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The Death of Jesus

John 19.28-37

Series: Signs of Life

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I. Introduction

- A. Watched a satirical spoof on the “national spelling bee” recently
 - 1. The satire wasn’t really about the spelling bee
 - a. It was about the current issue of gender confusion
 - 2. The moderator was placing words before the contestants, and the contestants would spell the words
 - a. According to the rules, the contestants are allowed inquire before answering
 - b. They can ask for the word to be used in a sentence
 - c. And they can ask for the definition of the word
 - 3. The turn came to a bespeckled little blond-haired boy
 - a. The moderator places the word
 - b. He says, “Woman”
 - 4. And the little boy says, can you give me a definition?
 - 5. The moderator stumbles over the request
 - a. Eventually says, “I don’t think you need a definition”
 - 6. The little boy says, “But don’t you have to give me a definition if I ask for it?”
 - a. The moderator then exchanges quick looks with several judges
 - b. Who all shrug their shoulders, look down at their shoes
 - c. No one is willing to even take a stab at a definition for “woman”
 - d. For fear of offending the notion that there really is no distinctive difference between a woman and a man
 - e. Or even for the idea that the definition of “man” and “woman” are fluid concepts
- B. But I venture to guess that the majority of you will be able to distinguish between a woman and a man
 - 1. And even venture to define those terms
 - 2. Because you are aware, I believe, that men and women are different
 - a. Different in many ways
- C. At least that’s what Jean tells me
 - 1. For she says, “Man works from sun to sun, but woman’s work is never done”
 - 2. I’m sure that’s not original with her
 - a. It’s a proverbial saying, rooting primarily in an age, I believe, when men were the so-called bread-winners and women the so-called

- homemakers
- b. Men tended to be those who were employed in full time jobs; left home in the morning; returned in the evening in time for dinner
- c. When the men came home, that proverb assumes, they didn't bring their jobs home with them; after dinner they collapsed on the couch and watched the idiot box, or TV
- d. Women, on the other hand, did not find their work ending at 5 p.m.
- e. They continued to work at one thing or another well after dinner, still didn't get everything done
- f. And when they collapsed it was into bed
- g. Where she remained until the whole process started at sunrise
- h. Constantly afraid that her husband would start quoting Proverbs 31
- i. "She rises while it is yet night..." and so forth
- 3. Bottom line – the woman's work is never finished
- D. But in some things, neither is the man's work ever finished
 - 1. If the work is what it takes in order to be saved
 - a. He can work from sun to sun, from sunset to sunrise, all day every day
 - b. Year in and year out
 - c. For a lifetime until the day he buys the farm, gives up the ghost, takes his last breath
 - d. Or whatever euphemism you might want to use for dying
 - e. And no matter how hard he works, no matter what kinds of good works he might have done
 - f. His work in trying to earn salvation like he earned a paycheck is never done
- E. That's the biblical view
 - 1. And it is rooted in the scripture
 - a. Specifically in the OT system
 - 2. Under the Law of Moses, God had established a system whereby Israel could experience forgiveness of sins
 - a. It was a sacrificial system
 - b. In which bulls and goats were killed as substitutes for the death of human beings
 - c. Since human beings, all sinners, were worthy of death as the just penalty for our cosmic rebellion against Almighty God
 - 3. That system, however, was merely temporary
 - a. **Hebrews 10:4** (ESV) — 4 For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.
 - b. Animals are not human beings
 - c. God established animal sacrifices as an illustration
 - d. That ultimately there would be a sinless human being
 - e. A human being who would be called "**The Lamb of God**"
 - f. Who would die in the place of all those who would believe in Him
 - g. And once and for all pay the penalty of sin that we all genuinely

- deserve
4. The Law established a priesthood
 - a. An order of religiously trained advocates
 - b. Who would provide sacrifices daily, weekly, and the high priest once each year on the Day of Atonement
 - c. Over and over again
 - d. Repeatedly
 - e. Day after day
 - f. Year after year
 5. **Hebrews 10:11** (ESV) — 11 And every priest stands daily at his service, offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins.
- F. So like “a woman’s work,” the work of the priest was never done; never finished
- G. Until Jesus came
1. **Hebrews 10:12–14** (ESV) —
 - a. 12 But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God,
 - b. 13 waiting from that time until his enemies should be made a footstool for his feet.
 - c. 14 For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified.
 2. Jesus did the work of the priest
 - a. He did it Himself, as a human being
 - b. He offered Himself, the Lamb of God
 3. And He did it once
 - a. And only once
 - b. And the job was done
 4. And He called out in that moment, **“It is finished”**
- H. That is the most significant truth invested in the death of Jesus Christ
1. Where we are engaged in our study of the Gospel of John
 2. Last week we examined the crucifixion
 - a. Discovered not so much a physical description of the means of execution
 - b. But a series of observations, of vignettes, given by John
 - c. Which highlight various aspects of the meaning of the crucifixion
 3. This week we examine the death of Jesus – the outcome of the crucifixion
 - a. And once again, we don’t get a detailed physiological analysis of His death
 - b. But a series of vignettes which highlight the meaning of this death

II. **“I thirst”**

- A. **John 19:28–29** (ESV) —
1. 28 After this, Jesus, knowing that all was now finished, said (to fulfill the Scripture), “I thirst.”
 2. 29 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.

B. **His Humanity**

1. The first thing we notice is Jesus' statement, **"I thirst"**
 - a. If nothing else, His cry in the midst of His suffering is a reminder of His humanity
2. In terms of the history of theology, various branches of the church have either overplayed or underplayed the humanity of Jesus
 - a. The liberal wing of Christianity (liberal in theological terms, not political) has tended to over-emphasize the humanity of Jesus
 - b. And either underplaying, or outright denying, His deity
 - c. This characterized the historical-critical scholarship of the 19th Century and it's influence on the mainline denominations in the 20th Century
 - d. And the "quest for the historical Jesus" movement in the 20th Century, which sought to eliminate any supernatural elements from the gospel witness
 - e. But it dates back to Socinianism in the 15th and 16th Centuries
 - f. And all the way back to Arianism in the 5th Century
 - g. Jesus was human, to be sure; but only human
3. Evangelicals, on the other hand, have tended, often in response to these movements, to overemphasize the deity of Jesus
 - a. Often at the expense of the humanity of Jesus
4. But Jesus is both God and man
 - a. He is the God-man
 - b. Only God can save us – we lack the moral power, the real righteousness, to save ourselves
 - c. But only a human being can actually atone for the sins of human beings
 - d. That's why God sent His Son as a human being
5. Arthur Pink: While here on earth the Lord Jesus gave full proof of his deity. He spoke with divine wisdom, he acted in divine holiness. He exhibited divine power, and he displayed divine love. He read men's minds, moved men's hearts, and compelled men's wills. When he was pleased to exert his power all nature was subject to his bidding. A word from him and disease fled, a storm was stilled, the devil left him, the dead were raised to life. So truly was God manifest in the flesh, he could say, 'He that hath seen me, hath seen the Father.'
6. Pink: So too, while he tabernacled among men the Lord Jesus gave full proof of his humanity – sinless humanity. He entered this world as a babe and was 'wrapped in swaddling clothes' (Luke 2.7). As a child, we are told, he 'increased in wisdom and stature' (Luke 2.52). As a boy we find him 'asking questions' (Luke 2.46). As a man he was 'wearied' in body (John 4.6). He was 'an hungered' (Matthew 4.2). He 'slept' (Mark 4.38). He 'rejoiced' (Luke 10.21). He 'groaned' (John 11.33). And here in our text he cried, 'I thirst.'
7. Pink: God does not thirst. The angels do not. We shall not in glory – 'they

shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more' (Revelation 7.16). But we thirst now because we are human and living in a world of sorrow. And Christ thirsted because he was a man...

8. So in that statement, "I thirst," Jesus clearly evidenced His humanity
 - a. His humanity in the midst of suffering

C. **Prophetic Fulfillment**

1. In addition to a demonstration of His humanity, this statement, "I thirst," also reveals something about Jesus conscious fulfillment of the scriptures
2. So many details of the passion of the Christ are fulfillments of scripture
 - a. Betrayed by a friend – Psalm 41.9
 - b. He was forsaken by the disciples – Psalm 31.11
 - c. He was falsely accused – Psalm 35.11
 - d. He was silent before his judges – Isaiah 53.7
 - e. He was proven innocent – Isaiah 53.9
 - f. He was numbered with transgressors – Isaiah 53.12
 - g. His crucifixion was prophesied – Psalm 22.16
 - h. He was mocked by the spectators – Psalm 109.25
 - i. He was taunted about delivering Himself – Psalm 22.7
 - j. The soldiers gambled for His garments – Psalm 22.18
 - k. He prayed for His enemies – Isaiah 53.12
 - l. He was forsaken by His Father – Psalm 22.1
 - m. He yielded His spirit into the hands of His Father – Psalm 31.5
 - n. His bones were not broken – Psalm 34.20
 - o. He was buried in a rich man's tomb – Isaiah 53.9
3. And of course "I thirst"
 - a. **Psalm 69:21** (ESV) — 21 They gave me poison for food, and for my thirst they gave me sour wine to drink.
4. Something about the thirst incident that is remarkable, and speaks uniquely to Jesus' own self-awareness of His fulfillment of scripture
 - a. Most of the fulfillments that I've just listed were things out of the control of Jesus, at least in terms of His human capacity to produce them
 - b. He could not control the mockery of the crowd
 - c. He could not compel the soldiers in their distribution of His garments
 - d. He was in no position to determine whether His legs would be broken
5. But in other ways, He was involved in the fulfillments
 - a. His silence before His judges
 - b. His praying for His enemies
 - c. His yielding of His spirit to the Father
6. But in this situation – "I thirst" – the text indicates that Jesus cried out specifically **"to fulfill the scripture"**
 - a. In other words, Jesus was aware enough to act in order to do what the scripture indicated He would do

7. We know from our study last week that Jesus had Psalm 22 on His mind as He approached and engaged with the crucifixion
 - a. He was aware of that significant Psalm – and of the other scriptures – to such a degree that He had a grasp on what had, and had not, been accomplished
 - b. You can get the sense of Him mentally checking them off
 8. Boice: Was there anything in Genesis that had been left undone? No. Exodus? No. Deuteronomy? No. At last he reached Psalm 69 where it is said in verse 21, “They put gall in my food and gave me vinegar for my thirst.” Already they had offered him gall to deaden his pain (Mark 15.23), but there had been no offer of vinegar for his thirst. Therefore, he calls out “I thirst” that this might be completed. This was the last prophecy.
 - a. **John 19:30** (ESV) — 30 When Jesus had received the sour wine, he said, “It is finished,” and he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.
- D. Only the God-man, a genuinely human being, a sinless human being, could save humanity from sin
1. And Jesus’ humanity was clearly on display in His dying
 2. And in this very human expression: “I thirst” Jesus completed the fulfillment of all the prophecies concerning His life and death
 3. And no other human being was ever, or could ever be, in a position to fulfill the prophetic role of the incarnate Son of God
 - a. Only Jesus!

III. **“It is finished”**

- A. This last verse leads us into the next vignette
1. And reveals perhaps the most important aspect of the death of Jesus
 2. **John 19:30** (ESV) —
 - a. 30 When Jesus had received the sour wine, he said, “It is finished,” and he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.
 3. “It is finished”
 - a. Arguably, for us believers in Jesus, the most important three words we can ever contemplate
 4. Something has happened in these moments on the cross
 - a. Something which would change the course of history
 - b. Especially when you recognize that **History is “His story”**
 - c. Something momentous has become the climax the grand story of redemption
 - d. Something was finished
 5. Of course, it might be easy to say, Jesus’ suffering was finished
 - a. He had endured the mockery, the beatings, the false accusations
 - b. The Via Dolorosa, bearing the cross
 - c. The nails in His hands and feet
 - d. The excruciating pain
 - e. The gradual suffocation

- f. Yes, that was finished
 - g. But that clearly wasn't what Jesus meant
 - h. His was the true purpose-driven life (Rick Warren)
 - i. And every element of His suffering was meant to accomplish something
 - j. And that something was what was finished
6. So what exactly was finished?
- a. What was the final act of our redemption
 - b. Four key issues may be highlighted
- B. **Substitution**
1. Jesus' sacrifice on the cross was "substitutionary"
 - a. He died in place of others
 2. The idea of substitution has its roots all the way back in the Genesis account
 - a. God placed Adam and Eve in the garden with one probationary stipulation
 - b. "You shall not eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil"
 - c. "If you eat of it, you will surely die" (Genesis 2.15-17)
 3. Of course, you know the story
 - a. Adam and Eve did eat of the forbidden fruit
 - b. But God in His grace didn't immediately kill them physically
 - c. Though they did die spiritually – hiding from God, covering themselves from each other with fig leaves
 4. But an aspect of the grace of God was that God considered their vain attempts at covering themselves inadequate
 - a. So He made coats of skin and clothed them (**Genesis 3.21**)
 5. The distinguishing difference between their attempts at clothing themselves and God's solution was that God's solution required a sacrifice
 - a. Animals had to be killed in order to cover their shame and unrighteousness
 - b. That was the first real death experienced by Adam and Eve
 - c. And it was clear to them that God was providing a substitute
 6. Ultimately, this pattern was reflected in animal sacrifices through the pre-patriarchal period, through the patriarchs, and institutionalized in the Law of Moses
 - a. But it was all an illustration
 - b. **Hebrews 10:4** (ESV) — 4 For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.
 7. So the death of Jesus Christ was our substitute
 8. **Isaiah 53:4–6** (ESV) —
 - a. 4 Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted.
 - b. 5 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.

- c. 6 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.
 - 9. Substitution – finished!
- C. **Propitiation**
 - 1. Where have we heard that word before?
 - 2. Our sin has incurred God’s wrath
 - a. His wrath is not simply an angry outburst
 - b. It is a posture of hatred of that which offends His holy and righteous character
 - c. It is entirely justified when God’s morally responsible creatures reject His right to reign and rule in our lives
 - 3. But the sacrifice of Christ is our propitiation
 - a. It is a wrath-removing sacrifice
 - b. It satisfies God’s divine and justified wrath
 - 4. **Romans 3:24–25** (ESV) —
 - a. 24 and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus,
 - b. 25 whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. ...
 - 5. **Propitiation = hilasterion (Gk)**
 - a. Mercy seat
 - b. OT, the mercy seat was the covering for the ark of the covenant
 - c. Over which were the pair of Cherubim
 - d. Where God Himself would dwell and be present with His people
 - e. Every year, on the Day of Atonement, the high priest would enter the Holy of holies, and sprinkle the blood of the covenant on the Mercy Seat
 - f. And thus atone for the sins of the people
 - g. And the wrath of God would be propitiated
 - h. And the people could live at peace with God – in a manner of speaking
 - i. As this sacrifice, being by bulls and goats, had to be repeated year after year
 - 6. But in Jesus, the propitiation was finally finished
 - a. There is not “no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus” (**Romans 8.1**)
 - b. No more any threat of the wrath of God hanging over the head of sinners who trust in Jesus alone
 - c. **Romans 5:9** (ESV) — 9 Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God.
 - 7. Propitiation – finished
 - a. Wrath finally removed
 - b. For all those who believe in Jesus

- D. **Reconciliation**
1. As sinners we are alienated from God
 - a. Not just separated
 - b. But enemies
 2. But the sacrifice of Christ completed the work of reconciliation
 - a. While we used to be enemies, we are now friends
 3. **Romans 5:10–11** (ESV) —
 - a. 10 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.
 - b. 11 More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.
 4. Reconciliation means to **“make one”** – the essential meaning of atonement
 - a. We who were far from God
 - b. Are now one in Him through Jesus Christ
 5. Finished
 - a. The final substitute
 - b. Propitiation – our wrath finally removed
 - c. Reconciled – finally brought into fellowship with God
- E. **Redemption**
1. As sinners we are in bondage to our sinful natures
 - a. The Bible speaks of our being enslaved to sin (**Romans 6**), and in bondage to sin
 2. But the death of Jesus paid the penalty for our sin
 - a. And we are purchased out of the slave market
 - b. Freed by the death of Christ on our behalf
 3. **1 Peter 1:18–19** (ESV) —
 - a. 18 knowing that you were ransomed [redeemed] from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold,
 - b. 19 but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot.
- F. **“It is finished”**
1. **Tetelestai (Gk)**
 - a. Secular business transaction – **“paid in full!”**
 2. Jesus Paid It All
 - a. Jesus paid it all
 - b. All to him I owe
 - c. Sin had left a crimson stain
 - d. He washed it white as snow
 3. His Mercy Is More
 - a. What riches of kindness He lavished on us
 - b. His blood was the payment, His life was the cost
 - c. We stood ‘neath a debt we could never afford
 - d. Our sins they are many, His mercy is more

- e. Praise the Lord, His mercy is more
- f. Stronger than darkness, new every morn
- g. Our sins they are many
- h. His mercy is more

IV. **Of Broken Bones and Pierced Sides**

A. Finally, the last vignette

1. **John 19:31–37** (ESV) —
 - a. 31 Since it was the day of Preparation, and so that the bodies would not remain on the cross on the Sabbath (for that Sabbath was a high day), the Jews asked Pilate that their legs might be broken and that they might be taken away.
 - b. 32 So the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first, and of the other who had been crucified with him.
 - c. 33 But when they came to Jesus and saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs.
 - d. 34 But one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and at once there came out blood and water.
 - e. 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.
 - f. 36 For these things took place that the Scripture might be fulfilled: “Not one of his bones will be broken.”
 - g. 37 And again another Scripture says, “They will look on him whom they have pierced.”
2. So why does John record that Jesus’ bones were not broken, and that His side was pierced?

B. **All Dead**

1. At the risk of recycling an illustration – Princess Bride
2. The Princess Bride stars Mandy Patinkin as Inigo Montoya, who is out to avenge his father’s death, storm the castle, and free the princess bride
 - a. Westley is played by Cary Elwes and he is in love with the princess bride, and is working with Montoya to storm the castle
 - b. They are accompanied by Fezzik played by Andre the Giant
3. The problem is that Westley is killed – apparently
 - a. That throws a wrench in the works for their plans to attack the castle
4. So Montoya and Fezzik carry Westley to Miracle Max, played by Billy Crystal
 - a. Miracle Max is a magician, sorcerer, or whatever Billy Crystal makes him out to be
 - b. But they take Westley to him and ask him for a miracle
5. Max says that if Westley is dead then he can’t do a miracle
 - a. But Max reluctantly takes a look at Westley, and concludes that he may be able to do something
 - b. Because, as he says, **“He’s just mostly dead”**

- c. And, he explains, “Mostly dead is nearly alive”
 - 6. The first reason for John’s recording of the bones not being broken but the side pierced is dispel the objection, claimed by some of the contemporaries at the time, that Jesus was never really dead
 - a. That He was just “mostly dead”
 - 7. But no!
 - a. Jesus was not mostly dead
 - b. Jesus was “all dead”
 - c. John’s description left no doubt that Jesus had fully, genuinely, thoroughly died
- C. **Prophetic Fulfillment**
 - 1. **Psalm 34:20** (ESV) — 20 He keeps all his bones; not one of them is broken.
 - 2. **Zechariah 12:10** (ESV) — 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.
 - 3. The soldiers set out to do the opposite of both of these prophecies
 - a. They wanted to break His bones
 - b. And they had no intention of piercing Him with the spear
 - 4. But they ended up doing both!
 - a. Why?
 - b. God overruled their desires and inclinations, fulfilling prophecy in the process
- D. **The Lamb of God**
 - 1. When John the Baptist first saw Jesus at His baptism, he declared, “Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world”
 - 2. And yet one of the requirements for the Passover Lamb was that the Lamb would be unblemished
 - a. **Exodus 12:46** (ESV) — 46 It shall be eaten in one house; you shall not take any of the flesh outside the house, and you shall not break any of its bones.
 - b. **Numbers 9:12** (ESV) — 12 They shall leave none of it until the morning, nor break any of its bones; according to all the statute for the Passover they shall keep it.
 - 3. Jesus, then, fulfills the Passover Lamb requirements
 - a. And then some!
 - b. Since He is the human “Lamb of God”
 - 4. He is unblemished by sin
 - a. And He is unblemished physically in fulfilling the scripture that none of His bones would be broken
- E. **Cleansed From Sin**
 - 1. Finally, piercing His side, with the flow of water and blood, represents the cleansing from sin that Jesus’ death accomplishes

2. **Zechariah 12:10** (ESV) —
 - a. 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.
3. **Zechariah 13:1** (ESV) —
 - a. 1 “On that day there shall be a fountain opened for the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, to cleanse them from sin and uncleanness.
4. There Is a Fountain Filled with Blood (William Cowper)
 - a. There is a fountain filled with blood
 - b. Drawn from Immanuel’s veins;
 - c. And sinners plunged beneath that flood
 - d. Lose all their guilty stains

V. **The Death of Jesus**

- A. Gloriously displays the great truths of the gospel
 1. The humanity of Jesus
 2. The prophetic fulfillment
 3. The completion of the act of redemption
 - a. Substitution
 - b. Propitiation
 - c. Reconciliation
 - d. Redemption
 4. The unblemished Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world
 - a. The cleansing of the believer from the stain of sin
- B. None of that makes any difference unless you believe
 1. Understanding it is good
 - a. Not good enough
 2. Must trust yourself into the hands of Christ