

Into Your Hands I Commit My Spirit  
Luke 23:44-56  
September 4, 2022  
Rev. Dave Dorst  
CenterPoint Church

Read Luke 23:44-56

*"(Jesus) said, 'Blessed (rather) are those who hear the word of God and keep it!"* (Luke 11:28)

## Introduction

In the book, *Life of Pi*, which was also made into a movie, a young Hindu boy named Piscine learns about the Christian doctrine of the Incarnation, God in the flesh in the person of Jesus, and says:

"That a god should put up with adversity, I could understand. The gods of Hinduism face their fair share of thieves, bullies, kidnappers and usurpers... Adversity, yes. Reversals of fortune, yes. Treachery, yes. But *humiliation? Death?* I couldn't imagine Lord Krishna consenting to be stripped naked, whipped, mocked, dragged through the streets, and to top it off, crucified – and at the hands of mere humans, to boot. I'd never heard of a Hindu god dying... It was wrong of this Christian God to let His avatar die. That is tantamount to letting a part of Himself die. For if the Son is to die, it cannot be fake... The death of the Son must be real... But once a dead God, always a dead God, even resurrected. The Son must have the taste of death forever in His mouth... Why would God wish that upon Himself? Why not leave death to the mortals?"<sup>1</sup>

That's a good question - "Why not leave death to the mortals?" For those of us who have grown up in church and heard the story of Jesus for a long time, the scandal of the crucifixion might have worn out a long time ago. But it's good to be reminded how incomprehensible, how shocking the idea of the Creator of the Universe allowing Himself to be killed by His creations truly is. As Piscine says, other religions have attributed human attributes to the gods and could understand their suffering. But no religion can fathom a God who gave His Son, who was a part of the eternal Trinity, over to a horrible death willingly. Why would the Christian God do that? It all sounds like awful heresy – if He's the all-powerful God, how could He let Himself be killed? What could possibly be accomplished by that act of weakness and surrender?

Well, hold those thoughts as we work our way through this text describing the last hours of Jesus' life. Last week's text saw Jesus' march to the site of His crucifixion, with a man named Simon pressed into service to carry the cross for Him. Then we read the words from Jesus' lips for God to forgive those who had done this to Him, and for the repentant criminal on the cross next to Him to be saved for eternity. As we come into our text this morning, we see the end of Jesus' life when He **I. Breathed His Last Breath (vv. 44-46)**

<sup>44</sup> *It was now about the sixth hour, and there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour,*  
<sup>45</sup> *while the sun's light failed. And the curtain of the temple was torn in two. <sup>46</sup> Then Jesus, calling out with a loud voice, said, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit!" And having said this he breathed his last.*

The sixth hour of the day is roughly noon, so there was darkness for the last three hours of Jesus' life – until 3 pm. We talked last week about fulfilled prophecy, and this is one more of those: Amos 8:9 says that, *"And on that day," declares the Lord, "I will make the sun go down at noon and darken the earth in broad daylight."* Two other Gospel writers also mention the three hours of darkness,

---

<sup>1</sup> Yann Martel, *Life of Pi* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2001), p. 54

but none of them attempt to explain it. Some people argue that it was a natural phenomenon, like an eclipse. But this was not a coincidental event, this darkness was heaven's answer to what was happening to Jesus. It was a way to show that this was the darkest time the world has ever known. Jesus had told the Jewish leaders who had come to arrest Him that *"this is your hour and the power of darkness."* To me, this seems symbolic of the Father turning His face away from the Son, who had become sin on our behalf. At a time when it should have been bright and sunny, the whole land was plunged in darkness. This is a fascinating bookend to the fact that there was incredibly bright light in the middle of the night when the angels appeared to the shepherds at Jesus' birth in Luke 2.

Luke mentions in passing something very weighty, very theologically deep. It would be very easy to read right over it and not realize that it had any significance; it doesn't even get its own verse. It's the second half of verse 45: *"And the curtain of the temple was torn in two."* If you were reading that, you might think, "Hmm, that's a weird coincidence that at the time that Jesus was dying, there was some random curtain in the temple that was ripped." Luke doesn't even mention who ripped it. What's going on here? Well, first off, as with the darkness, it was no coincidence, it was an act of God. This curtain or veil was the one that separated the Most Holy Place, the Holy of Holies, from the rest of the temple; it's the place that held the Ark of the Covenant. Only the High Priest could enter the Most Holy Place to make sacrifice on the Day of Atonement once a year because that was where God Himself resided. This was a double curtain over 30 feet high, with a thickness that no human being could have torn in two themselves.<sup>2</sup>

So what did the curtain being torn mean? Up until this very moment, God's presence had been hidden and access to Him had been restricted; the people were represented by the High Priest on their behalf; he was their mediator. God tore the curtain because the spotless Lamb of God had given His life on the cross as a once-for-all time atoning sacrifice for His people. So now access to God was opened to all; the Great High Priest, Jesus, had opened the way for us. We don't need a human mediator anymore because we have the heavenly Mediator! Hebrews 10:19-22 explains it well: *"since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus,<sup>20</sup> by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh,<sup>21</sup> and since we have a great priest over the house of God,<sup>22</sup> let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water."*

In verse 46, Jesus used the words of Psalm 31:5 where David asked God to care for him in the midst of enemy attacks: *"into your hand I commit my spirit."* Here, the Greater David in the midst of His enemy attacks added the word "Father" to the original prayer. It is the complete trust of the Son that His Father will vindicate and honor Him. It is also, in a sense, someone giving themselves over to a judge – my fate, my life, my future is in your hands.

I hope that when you and I die, we can say *"Father, into your hands I commit my spirit!"* So many people are afraid and anxious about death, but we have a Father who holds the keys to death and eternity. And He holds us in His hands. If we don't trust Him with our lives after death, we really don't trust Him with anything. And in actuality, we should be able to say that at any time in our lives: "God, I'm trusting You to uphold me through this job loss, through losing this family member, through this surprise pregnancy, through this betrayal of a close friend, through whatever it is that I'm going through. I trust You because You are my loving Father who works all things out for the good of those who love You and have been called according to Your purpose (Romans 8:28). My spirit is in Your hands."

---

<sup>2</sup> Dale Ralph Davis, *Luke 14-23: On the Road to Jerusalem* (Scotland: Christian Focus, 2021), pp. 213-14.

As we move to the next three verses, we see the immediate reactions of those watching, who

## **II. Believed He Was Blamelessness (vv. 47-49)**

*47 Now when the centurion saw what had taken place, he praised God, saying, "Certainly this man was innocent!" 48 And all the crowds that had assembled for this spectacle, when they saw what had taken place, returned home beating their breasts. 49 And all his acquaintances and the women who had followed him from Galilee stood at a distance watching these things.*

It's clear that people had been able to look at Jesus in all of His innocence and suffering and not see that He was sent from God. Most of the religious leaders, the soldiers, and the people just saw a man who caused trouble and needed to be shut up for good. But we have seen that the truth was clear to some people – certainly Pilate saw His innocence, the criminal on the cross saw it, and now we see that the centurions saw it. Matthew and Mark report that he said, "*Truly this was the Son of God*" (Matt. 27:54, Mark 15:39), which is more than just a statement of His innocence, he recognized His divinity. Centurions were the officers in the Roman army who commanded 100 men; the Latin word *centuria* means hundred. He was most likely in charge of this crucifixion scene, and he was probably so used to people cursing God and other people on the cross; being executed brought out the worst in people – either vile anger or tearful whimpering and pleading. He had never seen someone die like this praying for His enemies and being certain that He would be cared for by God. But his life was transformed by seeing Jesus up close and realizing that He was innocent; he praised God on account of Jesus. Phil Ryken says, "The descent of darkness showed that Jesus was suffering God's wrath against sin. The tearing of the veil showed that he was opening the way to God. But the conversion of the centurion showed that God can turn his enemies into friends and bring the hardest sinners from darkness into everlasting light."<sup>3</sup>

Luke says that all in the crowd beat their breasts, an expression meaning they had great sorrow. Even if those in the crowd had been mocking and encouraging Jesus' execution, it seems that they realized that something solemn and awful had happened. Perhaps this sorrow or guilt would come to lay the groundwork for many of them to come to faith in Jesus at Pentecost a few weeks later.<sup>4</sup> Certainly the ones who were most sorrowful were in verse 49 – those who knew Jesus and followed the whole trial and execution. You get the feeling that Jesus' followers were numb from the emotional wrenching of the whole day; they stood and watched, but they were as emotionally crushed as anyone.

Our final verses see the end of Good Friday, telling us how they

## **III. Buried His Body (vv. 50-56)**

*50 Now there was a man named Joseph, from the Jewish town of Arimathea. He was a member of the council, a good and righteous man, 51 who had not consented to their decision and action; and he was looking for the kingdom of God. 52 This man went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. 53 Then he took it down and wrapped it in a linen shroud and laid him in a tomb cut in stone, where no one had ever yet been laid. 54 It was the day of Preparation, and the Sabbath was beginning. 55 The women who had come with him from Galilee followed and saw the tomb and how his body was laid. 56 Then they returned and prepared spices and ointments. On the Sabbath they rested according to the commandment.*

Sometimes when there is a death and a funeral, you just want to help somehow. You offer to make a casserole for the family, you offer to pick people up from the airport, you offer to be a pallbearer, or

---

<sup>3</sup> Philip Graham Ryken, *Luke, Vol. 2* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2009), p. 615.

<sup>4</sup> R. Kent Hughes, *Luke: That You May Know the Truth* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2015), p. 831.

speak during the service. Anything to be helpful at a time when you know you can't make the pain go away, but you wish you could. Maybe that's what we see here. Joseph of Arimathea is included in all four of the Gospel writers' stories. John's Gospel says that he was a secret disciple of Jesus despite being part of the Sanhedrin, the Jewish religious ruling group. Here Luke says that he was good and righteous and had not agreed with the Jewish leaders' actions to end Jesus' life. So he took the task of preparing Jesus' body on himself. Usually, after crucifixions, the bodies were left to the elements and the wild animals to take care of; one last indignity heaped on Rome's enemies. But Jesus' body would be treated the way that Deuteronomy 21:22-23 prescribed: "*if a man has committed a crime punishable by death and he is put to death, and you hang him on a tree, his body shall not remain all night on the tree, but you shall bury him the same day, for a hanged man is cursed by God.*" Scholars say that Joseph might have been one of the wealthiest men in Jerusalem. Despite that wealth, though, he did not delegate this task to servants or pay someone to do it. Perhaps it was an act of penance or guilt, feeling that Jesus didn't deserve death, and even though Joseph didn't consent to it, he was still part of the council and partly responsible for this unjust death. I believe that he did it as an act of devotion to his Lord.

John 19:39-40 says that Joseph had help: "*Nicodemus also, who earlier had come to Jesus by night, came bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about seventy-five pounds in weight. So they took the body of Jesus bound it in linen cloths with the spices, as is the burial custom of the Jews.*" Do you remember Nicodemus? He was a Pharisee whom Jesus had met with secretly at night in John 3 and told him how he could be born again. Joseph and Nicodemus were both so afraid of losing their positions that they followed Jesus in secret, but this action of burying Jesus might have revealed them to others. They each risked their reputations and possibly their careers for publicly identifying with Jesus. What's interesting is that you have a Pharisee (Nicodemus) and a Sadducee (Joseph) working together to dignify Jesus after death, even as the Pharisees and Sadducees had worked together to destroy Jesus at the end of His life.<sup>5</sup>

Are you a secret disciple of Jesus? Do you hide the fact that you're a Christian in other parts of your life away from church? Are you afraid of losing a position because of your faith? Someone was telling me recently that at work there are several people that are nice when it's one-on-one, but when they get together, they end up ranting about moral things and disparaging Christians. It's hard to stand for your faith in the face of that pressure, to speak up that you're a follower of Jesus. I've worked in churches for over 25 years; you guys deal with this way more than I do. We need to remember that we are not called to be chameleons who blend into whatever group we're a part of. We're called to be salt and light in our communities, and the hands and feet of Jesus outside the church. We are ambassadors for Jesus who are ready to give a defense and an answer to anyone who asks about our faith. May God give us courage to be bold witnesses for Him regardless of the consequences.

The women in verses 55-56 went to prepare spices and ointments. Since they didn't embalm bodies, those things were placed on the body to reduce the smell and the decomposition. The Sabbath began at 6 pm on Friday night and after that work was prohibited.<sup>6</sup> So they would return when the Sabbath was over to do the work since they obviously were still expecting the body to be there. I will not be preaching on the resurrection next week, even though that is the next passage in order. I preached that text on Easter, so go to our website and listen to it before next Sunday if you want to be reminded of what happened when the women returned to the tomb on Sunday morning.

---

<sup>5</sup> Michael Card, *Luke: The Gospel of Amazement* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2011), p. 258.

<sup>6</sup> Darrell L. Bock, *Luke* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), p. 603.

## Conclusion

The whole rest of the New Testament helps us understand the significance of Jesus' death:

1 Peter 2:24 – *“He Himself bore our sins in His body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By His wounds you have been healed.”*

Galatians 3:13a – *“Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us.”*

Colossians 1:19-20 – *“For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of the cross.”*

On the cross, Jesus paid for our sins by offering Himself up as a substitute in our place. His death, His blood paid the penalty, it satisfied the justice of God that demands death for rebellion. It was the sacrifice that ended all other sacrifices. Jesus reconciled His people to His Father, allowing us to be declared righteous and holy in the Father's sight. As Darrell Bock says, “At the center of God's plan stands Jesus, and at the center of Jesus' work stands the cross and the resurrection.”<sup>7</sup> We here at CenterPoint church see Jesus' atoning work on the cross as the center point of our lives!

Let me give you a visual picture: Anyone who's tried to lose weight has moments when they eat unhealthy food that they love, but then regret it the next day when they get on the scale. You feel bad about whatever you ate the day before, but then you resolve to eat healthier that day. So you go down and eat an apple and a kale salad. But by mid-afternoon, you're craving something sweet, so you rationalize that it's OK to eat some chips or candy; it'll just get you through to dinner. So usually, we're just thinking about the last thing we ate, making better choices next time. But think about what it would look like if you were presented with every unhealthy thing you've ever eaten – you were taken to a room where you saw every dessert, every piece of candy and cake and pie and ice cream – you would be overwhelmed by how terribly you've eaten over the course of your life. You'd never believe that you ate all of that junk, how could you be such a glutton? But we never think about the cumulative amount of terrible things we've eaten, it's just one choice at a time.

That's kind of how we deal with sin, isn't it? Like losing weight, we want to be better, more godly. But we love our sin when we commit it; in the moment we rationalize it and enjoy it. But then we feel guilty later. So we resolve to do better; we do good things and try to stay away from sin, but inevitably we creep back to it. Now imagine being able to see every sin that you've ever committed all at once; maybe all written out in a book. You'd forgotten just how many terrible things you've done, and you can't believe how wicked you've been. But again, we rationalize how bad we are because we only commit one sin at a time. The entire catalogue of sins would overwhelm us.

Why did I give you that picture? Because that's what Jesus received on our behalf. Every sin that you and I and every believer has ever committed was placed on Jesus on the cross. That mountain of evil was loaded on Jesus for Him to atone for; Colossians says that God nailed our sins to the cross with Jesus. Not everyone's sins, only the sins of those who place their faith in Jesus. 2 Corinthians 5:21 (show with transfer) – *“For our sake He made Him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God.”*

### → Transition to Communion

Benediction- Colossians 2:13-14 - *“And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross.”*

---

<sup>7</sup> Bock, p. 601.