

Title: “It was not I.”

Chris Ryan

John 19:17-30

4/15/2022

Service Readings: Isaiah 52:13-53:12, Hebrews 4:14-16; 5:7-9, John 19:17-30

The death of Jesus

Message:

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.

¹⁷and he went out, bearing his own cross, to the place called The Place of a Skull, which in Aramaic is called Golgotha. ¹⁸There they crucified him, and with him two others, one on either side, and Jesus between them. ¹⁹Pilate also wrote an inscription and put it on the cross. It read, “Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews.”

It was not I who put the Messiah on the cross. I didn’t arrest him, or beat him, or scourge him with a whip. I didn’t forge a crown from thorns and place it upon his head. None of that was my doing. No! I didn’t put the Messiah on the cross, I merely pointed him towards it. I merely cleared the path from Heaven to Jerusalem so his travel would be easy. All I did was give him reason to enter the very world that he created. That’s all I did. *I was the cause for the sacrifice.*

It was not I who put the Messiah on the cross. The Roman army did that. And what’s more, he allowed it! He could have sent an army of angels with just a single word. The mighty power of Rome would not have been able to stand against him. But he didn’t. He remained silent; he remained obedient to his father, and he allowed those he created to crucify him. He allowed those he loved to crucify him. *They carried out the sacrifice.*

It was not I who put the Messiah on the cross. It was the Messiah, himself. “God so loved the world that he gave his only son.” And his only son went willingly, obediently because he, too loved the world. He came not to condemn it, but in order that it might be saved through him. *He give reason for the sacrifice.*

It was not I who put the Messiah on the cross. It was God’s love for us. And if you really want to understand that love it is necessary to first understand the role that we *did* play in Christ’s crucifixion as well as the role that we *didn’t*. Satan so often wants to accuse us and place the hammer into our hands. He wants us to believe that we were the ones that killed God. That our disobedience sought him out, captured, tortured, and then crucified him. If that were true, the burden would be too heavy for any of us to bear and in our despair we might be tempted to turn from the cross, to hide from Jesus’ work because the weight of that guilt would be crushing.

But Satan is wrong. Yes, our sin was ours to bear and the punishment was ours to experience. But our role didn’t include the hammer or the cross. We didn’t force God’s hand or manipulate him into serving us. He chose that himself. Our only *role* in *all of this* was earned judgement and wrath from

God. "The wages of sin is death," Paul writes. But it is not just a physical death he talks about. It is also a physical separation from all that is good; it is a physical separation from God himself. And an eternal life lived outside the presence of God is a life lived in hell.

<pause>

Our sin separates us from God. But our sin did not separate God from us. For even though we sinned and had fallen short of his demands he continued to love us. And he made a way to reconcile us to himself through his son. And he did it all; we had no part in that. And he did it because he loves us. And it is a love that is so vast and so deep that when Jesus hung on the cross, God the father separated himself from him. It was a separation so complete, so devastating that it satisfied God's wrath. And the son willingly accepted this complete agony so that we would never have to experience a separation from God, ourselves.

It was not I who put the Messiah on the cross. He did that all on his own. He did it not because he had to, not because we manipulated him, but because he wanted to. For you. For me. This is the love of God and he points it at you. And on nights like tonight, it is easy for Satan to try to place that hammer in your hands. He tries to distract you from God's love. He tries to turn the crucifixion into something that hides you from Jesus. But you can set the hammer aside. You can tell Satan to go back to where he came. The nails were the cause of Christ's physical pain - your sin was the cause of his spiritual pain, but it was a pain that he chose to accept.... For you. Because he loves you. And that detail changes everything. That detail gives us freedom and joy even as we view his tortured body. That detail removes the crushing burden that we feel when we see him on the cross. For there, on the cross, hangs the God of love. The God of a love so deep that his son gave up his life so that you would not have to.

he said, "It is finished," and he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.

<I would like to end the sermon here. There would be no prayer, just me silently exiting the pulpit.>