

Gospel of Mark Chapter 15C

Throughout the years in an attempt to guard the great truths of the Bible and maintain orthodoxy leaders within the church, great men of God establish creeds and confessions.

- While these works of men are not divinely inspired in the same way that the Bible is inspired they certainly help us teach and remember the great truths contained within the Bible.

As a young boy in the church (*like some of you*) I memorized the Apostles Creed.

I believe in God the Father, Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth:

And in Jesus Christ, his only begotten Son, our Lord:

Who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary:

Suffered under Pontius Pilate; was crucified, dead and buried: He descended into hell:

The third day he rose again from the dead:

He ascended into heaven, and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty:

From thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead:

I believe in the Holy Ghost:

I believe in the holy catholic church: the communion of saints:

The forgiveness of sins:

The resurrection of the body:

And the life everlasting. Amen.

The succinct manner in which the Apostle's Creed states the Gospel of Jesus Christ helps us remember and hold fast to the core tenants of the Christian faith:

Last week we focused on the death of Jesus Christ and we saw that his death was accompanied by supernatural signs and wonders

- Darkness covered the land from noon until three in the afternoon.
 - We know this was supernatural because Passover is always held on a full moon. That would eliminate the possibility of a solar eclipse.
- The veil in the temple that hung between the holy place and the Most Holy place was torn in half from top to bottom. (*Also a supernatural occurrence*)
- There was an earthquake, the rocks split and the tombs of the righteous dead were opened.

Not only was the death of Jesus accompanied by miraculous events In just 3 days we will face the most glorious of all miracles, the resurrection of the Lord Jesus from the dead.

Amid the miraculous events of Christ's death and resurrection the burial of Jesus is often overlooked. We have a tendency to jump over it and in doing so bypass its significance. This morning I would like to contemplate his burial and consider the divine fingerprints, the providential hand of God that was involved in Christ's entombment.

First, Let's recognize the difference between God's miraculous intervention and His providence. The True and Living God effected human history in two different ways.

The first is by means of miracles, where he accomplishes His will by interrupting or suspending the laws and processes of nature. Miracles are relatively rare but significant events in human history.

- Genesis 5:24, Enoch was translated into heaven without experiencing death.
- Genesis 6-9, Very soon after Enoch's translation God brought about the flood.
- God miraculously saved Daniel from the Lion's den; He also delivered the three Hebrew friends from the fiery furnace, rescued Jonah in the belly of the whale.
- The most significant outpouring of miracles took place during the life and ministry of the Lord Jesus. (Healing the sick, raising the dead, commanding the elements of nature)

All of these historic events were truly miraculous but the supernatural intervention of Almighty God is not always as easily perceived as it was in those amazing events.

The second way that God operates in human history is by means of providence. This is where God accomplishes his will in the world without interrupting the laws of nature or suspending natural processes.

John MacArthur, "Providence involves God accomplishing His purposes by taking all the infinite number of attitudes, choices and acts of free human and spiritual beings and weaving them perfectly into His own purposes."

- And that my friends, can be a greater display of divine wisdom and power than a momentary interruption of the natural laws.
- As a Mom or Dad just try to get all of your kids working together in harmony to accomplish your purposes, your will on any given Saturday morning. (act of God)
- Genesis: God providentially preserved and raised Joseph to a position where he was second in command in Egypt, the most powerful kingdom in the world.
- God providentially worked through the kings of Babylon to discipline the rebellious people of Israel.
- And then God providentially worked through Cyrus the Mead to send them back to the Land of Promise at the time that Jeremiah and Isaiah foretold.

When I look back and consider the providence of God as displayed throughout the pages of the Bible I liken it to a perfectly preformed symphony at the hands of a brilliant conductor.

- With a simple gesture from his baton at the perfect time he brings the strings into the piece.
- With the look of his eye the timpani drums lead the orchestra into a grand crescendo.
- God is the master conductor of human history orchestrating all things toward his desired end.

As we review the events immediately following the Death of Christ let's carefully observe the providence of God bringing about the confirmation of his death and the fulfillment of prophetic scripture surrounding his burial.

This is what I hope to bring out from our study this morning:

- Christ was Providentially Pierced
- His Burial was pre planned by a Sovereign God
- The Same Providence that arranged his Death gave us Life.

To get the full picture we will need to begin in the Gospel of John Chapter 19

John 19:30, After only 6 hours on the cross Jesus “ **bowed his head and gave up his spirit.**”

- The thieves on the cross next to him were still very much alive.
- Because it was the day before the Sabbath the Jews could not allow the bodies of those on the cross to hang there overnight. This was the command of Moses.

Deut. 21: 22 “**And if a man has committed a crime punishable by death and he is put to death, and you hang him on a tree, 23 his body shall not remain all night on the tree, but you shall bury him the same day, for a hanged man is cursed by God. You shall not defile your land that the LORD your God is giving you for an inheritance.**

- The leaders who enforced this law are the same leaders that Jesus called “*blind guides who strain at a gnat and swallow a camel!*”
- They don’t want to break the Law by allowing these men to hang on the cross all night but they didn’t mind breaking the Laws of Moses in order to put Jesus to death.

In order to speed the death of those on the cross Pilate gave permission to the soldiers to break their legs.

- As I said last week death by crucifixion was death by asphyxiation. In order for the victim to take a breath he had to press up against the nail that pierced his feet or pull up on the nails that pierced his hands.
- To hasten death the soldiers would take an iron mallet and crushed the femur bones of the individuals who were hanging on the cross.
- With their legs broken death came quickly.

John 19: 32 **So the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first, and of the other who had been crucified with him. 33 But when they came to Jesus and saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs. 34 But one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and at once there came out blood and water.**

- When the soldiers came to Jesus they determined that he was already dead.
 - These men were executioners, trained killers, when they determined that someone was dead, they were in fact dead.
- And they confirmed Jesus death by piercing his side with a spear.
- The blood and water that flowed tell us that Jesus’ heart had ruptured spilling his blood into the pericardial sac.

The Apostle John was an eyewitness to Jesus death and his writing helps us see the providential hand of God in the actions of the Soldiers that afternoon.

John 19: 35 **He who saw it has borne witness—his testimony is true, and he knows that he is telling the truth—that you also may believe. 36 For these things took place that the Scripture might be fulfilled: “Not one of his bones will be broken.” 37 And again another Scripture says, “They will look on him whom they have pierced.”**

- Did you know the decisions that the soldiers made that day actually fulfilled Bible prophecy?

Psalms 34: 20 **He keeps all his bones; not one of them is broken.**

Exodus 12:46, the Passover lamb was not permitted to have one of his bones broken.

Zechariah 12: 10 “And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and pleas for mercy, so that, when they look on me, on him whom they have pierced, they shall mourn for him, as one mourns for an only child, and weep bitterly over him, as one weeps over a firstborn.

The soldiers decision NOT to break the legs of the Lord Jesus AND their decision TO PIERCE his side serves as clear evidence of divine providence.

- Jesus could not have arranged this, he is dead. Only an all knowing, all powerful and sovereign God could bring all these things together.

The providential acts of the Soldiers affirm the promises of the Scripture and the certainty of Jesus’ death.

WHY it is important that we know for certain the Jesus was dead?

- Since the payment required by God for sin is death, then Christ had to die in order to justify sinful man so we read in Romans 6:23 For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Over the years theories have arisen attempting to deny the fact that Jesus actually died.

- The Swoon theory is one such theory: It states that Jesus was crucified and came very close to death. It states that He was taken down from the cross and laid in the tomb. After three days, the coolness of the tomb revived Him, and He managed to roll away the stone, come out of the tomb, and appear to the disciples making them think He'd risen from the dead.
- This theory denies the primary elements of the Gospel: the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ. This is the explanation of Christ’s death that is embraced by Islam.
- The Bible clearly reveals the importance of the death and resurrection of Christ.

1 Corinthians 15:14 if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain. 16 For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised.

17 And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins.

- Jesus had to DIE before he could be resurrected.
- The decisions that were made by the Soldiers that day serve as the final affirmation of the providence of God in Christ’s atoning death.

NOW let’s see the providence of God in the burial of the Lord.

2. His Burial was pre planned by a Sovereign God

Mark 15: 42 And when evening had come, since it was the day of Preparation, that is, the day before the Sabbath, 43 Joseph of Arimathea, a respected member of the Council, who was also himself looking for the kingdom of God, took courage and went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus.

- Joseph of Arimathea was not only a member of the ruling council (Sanhedrin) He was a REPUTIBLE member of the counsel. He was a leader among leaders.
- Matthew tells us that He was a Rich Man. (That will be important)
- John informs us that he was a Believer

John tells us that there were some among the council who were “Secret Believers.”

John 12: 42 Nevertheless, many even of the authorities believed in him, but for fear of the Pharisees they did not confess it, so that they would not be put out of the synagogue;

- John affirms the fact that Joseph was ONE of those “Secret Believers.”

John 19: 38 After these things Joseph of Arimathea, who was a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews, asked Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus,

- Mark tells us that Joseph had a Messianic Hope: himself looking for the kingdom of God,

Somehow the death of Jesus elicited courage, boldness and bravery in the heart of Joseph.

WHY?

- Was it remorse for the injustice that Jesus suffered at the hands of the council?
 - Luke tells us that Joseph had not consented to the decision or action of the Sanhedrin in Jesus’ death.
- Was it simply that it was the right thing to do? If he didn’t step up the body of Jesus could have been cast into the Valley of Hinnom with the refuse of the city.
- Was it the fact that the disciples all ran away and no one else had the means to give Jesus a proper burial?
- Was this Joseph’s expression of faith? Was it his coming out?
- It may have been all of these things but it was most certainly the providential hand of Almighty God working through Joseph to fulfill the Prophetic Scripture.

Joseph took courage - Identifying himself with Jesus could cost him his lofty position.

- It might even cause his family to turn away from him.
- It could cost him his business.
- Most certainly he would have been cast out of the synagogue.
- When we take a bold stand for Jesus Christ we abandon our lives to the providential care, the everlasting arms of Almighty God.

There comes a time when Jesus must become more precious than silver and pleasing the Lord more important than position, power or pleasure.

With newfound boldness Joseph asks Pilate for the Body of Jesus.

Mark 15: 44 Pilate was surprised to hear that he should have already died. And summoning the centurion, he asked him whether he was already dead. 45 And when he learned from the centurion that he was dead, he granted the corpse to Joseph.

- It may very well be that Pilate granted Joseph custody of Jesus body simply to ease his guilty conscience for his part in this wrongful execution.
- In the providence of God Jesus would be buried in a tomb that Joseph was constructing for himself.

Mark 15: 46 And Joseph bought a linen shroud, and taking him down, wrapped him in the linen shroud and laid him in a tomb that had been cut out of the rock. And he rolled a stone against the entrance of the tomb.

- John tells us that Nicodemus helped Joseph with Jesus' burial. Nicodemus brought about 100 pounds of myrrh and aloes.
- With tender care these two giants of Israel wash the body of our Lord, wrapping the linen cloths, layering the spices. With reverence and honor they give Jesus the attention in his death that they could not give him in his life.

SO where exactly do we see the providential hand of God at work in Jesus Burial?

- The Prophet Isaiah declared:

Isaiah 53: 9 **And they made his grave with the wicked and with a rich man in his death, although he had done no violence, and there was no deceit in his mouth.**

- 750 years before Christ came into the world the Prophet Isaiah foretold the Lord's manner of burial.
- God sovereignly working through the soldiers, the officials, the governor and in the heart of Joseph and Nicodemus provide absolute assurance that Jesus is the Christ the Savior of the world.

We have seen the providential hand of God at work in the details of Christ's death and burial. NOW let's consider the providence of God that brought US new Life.

3 The Same Providence that Arranged his Death Gave us Life.

- IN Eternity Past for his own glory God graciously chose a people for himself
- 2000 years ago at the cross those same people were viewed by God as being "In Christ" Died with him, buried with him and raised with him in his resurrection. (Rom 6)
- And when as these people came into being God graciously SAVED them,

Wayne Grudem: Systematic Theology

"Ephesians 1:4 tells us that, **"God chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world."**

It was "in Christ" that we were **"destined and appointed to live for the praise of his glory,** (Eph 1:11-12) Later (when our lives actually came into being) He **"saved us and called us"** because of **"His own purposes"** and because of the grace that he gives us **"In Christ before the beginning of time."**

GOD from eternity past knowing that we would exist already viewed us as being in a special relationship a vital union with Christ.

Ephesians 1: 4 **even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love 5 he predestined us for adoption through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, 6 to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved.**

- Our Salvation is a sovereign work of the Triune God
 - Before the foundation of the WORLD God the Father Authored our salvation
 - God the Son came to earth and ACCOMPLISHED our salvation.

Galatians 4:4 **But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, 5 to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons.**

- At the appointed time Jesus (God the Son) came into the world to redeem those God had chosen before the foundation of the world.

LASTLY in the providence of God the Holy Spirit APPLIED Christ's saving work to us

Titus 3:4 **But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, 5 he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, 6 whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, 7 so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.**

- How did the Holy Spirit apply the work of Christ to our lost and sinful souls??
- IN the providence of God, He sent a messenger who proclaimed the Gospel of Jesus Christ
- Just like in the creation of the World; the Spirit of God hovered over us and God spoke His powerful word.

2 Corinthians 4:6 For **God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.**

- He sovereignly opened our blind eyes gave us the gifts of repentance and faith so that we could believe.
- Through our new birth our union with Christ was realized. The penalty of our sin was paid and the power of sin was broken and we received eternal life.

The Father Authored our Salvation

The Son Accomplished our Salvation

The Spirit Applied the finished work of Christ to us personally