

Text: Matthew 27:45-50

Series Theme: "The Son of God Goes Forth to War"

Sermon theme: "The Greatest Battle Ever Fought"

<sup>45</sup> From the sixth hour until the ninth hour, there was darkness over all the land. <sup>46</sup> About the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, "*Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?*" which means "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" <sup>47</sup> When some of those standing there heard this, they said, "This fellow is calling for Elijah." <sup>48</sup> Immediately one of them ran, took a sponge, and soaked it with sour wine. Then he put it on a stick and gave him a drink. <sup>49</sup> The rest said, "Leave him alone. Let's see if Elijah comes to save him." <sup>50</sup> After Jesus cried out again with a loud voice, he gave up his spirit.

Sermon for Good Friday; Series "The Son of God Goes Forth to War"

Text: Matthew 27:45-50 Theme: "The Greatest Battle Ever Fought"

In the name of Jesus, dear fellow redeemed,

You and I have never seen it, not even during a thunderstorm. Suddenly on that Good Friday, at noon when the sun is usually the brightest, it became very dark. The darkness was so deep there was no starlight, no moonlight, no stars. There was no light. Everything just stopped. Historians tell us that as far away as Egypt everyone was closed in by this mysterious, frightening darkness.

The darkness people experienced happened because of a crucifixion. It was a horrible way to execute a person. At times it could take two days for death to come, depending on how badly the criminal had been whipped before he was crucified. It must have been excruciating, hot, unbearable. The executed criminal's diaphragm worked harder and harder, expending a lot of energy and wearing down the person's ability to breath. Because of that, the person began to breath more and more slowly until finally he could breath no more and he was asphyxiated.

Jesus was with two other men who were also crucified on Calvary outside of Jerusalem. Thousands of people had followed him, listening intently to his teaching and singing his praises. Less than a week before, a crowd had called him Savior. A few hours before this he had acknowledged to Pilate that he was the King of the Kingdom of truth. He was God's appointed soldier. But now the Warrior was dying.

But this was the battle where everything came together. The Savior went head to head with all our enemies, especially Satan. This battle was bigger than the Battle of the Bulge, bigger than Normandy Beach, bigger than Iwo Jima; Yes

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bigger and more important than Yorktown and Gettysburg combined. Jesus had come into the world and had prepared every day of his life for this. Your future, my future and the future of everyone who has ever lived was hanging on the outcome of this battle fought on a cross outside Jerusalem, because this was “The Greatest Battle Ever Fought.”

Websites that list the “greatest battles of all time” usually say their criteria is based on the influence of a battle on history. Battles and cultures, leaders and forms of government all have an influence on history. But they come and go.

The only one that has lasting influence is Jesus and the Good Friday battle fought on Calvary outside Jerusalem. The life of Jesus is the single most significant life ever lived in all of history. And what happened on the cross at his death, changed the entire world and every person who has ever lived.

### 1. His enemy Satan attacked Jesus relentlessly

**<sup>45</sup> From the sixth hour until the ninth hour, there was darkness over all the land. <sup>46</sup> About the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, “Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?” which means “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”**

The physical agony that Jesus endured was absolutely horrendous. He had already been distressed the night before in Gethsemane. He had had no sleep because of the trials. Then came the torture that was heaped on and added to Jesus crucifixion: The crown of thorns, the constant mocking, the pulling out of his beard, the humiliation of having his clothing stripped off, the excruciating scourging that often tore skin and flesh down to the bone. In that weakened condition he was forced to carry the heavy crossbeam until he collapsed. And after all that, they laid him on the cross and pounded spikes through his wrists and feet, lifting the cross into the hole dug for it, planting it firmly. And all the while the Jewish leaders and Roman soldiers mocked him. How can anyone do such things to another human being? That’s my Savior they are torturing? It is a very hard account to read.

But Jesus endures the pain and suffering with not one complaint, not one shred of anger or retaliation of any kind. The truth is, we hear some of the most amazing words from his mouth while he is on the cross. First he spoke an amazing prayer of love, asking his father to forgive those who crucified him because they did not know what they were doing. Then he answered the desperate prayer of the criminal on the cross next to him who believed in him and gave him the gospel assurance that he would inherit heaven that very day. And calmly, and with tender concern for his mother, he told the disciple John to care for her.

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But there was the darkness. And we begin to realize that all the physical suffering and even the mockery was like an insect bite compared to the spiritual suffering that is crushing him while he hangs there. The darkness is God's message to the human race that he hates sin, our disobedience of God in thoughts, words and actions that separate us from God. The darkness is both God's reaction to the judicial murder of his Son, and God's dreadful judgment upon sin as suffered by his son.

Perhaps in a way, we ought to be grateful for the darkness. It certainly must have shut the mouths of the mockers. But it also hid what no human being should ever have to see, as Jesus was on the cross alone, against all the forces of hell. Satan hates Jesus. And this is the moment when he saw the Son of Man and the Son of God at his weakest—where he might be vulnerable. Satan will do everything to force Jesus to give up his life's work of paying for your sins and mine, and for atoning for the sins of the whole world.

And can't you just imagine Satan screaming lies at Jesus while he hangs there. "Hey, Son of God, you won't make any difference. You're not big enough to cover the sins of every one. Just look, all of human history is on my side. Why would you even care about these people. They have turned on you. Even Judas and Peter and they were supposed to be your disciples. And you can believe millions more will turn on you later.

The internal and external pain and pressure that Jesus suffers mounts higher and higher. So much darkness. What have you and I done that Jesus should suffer so horribly in his spirit? The weight of the sins of billions upon billions of people are pressing down—all the massacres, all the abortions, the divorces, all the horrible things you and I have said and done.

And Jesus is fighting this powerful evil angel in all this darkness—alone, pure, holy and faithful. And he still loves us. He still holds his ground. Even a child can understand, that this is why Jesus is both God and man! Man to be our substitute, God to pay for all the sins of the human race.

But now the worst part. God's white hot anger burns against Jesus. Think of the power he had—Creator of the universe who crushed the world with a catastrophic flood, who torched and burned Sodom and Gomorrah, who made the mountain tremble and shake for Moses. He is the God who is directing his full anger and fury against Jesus.

And you can hear it in Jesus' voice as his tone changes. Up from his heaving chest and tortured body came a cry of horror. Maybe it was even a scream: "About the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, "Eli,

**Eli, lama sabachthani?" which means "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"**

We know our God is three in one, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. So how can we even begin to understand, grasp, comprehend that that though they are ONE the Father forsakes his Son. The Father is the source of all true love in the world. Yet he turns his back on his Son whom he had, at his baptism and on the Mount of Transfiguration, to be his beloved.

The Father cuts off his relationship with his Son so the warrior Son could pay for the whole world's sins as he had promised. The Father focused his anger on the evil Jesus carried because he hates the malignant tumor of sin that causes the human race to rot.

And notice another change. As he was being crucified Jesus prayed to his *Father* to forgive his tormentors. Now in the midst of his greatest suffering He cries out and asks "My God" the big WHY question. And we notice the formality of the question.

You can see that while the relationship is broken he still puts his trust in his Father calling him, 'My God' even though he is forsaken. This is the worst of his suffering, the moment of unimaginable terror for our warrior. He is suffering the terror of hell in our place. It is right here in this moment where the battle for our salvation will be won or lost, as Jesus suffers for us.

The Old Testament prophet Isaiah explains what is happening: **"Surely he took up our pain and bore our suffering, yet we considered him punished by God, stricken by him, and afflicted"** (Isaiah 53:4).

It happened this way because of us. All this time Jesus remained perfect and holy. Yet God charged, blamed him, accused him of all of our sins and he was willing to make full payment. By now, no matter how old you are you and I have noticed something about ourselves. We are not always aware of how much we sin. Yet we know that something inside us is broken. And so often we think, well I will just work harder to overcome the sin of unjustified anger, or laziness, or lust, or greed, or overeating and all the other sins that often become habitual without our even thinking about it. But God has a headline News Flash for us. Our problem is much bigger. We need an almighty warrior who can purchase forgiveness for us all. This is God's grace in all its blood and sweat.

## **2. When the dust settled, then came the victory cry**

As the afternoon wore on perhaps the darkness began to lift. The mockers started in again thinking Jesus was begging for Elijah to come back and rescue him. **"When some of those standing there heard this, they said, "This fellow is**

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**calling for Elijah.”** <sup>48</sup> **Immediately one of them ran, took a sponge, and soaked it with sour wine. Then he put it on a stick and gave him a drink.** <sup>49</sup> **The rest said, “Leave him alone. Let’s see if Elijah comes to save him.”**

But the end was near. They wait, but not long. Things happen very quickly now. Jesus was thirsty. **“When he had received the drink, Jesus said, ‘It is finished’”** (John 19:30). **After Jesus cried out again with a loud voice, he gave up his spirit.**

Mark tells us that the curtain in the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. Some have suggested this was the Father’s way of adding an “Amen” to his Son’s Words “It is finished.” That means there is no more need for sacrificing. No more sheep, no more goats, no more bulls. Priests are no longer needed for their daily ministrations. The High Priest no longer needs to enter the Most Holy Place on the Day of Atonement, for that is fulfilled in Jesus’ sacrifice. All restrictions that kept God’s people separate from others are now removed. Every prophecy about the coming Savior has been fulfilled. Through the lamb of God, Christ Jesus, God has opened up access to himself for all people, nations, languages, cultures and generations. God actually transferred the righteousness of Jesus to us. Just as Paul says, **“God made him who knew no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.”**

When we listen carefully to Jesus we can tell that the sacrifice is completed for before he died Jesus says, **“Father” into your hands I commit my spirit.** God’s justice has been satisfied, his anger is spent. There is no longer separation between Father and Son. Jesus’ loud cry, ‘It is finished’ says everything. In this greatest battle of all time, the work of atoning for the sins of humanity is completed. Jesus has crushed Satan’s head as God had said in Eden. It is plainly a knockout blow. Satan is mortally wounded. He can still walk around, but he cannot win, he IS defeated. Satan thought he had locked down the gate to heaven, but Jesus broke the lock and has locked down Satan with a restricting chain.

Our home in heaven is paid for. There is nothing more you or I or even God himself has to do to pay for our guilt and sin. We are forgiven.

And so as Jesus hung on the cross for those last few moments before he died, he could be satisfied that his work was completed. He is exhausted, and content that the human race is saved. And so it was time for him to leave. The soldiers, the mockers, and Satan himself could not kill Jesus. No, of his own free will he gives his soul into his Father’s loving hands. Our dear Lord Jesus, who remained unspotted and unblemished as he suffered our hell, now offers his pure, holy, blameless life as the final, once-for-all sacrifice that has been promised since the first sin in Eden.

Yes, dear friends, it is finished! The war is won. Amen.