

LENT 5 - HE CHOSE THE NAILS
I UNDERSTAND YOUR PAIN / I HAVE REDEEMED YOU AND I WILL KEEP YOU
JOHN 19:28-30, MARK 15:22-24, HEBREWS 4:15-16
2025-04-13

We're into the 6th Sunday of Lent and continuing with Max Lucado's, *He Chose the Nails*. We've been looking at all the gifts Jesus has given us around the cross. So far, we've considered the gift of the soldiers' spit, where Jesus took the filth of our hearts symbolized by His refusal to wipe the spit from his face. We looked at the crown of thorns, symbolizing not sin but the consequences of sin. Since the fruit of sin is thorns, the thorny crown on Christ's brow is a picture of the fruit of our sin that pierced His heart. It was Jesus who chose the nails—they weren't driven by a Roman soldier, nor was the force of the hammer from an angry mob or the verdict the result of an angry Jewish mob—Jesus Himself chose the nails. The sign over Jesus' head: Je-sus of Nazareth the King of the Jews was written 3 languages. God made sure everyone in every language would know indeed that Jesus is King of all people in every language. Then we learned from the two thieves crucified beside Jesus that God, because we are made in His image, and because He respects us completely to exercise our freedom of choice, will not coerce us to go His way—He leaves the choice to us! We cried at the story of the dancing daughter who wandered away defiantly from her father, then eventually returned to once again dance with her father because of his repeated invitations—that God will never abandon us. Then last week as we spoke of Jesus' seamless robe, we realized that we come to the cross dressed in sin, but we leave the cross clothed in garments of salvation (Isaiah 61:10). And finally, last week, we saw Jesus as the curtain in the temple. Just as His body was torn, so too was the curtain, symbolizing the removal of every barrier to God—we are welcomed into God's presence any day, any time.

Today, we're going to discover that God understands your pain and that He has redeemed you and will keep you. Why do you suppose Jesus lived on earth as long as He did? Why not step into our world just long enough to die for our sins and then leave? Why not a sinless year or week? Why did He have to live a life? To take on our sins is one thing, but to take on our sunburns or coughs/colds? To experience death, yes—but to put up with life, long days and short tempers? Why did He do it? Because He wants you to trust Him. Even His final act on earth was for that.

“Later, knowing that all was now completed, and so that the Scripture would be fulfilled, Jesus said, ‘I am thirsty.’ A jar of wine vinegar was there, so they soaked a sponge in it, put the sponge on a stalk of the hyssop plant, and lifted it to Jesus’ lips. When He had received the drink, Jesus said, ‘It is finished.’ With that, He bowed His head & gave up His spirit.” (John 19:28-30)

Through His thirst—through a sponge and a jar of cheap wine, He left His final appeal—“*You can trust me.*” The last time moisture touched Jesus' lips was the night before at the Last

Supper. Since that time, Jesus has been beaten, spat upon, bruised and cut. He has been a cross-carrier and sin-bearer and no liquid has salved His throat.

Again, why doesn't He do something about it? Couldn't He? He turned jugs of water into wine. He made a wall out of the Jordan River and two walls out of the Red Sea. With one word He banished the rain and calmed the waves. He turned the desert into pools (Psalm 107:35) and the hard rock into springs (Psalm 114:8). God said I will pour water on him who is thirsty (Isaiah 44:3). So, why does Jesus endure thirst?

Why did He grow weary in Samaria (John 4:6), disturbed in Nazareth (Mark 6:6), angry in the Temple (John 2: 15)? Why was He sleepy in the boat on the Sea of Galilee (Mark 4:38), sad at the tomb of Lazarus (John 11: 35) and hungry in the wilderness (Mark 4:2)? And why did He grow thirsty on the cross? He didn't have to suffer thirst. Six hours earlier He'd been offered a drink but refused it.

“They brought Jesus to the place called Golgotha (which means The Place of the Skull). Then they offered Him wine mixed with myrrh, but He did not take it. And they crucified Him. Dividing up His clothes, they cast lots to see what each would get. (Mark 15:22-24)

Before the nail was pounded, a drink was offered. Mark says the wine was mixed with myrrh. Matthew described it as wine mixed with gall. Both myrrh and gall are sedatives that numb the senses. But Jesus refused them. He refused to numb the pain, opting instead to feel the full force of His suffering. Why? Because He knew you would feel them too. He knew you would be weary, disturbed, angry, sleepy, grief-stricken and hungry. He knew you'd face pain—pain of the soul as well as the body; pain too sharp for any drug. He knew you'd face thirst, if not for water, at least a thirst for truth. And the picture we get of a thirsty Christ is that He understands. Because He understands, we can come to Him. Jesus has been where you are and can relate to how you feel. If His life doesn't convince you of that, His death on the cross should. Jesus doesn't scoff at our needs. He responds “generously to all without finding fault” (James 1:5).

“Jesus understands every weakness of ours, because He was tempted in every way that we are. But He did not sin! So whenever we are in need, we should come bravely before the throne of our merciful God. There we will be treated with undeserved kindness, & we will find help (Hebrews 4:15-16)”.

Thirsty so that the Scripture would be fulfilled. Jesus was betrayed, His clothing was gambled for, His legs were not broken, His side was pierced, the disciples did not understand that Jesus had to rise from the dead—all of these things happened so that Scripture (from the Old Testament) would be fulfilled.

Jesus knew we would doubt and question. So, He used even His final moments to offer proof that He was the Messiah. The list of fulfilled OT prophecies is long: betrayal (Psalm 41:9), forsaken by His disciples (Psalm 31:11), false accusation (Psalm 35:11), silence before His judges (Isaiah 53:7), proven guiltless (Isaiah 53:9), included with sinners (Isaiah 53:12), crucified (Psalm 22:16), mocked by spectators (Psalm 109:25), taunt of non deliverance (Psalm 22:7-8), gambling for His garments (Psalm 22:18), prayer for His enemies (Isaiah 53:12), being forsaken by God (Psalm 22:1), yielding His spirit to His Father (Psalm 31:5), bones not broken (Psalm 34:20), burial in a rich man's tomb (Isaiah 53:9). Over His lifetime Christ fulfilled 332 distinct Old Testament prophecies—chances of that happening to any one person? Zero, zilch, nada, rien (one in ninety-seven zeroes). Still have any doubt that He's the Messiah. Conclusion? "You can trust in Me."

Golf. Here we go on another sports analogy. In a pro-am tournament the official score goes to the amateur of the three or four who records the lowest score on the hole. So I could shoot eights or worse all day long and if the other amateurs had threes, that's the score that would be recorded, no matter how badly I play so long as I joined the right foursome. In our case, the foursome is pretty strong—you, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. So you win the prize not because of what you do, but who you know We are sanctified because of Christ's work for us and we continue to grow because of Christ's work in us. Both are gifts from God. "With 1 sacrifice He made perfect forever those who are being made holy (Hebrews 10:14).

God's work for us: "But 1 of the soldiers stuck his spear into Jesus' side and at once blood and water came out (John 19:34). There's this forever connection between blood and mercy: "without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness" (Hebrews 9:22). Back as far as Abel, he offered a blood sacrifice for sins. Thereafter, it was expected; we see it with Abraham, Moses, Gideon, Samson, Saul, David, Jacob, Saul, Aaron (so the priesthood began), Haggai and Zechariah (so the Temple was built again. But the line ended at the cross. What Abel began, Christ completed. After His sacrifice there would be no more sacrificial system because "He came as High Priest of this better system which we now have (Hebrews 9:11).

There's now no more need to shed blood. He "once for all took blood into that inner room, the Holy of Holies and sprinkled it on the mercy seat. He took His own blood and with it He, by Himself, made sure of our eternal salvation (He. 9:12). The Son of God became the Lamb of God, the cross became the altar and we were made holy through the sacrifice Christ made in His body once and for all time (Hebrews 10:10). What needed to be paid was paid. What had to be done was done. Innocent blood was required. Innocent blood was offered—once and for all time. The achievement of Jesus' blood is credited to us. The work for us is complete, but the progressive work in us is ongoing. His work for us is seen in the blood.

God's work in us: The ongoing work in us is seen in the water. "The water I give will become a spring of water gushing up inside a person, giving eternal life" (John 4:14). The well is

the Holy Spirit in your heart. “If anyone believes in Me rivers of living water will flow out from that person’s heart” (John 7:38).

Water, here, is a picture of the Spirit of Jesus working in us. It’s not work to save us—that work is done. He’s working to change us. As a result of being saved we obey God with deep reverence and avoid all that displeases Him. We love our neighbour and watch our mouth. We refuse to cheat and do our best to love people who are tough to love. These are the good things that result from being saved. The common example is marriage. Married is married but think of how that relationship grows over the years. Marriage is both a done deal and a daily development. The same is true of our walk with God. That is why we are not whisked off to heaven the moment we are saved—there is growth that needs to occur—character development—and good things to follow. We are here for a purpose—to glorify God in our service. The blood is God’s sacrifice for us; the water is God’s Spirit in us. We need both. So, back to the spear in Jesus’ side.

“At once, blood & water came out.” (John 19:34)

Do you want to be saved but not changed? All blood, no water. Or do you want to be busy all the time for Christ, but never at peace in Christ? All water, no blood.

“The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.” (John 1:29) The blood of Christ doesn’t cover your sins, conceal your sins, postpone your sins, or diminish your sins. It takes away your sins, once and for all time. Jesus allows your mistakes to be lost in His perfection. When you and I stand in heaven to receive our prize, only one will know of all our sins, but He won’t embarrass you—He has already forgiven them. And back to the golf analogy: enjoy the game—your prize is secure, but don’t refrain from asking the Teacher for help with your swing.

Share that this week.