

Oh So Great A Savior

By David Harrell

Bible Text: John 19:25-30
Preached on: Sunday, September 13, 2015

Our text this morning is in John 19, if you will join me there. We will be looking closely at verses 25-30, a very solemn passage of Scripture. The context, of course, is our Lord Jesus hanging upon the cross. Beginning in verse 25, we pick up the narrative.

25 Therefore the soldiers did these things. But standing by the cross of Jesus were His mother, and His mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. 26 When Jesus therefore saw His mother, and the disciple whom He loved standing nearby, He said to His mother, "Woman, behold, your son!" 27 Then He said to the disciple, "Behold, your mother!" From that hour the disciple took her into his own household. 28 After this, Jesus, knowing that all things had already been accomplished, in order that the Scripture might be fulfilled, said, "I am thirsty." 29 A jar full of sour wine was standing there; so they put a sponge full of the sour wine upon a branch of hyssop and brought it up to His mouth. 30 Therefore when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, "It is finished!" And He bowed His head and gave up His spirit.

My heart has been held captive by these five verses in a very unique way of late and as I meditated upon them, I found the Holy Spirit taking me into a vault filled with spiritual treasures that I believe I have perhaps overlooked in the past. So I wish by God's grace to take you into that vault so that you can behold these riches as well, better yet, God would have you take all that you can with you because there is a limitless supply.

Now, bear in mind that the emphasis in John's Gospel is on Jesus, the Son of God, Incarnate. He has presented him as the pre-existent, self-existent, uncreated Creator of the universe, the Word become flesh that dwelt among men. And it's interesting, although the process of crucifixion surpasses all forms of satanically inspired human brutality, in fact, you might say it is the acme of physical torture, John nevertheless continues to focus on the divine glory and majesty of Christ, not his physical sufferings. Bear in mind that by now Jesus is unrecognizable as a human being. He is unable to brush away the flies that are now swarming around his open wounds. And although there are perverted religious fiends that find some unimaginable pleasure in watching another human being suffer in pain and degradation and although all of this is happening, John seems to pull a discreet curtain over all of his physical agony to, again, help us focus on Jesus as the Son of God reigning from that tree.

The cross here is really pictured as a mysterious throne of glory where the King of kings is directing every scene in this unfolding drama of redemption. For example, you will

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recall in verse 24 the soldiers, John says, are casting lots to determine who would get what part of Jesus' garments and he adds, "that the Scripture might be fulfilled," and then he quotes Psalm 22:18, "They divided My outer garments among them and for My clothing they cast lots." So he's linking everything back to the reality that all that is going on here is part of God's sovereign predetermined plan. Jesus is not some helpless victim. He is the King of glory reigning from the tree. In verse 28, he says, "I am thirsty," that the Scripture might be fulfilled. Verse 36, "not a bone of him shall be broken," that the Scripture might be fulfilled. Verse 37, "they shall look on him whom they pierced," that the Scripture may be fulfilled. So John is making it clear to us that Jesus is not a helpless victim being crucified by wicked men but he is the sovereign King of glory fulfilling the perfect plan of redemption decreed and set into motion in eternity past.

Oh, child of God, don't miss this: what Jesus did on the cross for you and me was all part of a plan, a predetermined plan. It was decreed before time began and it is inexpressibly humbling to me to know that the Lord of glory would set his love upon me and his love upon you before the foundations of the world and to think that he continues to orchestrate all of the events of history to accomplish his eternal purposes, even allowing Satan to do wicked things through evil men and here on this Roman cross, he is carrying out yet one more part of that plan of redemption that will ultimately culminate in our resurrection to glory. It's an amazing thought, isn't it?

You may recall that soon after the resurrection persecution began to mount and the newly regenerated saints really understood what I'm saying here, what John is saying, the sovereignty of God in all that is happening. In fact, they prayed and it's recorded in Acts 4, beginning in verse 27, they said this, "For truly in this city there were gathered together against Thy holy servant Jesus, whom Thou didst anoint, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, to do whatever Thy hand and Thy purpose predestined to occur." So they understood this. To be sure, God had sent his Son, the Messiah of Israel, the King of the Jews, and even on that cross, Jesus continues to rule and to reign. In fact, isn't it interesting that John records that above Jesus' head Pilate had written, "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews," an unwitting attestation to a truth that will one day become evident to everyone.

So John makes it clear that Jesus is not a helpless victim but he is a willing sacrifice. He is our Savior, our King. He makes it clear even that Jesus is hanging between two criminals on a cross prepared for their leader, a man named Barabbas. An undeniable picture, is it not, of the substitutionary work of Jesus Christ for guilty sinners like you and me?

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So as we go to the cross, we can see and we can hear the sneering taunts of the crowd associated with this public execution which, frankly, is a picture of how the world then and now views Jesus Christ and his work of redemption. But if you will also look at that cross, beneath it there are five people: four women and one man. A small group which also pictures the loving adoration of those who adore and worship the Lord Jesus Christ.

So in keeping with John's emphasis on the glory of Christ, the Son of God, I wish to draw your attention to three characteristics of his majesty that I believe emerge from this narrative. We are going to see 1. His submission as the Son of God. Secondly, his sympathy as our great high priest. Then finally, his sustaining grace as our loving Savior.

So we come to the text, John an eye-witness says this in verse 25, "Therefore the soldiers did these things." Now he's referring here to their savage duty of crucifixion, followed by their sociopathic glee in somehow dividing up Jesus' garments. Then he goes on to say, "But standing by the cross of Jesus." In other words, there is a huge contrast that he's making here. "standing by the cross of Jesus were His mother, and His mother's sister." This would be Salome, the mother of the sons of Zebedee, James and John. Then also he says, "Mary the wife of Clopas." Clopas is a variant of the name Alphaeus and so this is the mother of the Apostle James, the son of Alphaeus, also called James the Less in Mark 15:40. Then also he says there was, "Mary Magdalene." Mary was from the village of Magdala located on the west side of the Sea of Galilee. I've been there. It's about three miles north of Tiberius. In fact, in Luke 8:2, she is described as one, "from whom seven demons had gone out," so presumably this was as a result of Jesus' ministry in her life and so she was there at the cross. I might also add there is no reason to believe that this is the prostitute mentioned in Luke 7.

So only these five stood with Jesus. We have every reason to believe that by now Jesus' earthly father, Joseph, was deceased. Jesus' half-brothers are at odds with their mother because she believed that her son, Jesus, is the Messiah. They don't believe that at all. They reject him. They're not going to believe in him until after the resurrection. And all of the other disciples had run away in fear. In fact, John had also run away but isn't it interesting that his love for Jesus compelled him now to return to his side at the cross.

So as we look upon this ghastly scene, I would like for us to look, first of all, at Jesus' submission as the Son of God. We must first acknowledge that Jesus is joyfully submitting himself to the will of his Father, perfecting fulfilling the plan of redemption. Also perfectly fulfilling the law because he is the embodiment of the law. Think about it: here Jesus is demonstrating to us what it means to obey the greatest commandment of all to love the Lord our God with all our heart and soul and mind. And also he's demonstrating to us what it means to fulfill the second which is like it. Jesus says, "You

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shall love your neighbor as yourself." Now think about this: even in the midst of unimaginable suffering he is committed to perfect obedience and he selflessly thinks about the welfare of both his enemies and his friends and even his family. We know that even with fiendish men hurling insults at him as they salivated over the prospect of his death, Jesus prayed, "Father, forgive them for they do not know what they are doing." And later on when one of the thieves said to him, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom," he said to him, "Truly I say to you, today you shall be with me in paradise."

Now beloved, in this section we are going to see Jesus honoring John as well as making provision for his dear mother, obeying yet another commandment, "Honor your father and your mother." So I wish you would join me. Let's gather around the cross in our imaginations as dreadful as it is, and let's first put our arm around Mary, the mother of Jesus, and try to imagine what must have been going through her mind. There is perhaps no stronger bond in all of the world than a mother's love for her children. Her every waking moment is committed to protecting and nurturing her children. When a mother's child hurts, the mother hurts. When her children die, a part of her dies. Folks, what would it have been like to be Mary, looking at your son in such a condition? To stand there in horror, helpless, confused? No doubt numb with grief and pain.

As I thought about it, I think it's reasonable to assume that in the midst of it all her mind would have gone back to Gabriel's announcement some 34 years earlier when he said, "Hail, favored one, the Lord is with you," and yet she's thinking, "Lord, where are you now?" When he said, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God and behold you will conceive in your womb and bear a son and you shall name him Jesus. He will be great. He will be called the Son of the Most High and the Lord God will give him the throne of his father, David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever and his kingdom will have no end." And yet she's probably saying to herself, "Lord, what went wrong?" Maybe she remembered what he said when he told her that, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you and the power of the Most High will overshadow you and for that reason the holy offspring shall be called the Son of God." And I imagine she would be thinking, "Father, if all of this is true, why this? What is happening here?"

Doubtless her mind went back to the events surrounding the birth of her firstborn son. Perhaps she remembered the long journey, probably on a donkey, while pregnant to Bethlehem. Perhaps she remembered the manger in which she laid her little son. Perhaps she remembered the excited shepherds and their report of the angelic visitation that they experienced. Perhaps she remembered many months later when the Shekinah, the blazing forth, hovered over their place and led the Persian kingmakers to come and give him homage. But I'm sure that as she looked in disbelief at her son hanging there on the cross,

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her Messiah, doubtless her mind returned to the time when she took her little boy into the temple for the prescribed purification according to the Mosaic law eight days after his circumcision.

You will recall that Luke tells us that there Joseph and Mary encountered a man named Simeon who was righteous and devout, looking for the consolation of Israel. Luke says the Holy Spirit was upon him. We're told that he was a man whom God had promised that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ. We are told that the Spirit of God led him into the temple where Joseph and Mary had brought baby Jesus. We're told that he then took the child into his arms and blessed God and then he said to Mary, his mother, "Behold, this child is appointed for the fall and rise of many in Israel and for a sign to be opposed." Then he said this, "and a sword will pierce even your own soul," and no doubt he looked into Mary's eyes when he said that.

There as Mary stood at the foot of the cross, certainly she felt the pain of that sword of personal grief as she watched her firstborn son being rejected by her kinsmen, as she watched the very lifeblood drain from his body. But folks, think about it: notwithstanding the horror, despite the inconceivable trauma, the text says that Mary stands by the cross. This is unlike anything in that culture. There is no falling down to the ground in uncontrollable sobbing. There is no hysterical wailing. No clenched fists at God or man. There is no word of rebellion. There is no turning away in disillusioned faith to see the tragic outcome of her son's life, indeed, he was a man of sorrows acquainted with grief and yet he was the Son of God. How do you harmonize that? Here she is, we might say the mother of sorrows, acquainted with grief, yet there is no show of feminine weakness whatsoever. She merely stood there in silent sorrow, once again, perhaps pondering all of these things in her heart.

Folks, how could a person have such fortitude of spirit? The answer is this: what we witness in Mary is the spirit generated power of faith. Here we witness a woman standing upon the Gibraltar of the word of the living God, even though it made no sense to her at the time. But she was convinced in her heart that God would be true to his word, that he is faithful to his covenant promises. She was certain that beyond the dark clouds of her ignorance and her confusion God would do everything that he said he would do in his time. Moreover, Jesus had promised that he would rise again in three days. Even though she had never seen that and never even heard of such a thing, she was willing to stand on that promise.

My friends, there is a lesson for us to learn here because life is filled with mysterious sorrows that very often break our heart. Sometimes the spouse leaves for good. Sometimes the child's rebellion ends in death. Sometimes the doctor says, "I'm sorry,

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there is nothing more we can do." Sometimes the policeman knocks on the door and says, "There has been a terrible accident and I regret to inform you that your loved one has died." Folks, this is part of living in a fallen world but, beloved, unless you can stand at the foot of the cross in faith believing, you will never be able to stand in the day of sorrow confident that God is good. Confident that God is faithful. Confident that God is merciful. Confident that God is in it regardless of what is happening. Convinced that joy will come in the morning.

Dear Christian, when all you can see is the sorrow, you simply must come back to the cross because at the cross, if you look close enough, you will see the joy of your deliverance because it was on that cross that the Lord Jesus Christ conquered sin and Satan and death and therein is our hope. We have no hope, we have no help apart from Christ. For this reason, the writer of Hebrews says, "Fix your eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith who for the joy set before him endured the cross, despising the shame and has sat down at the right hand of the Father, the throne of God." Then Paul tells us and I think of Paul who was abused in so many ways, persecuted in ways that are just unimaginable, he said this in Colossians 3, "Since then you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above where Christ is seated at the right hand of God." In other words, "Since you're united with Christ, that you have died with him, keep looking towards him." He goes on to say, "Set your mind on the things above, not on the things of this earth for you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God." Then he gives us this word of hope, "When Christ who is your life is revealed, then you also will be revealed with him in glory."

But folks, none of this happens unless you've seen Jesus at the cross and placed your faith in him and then even as believers, unless we go back often to the cross, we lose perspective of the hope that is ours in Christ so we need to learn to live in the reality of our union with Christ, to be preoccupied as Jesus was with his purpose and his plans and his provisions and his power. You see, apart from faith in Christ reinforced by years of experiencing his faithfulness and his love, people without Christ are helpless victims. They merely await the inevitable sorrows of life in this sin-cursed world. Then, unless they repent and place their faith in Christ, the sorrow will get worse because they will perish in their sin and experience the solitary confinement of an eternal hell. But, oh, the power of saving faith. The assurance of things hoped for. The conviction of things not seen. All of which is made available to us because Jesus, the Son of God, was submissive to his Father's will and died in our stead.

But here, folks, we also see 2. His sympathy as our great high priest. Will you notice verses 26 and 27, "When Jesus then saw His mother, and the disciple whom He loved standing nearby, He said to His mother, 'Woman, behold, your son!' Then He said to the

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disciple, 'Behold, your mother!' From that hour the disciple took her into his own household." Now, this scene occurs before noon when the darkness covered the earth until 3 p.m. When Jesus experienced the worst of his agonies when the Father poured out upon him the fullness of his wrath for our sin, causing Jesus to say, "My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?" and it appears that Jesus does not want his mother to be there in those final hours.

We are told in other passages that Jesus knew what was in the heart of men. He knew what was in the heart of his mother. He knows what's in our hearts as well. And he certainly knew that Simeon sword that was predicted was now piercing his mother's soul. He knows that she has heard him say to the thief, "This day you will be with me in paradise," and don't you think it's reasonable to believe that Mary was looking up at him and thinking to herself, "I wish he would say something to me. I wish he would come down off of the cross. But I wish he would say to me, 'Mother, you will be with me today in paradise.'" I think that's reasonable to assume she would have thought that but it was not her time.

So once again we see Jesus thinking of others rather than himself, even as he fulfills the function of the high priest in making atonement for sin. In fact, the writer of Hebrews says, "We do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses." In other words, we have one that can and what that text is literally saying is Jesus can do something that none of us can do. He can actually feel our pain. Sometimes people will say to you, "I know exactly what you feel." No, you don't. I don't know what any of you feel. You don't know what I feel. We might have some things that we can relate to but we can't actually feel each other's pain. Jesus can. Instead he says, "We have one who has been tempted in all things as we are yet without sin. Let us therefore draw near with confidence to the throne of grace that we may receive mercy and may find grace to help in time of need."

Folks, here in this scene, we see this vividly portrayed because here we see Jesus, the sympathetic and loving high priest, attending to his mother who, frankly, has drawn near with confidence to the throne of grace to receive mercy and find grace to help in her time of need and so in verse 26 we read this, "When Jesus then saw His mother," and I might add that by now the only way that he could see his mother is through just little slits because by now his head would be so swollen and so filled with blood. But he sees his mother as well as John, the disciple whom he loved standing nearby.

Then we read this, "He said to His mother, 'Woman, behold, your son!'" That sounds rather crass in our English language but it means, "Dear woman or Madam." You see, Jesus speaks to her not as her physical son now but as her spiritual Savior but it is a term

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of endearment, a term of kindness. He says basically, "Dear woman, behold your son." He is referring to John who stood next to her, not to himself. You see Jesus, as we're going to see, wants his mother to be united to John, her son in the faith. Joseph is dead. Mary has been with Jesus now and Jesus is about to leave and Jesus' half-brothers are not believers, at least not yet. So here Jesus is graciously making provision for the care of his mother in his absence so he says, "Dear woman, behold your son." Then verse 27, he says to John, "Behold, your mother."

As I thought about this, I think that this was a very meaningful, encouraging word to John. It must have moved upon his heart in a very deep way because, think about it, earlier at Jesus' arrest John had run away with all of the others but then his love for Christ overpowered his fear of man and he returned to the side of his beloved Savior and here what we see is the Lord Jesus in a very tangible way demonstrating his love and his forgiveness to John by asking him, "To be my mother's son. To replace me. To begin to care for my mother in my absence. I am entrusting that responsibility to you, John." And what a compassionate provision this would have been to commit her unto the care of the one whom Jesus loved, the Apostle John.

But folks, I ask you to think about this: think of the condition that Jesus is in as he attends to the needs of others, his mother and John. He is in the midst of the most unimaginable torture. He is hanging on this cross and yet he still remains steadfast in his love for his Father and for others as he enters into their pain as he cares for them. It was at this point that I found my heart just saying, "Oh, so great a Savior!" And this is why I decided to entitle my discourse to you that very thing, "Oh, So Great A Savior." So great a high priest that can sympathize with our weaknesses. Who is able to touch our infirmities. Who is able to heal our broken heart. What wondrous love is this? In fact, it's a love so foreign that as an old man John later reflected on this in 1 John 3:1. He says, "See," in other words, "Look at this, how great a love the Father has bestowed upon us that we should be called children of God." When he says, "How great a love," it could be translated, "How astonishing." How utterly foreign. From what country, from what planet, from what universe does this love come? This is foreign to anything that we have ever seen, that we have ever experienced.

Folks, I ask you: do you know the love of Christ? By God's grace because my oneness with Christ, I do and I know many of you do but perhaps some of you don't. You know, we all know the superficial and manipulative love of the world. We've all experienced that self-serving, short-lived love, kind of that teeny-bopper mall love that happens. We've all seen that type of thing. We've experienced that in our life, people that love us for their own ends and then discard us like a dirty diaper. But my friend, I ask you, do you know the love of God? Do you know the steadfast love of Christ that can feel your

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pain? A love that can enter into the darkest caverns of your sorrow? Your deepest sorrows and bring light and hope and even joy and provision? Do you know the love of Christ that looks beyond your sin and embraces you in all of your filth? That unmerited love that knows no bounds?

J. C. Ryle, that great 19th century English pastor and theologian said this, "We should mark the depth and width of our Lord's sympathies and affections. The Savior on whom we are bid to repose the weight of our souls as one whose love passes knowledge. The shallow, skin deep feelings of others, we all know continually chill and disappoint us on every side in this world but there is one whose mighty heart affection knows no depths and no end. That one is Christ."

This is what John wants us to see and what a stunning lesson of love Jesus preaches from the cross. Oh, dear friends, how we should love one another and care for one another. In fact, this is one of the great tests of genuine saving faith, do you realize that? John wrote about this later in 1 John 3:14, he says, "We know that we have passed out of death into life," in other words, "We know that we have been born again." How? "Because we love the brethren." We love those who are a part of the body of Christ, those within our church family.

So here on the cross we see the majesty and glory of Christ the King manifested in his submission as the Son of God and, secondly, in his sympathy as our great high priest but then finally in his sustaining grace as our loving Savior. I want you to think about this: the Lord Jesus did not abandon us without provision like homeless orphans. No, here we learn how Christ unites us as sinners saved by grace and places us into the household of faith to care and love one another and in this union we experience his sustaining grace. You will recall that later on he is going to pray for the Father to send the Holy Spirit who will come and dwell within us. He will empower us. He will give us gifts. He will give to each of us, perhaps serving gifts of speaking gifts so that we can speak truth into each other's lives and how thankful for that provision. I'm thankful for godly parents and godly friends and pastors and Sunday School teachers and youth directors that served me, that spoke truth into my life as I was part of the family. I don't have all of the gifts. My parents don't have all of the gifts. None of us have all the gifts. We have each other in this family.

This is part of the sustaining grace of our loving Savior but I want you to notice therefore what he says, John says here at the end of verse 27, "From that hour the disciple took her into his own household." John immediately obeys his Lord and takes Mary into his care. At this point, it would appear that John leads Mary away from this terrible scene and takes her to his home, perhaps, just before the darkness covers the land. Just before Jesus

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enters into that final and most horrific stage of his suffering and then we evidently see John returning to witness the final events that he records in verses 28-37. But I find it interesting, tradition tells us that Mary would later accompany John on his Gospel journeys. In fact, we learn that when he came to minister to the saints in Ephesus, it is said that Mary accompanied him there and he called her mother and she called him son. Isn't that interesting?

Think of the wonderful conversations they would have enjoyed after Jesus left, in this extended family. Think of the sweet communion that they would have had around the dinner table. Think of the times they would talk about what Jesus had done in the past and what he was doing right now and as they would contemplate together what he is going to do in the future. Jesus knew that his mother needed that. He knew that John needed that. He knows that all of us need that. Jesus knows the profound importance of spiritual conversations in a Christ-honoring family because that's the only place it will ever occur. Those places and times when you can have those great theological discussions where you can enjoy the mutual fellowship and ministry of Christ because, folks, without it we wither up and die of spiritual malnourishment.

So Jesus is caring for his mother. He's caring for John. And how boring it is, even frustrating it is to spend time around families who know nothing of Christ, who live only for themselves, who live only for this world. It's like having to read people's mundane, self-promoting Facebook posts. About as profitable as watching reruns of the weather channel. It is so frustrating to be around those kind of people but oh, the joy of coming together with other believers in a family where they are promoting Christ, not themselves. Where they talk about the Gospel. Where they talk about the kingdom rather than their children and the Titans and politics and all of these types of things.

Beloved, don't miss this: the fruit of Christ grows on the vine of fellowship and it all originates at the cross. Out of his love, we love one another. You see, our Lord Jesus is concerned for each one of us. He wants us to enjoy the protection and the provision of the family of God so by the power of his forgiving, delivering grace, he binds us all together in one body. He places us into a family. He gifts us and as each member that has been gifted, we serve one another. And I ask you: is the priority of your heart? I think it's fair to ask: do you love your church family or do you merely tolerate them? When you see some sword piercing the soul of someone in your church family, do you respond with selfless love in very tangible actions of tender care or do you merely say, "Well, I'll pray for you," and let others handle it? You see, true love is more than mere sentiment. True love includes deeds of kindness that point people to Christ. In fact, John wrote about this as well in 1 John 3:18. He said, "Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue," in other words, don't just give lip service to it, he says, "but in deed and truth."

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So we have a great lesson to learn here from the cross and then finally in verse 28, "After this, Jesus, knowing that all things had already been accomplished, to fulfill the Scripture, said, 'I am thirsty.'" This, by the way, fulfills Psalm 69:12 where David said, "They also gave me gall for my food and for my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink." The Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament, translates sour wine in verse 29 in the same way. You see, Jesus knew that the soldiers would give him a drink, not because they were merciful but because they knew that this would prolong his agony and perhaps this helped his vocal chords, his voice, we don't know, because we know he's getting ready to shout something from the very top of his lungs. But he also knew that their response would give yet another proof to the fact that he was reigning from the tree. That God was sovereign. That what was happening was a fulfillment of prophecy.

Verse 29, "A jar full of sour wine was standing there; so they put a sponge full of the sour wine upon a branch of hyssop and brought it up to His mouth." This would have been the cheap sour wine that the soldiers drank.

"Therefore when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, 'It is finished!'" It's one word in Greek, tetelistsai. Matthew and Mark indicate that it was a loud cry, a shout of triumph. He was basically saying, "The work of redemption is done!" It's interesting in John 13:1, John said that Jesus having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end. Not only to the end but to the full extent necessary to accomplish that work of redemption and we see that encompassed in what Jesus said in his final word and likewise in the garden, Jesus cried out to the Father in John 17:4, "I have brought You glory on earth by completing the work You gave Me to do." The language is oh so similar here.

You see, all of this is captured in his final shout from the cross, "Tetelestai, it is finished!" That he still had the strength to cry out as he did reveals that he was not fully physically spent. In fact, when Joseph of Arimathea came to Pilate in Mark 15 to ask for Jesus' body, Pilate didn't think Jesus would be dead already so he had to summon the Centurion to find out and indeed he was. So what we see happening here is consistent with that. It says, "And He bowed His head and gave up," literally in the original language, handed over, "His spirit." And He bowed His head and gave up His spirit. You see, no one took his life from him. He gave it up on his own authority. Oh, so great a Savior, amen?

Can I close with five real quick points of application? 1. God uses great sorrow to produce great sanctification. Like Mary, there are going to be times in all of our lives when we experience the sword of grief piercing our heart and when, not if it does, the question is will you stand at the cross or will you run from it? Ask yourself, "When I am

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experiencing great sorrow and perhaps some of you are there right now, is it a sanctifying sorrow? One that strengthens me? Or does it bring dishonor to Christ and weaken me? Does it cause me to trust Christ all the more and become more like him or does it cause me to collapse in hopeless despair and drive me from his presence and power? Does my sorrow lead me to the cross or does it drive me away from it?"

Secondly, Christ honors those who love him more than they fear man. You see that with John. There are going to be times when we run from Christ out of fear that others are going to hate us and if you love Christ, they are going to hate you. But oh, dear friends, when we return, that's when we find the blessing even as John found it. He gives grace to those who stand close to the cross. He gives grace to us as we stay close to him throughout the days of our lives. Moreover, he entrusts us with special blessings and special ways to serve him by caring for others.

Thirdly, there is never an excuse to not honor our parents. There is never an excuse to not honor our parents. Sadly, many children in our day and age are self-indulgent. They are self-centered. This is a self-centered culture. They tend to dishonor their parents. They tend to forget about them in their old age. Folks, this should never happen. If Jesus could remember to honor his mother in the midst of such astonishing anguish, surely we can do the same in the midst of our comfort. We would all do well to heed the words of Proverbs 23:22, "do not despise your mother when she is old."

Fourthly, we are most like Christ when we love and care for one another. Did you catch that? You see, it is our union with Christ and the union of Christian fellowship that he gives us. That is the place where we experience the sustaining grace of our loving Savior and I want to ask you: do you really care for your church family? Do you take others into your household when they are in need? Do you even invite people over to your home to get to know them at all? Do you fellowship with others? Do you encourage them? Do you pray for them? Or do you merely live for yourself?

Then finally, when death separates us from our loved ones, our only hope, our only joy can be found in Christ because it was there on that cross as we said earlier, that he paid the penalty for our sin and he conquered sin and Satan and death and herein we find great comfort, once again, at the foot of the cross.

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In closing, as I meditated upon these truths, I wrote this,

"Oh, so great a Savior,
What hope and joy he gives.
In him alone we find favor,
And by his death we ere shall live."

Let's pray together.

Father, we rejoice in these eternal truths. Cause them to become so much a part of us that we live them and others see them and enjoy them and experience them, that by them others may see Christ and be drawn to him in saving faith. For it is in Jesus' name that we ask. Amen.

We pray you've been edified by this presentation. You've been listening to Pastor, Bible Teacher and Author, Dr. David Harrell. For more information or for other messages from Dr. Harrell, please visit the Olive Tree Christian Resources website at otcr.org.