

# Great Friday

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[0:00] Verse 44. Just open your Bibles up there and have a look with me. Then Jesus, calling out with a loud voice, said, Father, into your hands I commit my spirit.

And having said this, he breathed his last. Now when the centurion saw what had taken place, he praised God, saying, Certainly this man was innocent.

And all the crowds that had assembled for the spectacle, when they saw what had taken place, returned home, beating their breasts.

And all his acquaintances and the women who had followed him from Galilee stood at a distance watching these things. Now there was a man named Joseph from the Jewish town of Arimathea. He was a member of the council, a good and righteous man. Who had not consented to their decision and action. And he was looking for the kingdom of God.

[1:32] This man went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Then he took it down and wrapped it in a linen shroud and laid him in a tomb cut in stone.

Where no one had ever yet been laid. It was a day of preparation and the Sabbath was beginning. The women who had come with him from Galilee followed and saw the tomb and how his body was laid.

Then they returned and prepared spices and anointments. On the Sabbath they rested according to the commandment.

This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. Let's pray. Our Father we thank you for your perfect wisdom in sending your son the Lord Jesus to the cross.

And please help us to see clearly again or for the first time this great wisdom and this great hope.

[2:40] We pray in Jesus name. Amen. Well the world we live in is becoming less certain and less confident about what lies ahead.

I mean the petrol prices are up. Share markets down. What's coming next? One man speaks. Everything changes. We're growing less confidence in what we think we know is going on in the world.

We're growing less confidence to believe that what we're told is true is actually true. We've become less certain of the truth and we're becoming less certain of the future.

How will events in the Middle East turn out? How will they affect us? What will happen with the price of fuel? Will there be anything left for us to have in the future?

Will there be any crops sown for winter? Will there be any food come summer? What things can I be absolutely certain about?

[3:52] One thing we can be absolutely certain about is what we've been reading in Luke 23 this morning. Events bigger than anything else in world history so far.

Events which have shaped history and certainly will shape history for all mankind in the future. We can be certain of what happened here because the author who wrote it tells us why he wrote it.

So if you come back to Luke chapter 1 at the very beginning of the Gospel of Luke. Matthew, Mark, Luke. Luke chapter 1. Luke chapter 1. And pick it up at verse 1. These would be familiar words to some but not to others.

The author tells us why he wrote this account. Luke chapter 1 verse 1. Luke chapter 1. concerning the things that you've been taught. What the author, Luke, writes is an orderly account.

[5:26] He has researched these things and he was part of these things. Well, let's recount the event of Jesus' last moments alive on earth.

We read his account, the Jesus' death and burial. It wasn't put on Truth Social. It wasn't published on Facebook. It wasn't put on Instagram. It was published in a book, the Bible, for all to read and for all time for us to read.

And we've read about the trial before Pilate and Herod, Roman rulers of Judea and Galilee. He's accused by the Jews of falsely claiming to be the Christ, the King, for forbidding the Jews to pay taxes to Caesar, of stirring up trouble all around Judea and Galilee.

But Herod and Pilate find him not guilty of anything deserving of death. In fact, they become friends that day.

[6:44] Pilate offered to release him, but the crowd want a murderer released. Instead, we're told emphatically twice. And Jesus handed over to the mob to be crucified. We've heard about the crucifixion.

Two other criminals with him, one on his left, one on his right. In verse 33 of chapter 23, they crucified him at the place called the skull. Clothes are divided by lot.

Rulers scoff. Save yourself if you're the Christ. The soldiers mock if you're the Christ. King of the Jews, save yourself. There's an inscription over the top of him.

This is the King of the Jews. It serves as a kind of a charge against him, but also as a statement about him. He is your Christ, your King, you Jews.

Look what we've done to him. The criminals are divided. One says, if you're the Christ, save yourself. The other confesses his guilt. And asks Jesus to remember him when he comes into his kingdom.

[7:44] And Jesus promises him, today, you'll be with me in paradise. There's darkness. The sixth hour, it's midday until 3pm, the ninth hour. The curtain's torn in two.

And Jesus breathes his last and dies. The light of the world goes out and the world is plunged into darkness. The centurion sees what's taking place and he praises God.

Certainly this man was innocent. In fact, certainly this man was righteous. The spectacle's over.

The crowds return home, beating their breasts. And the acquaintances and women are standing at a distance watching.

We've heard about the burial. Joseph of Arimathea is looking forward to the kingdom of God coming. Takes Jesus' body and he buries him in a tomb. It's preparation day.

The Sabbath's about to begin. The sundown from Friday to sundown Saturday. Women see where they know where he's laid. Right? And they make plans to return.

[8:48] But they rest on the Sabbath as he's supposed to. These things certainly took place. Jesus was a real historical figure. Along with everyone else we've read about in Luke 23.

He was flogged. He was mocked. He was murdered. He was crucified. Dead and buried. So, the question is, what's the death of Jesus all about?

Now, you know we can't isolate the death of Jesus from his resurrection. But more of that on Sunday. The death of Jesus brings about confidence in at least three ways.

Forgiveness of sins is one. Another is life in the kingdom. And another is peace with God. Let's just nail those three this morning. Firstly, one death, one forgiveness for sin.

That's the first certainty. One death, one forgiveness for all who honour him as Lord and trust in Jesus for his forgiveness. That's what makes good Friday good.

[9:58] That's what makes good Friday great Friday. It's true that Jesus could have come down from the cross and saved himself. But if he did that, there would be no offer of forgiveness for us down the ages.

The scriptures teach us that Jesus' death was how forgiveness for sins is made possible. The Old Testament sacrificial system taught that sin led to death.

And that forgiveness was costly. Requiring a sacrifice. The death of an innocent, spotless animal in your place.

And when Jesus goes to the cross, he's the perfect, spotless son, lamb of God. In 1 Peter chapter 3 verse 18 we read, Christ suffered for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God.

Christ suffered for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring us to God. Nothing could be clearer about what his death did.

[11:14] The righteous, innocent one dies for the unrighteous, guilty ones. You and me. And he suffered once at the cross.

A one time sacrifice for sins wins forgiveness for all who rely on him to pay for their sins. No other sacrifice for sins required. No other sacrifice for sins will work. It's all been done. It's been paid in full. What the Old Testament taught, Jesus fulfills.

One death brings forgiveness. One forgiveness. But also, one death, one life in the kingdom. We who have trusted in what Jesus did have confidence of life in the coming kingdom. That's great news.

[12:19] A kingdom where there is truth, where there is justice, where there is peace, where there is prosperity. All that we would long for in this world but are frustrated with because of the sin that sort of mucks everything up.

His death opens the way into the presence of God. As Jesus' body is desecrated on the cross, so too the temple is desecrated.

The curtain is torn from top to bottom. The Holy of Holies is now shattered. At one level, opening up the Holy of Holies for sinners to gaze into.

The curtain was not just some flimsy window dressing that you can just tear easily. It was about 10 centimetres thick. And we're torn from top to bottom, not bottom to top.

So it's God who's the one who tears it. Not men. God defiles the temple. And opens up the new way.

[13:26] By Christ's blood. We're told in Hebrews chapter 10 verse 19 following. That we have every confidence. Hear that? Every confidence to enter the kingdom of heaven now through the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross.

Listen to Hebrews chapter 10 verse 19 following. Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is through his flesh, and since we have a great high priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart and full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.

We have confidence to approach God now, certainty of life in the kingdom, by the death of Jesus, and his resurrection to be our great high priest.

One death wins entry into the kingdom of God. And a third. One death, one peace.

A third thing that we can be confident of is that his death means that, is the means by which God uses to bring about true peace.

[14:52] Peace with himself, the war is over. Peace with others, who he might once have fought against, as God makes a new nation, in his new kingdom, a family of believers.

Ephesians chapter 2, verse 11, is a key place to go to. Let me read to you from Ephesians chapter 2, and a few verses after that. Therefore, remember at one time, you Gentiles in the flesh, called the uncircumcision, by what is called the circumcision, which is made in the flesh by hands, that is the Jews, look down on the Gentiles, right?

Remember, that you, the Gentiles, were at that time, separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise.

Listen to the status of those, who were not the Jewish nation, having no hope, and without God in the world. But now, right?

But now, in Christ Jesus, you who were once off, have been brought near, by the blood of Christ.

[16:06] Listen to this. For he himself is our peace, who has made both one, and broken down in his flesh, the dividing wall of hostility, by abolishing the law of commandments, expressed in ordinances, that he might create in himself, one new man, in place of the two, so making peace, so now he's made peace, between Jews and Gentiles, who despised each other, nations who despised each other, and, might reconcile us, both, to God, in one body, how?

Through the cross, thereby, killing hostility. It's by trusting in the death of Jesus, that divisions, and hostilities, and hatred can be resolved, and reconciliation made.

A real hostility exists, a real division exists, between people who reject God, and God himself. I mean, hostility expresses itself, in all kinds of ways, by not wanting to be with somebody, by being estranged, from someone, by ignoring them, and sometimes, being at war, with someone, and we demonstrated that, clearly, by crucifying, God's son, the Lord, Jesus Christ.

That's the hostility, we had towards God, but in the mercy, and the plans of God, the very act, of us crucifying his son, made it possible, to put an end, to the hostility, between us, and God.

[18:05] That is insanely, incredible, isn't it? God's righteous hostility, towards us, is over, for all, who put their faith, in the one, we crucified.

It's not a fake peace, either. It's a real peace. True peace, is made possible, when wrongs, are confessed, when forgiveness, is asked for, when repentance, is real, forgiveness, is given, damages, are accounted for, and the price, and the price, is paid.

That's what the cross, makes possible. The cross, is God's, terms of peace, and all, at his, cost. And those, who accept it, and trust him, and rely on him, are reconciled to God, and made members, of his kingdom, hostility, has come to an end, we're given real hope, we're given a new heart, we're given a new love, we're given a, a fresh start.

What a great day. Now, there can only, have to be two responses, to this one unique death, on Good Friday.

[19:44] There's one death, two responses. One's contempt. One response, to Jesus' death, is just utter, contempt, to him.

The religious leaders, the Roman leaders, had no regard, for him at all. For them, he was a troublemaker, or at least, a nuisance. For them, he's a cultural threat, he's upsetting the peace. The soldier, seems a pathetic Jew, worshipping a pathetic God. And so, they mock him, and mock his God. If he's God's chosen one, look what we did to him.

Hanging pathetically, on a cross. One size, sign said it all, doesn't it? This is the King of the Jews, and look what we've done to him. Your God, hasn't withstood, the might, of Rome, and her gods. One of the criminals, responds in a similar way. If you are the one, you say you are, then save yourself, and us, of this terrible fate. Come on, get on with it, Jesus, if you're really, who you are. Showing contempt, for Jesus.

[20:55] The other response, is confession. The other criminal, confesses his sin, recognises that, he deserves punishment.

That's, the way of confession, it's truth. Verse 41, of chapter 23, don't you fear God, since you're under the same sentence, of condemnation, and we indeed justly, for we're receiving due reward, for our deeds.

He's owning it, he's saying, yeah, that's true, I am a sinner, I deserve death. But this man, has done nothing wrong, and he said, Jesus, remember me, when you come into your kingdom.

And Jesus said to him, truly I say to you, today you'll be with me, in paradise. The criminal believes, that Jesus is innocent, that Jesus is righteous, done nothing wrong.

And now it's time, to fear God, not mock him. And he acknowledges, that Jesus is the Christ, who is the king, of the kingdom.

[22:04] Believes that Jesus, is about to bring in, the kingdom of God, the reign of God, and he wants Jesus, to remember him. That means, not that he's going to forget him, right? But he wants him, to be favourable, towards him.

Have mercy on him, when Jesus comes, in his kingdom, and he stands, before him. And notice what Jesus, says to him, today, you'll be with me, in paradise.

He's been saved, from the kingdom, of death and darkness, and brought into the kingdom, of life and light. And here's the one man, in history, that I can be absolutely, certain of, is in the kingdom of God.

Not because he earned it, by doing anything good. not because he deserved it, by being good enough, he is self-confessed criminal. But by recognising, who Jesus was, confessing him, as Lord, and putting his trust, in him, while he's drawing, his last, dying, gasping breaths.

Well, the centurion, praises Jesus, praises God, having seen all that happened, he changes his opinion, about Jesus, and goes, yes, you are innocent, you are righteous, he done nothing, deserving death, and he's saying that, he praises God.

[23:32] And then, Jesus of Arimathea, a good and righteous man, looking forward, to the kingdom of God, coming, honours Jesus, in his death, taking his body down, and lying him in a tomb.

So, there are those, two categories of people, those against Jesus, and those, who are for Jesus, really, just saying, two categories of people. Those hostile to God, outside the kingdom, without forgiveness.

And those, who confess, he is Lord, who are no longer, hostile to God, who are in the kingdom, and are forgiven by God.

Now, if you haven't confessed, Jesus Lord yet, we're so glad you're here, today would be a great day, to do that. Having heard, of all that's been done, for us at the cross, today's the day, you could ask him, to forgive you, for your sin, for your ignorance, of Jesus, your rebellion, your hostility, towards God.

You know, you need it. And when you do, confess Jesus Lord, and asking for forgiveness, can begin living, in the confidence, and the certainty, of sins forgiven, of having eternal life, in the kingdom of God.

[24:51] Peace with him. Nothing could be better, could it then, on Good Friday, to have a great Friday, and become one of God's people. Like the criminal, on the cross, ask Jesus to remember you now, that he has come, into his kingdom, be gracious to you, kind to you.

And all of us here, who have confessed, Jesus Lord, were once among those, showing contempt for Jesus. Yes you were, either actively, or passively, by contempt, nonetheless.

And yet God, moved us, to change our minds, and see Jesus, for who he is. That's what God's done for us.

And he's moved us, to cry out to him, to be our Lord, and our Saviour. How wonderful that is. Our ongoing response, is something like this.

You are Lord, you are the source, of all our hope. You are the one, who brings forgiveness. You are our peacemaker, you are our Saviour.

[26:10] Jesus, remember me. Now that you've come, into your kingdom. And you know what? We can be, absolutely certain, that he will.

Let's pray. Our Father in heaven, we thank you, for your great love to us, in the Lord Jesus. That while we were sinners, Christ died for us.

We thank you, that in his death, he's won forgiveness. By his death, he's won entry, into your kingdom. And by his death, he's made us, at peace, with you.

Thank you, for these glorious things. Please help us, to treasure them, and lay them up, in our hearts. And live for you, as our Lord, and our God.

We pray it in Jesus name. Amen.