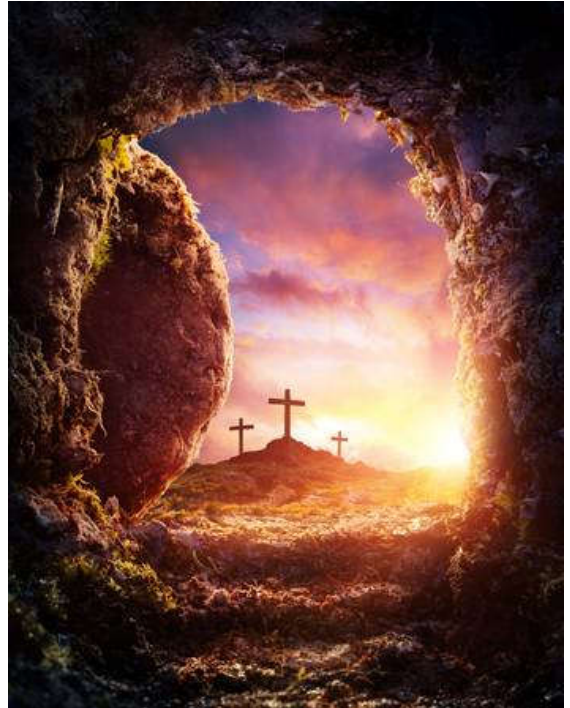


“RESCUED FROM A NIGHTMARE OF SIN”

**Message for Good Friday
From Pastor Norman Staker
April 3, 2026**

ISAIAH 52:13-53:12 — HEBREWS 10: 16-25 — JOHN 18:1-19:42

**GRACE. MERCY, AND PEACE FROM
GOD OUR FATHER AND FROM OUR
LORD AND SAVIOR THE CRUCIFIED
JESUS CHRIST. AMEN.
HE IS RISEN: HE IS Risen INDEED!!**



Pastor James Merritt said;

"Normally people are remembered for what they accomplished during their lives, the things they did to make a difference, good or bad, in the lives of others. We know George Washington was the first president of the United States and was a famous general in the Revolutionary War. We know about Benjamin Franklin and his connection to electricity, Abraham Lincoln and the Civil War and the freeing of the slaves, even Martin Luther King Jr. and the civil rights movement."

There are thousands of names we could mention from history or even today who are known for their accomplishments, their talents, their gifts and what they did in this life. As we have today to Good Friday, I want us to be reminded that the most significant thing Jesus accomplished was accomplished with His death. This night in the life of Christ was the darkest period in the history of the entire world.

It has been 2,000 years since Jesus left this earth physically and the centerpiece of our faith, and what has become a symbol of our faith, is not a cradle or a crown but a cross, an instrument of the cruelest form of execution known to man. It was so brutal and barbaric that it was abandoned over 1500 years ago.

Today we remember that Jesus came to die.

Another great preacher, Dr. R. G. Lee, put it like this: "His death prearranged, prophesied, and provided by God, was no afterthought. Jesus was born with the shadow of the cross upon him. With the shadow of the cross upon his heart, he learned to walk, he learned to talk, and he learned to work. From his earliest moment upon this earth, it was his burden by day, his bed by night."

Billy Graham said many people write to me and say, "We do not understand the Gospel. We do not understand what you mean by receiving Christ or being born again, remember that was Nicodemus' question. But Graham goes on to say that more people write to him because they do not understand why Christ had to die on the cross in order for us to be saved. They do not understand the dark hours of Gethsemane. They do not understand why Christ voluntarily laid down his life. They do not understand why he endured the shame of the cross. They do not understand all the phrases in the Bible that talk about the blood. In Hebrews, it's the blood of Christ. In John, the blood of Christ cleanses us from all sin. They wonder why that is in the Bible. They wonder why so much stress is placed on the crucifixion and the resurrection of Christ. Before the triumph, before the crown, before the kingdom, before the victory, there had to come the suffering. He's had the last supper with the disciples in the upper room, and they have gone now to the Mount of Olives. Now they are in the garden that is called

Gethsemane. Jesus leaves eight of his disciples on the outskirts of the garden and He takes three with him, Peter, James, and John. He tells them to watch and pray. Then he goes a little farther into the garden and falls prostrate on the ground and begins the agonizing prayer. Before he was finished, the Bible says he sweat, as I said last Sunday, great drops of blood. Talk about agony. Talk about praying hard. Many times in scripture we find Jesus praying all night and if he had to pray all night, what about you and me in 2026? We Americans are not praying; we are not calling upon God; we give lip service to God but our hearts are far from him. You and I have to stand at the foot of the cross and receive the Savior who was willing to go to the cross.

Yes, the last 24 hours in the life of Jesus were the darkest in history, but the good news, it was the darkness before the dawn.

Jesus came to die but I want us to ask the question, "Why did Jesus die? Why would we say that His death was His greatest accomplishment?" To answer that question I want us to turn our attention to one verse, 1 Peter 3.18: "For Christ also died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, in order to bring you to God. He was put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit."

There are three days in the New Testament that are the most important days in all Christianity and they are the birth of Jesus, the crucifixion of Jesus and the resurrection of Jesus. Each of these days are equally as important to the other and each deserve their own day of remembrance and celebration.

If any one of these three days were eliminated from Christianity, then Christianity would cease to exist altogether;

that's how crucial each part is to the total.

Today as we approach Easter, I wanted to put my focus on the day Jesus was crucified for our sins. Many Christian churches today do not even celebrate this day or give it its just time and focus and I struggle to understand why.

Could it be the guilt associated with the day causes Christians to pass it by? The guilt of their own personal sins and the pain and suffering Jesus had to endure because of it? It is a valid question that needs to be asked of both the church and the individual.

As we look throughout scripture about this day, we need to start near the beginning and the fall of mankind into sin.

Genesis 3: 1-7- "Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God actually say, 'You shall not eat of any tree in the garden'?" And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, but God said, 'You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.'" But the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die. For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate. Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths."

This is the point in which everything had changed for mankind and from this moment on, every person born would inherit the sin of that day. When God had confronted Adam and Eve about

their disobedience, God also rebuked the serpent and gave revelation about Christ to come.

Verses 14/15: "The Lord God said to the serpent, "Because you have done this, cursed are you above all livestock and above all beasts of the field; on your belly you shall go, and dust you shall eat all the days of your life. I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel."

The woman God talks about in verse fifteen is Mary and the offspring being Jesus, the only one who could now pay the penalty for mankind's sin by living His perfect life in our place and dying on the cross for each of our sins.

Later in scripture we see another revelation about the pain and suffering that Jesus would have to pay for the sins of all who would believe.

In Isaiah 53 vv 3-6: 'He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.'

The penalty we deserved for our sins was laid upon Jesus at the cross for all who believe in Him as their Lord and Savior, and the life given for us we know was to give our life to Him as servants in the hope of bringing more people to Him and salvation.

As we move forward to that day, in the book of John chapter nineteen we read this: John 19: 1-6: Then Pilate took Jesus and flogged him. And the soldiers twisted together a crown of thorns and put it on his head and arrayed him in a purple robe. They came up to him, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!" and struck him with their hands. Pilate went out again and said to them, "See, I am bringing him out to you that you may know that I find no guilt in him." So Jesus came out, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. Pilate said to them, "Behold the man!" When the chief priests and the officers saw him, they cried out, "Crucify him, crucify him!"

And then, we move forward to the crucifixion of Jesus. Men had died terrible deaths before. Men had been thrown into boiling water; men had been burned at the stake. Other men had died and suffered physical pain. But the death of the cross was something even worse than that. It was said that the death of the cross was said to be the worst possible torture that a man can endure. First, they would strip a man to his waist. Then they would tie his hands together and bend him over and take long leather thongs with lead pellets or steel pellets and shards of glass and nails embedded in leather thongs and beat him across the back until his back was in ribbons. It was such a violent form of torture that many times the lash of those thongs would come around his face and take his eyes out by the sockets, even tear his teeth out. Often death followed just the scourging and the floggings were given by great muscular men. Jesus endured that kind of flogging for you and me.

Then they would take that crown of thorns and place it on his brow, not gently mind you but forcefully to get the point across if you'll pardon the pun, and his face bled as they jerked His beard off. Then they spat in his face until he was covered from head to foot with the spit of the people. Hatred, prejudice, intolerance, and bigotry all that the human heart could devise against this one man, Jesus Christ. No, he was not killed by

Rome or Israel. We did it; you and I did it. My sins and your sins crucified Christ.

In light of that, have you helped Jesus to carry the cross or were you one of those putting nails, spikes, 9 inch spikes, into his hands and feet?

You say, 'But Pastor, I would never put a nail in Jesus' hands. I would never flog him. Wouldn't you? You did it today. The sin that you committed today helped crucify Christ because those people were all representative. We were expressing ourselves in them. You and I helped crucify Jesus. He was dying for our sins.

At Golgotha, those spikes tore his hands, they tore his feet. Jesus never uttered a sound. He hung on that cross hour after hour; the pain, the thirst. A lot of times when a person is dying on a cross, the ravenous birds, the vultures, would come with their iron-like beaks and peck at him while he was still alive. That was the cross! Gruesome is not a strong enough word for it!

Jesus died alone. You say, But Pastor, what about the two criminals who were hung on crosses on each side of Jesus? He wasn't alone. Let me ask you; what did they do to deserve their sentence? Murder, rape, robbery, child molestation, the list goes on. And Jesus, start listing the sins he committed. You can't; he was a sinless son of the Almighty God and even Jesus cried out to him, My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Forsaken indeed.

After this, Jesus, knowing that all was now finished, said (to fulfill the Scripture), "I thirst." A jar full of sour wine stood there, so they put a sponge full of the sour wine on a hyssop branch and held it to his mouth. When Jesus had received the

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

So you see without that day on the cross, all the rest of Christianity fails. The significance of it is as vital as His birth and His resurrection.

So I say that we should reflect heavily on that day and what our contribution was in it. If there was only one sinner who lived, in order for that sinner to receive salvation, the pain and suffering of Jesus would have looked much the same. That is how destructive God sees our sin.

How do you live like he's risen when you feel dead yourself?

How do you dance for Joy when you're knocked down to the floor?

How do you celebrate Easter when you're living Good Friday?

Good Friday will never be as harsh for us as it was the disciples. We know he was resurrected – they did not. But without Good Friday, we don't have an Easter.

One of the mainline denominations in the USA is in an uproar this Easter because one of its chief bishops gave an Easter message in which he said that Jesus was a sinner. He said that we need to repent of our sins in the same way that Jesus did when He was baptized by John the Baptist in his baptism of repentance.

Here is the only message I will proclaim on Good Friday. Because what happened on this day some 2000 years ago was a murder, a cruel, painful, and utterly shameful execution. Paul the apostle says it best when he holds up the horror of the actual cross, "We preach Christ crucified."

Yes, we get to hand over the penalty of our evil deeds to the One who, through His death on the cross, dealt with it completely and forever. His death for our death, His life for our life!

AMEN!!