

Testimony Concerning the Son of God

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[0:00] Yes, I apologize that you just have me and not. Man, Aiden, your hair is growing. It's looking. Sorry.

I'm not jealous. I'm not jealous. Man, I'm sorry that it's just me. We hope that Micah will be here with us. Guys, you've been sending me really mixed messages.

You guys meet Micah, and last week we had J1 preach, and he came over to our house afterwards, and him and Emily were both there, and they're like, oh, Micah's just so perfect in every way. And then Jay looks at me and goes, James, he looks just like you. And I'm like, ah. Does that mean, yes, it does. It does.

Thank you, Micah. Yeah, there's a lot of jokes about his hair and my hair, but, guys, there's low-hanging fruit. But I'm so grateful to be here.

[0:56] Actually, even these last few weeks, just having Gabe ministers in the Word, and then having Aaron and Jay, and I'm not going to lie.

I mean, Rusty is probably a good way to put it. I came in this morning, oh, my goodness. Some of the kids are sick, and figuring this out, figuring that out. And I'm like, my heart is all over the place. And then I was blessed.

I was blessed just by being in that small room, praying with the leaders, and just, I need this gathering. I need these people. This is how my heart is steadied, being amidst the people of God. And hearing the prayers of my brothers and sisters was what really kind of stilled me. And so I'm thankful for you all for just being here, being here and being part of this.

And this is an incredibly important week. Why don't you just put up the slides? Actually, can I hijack this? Do you think that'll work? Sorry, I'm being the rebel here.

[1:54] Does that work? Okay, not yet. Maybe that was a bad idea for me to suggest that. I was meditating over this week's passage, and we're in 1 John, and it's also Palm Sunday, which I was talking to a few people about.

This week is the week. This week, don't worry about it if it's too hard. This week is the most important week. It is by this week we are saved. It is by this week that we have life.

And I don't know how much, how aware we are of that, this Holy Week, and everything that's going to be happening this week. And it really ties in with the passage that we've got happening in 1 John. Alex just read the triumphal entry from Matthew chapter 21.

If you've got your Bibles, I invite you to bring it out. So, journey with me today. Grateful for you all last week is Aaron, and oh, I'm on.

Is this me? Is this my, huh? Yes. Oh. Let's see if this works then. Oh, but it's tiny. Should it be this tiny?

[3:00] Close it and try again. Close it. And then try again. If not, don't worry. Then you can just control it from your end. Whoa.

So clever. Palm Sunday is the day that Jesus enters into Jerusalem. And he enters in with all this fanfare and all these people celebrating him, shouting for him.

Hosanna, Hosanna in the highest. And these palm trees just waving at him. And even though it's so filled with celebration and joy, no doubt in Jesus' heart, he's like, man, if only they knew what was about to happen this week.

And as you see, he journeys in, and there's the donkey, and there's this final bit. He says, the crowds are asking. No doubt you and I would have been. Have you done this when you see a big, I heard Mirror were in Pacific Place the other day, and there's just the crowds there, and then everyone's like, oh, what's happening here?

What's happening here? Another example is on weekday mornings, the kids and I, oh, it's gone again. Oh, that sucks. We will try one last time, Bonnie.

[4:11] If it doesn't work, you can take it back. Does that sound good? I didn't know if you knew this. The MTR has this early bird offer.

So at 7.15, if you go through the turnstiles, it's cheaper. So the kids and I, we get into the MTR around 7.10, and we see just people just standing in the middle of the concourse, not going through the turnstiles.

Has anyone seen that? No, none of you are up that early. And we were like, what's going on here? Why is everyone just standing and not going in through the turnstiles? And so then I'm always nosy, so they're like, hey, what's happening?

Is this like a, what's going on? He's like, oh, it's just because we're all cheap and we all just need to wait for two more minutes and then we'll have the early, but Gabe's like the green. That's what he does. And so I was like, wow.

No doubt the crowds would have done the same thing. You've got all these people shouting, Hosanna, Hosanna in the highest. Everyone's welcoming this guy, Jesus of Nazareth. There would have been people who were on the back going, who is this?

[5:11] What's happening? I hadn't heard about this. And then, so the question is, who is this? Verse 10, and the crowd said, this is the prophet Jesus from Nazareth of Galilee. Isn't that the point of debate since that moment then?

Who is this guy? Who is this Jesus? We've all been asking that question. For those of you who've been doing Alpha on Monday nights and it's been so fun just being with everyone there. Isn't that the same question that we just asked on Monday?

Who is this Jesus? There's no doubt that Jesus existed, by the way. We all are agreed on Jesus existing. But the question is, who is he? Who is he?

This guy that, well, those who don't believe him will still shout his name when they, when they stub their toe on the table. People who follow the calendars, which nearly all of us do here, he split time in half.

The question isn't whether Jesus existed. The question is, who is he? And this is the, this is the point of the question. If this Bible is to believe, be believed, then there's only really three scenarios that C.S. Lewis and many, many apologetics people talk about this.

[6:13] Three options that we have in terms of who Jesus is, which is, is he a lunatic? Does he, does he just believe these things? He's delusional or is he a liar? Is he a fraud or is he actually Lord?

There are no other options. Those are the only three options that we have. Who is this Jesus? Now, if we fast forward to one John and if you turn with me there, we're nearly done with one John and actually next week is Easter and then the week after, we actually have the honor of having Juju come up to summarize the whole book of one John for us.

So looking forward to that. Essentially, in one John five, the same question comes up. John is trying to address the very same thing again. Even after everything that's happened now, the same question remains.

Who is this Jesus? And this is what he says. This is he who came by water and blood, Jesus Christ, not by the water only, but by the water and the blood.

And the spirit is the one who testifies because the spirit is the truth. This whole book of John is saying, hey, I want you to know this Jesus guy.

[7:17] And then really, the question is, well, who is this Jesus? And so here, as he's coming up to his finale, he sees it important enough to address that question again. Do you truly know who the real Jesus is?

Because you need to know who he is. He's either lunatic, he's either liar, or he's Lord. And if he's Lord, then that has massive, massive implications for your life. The question really is, do you and I really know who the real Jesus is?

The Jesus that we have, is he the real one? Or is it one that church tradition and Sunday school has built up as to who Jesus is? During COVID, I use the example, hey, many of us growing up in a culture that is filled with Christianity are vaccinated with a mild version of Jesus.

Remember we had those vaccines and the Pfizer's and all those kinds of things? Vaccinations, how they work is that they inject a weak or mild version of that virus into your body so it will stop you

from getting the real thing.

Right? And so the thing that I had on my heart all the time was, have we, have we basically been injected with a mild, weak, dead version of Jesus that's stopping us from getting the real thing? That's the challenge that I had in my heart.

[8:24] I know of Jesus, I know about Jesus, but is it the real Jesus? Who is the real Jesus to me? Do you know the real Jesus? John here, as he's coming into his finale, he says, this is he who came by water and blood, Jesus Christ, not by the water only, but by the water and the blood.

Now, Florence and I were talking about this over this week as she was preparing songs and we were like, this is a hard passage. This is a hard passage to understand. And actually, a lot of scholars are at odds over what this actually means.

But just to put it simply, really, what we're seeing here is that Jesus is the Christ, which is the chosen one, the one who will save the world. And why? Why do we know that? It's because the spirit testifies that he is.

And how does he do that? One, through water, which is what? Is there any guesses to what that might be? Sign. Baptism.

The baptism. Yes, do you do. The baptism, that moment at the beginning of Jesus' ministry where he goes and gets baptized by John the Baptist and the heavens open. God doesn't open the skies that often in the New Testament.

[9:28] But the two times that he does, the two times he comes and says something, he opens and he says, this is my son. This is my beloved son with whom I am well pleased. That's one way to testify that this guy is the real deal.

The second is, of course, the blood. What is that? It's the crucifixion. And we're going to focus a little bit on that today because I think that has, again, massive ramifications of why we're even sat here today by the blood.

Now, often, and I've talked about this, we have a pick and mix, kind of pick and choose kind of Christianity these days. We like the Jesus who is good. We like the Jesus who is kind, who is loving, who comes and heals our hurts and our pains, who gives us purpose.

He's just the kind, loving Jesus. And we often try and avoid the issues of sin. We try and avoid the issues of the blood because once it gets to the blood stuff, it's a little bit gory. It's a little bit like, oh, that makes me uncomfortable.

But here's the question that I wanted to ask us today. What does the, why does Jesus have to die? Why does Jesus have to die? Have a think about that.

[10:30] I might even pick on you. Why, in your eyes, did Jesus have to die? John here is saying, hey, it's not just by the water, it's by the blood.

And I'll tell you the context of why he's saying that because there were people in the church at that moment who were saying, hey, Jesus was a good man. And you may have heard these things said by people as well. He was a good man. He had good teachings. I heard this even during Alpha.

But, there's the but. But actually, the whole death thing is the bit that I don't really truly understand. Or actually, there were some people during this time when John was writing his letters to the church, there were people who believed that Jesus was just a normal man, a good man.

He became God when the spirit descended on him at baptism. That's the water bit. But, then they said that actually he stopped being God just before he died because God can't die.

So, their beliefs were that actually the moment just before he was crucified, the spirit of God leaves him and Jesus becomes a man again. That was their kind of angle as to what this was.

[11:30] And John's insisting saying, no, no, no. Jesus had to have been God even at the crucifixion, even all the way up until the point of death, he would have been God.

The question is, why? Do you know the answer to that question? Let me ask a few people.

Kuban, let me start with you. Start, I mean, again, no pressure on getting the right answers here, just, in your eyes, why did Jesus have to die? I think he had to die because as the perfect being, he had to be offered as a sacrifice for everybody else.

It was not perfect. Yeah. Boom, there's two words there that actually pop up. One is sacrifice, that he actually had to sacrifice himself. And two, of course, is substitution. He had to die in our place.

If you were to be asked by someone else, why did Jesus have to die? What thoughts would come to your mind? Paul, what do you have? Committed to justice. Committed to justice.

[12:30] Committed to justice. Wow, that's good. Tell me a bit more about that. Expand on that. Well, like, punishment needed to be paid. Hmm. So, he needed to be gracious. He had to be committed to making sure that punishment wasn't paid and he was the only one who could do that.

Paul's talking something about justice, just this idea that actually, Romans 6, 23 says this, the wages of sin is death. And so, there was a wrong. And every time there is a wrong, every time there is a wrongful action, there is a consequence.

There is a price that has to be paid. And Jesus, being the one who actually is blameless, is the one who steps in to pay for that. And that's what we're saying. That's a debt that we have no ability to pay at all, but Jesus is the one that comes and steps in.

Again, that's completely true. One final one. Over there. Kelly, what do you got? I think just echoing what both of them said, like, there's just no other way for us to have patience to be done unless the perfect sacrifice unless there's a perfect sacrifice.

Yeah. And because of the justice and because of the great love, that had to be done in order for him to be done. Wow.

[13:45] There was a price that he was paid and it had to be a perfect sacrifice and out of love. And really, Kelly sums up to us really what Paul starts to say here.

And this week, next week, we'll look at this passage. This is key here. For I delivered to you as of first importance was I also received that Christ died. Why did he die? For our sins. We'll unpack what that actually means later in accordance with the scriptures that he was buried and that he was raised on the third day.

It is all about what actually happened from the moment. If you rewind the question of why is there death in the first place? Why would you say that there is death in the first place?

We weren't created to die. What was the original source of death? We go all the way back to the Garden of Eden. We go all the way back to the Garden of Eden where God creates man and woman and they're supposed to live in communion with him.

But then what happens? The apple happens. And what happens with the apple? Basically, there's these two trees. There's one, which is the tree of life, and the other one is the tree of knowledge of good and evil.

[14:52] At that moment, God says, hey, eat from this tree. Eat from this tree and you're going to enjoy just the garden. You're going to flourish the way that I designed you to be flourishing. But then the snake comes in and deceives.

And what does the snake ask Eve? Did God really say that? What he's saying is, can God really be trusted? Why don't you eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil so that you can decide what it is?

So basically what it is the tree of life represents trusting in God's wisdom. And then the tree of the knowledge of good and evil is saying, I don't trust in God's wisdom. I'm going to choose to decide what's good and evil myself.

I'm going to choose trust in man's wisdom. The problem then becomes the moment they did that, that's when sin entered into the garden. When we lose that trust, we were designed for communion and relationship forever.

And yet in that moment, they chose sin. Essentially, that's what sin is. Sin is turning away from God's way and saying, God, I can't trust you. I can't trust you, so I'm going to have to take matters into my own hands.

[15:55] So then Adam and Eve were banished. And actually, that's what part of the passage here God tells them, you may surely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, you shall not eat. For in the day that you eat of it, you shall surely die.

In that moment of rebellion, in that moment of mistrust, they have to leave the garden. And then what guards the garden? Just this swinging, fiery sword. There's no way for them to get back into the garden where there is eternal flourishing.

They now have to wander outside. And because they ate this, they now will surely die. That's why death came in. If you think about it, God designed us to be in perfect communion with him.

But the moment we turn our backs, we leave, then we are no longer in communion. You could argue this whole story, this whole Bible, if you could sum it up, yes, the word love is there.

What does that love lead to? That leads to reconciliation. This gospel message is one of reconciliation. From that moment that Adam and Eve were banished from the garden, from that

moment, now God starts his plan of salvation to reconcile.

[17:01] That's what he's trying to do. And in the Old Testament, you see tons of examples of how he tries to reconcile. He gets them to create a tabernacle. And he's saying, guys, you can't come into my presence anymore without dying, but there is one way.

We're going to have a tabernacle, we're going to have a tent, and we're going to have an inner part of the tent called the Holy of Holies, and before you come into my presence, you're going to have to sacrifice, what Kenny just said, sacrifice a perfect animal. Basically what they're saying is you have to put your sins onto that animal and banish that animal, that goat, into the wilderness, and then, only then, can one person come in.

And so this starts this whole thing of just animal sacrifices, trying to get to the point where they understand that in order to reconcile, the debt has to be paid, because the wages of sin is death, Romans 6.23.

Unfortunately, this starts then just a cycle of all these animal rituals, and the Israelites and mankind still do not get it. God is trying to pursue mankind, but unfortunately, we still keep running away. You fast forward to the New Testament, that's when actually God says, actually, I'm going to tabernacle with you. I'm going to tabernacle with you. John 1.14, the word became flesh and enters the world in light, enters into the darkness.

[18:17] It's this continuation that God wants to be with us. Of course, then, that comes into the issue but there still needs to be a price that is paid. And of course, God, Jesus, offers this ultimate, ultimate way of doing it.

And what is that way? Here, for our sake, he made him to be sin who knew no sin so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. this is what we're going to focus on today because when we think about why we're here it's because someone paid a price.

It's because there was a death that was paid. The question for us is do we think about that enough? And if there's a week to think about it more, it is this week.

But maybe a question just to kind of help us kind of get there, what is your relationship with death? And actually, when I we first had Micah, then I went to work with Young Life guys and I was reflecting that that's the word that's been on my heart.

When the moment I met Micah, the thing that I couldn't help but think about was death. And it was a thing that I've actually been processing myself for this long time. And actually, why is that word so prominent in my mind?

[19:36] And I maybe rewind it all the way back to when Joe and I and our dad died and that's just the word that has just always been there. When my mind is blank, and as a guy, I can confirm that my mind is often blank.

When Christina asks me, what are you thinking? I'm like, quick, think of something. I can't let her know that I'm actually thinking of nothing. And that word just keeps coming up.

Death. And I couldn't even help but think it when I saw my child. I mean, of course, I witnessed my wife die to herself to push this baby out. That's part of it.

I was like, man. And then when I saw him, this life and this beautiful, actually, babies are just this paradoxical existence where they're ugly and beautiful at the same time. They're literally both.

Can we call that out? I don't mind. Have you seen a picture of baby Micah in his first few days? It's okay. You can tell me he's ugly. He looks really ugly. But he's ugly and beautiful at the same time.

[20:35] I mean, the thing that I couldn't help but say to my son was that, Micah, my son, one day you will die. But that's not going to be the end.

Life and death, it's baked into who we are. It's baked into the seasons that we live in. Winter is dying and gives way to spring. A parent lays down their life.

Christina lays down her sleep and dies to her sleep. And so a baby can be fed. What's your relationship with death? I just want to spend a moment. Before we process more about what Jesus' death means, let's just start with the fact that do we realize that from that moment in the garden we've been set on a path towards death?

To set the mind on the things of the flesh which is what Adam and Eve did which is what you and I do, Romans 8, it leads the death. What's your relationship with that? And I shared with some of the guys in your life and I think I've shared this with before.

Alexander the Great, his dad, King Philip II of Macedon, he hired a servant who had one job which is every morning when King Philip would wake up, he would go to King Philip and tell him, King

Philip, one day you will die.

[21 : 50] Can you imagine that being your job and that's it? Imagine just forgetting that job. So we have one job. Wake up, King wakes up, you tell him that one day he will die. Why?

Because King Philip wanted to be reminded of his mortality, wanted to be reminded that he won't live forever. Sometimes me, maybe you, we get so engrossed in the things of this world and the things of this life and the worries for tomorrow that we don't take a step back and go, man, one day we will die.

But that is not the end of it. I just want to spend 60 seconds just in a bit of a reflection just to kind of set as a primer for us as we go into why Jesus died is what is your relationship with death just in general?

You know, let's go from there. Whether you close your eyes or whether you stare into blank space, whatever it is, let's just spend a brief moment doing that. Okay.

Thank you.

[23 : 28] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

[25 : 44] Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. himself to the sword for us. You see, if we lose sight of that, that's when we get consumed with everything else in the world. When we lose sight of the cross that we have now turned into just a nice little bit of jewelry that we have, but we don't realize what we're hanging here.

Someone once said that actually, if Jesus had come to earth in a different century, it wouldn't have been a cross. It would have been an electric chair and maybe we would have all had electric chairs hanging around our necks. But do we understand what even this is? The most brutal, humiliating form of punishment during the time that Jesus came and he did it for us. The question is, why did he do it for us? But God shows his love for us that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. I know that all of us here, many of us here have heard that message multiple, multiple times.

But I'm praying today that the Holy Spirit would remind us of that in a new way. Mostly because there's probably something that we have to do to respond to it.

This is what Tim Keller says. The cross is not simply a lovely example of sacrificial love. Throwing your life away needlessly is not admirable. It is wrong. Jesus's death was only a good example if it was more than an example.

If it was something absolutely necessary to rescue us. And it was. Why did Jesus have to die in order to forgive us? There was a debt to be paid and God himself paid it. There was a penalty to be born.

[27 : 36] God himself bore it. Forgiveness is always a form of costly suffering. I want to lead us into a time where we come and fixate our eyes on the cross.

Sam, you can jump on. Actually, St. Teresa of Avila says this. Fix your eyes on the crucified and nothing else will be of much importance to you. Billy Graham says the cross shows the seriousness of our sin, but it also shows the immeasurable love of God.

I realized today as I was prepping this message that there really is nothing more than the power of the cross for us. The danger is I speak too much with lofty words and speech and the power of the cross is taken from it.

Until we realize that we're all sat here because of what someone did for us.

That actually everything else is really meaningless. But the question really then becomes, okay, well, what's the response? Okay, Christ died for us.

[28 : 47] I think sometimes we skim over that too quickly. But you see, when you fix your eyes on the cross, you remember, at least I remember Jesus' words that he who wants to follow me, whoever wants to follow me, must deny themselves and take up their own cross.

And just as a mother like Christina laid down her life to die to herself, to give life to a child, we're actually encouraged that we're also called to die to ourselves in some way.

John Mark Homer says the, maybe the more easily understood word to die to ourselves is surrender. Just as Christ surrendered himself on the cross for us.

The question then comes is, is there anything that we need to surrender to him? Is there anything that you need to die to in order that you may live?

Now, the message of the gospel is not just a sad one. It's not just that someone died, but it's in that death that we have life. And I'm convinced all of us here in the room, at least most of us have something that we need to let go.

[30:11] There's something we need to die to in order that we can access the full abundant life that Christ has offered us. There's something that we need to surrender.

I can think of no better week for us to be doing this. We're going to be going into a time of communion as well. But before that, while we, while we just have this moment of just quiet reflection, can we just ask the Lord, how must I respond to your cross?

What is the cross that I have to take today? What is the sin that I have to acknowledge today? And I know that I've chosen this sin time and time again.

And I know that somehow I need to get out of it. Because if I don't, it will lead to death. That's the beauty paradox of the faith of the good news.

Can we do that? Can we just spend a moment? There's a few things I really want to do today. I want to lead communion. I want to have this time of solar reflection. And I want to be able to pray for each other. And if we do those things, I'll treat this time as a success for us.

[31:32] Let me pray for us to begin. Amen. Amen.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Christ died for us. Since therefore we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. For if while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his son.

Much more now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life. More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

[33:20] And Lord Jesus, we want to spend this time now to ponder the cross.

Thank you.