

Community Good Friday Service at FCC 4-2-2021 7pm

One of the things I enjoy about Christian fellowship and worship, and specifically about prayer meetings, is hearing other people pray. When you listen to someone pray, you are hearing the sound of their spirit connecting with the spirit of God. You are hearing the spirit of God intercede for them and through them. You are hearing their heart for God, their passions, their concerns. Hearing someone pray is a window into their lives and their relationship with God. That's one reason why we are drawn together and built up when we get together to pray. We are revealing a part of ourselves to each other.

Now think about the prayer of Jesus that Mary Jo read. I wonder what impact it had on any or all of the disciples that heard him pray- to hear his heart for God and his heart for his followers, to see into his relationship with his father.

Reading John 17 reveals such a strong contrast- a contrast between the type of person Jesus is and the type of death he died. This man of prayer and purity and compassion and so many other truly good and godly qualities suffered in a way that was reserved for the most vile criminals. Turn with me to John 19:16-30

*Joh 19:16 So he delivered him over to them to be crucified. So they took Jesus,*

*Joh 19:17 and he went out, bearing his own cross, to the place called The Place of a Skull, which in Aramaic is called Golgotha.*

*Joh 19:18 There they crucified him, and with him two others, one on either side, and Jesus between them.*

*Joh 19:19 Pilate also wrote an inscription and put it on the cross. It read, "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews."*

*Joh 19:20 Many of the Jews read this inscription, for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city, and it was written in Aramaic, in Latin, and in Greek.*

*Joh 19:21 So the chief priests of the Jews said to Pilate, "Do not write, 'The King of the Jews,' but rather, 'This man said, I am King of the Jews.'"*

*Joh 19:22 Pilate answered, "What I have written I have written."*

*Joh 19:23 When the soldiers had crucified Jesus, they took his garments and divided them into four parts, one part for each soldier; also his tunic. But the tunic was seamless, woven in one piece from top to bottom,*

*Joh 19:24 so they said to one another, "Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it to see whose it shall be." This was to fulfill the Scripture which says, "They divided my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots." So the soldiers did these things,*

*Joh 19:25 but standing by the cross of Jesus were his mother and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene.*

*Joh 19:26 When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to his mother, "Woman, behold, your son!"*

*Joh 19:27 Then he said to the disciple, "Behold, your mother!" And from that hour the disciple took her to his own home.*

*Joh 19:28 After this, Jesus, knowing that all was now finished, said (to fulfill the Scripture), "I thirst."*

*Joh 19:29 A jar full of sour wine stood there, so they put a sponge full of the sour wine on a hyssop branch and held it to his mouth.*

*Joh 19:30 When Jesus had received the sour wine, he said, "It is finished," and he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.*

There is no more terrible death imaginable than death by crucifixion. Even the Romans shuddered to speak of it. They tried to prevent women and children from ever seeing someone crucified. Cicero the Roman writer noted that it was the most cruel and horrifying of all deaths. Tacitus said it was a despicable death. It was originally a Persian method of execution. The people of Carthage took it from the Persians and the Romans learned it in Carthage. They didn't use it in Italy and no Roman citizen would ever suffer the indignity of crucifixion

unless that Roman citizen was guilty of high crime against Caesar. It was the most dreaded kind of death in the ancient world. It was reserved for foreign slaves and foreign criminals.

I think many of us have read or heard from a medical perspective about the gruesome details of crucifixion. We have seen films or read articles or heard sermons that describe or depict the suffering of Christ on the cross- every injury and their effects. It's certainly instructive for us to examine those details for several reasons, not the least of which is that it shows us the worst of what religious people can do. It shows us the horrors of false religion and hypocrisy.

But tonight I want to draw attention to some OT prophecies and typology that were fulfilled in Christ, and how their fulfillment points to that contrast between the type of person Jesus is and the kind of death he died.

According to historians, the victims of crucifixion were often so terrified that they lost their senses and had to be driven like a wild animal to the crucifixion site. The scourging, in spite of the blood loss it caused, also caused hysteria. Sometimes they even had to be tied up and dragged because they resisted so hard. And having to get them to go uphill made it even more difficult.

But it was not so with Jesus. Verse 17 said he went out, bearing his own cross. There is no panic or struggle here. They tell him where to go and he goes. This fulfills a prophecy from Isaiah 53:7 which says he was led as a sheep to the slaughter. Other animals might have to be driven to the site of slaughter. Sheep can be led to the site of slaughter, and act no different than any other time you lead them somewhere. Jesus was willing to go. There was no resistance in him. Therefore this process went relatively quickly. Only a couple hours or so had passed since he stood before Pilate, and now it's time for the procession to the hill of Golgotha where he would be put on the cross. The Jews lost no time and the soldiers acted immediately. He was taken from Gabbatha, which means the pavement, the place of

judgement, to Golgotha. He went from judgement to execution with no time wasted in between.

Why is that important? Isaiah 53:8, speaking of his death, says he was taken from prison and from judgement. That's what happened, he was taken from the place of judgement to the place of execution- there was no resistance and no appeal. Again, another prophecy fulfilled. And he goes, it says, bearing his own cross. Carrying either a portion of it or all of it, heading for Golgotha. Why did they have the prisoner carry the cross? To drag out the parade to the crucifixion site, as a warning to all that crime does not pay, and so that if there was anyone along the way who had some information that could overturn the execution sentence, that information could come forth because this was a public parade. But no one came to the defense of Jesus, absolutely no one.

The behavior of Christ in these circumstances fulfills the typology of Isaac in Genesis 22:6.

*Gen 22:6 And Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering and laid it on Isaac his son. And he took in his hand the fire and the knife. So they went both of them together.*

Just like Isaac carried the wood for the offering, Jesus carried his cross, the wooden means of his sacrifice. Without interruption, without complaint, without hesitation, they both went to the offering site.

The OT also teaches that the sacrificial lamb on the day of atonement was to be taken outside the gates of the city. John 19:17 says he went out, that's referring to outside the city. Golgotha was outside Jerusalem. The Romans said it was illegal to crucify anyone inside the boundary of a city.

Now it's interesting to think about the fact that Jesus was sentenced to crucifixion by the Roman governor Pilate at the urging of the Jews. Crucifixion is a Roman method, not a Jewish method. The Jews never crucified anyone. But that doesn't mean they never executed anyone. Their own means of execution was stoning, as stated

in the Law of Moses. There was a place nearby that was about an 11-foot precipice that some historians state was designated for this purpose. The procedure for death by stoning was the person was thrown off the precipice onto the bedrock surface below and then the person was pummeled and crushed with stones until they perished. That was the Jewish method of execution for anyone guilty of blasphemy, which is the crime they accused Jesus of because he claimed to be one with God the Father. Anyone guilty of this crime would be pushed off the precipice by the first witness to the crime. It was seen as an honor to do that as the first witness. This put the criminal below the rest of the people. This physical action of the person being forced down was deemed appropriate given their crime of lifting themselves to godhood with their blasphemy. And it then allowed the stones to be dropped down on them. So the fall did not kill the person, then the second witness to the crime would then throw the first stone, a large stone, down onto the person's head. If the criminal was still alive, then everyone joined in and threw stones down onto the criminal until they perished. But Jesus, even though he was a Jew, and he was guilty of a Jewish crime, and he was accused by Jews, and it was the Jews who wanted him dead, he was not executed using the Jewish method. This was truly unique and strange.

Jesus of course said that this would happen to him.

*Joh 3:14 And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up,*

He repeated it in John 12.

*Joh 12:32 And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself."*

In Numbers 21, anyone who looked up at the serpent would be healed. Jesus is comparing himself to the serpent because he knows he will die by a means that involves him being lifted up. Execution involving being lifted up is the very opposite of Jewish execution in which the person was brought down.

Psalm 22:14 and the verses following are a prophecy about the death of the messiah. It mentions some many details that of course don't line up with a death by stoning. Just one example is bones being out of joint. Only during crucifixion would one's bones be out of joint. Death by stoning would not likely cause this symptom. It would much more likely cause broken bones. Again, prophecy reveals a non-Jewish means of execution. This points to the sovereign purpose of God being at work, orchestrating the atoning death of his son.

Isaiah 53:9 says he was with the wicked. Isaiah 53:12 says he was numbered with the transgressors. These were fulfilled when he was crucified in between two criminals.

John 19:24 records the distribution of Jesus' clothes among the soldiers. There were four soldiers in the crucifixion squad and there were normally four garments- shoes, belt, headpiece, and outer cloak. Each of them would get one of those pieces. But then there was that seamless tunic Jesus had. What do you do with that- you don't want to tear it up or it's no good to anyone, so they cast lots for it, just like Psalm 22 said they would do. Without knowing it, these men operated within the divine purpose. There are over 300 prophecies in the OT that have literally been fulfilled in Christ and many more pictures and types and analogies.

The mathematics of that is staggering. If all of those 300 plus prophecies were fulfilled in one man, the odds of that would be 1 in 84 with 100 zeros.

In John 19:28 Jesus said something to fulfill scripture. He said I thirst. Psa 69:21b says "for my thirst they gave me sour wine to drink." Jesus had refused the gall that was offered to him earlier, which would have served as a sedative to relieve his pain. Most people would have drank it, but his purpose was to endure the full suffering of crucifixion. But now he is thirsty. They had this jar of sour wine there, a drink common among the soldiers and the poor. He sipped some off of a sponge on a branch, and then said it is finished, it is accomplished. Then he died. He died relatively quickly for a victim of crucifixion. His

strength was not diminished by sinful lifestyles and his lifespan was not shortened by sinful nature. He probably could have lasted much longer than most on that cross. But that's what makes his life an offering. He laid it down willingly. That's why the soldiers did not have to break his legs to make him unable to lift himself to breathe and make him to die of asphyxiation. This also fulfilled prophecy of Psalm 34:20- none of his bones would be broken. According to sacrificial law, the lamb was not to have any broken bones. So to ensure that Jesus was dead, the soldier simply pierced his side with his spear, which allowed blood and water to flow out. Again, this fulfills the prophecy from Zechariah that he would be pierced.

We hear these details and we feel horrified, we feel saddened. The same one to pray a prayer that could not be more true and sincere was the one to die the most awful death imaginable. There is a disturbing contrast there. But the prophecies and the gospel accounts of Scripture force us not to fixate on the horror but to understand that every single thing that is happening is fulfilling God's will and accomplishing our salvation. We could see this only as a horrible event were it not for that purpose. Jesus bore the consequences of the sins of every last person to ever live on this earth. That goes for every person here tonight. Jesus is offering you forgiveness, acceptance, and love that is more pure and deep than you can imagine. Simply ask and you shall receive.