



Message **Transcript**

Good Friday | The Death Of Death

Jeff Schwarzentraub

Pastor Jeff:

Our good father in Heaven, we give you all the glory, honor and praise. We praise you specifically today for your son, Jesus Christ who came and died on a cross for all of the sins of the world, who was buried in the grave, who rose in victory on the first day of the week. And we celebrate you. Lord, we thank you that you've given us your Holy Spirit who indwells all of us who believe to convict us of sin, righteousness, and judgment, to guide us into all truth and to lead us into your ways. And Lord, we thank you for your living and active word among us that every time it is faithfully and accurately proclaimed that Lord, you are speaking. So our prayer this evening is Lord, speak for we are ready to hear. And so now for all those who have gathered who desire to hear the Lord Jesus Christ speak directly to you, who will believe what he says and who will by faith put into practice what he shows you this evening?

Will you all agree with me very loud tonight by saying the word amen.

Congregation:

Amen.

Pastor Jeff:

Amen. Good Friday is always a unique term that we use to commemorate and celebrate the death of our Lord Jesus Christ. And it's unique because in the heart of all of us, death is not something we celebrate. Death is something we try to avoid. Self-preservation is what we celebrate. If something happens to us where we have a "near death experience" and we stay alive, that's something we celebrate. New life, we

celebrate. Aging for a long period of time, we celebrate. But death is not something we even like to talk about. Death is something that we try to avoid. When we even see scenes that may cause death, it causes us great fear.

Somebody sent me a Twitter the other day of a picture of somebody that set a record in 1983 for having the world's tallest high dive. They were at 172 feet in the air on this little scaffold. And just looking at the man standing there looking down, I'm like, I would rather die than be standing on that platform. 172 feet above the water and then backwards he went and right into the water he went. And I was like, even though I knew it was forty some years ago, everything in my heart was like, ah, he's alive. So why is it that when we gather on Good Friday, we call it good? Why is it that we come together and say, Jesus Christ died and here's why we do. Because it's a central theme of all of our biblical literature. That from the time that we were in the garden where God created a perfect world, where he created men and women in his image, where he created this great glorious setting where he says in Genesis 1:31, "God saw all that he had made and it was very good."

It doesn't take very long even though they've been commanded to be fruitful and multiply and eat off any tree they want and have a great time, they were warned of not doing one thing and that was not to eat off the tree of the knowledge of good and evil because the day they would eat off that tree dying, they would die. And we realize it doesn't take him very long until Eve is being deceived by the serpent. Adam who's standing right there with them is culpable and they both eat the fruit and sin enters into humanity. And so now it's part of the DNA of life and dying. They began to die and we

know that they died because they're no longer here. And what happens is, every time new life happens in the heredity of every man and woman, boy and girl, from the time of conception, we know that that child is terminal.

There's no way they can live forever. But God made a promise all the way back in Genesis chapter three in verse 15, that he would one day send a Messiah that would redeem the world, that would pay the penalty for sin. And we read throughout all the New Testament that Jesus Christ came as God's one and only son, the eternal son of God who had always existed put on flesh. He was born of a virgin. He had to be born of a virgin because he couldn't have the heredity of sin, but he had to have the human nature. And so he came as fully God and fully man and fulfilled the law and restored glory to his father. And he demonstrated, he was God's eternal son through his healings and through his ministry. But he came for one reason and one reason only, and that was to die.

As a matter of fact, he spoke clearly to his disciples about this many times and it was interesting because even when Jesus promised them, I'm going to die on your behalf, they were pulling him aside and said, no, we know who you are now. You're never going to die. Peter rebuked Jesus. And he said to Peter, "Get thee behind me Saint for you do not have in mind the things of God but the things of men." He said he was going to go into Jerusalem, he was going to go there on purpose. He said he would be betrayed. All the Old Testament prophesied that was exactly what was going to happen. And he went into Jerusalem willingly, knowing that the very people that were yelling "Blessed be him who comes in the name of the Lord." Would days later be

yelling, "Crucify him, we have no king but Caesar." And Jesus Christ on the night he was betrayed, he was praying in a garden.

He was sweating drops of blood, not just because he knew of the excruciating pain that the crucifixion was going to be, but that he was going to endure the wrath of God on behalf of all mankind. Because what you realize is that sin has a consequence and the consequence is not just death. You have the sin virus, you have sin DNA, I promise you you're going to die. I don't know when it's going to happen, I am thoroughly assured that I'm going to die, but that's not the problem. The problem is if you die in your sin, you pay an eternal punishment for offending an eternal God in your sin. So when you die in your sin, you go to a place called Hell where God is righteous and holy and good to punish you eternally because you've offended an eternal God. And yet God so loved the world so much that he gave his only begotten son Jesus, who came to this world to do one thing, to seek and save that which was lost. To do for humanity what no other human can do, to die for the sins of the world.

That's why Jesus came. And every single day, for those of us who are believers, we should celebrate that truth. Amen. We should believe. He died for me. He forgave all my sins. And we know that through repentance and faith, we can receive the full expression of all of God's love and mercy poured out to us in Christ. And so when we see Jesus on the cross with his arms extended, he's giving an invitation to the world that anyone who would turn from their sin and come to Christ, he would redeem to the full. We also see an expression on the cross of God's justice, like how serious is God

about sin? He's as serious enough to kill his own son. Was serious enough to ask the blood of his own son, because holiness demands a righteous payment and none of us is able to give it. That's why Jesus Christ came.

And yet here's what I find for many people that attend church on a regular basis. Okay, I got it. I remember you talked about that last year. I remember you said that last Sunday, we get it. He died for our sins, check the box, did that, move on to something more important. There's nothing more important. There's no other thing I can tell you that's more gracious. And here's the problem, many of us view Jesus on the cross as a spectator sport. We think Good Friday is about coming to church and hearing the story one more time. If we would've been standing there, we would've been yelling, crucify him. But praise the Lord, Jesus Christ died for us and we're watching what he did and we thank you. But can I just tell you there's more? Can I tell you he died because there's something more?

If you have your Bible with you tonight, I want you to open up your Bible to Galatians chapter two. We're going to look at two verses, Galatians chapter two verses 20 and 21. And I want to talk about the death of death. Because for many of you, even though you fear death, you shouldn't fear death anymore. Now, you may be concerned with how you're going to die. I get it, we don't know. But you shouldn't fear death in itself. Death should not have mastery over you. As the apostle Paul writes to the Galatian church, here's what he says. He says, "I have been crucified with Christ and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me and the life I live now, I live in the flesh. I live by faith in the Son of God who love me and gave himself for me. I do not

nullify the grace of God for if righteousness comes through the law, then Christ died needlessly."

And I want to highlight four truths today about the death of Jesus Christ. And really what we're reading about is the death of death. That as a Christian and follower of Jesus, death should not be something that you concern yourself with. That for you as a believer, death should be dead to you. Because as a believer in Christ, here's what we believe for it's appointed on a man to die once and after that face judgment. And if you're a believer in Christ, the moment that you die and your eyes are opened for the first time ever, you'll be more alive than you've ever been in your entire life. Amen?

And so with that being true, I think there's some people in the church that say, I believe that. I'm not experiencing that. I want you to experience that tonight. And I want to talk to you about four reasons that death is dead and how you can apply that to your life so you can experience the death of death in you. And the first is this, death is dead. When you willingly die with Christ. Death is dead when you willingly die with Christ, notice what the word says. He says, "I have been crucified with Christ." Who's been crucified with Christ? The Apostle Paul says, I have. Well we know from church history he wasn't crucified. He was likely beheaded later in life, but at the time that he's writing this, he's as alive as me and you. What in the world does he mean? I have been crucified with Christ.

He didn't say Christ died for me, although the Apostle believes that. He says one step further, I have been crucified with Christ. He's going to say it's no longer I who

live. What's he mean by that? He realizes that in the moment that Jesus Christ died and he stretched out his arms, it was more than Jesus saying, I love you and I'm willing to die for your sins. It was an invitation for you to die to your life and come and live with Christ. When Christ had his arms stretch out, it wasn't, hey, look at me. I love you so much I died for you. When his arms are stretched out, he's saying, you're dead in your sins, but I'll give you a way out. Come die with me. And it's really nothing new to the teaching of Jesus. Jesus said in Matthew chapter 16 verse 24, "If anyone would come after me, he must..." What? Deny himself? Take up his cross, which means die and what? Follow me.

Some of us falsely believe, well, that's discipleship. I'm not ready for that kind of thing yet. No, that's foundational. One of the reasons that some of us that call ourselves Christians, that really aren't Christians is because we acknowledge the truth of what happened on Good Friday, but we have no desire to apply it. And I want to tell you, even the demons believe Jesus Christ died for the sins of the world and shudder. It's not enough to just know he died. There has to be something in you that recognizes, I have a need. I'm going to die. I'm not only going to die in my sin, but I'm going to face the one who is perfectly holy who's going to hold me accountable and I don't want to face them and I need to die.

I need to die to me. I need to die to this world. I need to die to my life. Jesus said, "Anyone who wants to find his life in this world will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. If you want to find a life, you can't find it in this world. You

can only find it by coming and dying with Christ." He's like, come with me. Be crucified to your desires. Be crucified to your own life. Be crucified to your will. Come to me and that's where you'll find life. All of the New Testament speaks this way. In Colossians chapter three and verse three says this, Colossians three, three, "For you have died and your life is now hidden with Christ and God." The Bible makes clear for the believer you've already died. You've already been crucified with Christ. Do you not realize that?

In Romans chapter six verse three, "Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into his death? Therefore, we have been buried with him through baptism unto death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life." You cannot experience the life of God if you're unwilling to die. You can't. A lot of people think they can give lip service to Jesus and then they don't know why they're not experiencing life. A lot of people think that they can repeat a prayer and then they don't understand why they're not experiencing life. To experience the life of Christ is a rejection of your own sin and an embracing of the fullness of who God is. It's saying, I'm done with my life as long as I can have his, it's time to die.

And that's why for some people that will say, well, I've always been a Christian. I was kind of raised in a Christian home. You haven't always been a Christian because you weren't born. Well you were born spiritually dead, you never made a decision to be crucified with Christ. That's an act of the will, a willingness to say, I'm done with my life. Jesus, I'm done with my desires. I'm done with what I want. I'm coming to you

because I need your blood, because in your blood you have life. And I'm letting go of my life and I'm embracing all of yours. Even in first Peter chapter two in verse two, four says it like this, "And he who bore our sins in his body on the cross..." That's Jesus, so what? "So that we might die to sin and live to righteousness for by his wounds you were healed."

If you don't die to your sin, if you don't crucify your flesh, if you don't tell Jesus, I'm done with this, you cannot experience his life. And there are too many people in the church that are giving lip service to Jesus that the devil is lying to and said, you've always been a Christian. Oh, you're a Methodist, you're a Presbyterian, you're a Baptist, you're a Catholic. You're good. You attend church. You're a good person. Look around, compare yourself. That's not why Jesus died. He died because you're spiritually dead. And if you don't recognize you're spiritually dead and are willing to let go of this life and embrace the fullness of Christ's death and die with him, you can't experience life in this life or the next. That's why we commemorate Jesus' death on this day. That's why we give it special attention. That's who our God is. That's what he's done.

Death is dead when you willingly die with Christ. It's not a spectator sport. It's trusting Jesus for what he wants to do. Number two is this, death is dead when you own your identity in Christ. Death is dead when you own your identity in Christ. He says, "I have been crucified with Christ. It's no longer I who live, but what Christ who lives in me." See, when you're willing to go to the cross and say, God, you have my life. You can take my life. I'm willing to be crucified with you. Then what happens is

there's this great exchange that takes place. All your sin gets placed upon Jesus and all his life gets placed into you. And then while you say, well, I thought I was dead. How can I live? Well, it's no longer you who live, it's Christ in you who's doing the living.

And so what we have to do is we have to take ownership of our identity in Christ. I mean, think about this verse John three 16. "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have..." What? Eternal life. What is eternal life? It's the very life of God and his son in you. That's the gift. It's not that you get to live forever in Heaven. That's a byproduct of the very gift of Christ in you presently. That's why Jesus said in John 14, six, "I am the way, the truth and the life. Life is in me." He said, second Corinthians five 17 says, "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he's a new creation. Old things have passed away. Behold, all things have been made new." When somebody dies to themselves and rejects sin and turns to Christ and says, you take my deadness, you take my sin, I'll take all of your life. Something transforms on the inside and it's more radical than if your physical body changed.

Everything on the inside is recreated. You are a new creation. Old things have passed away. All things have been made new. And one of the reasons we don't experience the life of Christ is we don't realize what's taking place. It's not just that you exchange your sin for Christ's life, signed a card and said, good, now I'm going to live my same life. You can't live your same life. If you've truly come to Christ, you will not be able to sin the same sins you sinned before you did without feeling massive conviction. Sometimes people come to me in the church and say, "Pastor Jeff, I don't

know if I'm saved anymore. I did this and I just feel horrible." I'm like, "Did you feel horrible before you got saved?"

No. That's a good sign, right? We have to own our identity in Christ. And our identity in Christ rejects the lies of the enemy. And so when we read statements that are true about Jesus, they're not necessarily true about me in my flesh. They're true about Christ in me. So they make who I am, very valid. Because the enemy lies to us and says, you know what? You need to earn your way. The death of death means it's the end of you earning your way. Christ paid for all my sin, I am forgiven. I don't have to earn anything. I don't have to earn anything. I don't get into Heaven because I'm a pastor. You don't get into Heaven because you came to church. You get into Heaven because you exchanged your sin for the life of Christ.

The death of death is the end of me being under God's wrath. For we were all as nature born as children of wrath. But once I've given my sin to Jesus, the wrath is gone. Why? Because Jesus Christ took all the wrath of God. Everything that was intended for sin was completely fulfilled in Christ. And if you're in Christ, there is no more condemnation for you. So now I can say I am statements. I am forever and unconditionally loved, and there is no condemnation in me. It's good, right?

It is the end of me being under the law. The law is for those who are lawbreakers. The law is for those who are living in the flesh. Do not steal, do not cheat. Do not commit adultery. Because the law tells you God's holy and you're not. And the law points you to the one who is and makes you feel conviction. But once

you've died to Christ, the law has no mastery over you. Not because you get to be a lawbreaker, but you're freed up from the law. Because in Christ, he's already fulfilled it all and he's already living in you.

So in Christ, the fulfillment of the law has already taken place. So I know now that I'm growing in the grace of God and I am maturing and I'm bearing fruit. It's a guarantee. It's the end of me being uncertain about God because I'm sure that Christ died for my sins, and I'm sure that he rose from the dead and I am secure forever. It's the end of me trying to find meaning and what's life all about? And how can I use my gifts to best help other people? And what can I do and how can I find this? And today's not as good of a day as yesterday. And how can I... No, no, no, no. I'm Christ's ambassador and he has placed me on mission. And I'm significant because I'm fearfully and I'm wonderfully made. Amen?

And I love this. It is the end. The death of death is the end of sin being your master. Do not believe the lie. Whoa, I've always sinned this way. My dad sinned this way. Grandpa sinned this way. All my uncles sin. This is just a generational curse. No, no, no, no, no. Because Christ took the curse and by his stripes, you are healed. Notice what Romans says in chapter six in verse 14, "For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under the law, but under grace." You are not mastered by sin. You know what I would say? In Christ, I am totally, totally, totally free. I do not have to sin the same sins I sinned, because Christ's power works in me. Isn't that good? I mean, if you want to experience what happened on that Friday, if you want to experience what happened on that day, it's not enough just to look at what Christ did.

You have to take ownership and willingly die with Christ and own your identity in Christ. And how about this? Number three, how about this? Grow your faith in Christ. He says, "I've been crucified with Christ. I've willingly died with Christ, and it's no longer I who live but Christ who lives in me." That's owning my identity in Christ. Notice what he says now "And the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the son of God who loved me and gave himself up for me." So how am I going to grow in this understanding? I'm going to continue to take steps of faith, not because I have great courage, not because I'm trying to do great things for God, but Christ is in me prompting me to believe him for things that I haven't seen done. So I'm stepping in faith, believing Christ for what he says he can do even though I can't see it with my eyes because the Bible says for we walk by faith and not by sight.

So I'm believing not that God can do something through me. I'm believing that Christ is already in me doing the work, and I'm believing him to get it done. So my faith is not faith in me doing what God wants. My faith is in Christ in me getting done what he wants. Isn't that a great exchange? The Christian life is not effort. It's not striving. The Christian life is surrendering to the Holy Spirit of God inside of you and following his truths and his promptings to do what he wants to get done. So that when people see you, they see Christ in you. They see the mercy of Christ and the love of Christ and the patience of Christ and the kindness of Christ and the goodness of Christ. And they wonder, what's different about this one? Because they never used to be that way.

Well, that's no longer me. That's Christ who lives in me and I'm going to keep stepping. I'm going to keep trusting. If Jesus says go, I'm going because I'm going to

believe that he's going to do something great. And the death on the cross tells me that through being crucified with him, his very life comes in me. And because he's in me, I can continue to grow. In who? The one who loves me and gave himself for me.

Do you know how many people in the world are looking for love in all the wrong places? We have this insatiable desire to be loved, whether you realize it or not, everybody wears a sign around their neck saying, please make me feel important. Please make me feel loved. Please tell me that I'm valuable. If you don't, I will tell you that I am so that you will think that I feel good about myself. All of us have that, but not when you have Christ on the inside because then you begin to hear that voice saying you are loved and you are special, and I created you and you are fearfully and wonderfully made, and you know those things about you you don't even like? I'm the one that put them there so you'd depend upon other people. And you know those things that you do so easily that nobody else can do? I'm the one that did that. And why don't you just be who you are and be freed up to let me live my life through you and quit trying to look around and please everybody else?

Congregation:

Amen.

Pastor Jeff:

Amen?

That's what the death of Christ does. It grows our faith. Hebrews chapter 11, verse one tells us that "Faith is the assurance of things hoped, for the evidence of

things not seen." And verse six in chapter 11 says, "And without faith, it is impossible to please God." Some of us stagnate even when we believe the truths about the crucifixion because we don't continue to allow Jesus Christ to help us take the next step. And as I've said multiple times, the hardest step of faith you'll ever take in your life, it's the next one. It'll feel ginormous when you take it. I remember some of the steps I took when I first became a believer, when people were asking me, do you have any Christian friends? Out of all the group you have, do you have any Christian friends? I have one or two. Are they strong in the Lord? I didn't even know what that meant.

And they were prompting me to get in around Christian people into attend a church. And man, that took everything I had to say, I want to be around Christians. Because for so long I thought Christians were weird. And taking that step of faith was like a huge step. Giving up bad behaviors, huge step. I mean, I look back at some of the things I thought were huge steps. I'm like, that's elementary 101. And now God's got me taking steps that feel like huge steps, and I hope that in five years I'll look back and say, no, that was a teeny weeny step, you just thought it was big. And God's always taking us on that journey. Wherever you're at, to feel the prompting of him saying, I love you and I love you enough to never let you stay right where you are. And even though I accept you with who you are, I love you enough not to leave you there. Keep growing in me. Amen?

And then finally is this, death is dead when you willingly die with Christ, when you own your identity in Christ, when you grow your faith in Christ. And then finally is this, here's the final death knell to death. Death is dead when you thank God for freedom in

Christ. When you thank him for freedom in Christ. Notice what he says, he said, I've been crucified with Christ no longer I who live, I've willingly died with Christ, but Christ lives in me. I'm owning my identity in Christ in the life I now live in the flesh. I live by faith in the son of God who loved me and he gave himself for me. He was my substitutionary atonement. He took my place. He jumped in the way. He got in front of it all. He said, only I can handle this, you can't handle my dad's wrath. You can't handle my wrath. You can't handle the spirit's wrath. You can't handle God's wrath. I'll take it. Get behind me. I got this.

That's what he says. And because of that, then we can thank God for the freedom we have in Christ. Notice what he says, "I do not nullify." That means to set aside, "The grace of God. For if righteousness comes through the law, then Christ died needlessly." In other words, he's saying this, and I'm paraphrasing. If you could do something to earn God's good graces, Jesus Christ died for nothing. When you talk to somebody and you ask them, how do you know if you're going to Heaven? And they'll tell you, because I'm a good person, then Christ died for nothing. Well, it's because I go to church. Then Christ died for nothing. It's because I'm trying to get better. Then Christ died for nothing. Christ died for sinners. That's what he came for. Amen?

And as I like to say, all of us is one. All of us have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. And the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ. It doesn't cost you anything. Every act of grace costs somebody something. When your child doesn't finish their homework and you have to stay up and write the

paper with them, it costs you your time and energy. Not that that's ever happened, but that's happened. But it always costs somebody something, right? Anytime that grace is extended, it costs somebody something. But here's the truth about the grace of Jesus. When he extended the grace he paid for it. When some of his final words are, it is finished, that means paid in full. It's like I took care of it because you can't offer anything. You got nothing to bring to the table. I'm paying for it all. Can you thank God for that? Can you praise him for that? I mean, that's some good news.

And when we have that kind of gratitude, it's not just that he paid for it so it's free, but then we experience his freedom. You had nothing to do with this. God gave you everything. If you could experience the same life in Christ that you could without him, then Christ died for nothing. I'm not the same person I was before I met Christ. It's no longer I who live, it's Christ who lives in me.

Here's the question I would ask on Good Friday is, have you died with Christ? Or have you given just intellectual assertion to, yeah, I believe that and I'm trying to be a good person. Or yeah, I believe that and I'm going to church. Or yeah, I believe that, and someday when I meet Jesus, I hope he'll take me in the Kingdom. Or have you said I need that. I know that I'm dead in my sin. I know that if I stood before a holy God, I'd be terrified right now. And I need to reject my sin and reject the pleasures and reject this world and reject all the things that are pulling at me and come running to the cross. Because at the cross, Jesus demands my everything and I'm willing to give it all to him in exchange for all of his life.

It's the great exchange. When was the time that you poured all your sin on Jesus

and you received the full measure of all of his life? Have you been crucified with Christ or do you give him lip service? See, I find that there's a lot of people in church that know all the facts that can tell you about where they prayed a prayer, where they wept when they felt the Lord speak to their heart and all this kind of stuff. There's people that go to Hell every day that walk aisles at a crusade. There's people that go to Hell every day that felt God move in the church. There's people that go to Hell every day that say, I went to church my whole life and I believe in Jesus.

Friends, I'm just telling you I love you enough as your pastor to tell you, embrace the fullness of the death of Christ. When he said it is finished, it means it's done. When Jesus descended into Hell, it wasn't to go down and fight the devil and wrestle him and see who was going... He won on the cross. It's finished. It's done. He said, today to the thief, I'll be with you in paradise. And isn't it interesting, you ever think about this? Isn't it interesting that one of the disciples that spent three years with Jesus, that Jesus allowed to keep the money that Jesus poured into, that even the one that Jesus washed his feet at the last supper, Judas Iscariot, who had every opportunity to know that Jesus Christ was Lord, preached on his behalf, healed on his behalf, seemingly would cast out demons on his behalf.

Why? Because none of the other disciples noticed any deficiencies in him. And when Jesus said, one of you is going to betray me, nobody was like, oh, it's Judas. They're like, is it I? Is it me? It was Judas the whole time. One that had been with him the whole time. And instead of coming back to receive the grace of Christ, went and hung himself in shame. And yet then there's one of the thieves on the cross who

would've been mocking Jesus all morning. That later in the day was like, what in the world is going on? This man's done nothing wrong. Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom, only a king has a kingdom. Just so you know what we're saying, Jesus, I know you're the king. I know you're the Lord. Will you remember me? And Jesus looks at him, that had never spent any time with him, that was fortunate enough to get pinned next to him for six hours before he died.

That said, truly, truly, I say to you, today you'll be with me in paradise. I'm taking you home. Friends, it's not about proximity. It's not about how long you've spent time with Jesus. It's about when were you willing to be crucified to yourself and bring your sin to Christ. That's why we're gathering. Because he wants to have a relationship with you. And it's not about your good works, and this offends our pride. The message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing. It's so offensive. Who me? The one who's 70 years old has gone to church my whole life, who's a really good person, God would me to repent and trust him? Yes. You mean me, the one who's 12 years old. I mean, doesn't God just love all the children? Yes, but you must repent too. I mean, if you understand the truths, you're accountable for what God is saying. Why would you not run to the cross today if you hear the Lord's voice? Do not harden your heart.

The beauty of the cross is the mercy and grace of God is coupled with the holiness and righteousness of God in a perfect way, and it's central to everything we believe as Christians. My wife and I were one time at a Billy Graham Crusade. We

were in a press conference, we're about 150 people, and he was there being interviewed, and they asked him this question. They said, what do you wish you would've done more in your ministry? And without hesitation, he said, "I wish I would've preached more on the cross." And I was like, more on the cross, isn't that all you teach on? And what he was trying to say is the significant and the weight of what happened on that Friday, is that Jesus Christ paid for the sin of humanity. So that anyone who was willing to turn from his or her sin and come running to him, he would take all their sin and all the wrath of God and extend to them the full measure of all of God's grace. Have you done that? Have you done that?

Congregation:

Yep.

Pastor Jeff:

Make sure you've done that. Amen. Make sure you've done that.

One of my favorite hymns in the history of the church is Sir Isaac Watts, "When I survey the wondrous cross on which the Prince of Glory died, my richest gain, I count but loss and poor contempt and all my pride. Forbid it Lord, that I should boast save in the death of Christ, my God, all the vain things that charmed me most, I sacrifice them to his blood. See from his head, his hands, his feet, sorrow and love flow mingled down, did air such love and sorrow meet nor thorns compose so rich a crown. Were the whole realm of nature mine, that would be an offering far too small. Love so amazing, so divine, demands my soul, my life, my all."

We can never repay Jesus. All we can do is turn from our sin and receive the full measure of everything he wants to give us. And thank him for the freedom that we have. Make this Good Friday, the Good Friday. If you haven't done it before, you put a stake in the ground and say, this is the day that I received the fullness of Christ, that I gave him all my sin and that I welcomed him into my life. Amen? Make today that day. And if you've done that prior to today, aren't you glad to hear these truths just one more time? Isn't this the truth we believe for all eternity? Amen. Amen. Amen.

So what I'd like to do as we set up this song, you can prepare your heart in any way you want. You can stand, you can stay seated. But I want you to hold the elements in your hand, whatever campus that you're on. Because it's the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ that gives us hope. It's the only reason we can have life. And as you're holding this, I want you to consider that Christ hung on that cross for six hours, was stripped, was beaten, was yelled out, was shamed because of his great desire to restore glory to the Father and his great love for you. Have you welcomed that love fully into your life? Have you given Christ all your sin?

As you prepare your heart to take this meal, I'm going to invite people on all campuses just to know that we'll have elders and pastors up front on all three campuses. If you'd like to pray with somebody today, if you want to come and just kneel and prepare your heart that way, that's totally fine. And then on our campuses, Pastor AJ, up in Westminster, Pastor James down in Colorado Springs, they'll come up and take the elements with you and then take the service over from there. But I want you right now just to prepare your heart as I pray for you, and ask you to allow

the Holy Spirit to move in your life. Father in Heaven, we just thank you for tonight. What a great night. We wouldn't call it Good Friday if it wasn't good. It's the greatest day in the history of the world because it began what takes place three days later when you get up out of the grave.

Lord, we know the end of the story. We know you're already alive. And we know that through your death, we can have life in your name right now because you're ruling and reigning from on high. So Lord, do a work in our lives here. If you're here tonight, you've never trusted Jesus, you might say, I prayed a prayer. I've gone to church. Or I think I've believed the facts, but there's never been a time I've wanted to turn from my sin and come running to Jesus, and I'm making tonight the night. If that's you, here's how you can pray. Lord Jesus, I know I'm a sinner. I know I'm apart from your grace right now. I just want to turn from my life, I want to turn from my sin and I want to come running to you. I want my life to be crucified with you. I want you to be my Lord. I confess you as my Lord. Come into my life and save me. Lord, save me.

And for those of you who have been saved by the Lord, who are in process of being sanctified, Lord continue to work out our salvation with fear and trembling. Lord, as we hold these elements in our hands, do a work in our hearts as we sing this song, as we hear this song, as we're reminded of this song, let's be reminded of all that you've done on our behalf, for your glory. And it's in Jesus Christ's name we pray. The altar is open. Amen.

