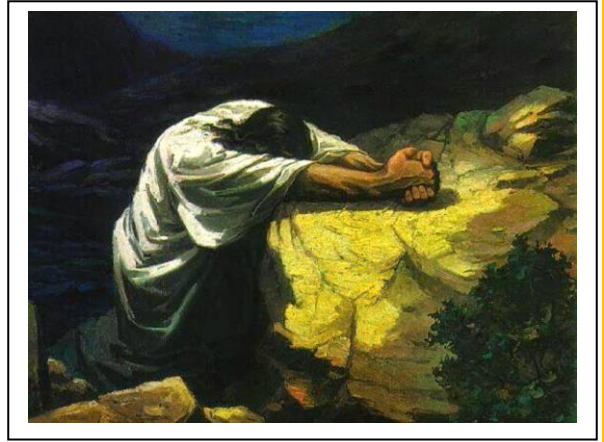


GOOD FRIDAY SERVICE:

5 Miracles of Calvary

Scripture: Matthew 27:45–54



We call it "Good Friday", but on that Friday, when Jesus died, it seemed anything but good.

That much was clear to everyone. Every tortured breath testified to the thorough job done by the Roman soldiers. They started with two criminals and this man Jesus.

Nine o'clock came. Crucifixion time. Hammers and nails, screams of pain. Men stripped naked. The smell of death in the air. Blood oozing and dripping. People watching, talking, laughing – if you are the King of the Jews, come down from the cross.” For three hours it was just like any other crucifixion.

Then high noon came, with 3 hours of total darkness. People panicked, shouted, became silent. At 3pm, the sun suddenly shines again. All eyes now focus on the man in the middle. He looks terrible. Something awful has happened to Him during those three hours. He speaks, then speaks again, then one more time, almost in a whisper He cries out – then He is gone.

Have you noticed in the Gospels that none of the authors state – Christ died. Matthew and John say – He gave up His spirit. Mark and Luke say – He breathed His last. They do this to stress the voluntary nature of His death. No-one took His life. Jesus gave His life for others.

Matthew mentions 5 miracles that accompanied His crucifixion.

Verse 45 – from noon until three in the afternoon, darkness came over the whole land.

Slide 1 Darkness sent from Heaven.

It happened suddenly and without warning. One moment the sun was overhead, the next moment it disappeared. It was a thick, inky-black darkness that fell like a shroud over the land. No hint of light. No-one moved, or spoke, even the soldiers were quiet. Not a sound broke the dark silence over Golgotha – something eerie was going on.

But at 3pm, just as suddenly as the darkness descended, it disappeared. People began to shout, rub their eyes. There was panic on many faces, confusion on others. It was not an eclipse or some sort of suffocating sandstorm that darkened the sky. This was a supernatural miracle of God.

What does it mean? Jesus' first word from the cross had been, "Father forgive them." His last word was "Father, into Your hands I commit my spirit." In between, however He cried out, "My God, my God, why have You forsaken me?" God could not look on sin and Jesus bore the sins of the world when He gave His life for us. The battle has been won, the struggle over.

Verse 51 Suddenly the curtain of the sanctuary was torn in two from top to bottom.

Slide 2: The veil of the temple was torn – don't let your sins keep you away.

Everything about the Jewish temple taught people to keep their distance. There were courts set aside for the women and the Gentiles. There were places for sacrifices and steps leading up to the temple. The two main rooms inside were the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place or Holy of Holies.

Only the High Priest could enter the Most Holy Place, one day each year on the Day of Atonement. He had to wear special garments, bring with him the blood of a goat, and sprinkle the blood on the golden Mercy seat. It was as if the temple itself was a giant roadblock, making sure that no-one could come into God's presence uninvited – stay away, don't come near, not qualified to come on your own.

God had ordered that a thick curtain be hung between the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place, yet when Jesus died, Matthew tells us that this heavy, weighted curtain was torn in two – from top to bottom, signifying what God had done and what only He could do.

The law that condemned us has come to an end – when Jesus died the old law died with Him. There is now no condemnation to those who believe in Jesus. The road to heaven is open to anyone, anytime, anywhere. We know we have eternal life. Fear not, don't let your sins keep you away – God has opened the door to heaven.

Verse 51 The earth quaked, and the rocks were split.

Slide 3 Earthquake shatters. Evidence of the crack in Golgotha rock.

At Mt. Sinai the law condemned but could not save. At Mount Calvary Christ died that condemned men might be saved.

The earthquake at Sinai reminded men they could not approach God on their own. The earth shook beneath the cross to say – at last, the curse is being lifted. What the law could not do, Christ did for us when He died in our place, paying a debt He did not owe.

An earthquake stops us in our tracks and reminds us we are not in control. When an earthquake comes, we run for cover as the earth beneath us begins to give way. Perhaps this earthquake was God's way of saying to a wayward world, "Stop! Look! Listen! This is My Son who died for you. Run to the cross and be saved.

Verses 52-53. The tombs were also opened and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised. And they came out of the tombs after His resurrection, entered the Holy city and appeared to many.

Slide 4: The tombs were opened, and the saints were raised.

We don't fully understand what happened there. Many of the saints or believers were raised from the dead, but this was after Jesus rose from the dead on Sunday morning. Those saints went into Jerusalem and gave testimony to the death-destroying, life-giving power of the Lord Jesus Christ. Death died when Christ died because He went into the realm of death and came out holding the keys to death and Hades in His hand.

From this miracle we have the answer to our questions about our loved ones who have died, where are they now and will we see them again. We have the answer – just as these saints rose bodily and presented themselves in Jerusalem, the day will come when our loved ones who knew the Lord will rise from the grave, free from death, free from disease, free from all corruption – never to die again.

Verse 54 When the centurion and those with him, who were keeping watch of Jesus, saw the earthquake and the things that had happened, they were terrified and said, "Truly this man was the Son of God."

Slide 5 – The Centurion watched as Jesus died – he got it right as he testifies – this truly was the Son of God.

This may be the greatest miracle of all.

The centurion played a crucial role in the death of Christ. As the leader of a Roman army of 100 men, he was an officer held in high esteem, possessing good character and an expert with the sword and other weapons.

He may have known the centurion whose servant Jesus healed as it was a small region, so he may have had a favourable impression of Jesus. He must have heard Jesus say, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing. He heard Him promise heaven to the penitent thief. He witnessed the darkness and heard Jesus cry out, "It is finished!". More than that, unlike the usual criminals who died in agony, screaming bitter oaths, Jesus died quietly as He yielded His spirit to His Father in heaven. He felt the earthquake that split the rocks in two.

Think about these miracles for a moment.

Jesus touched the sun, and darkness came on the land.

Jesus touched the temple, and the veil was torn.

Jesus touched the earth, and the rocks split apart.

Jesus touched the graves, and the saints were raised.

Jesus touched the centurion, and he gave a testimony.

The first 4 miracles happened are meant to lead us to the final miracle. That's the greatest miracle of all because it is the miracle of a changed heart.

It's a miracle that happens whenever anyone comes to Jesus.

It's a miracle than can happen to you at this very moment.

What Jesus did for the centurion, He can do for you.

Do you know Him?

May God give us grace to take our stand with the centurion and say - Truly this man was the Son of God.