

“The Extraordinary Grace of the Beloved”

Good Friday Live Stream - 2020

Welcome/Prayer (Nick Wilson)

Good evening. Thank you for joining us on this Good Friday to honor the Lord Jesus Christ. Our theme this evening is *“The Extraordinary Grace of the Beloved.”* Together we will reflect on Christ, the Beloved of the Father, who came so that we too could become God’s beloved. Tonight, we are going to be introduced to Jesus through the eyes of His closest disciple, John, who became known as the disciple whom Jesus loved. Through John’s eyes we are going to see snapshots of Jesus’ extraordinary life, His extraordinary humility, and His extraordinary sacrifice through which God provides for undeserving sinners, extraordinary grace! [prayer]

Song - **When I Survey the Wondrous Cross**

*In the beginning was the Word,
And the Word was with God,
And the Word was God.*

*And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us,
and we beheld His glory,
glory as of the only begotten from the Father,
full of grace and truth.*

In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men.

(John 1:1, 14, 4)

The Extraordinary Life of the Beloved

I’ve become known as *the Beloved*—the disciple whom Jesus loved. It is no secret that of all the disciples, I was the closest to Jesus.¹ He was a delightful friend—the kind of friend you could always count on to speak the truth yet never lacking grace. When He looked into your eyes, He knew your very thoughts. Yet even when Jesus saw the darkest corners of your heart, there was a depth of love that drew you to Him—a perfect love that casts out fear. I guess you could say that my relationship with Jesus was like being fully known, yet fully loved with no fear of rejection.

Oh, it was such a privilege to walk and talk with Jesus; to eat with Him, to hear His teaching and to see, firsthand, His countless miracles. There’s no doubt that God’s favor rested on Him—unlike anyone else. I was there when Jesus was baptized in the Jordan River by John the Baptist. I heard that thundering voice from heaven: *“This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased.”*²

I think that’s why it’s been such an honor for me to be called Jesus’ beloved. Because He Himself was the beloved of the Father.

The more I saw of Jesus, the more I realized that His power was not an endowed power like the prophets of old. It was inherent power—a power from within—subject to His every command. When He spoke, His Word had authority and power—power to change heart, soul, and body. And His fellowship with the Father was so deep and intimate, like it had always been without beginning.

¹ John 13:23

² Matt 3:17

Oh, I didn't comprehend it all at first. But the testimony of His life leaves no question. He is the Christ, the Son of the living God! He was one with the Father, before time began; the Creator, God Himself come in the flesh. Jesus was the word, the expression and revelation God in His very being. Perhaps the best way I could say it is that...

*In the beginning was the Word,
And the Word was with God,
And the Word was God.*

*All things came into being by Him
And apart from Him nothing came into being
that has come to be.*

*And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us,
and we beheld His glory,
glory as of the only begotten from the Father,
full of grace and truth.*

In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men.³

Now, as I look back over Jesus' life, I can clearly see how distinctly He is all that we see in the Father.

At the wedding in Cana, we saw in Him **Elohim**, the all powerful Creator, as He turned water into wine.

When Jesus turned over the tables of the money-changers in the temple, we saw in Him **Jehovah-Tsidkenu**, the Lord our Righteousness, the Holy and righteous Judge.

When Jesus gave sight to the blind and caused the lame to walk again, we saw in Him the glory of **Jehovah-Rapha**, the only God who heals.

When Jesus fed the 5000, He was **Jehovah-Jireh**, our Provider.

When Jesus sat by the well and told the Samaritan woman all that she had done, **El Roi** was speaking, the God who sees all things, both seen and unseen.

When Jesus rescued the adulterous woman from her accusers, we saw in Him, **Jehovah-Shalom**, the Lord our peace; our merciful Savior who along can make one whole.

To our astonishment, when Jesus walked on water and when He stilled the storm on the sea of Galilee, we beheld **El Shaddai**, the all-sufficient One to whom even the laws of nature must bow.

But none was more convincing than when Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead. Jesus intentionally waited 2 days before beginning his journey to Bethany so that Lazarus had already been in the tomb four days when we arrived. And there He proved to us beyond the shadow of a doubt just who He is. I will never forget Jesus' words as he stood outside the tomb—the most significant words spoken since the beginning of time: ***“I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me will live even if he dies, and everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die. Do you believe this?”***⁴

³ John 1:1-3, 14, 4

⁴ John 11:25-26

Jesus commanded that the stone be removed from the entrance to the tomb. Then Jesus spoke with a power and authority that defied all the forces of death and—“Lazarus, come forth!”

Beloved, when I saw Lazarus walk out of his grave, I knew for certain that there was nothing Jesus could not do. He is the embodiment of Hope!

And that’s why the crowds hailed Him as their King as He rode in Jerusalem just days before the last Passover. Yet our elation of praise was soon overcome by a crushing weight of sorrow. Jesus told us that He would suffer and die at the hands of the scribes and Pharisees, but we didn’t want to believe it. In the hours to come our faith would be tested unlike ever before. It was like trying to swim against an ocean current. Our flesh was weak, our sin so heavy. But as we sank deeper and deeper into the grief and horror of those hours, what we could not see is that we were drowning in the ocean of Christ’s love—the painful, purifying love of Christ that alone could rescue our souls.

Song – **What Wondrous Love** (vs. 1-3)

“Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He had come forth from God, and was going back to God, rose from supper, laid aside His garments, and...began to wash the disciples' feet...” (John 13:3-4).

The Extraordinary Humility of the Beloved

I was there on the night when Jesus was betrayed. I sat nearest to Jesus at that last Passover meal that we would share together. Though Jesus carried an air of sorrow that night, there was a determination of purpose in Him that I had never seen so intensely.

When we gathered for the meal, the other disciples and I were preoccupied with thinking about what status we would have in Jesus’ kingdom. But Jesus, knowing all that He was about to suffer and the glory that would follow in His return to the Father, could not be swayed from His true character of humility and servanthood. Even in the most intense moments of His life, Jesus never withdrew into Himself—He was always outward focused, seeking the Father and serving us. But never would we be so influenced by Jesus lowliness than on that night.

We had already taken our seats at the table. Peter and I had just finished the preparations for the Passover meal while the others were still engaged in the vigorous conversation of day. We were all so distracted that we didn’t even notice Jesus get up from the table; until he returned with a basin of water, girded in a towel. And then taking the posture of a servant, He began to wash our feet.

Sitting closest to Jesus, I was the first whose feet He washed. As He gently bathed my soiled feet, my mind recalled his words from just a few days earlier: *“whoever wishes to be first among you shall be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.”*⁵

I felt a sense of silent embarrassment as Jesus’ words echoed through my mind. His proverb on servanthood had come as a rebuke to my brother James and I. We had asked Jesus to grant us the privileged place of honor in His kingdom—one to sit on His right and the other to sit on his left. And naturally, as Jesus’ closest friend, I assumed that I would be seated at His right. Jesus’ words of correction should have penetrated my heart that day, but I was too quickly distracted by the indignation

⁵ Mark 10:44-45

of the other disciples who overheard our request. “Only their pride makes them indignant,” I thought to myself with the insight of sin-blinded heart.

I was only rescued from the torment of my memory when I heard Peter boldly object to Jesus washing *his* feet. Once again I mentally assaulted Peter for his evident pride. After all, its only one’s arrogance that refuses to let others serve us. And yet I failed to see my own pride. Peter was the only one who was humble enough to acknowledge that the roles were reversed. We should have—I should have washed Jesus’ feet.

All of us were reluctant to speak as Jesus returned to His place at the table. Then He began to teach us one of the most important lessons we would ever learn:

“Do you understand what I have done to you?

You call Me Teacher and Lord; and you are right, for so I am.

If I then, the Lord and the Teacher, washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet.

For I gave you an example that you also should do as I did to you.

Truly, truly, I say to you, a slave is not greater than his master; neither is one who is sent greater than the one who sent him.

If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them.”

All of us felt the sting of Jesus’ rebuke. Yet it was a rebuke that came out of a heart of pure love. And we knew it. Jesus was showing us the full extent of His love! *Beloved, He who loves much, serves much.*

Undoubtedly, we were all confident that we had grasped Jesus teaching—it seemed plain enough: We were to serve one another. But did we really comprehend the irony of that moment?

As Jesus knelt to wash my feet, He was fully conscious of His own greatness; having come from the Father and soon to be seated in His glory once again. Yet Jesus did not hesitate to humble Himself out love for His own. *Beloved, love is always humble.*

When Jesus knelt to wash Peter’s feet, He knew what ultimate servanthood would cost Him in the hours to come. Yet because of His great love for us, He withheld no sacrifice in the ultimate act of servanthood—the cross!

Even as Jesus knelt to wash the feet of Judas, He knew full well that Judas’ heart had already betrayed Him. And yet did not Jesus say, *“Love your enemies and do good to those who hate you. Bless those who curse you and pray for those who mistreat you...Be merciful just as your Father is merciful.”*⁶

Yet, Judas does not stand alone. His heart was not the only one to forsake Jesus. Indeed, all of us have betrayed Him with our sin.

But God proved the immensity of His love toward us; while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.⁷

Song – **How Deep the Father’s Love For Us**

“Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made Himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness...He humbled himself and became obedient to death-- even death on a cross! (Phil 2:5-8)

The Extraordinary Sacrifice of the Beloved

⁶ Luke 6:27-28, 35

⁷ Romans 5:8 paraphrase

O Beloved, so much happened in the hours that followed the last supper—it was the longest night of my life, yet it all happened so suddenly; Gethsemane where Jesus prayed with such agony, and there was arrested by a Roman cohort; Judas’ betrayal; the false trials before Pilate and Herod; Peter’s denial of Jesus; the crowds demanding His crucifixion; the scourging and mocking of the soldiers who beat Jesus nearly beyond recognition; and that horrible parade from Jerusalem to Golgotha, as Peter and I followed from a distance.

Every memory pierces my soul with sorrow. But I cannot shut it out—I must not! Make no mistake, my friend, though Jesus was given the most vile treatment wicked men were capable of—and they will be held to account—make no mistake, not one detail of Jesus’ suffering, not one dissonant chord, failed to fit into our Father’s perfect orchestration that would so beautifully compose our salvation.

Yet as I reflect on that dark, bloody day, what captures my heart the most was the last few words Jesus’ uttered from the cross before He died. Jesus’ cross had been raised and those who gathered to gloat at the spectacle were hurling abuse and insults at Jesus mercilessly. Even the two thieves who were crucified with Jesus joined in the jeering. It was then Jesus first spoke: **“Father, forgive them for they do not know what they are doing.”** While His accusers were still blinded by their own sinful hearts, Jesus interceded for them, pleading with the Father to have mercy on them.

It was in that moment that one of the criminals next to Jesus suddenly had a change of heart. It was as if His heart was suddenly overcome by the fear of God and in seeing the extraordinary character of Jesus, he saw the sinfulness of his own condemned heart. Turning to Jesus he said, “Remember me when you come into your kingdom.” And Jesus said, **“today you shall be with Me in paradise.”**

Beloved, do these words not capture the glorious, divine purpose of the cross!? Jesus, the perfect, sinless, Son of God, died as a sacrifice for our sin so that we could be forgiven, reconciled to our Father, and one day call heaven our eternal home.

I was trying to take in all that Jesus was saying, when His eyes turned in my direction. Mary His mother was standing next to me. His eyes moved from Mary to myself and back again as He said, **“Woman, behold your son; son behold your mother.”** I was taken back by the utter selflessness of Jesus in that moment. In the midst of His greatest agony, His focus was not on Himself or His own needs, but the needs of others. It was yet one more example of the warmth of Jesus’ compassionate care for those He loved. Needless to say, I took Mary into my home and cared for her from that day on.

By now the sky had been growing darker and darker for nearly three hours, as if all creation was mourning for its Maker. Suddenly Jesus cried out those bone-chilling words, **“Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachtanani?—My God, My God, why have you forsaken Me?”** Indeed, all seemed forsaken. It wasn’t until later when the Spirit taught us all things, that I comprehended the weight of those words. Jesus was bearing the crushing weight of God’s wrath for man’s sin. Jesus was forsaken by the Father, so we need never be forsaken by Him. Yet in those words, were hope. Jesus was quoting the words of David in Ps 22—David himself, prophesying of Christ’s sufferings. Not only was He expressing anguish, He was also affirming God as holy and sovereign; the very One in whom our fathers trusted and were vindicated in the end. Beloved, even in that moment Jesus was clinging to the faithfulness of His righteous Father.

Its impossible to imagine the physical torment that Jesus endured. The Romans were masters of humiliation and torture. Crucifixion was a prolonged and utterly exhausting process in which the victim’s suffering was intensified by blood loss, asphyxiation, and dehydration. Just before Jesus was nailed to the cross, He was offered wine with myrrh. This served as a sedative to reduce the struggle of being nailed to the cross. But Jesus had refused to drink it. He offered Himself willingly having determined at Gethsemane to rather drink His Father’s cup—the full cup of the Father’s wrath for our sin. Nothing would cloud His mind or minimize His suffering on our behalf.

But now, hours later, Jesus, knowing that all things had been fulfilled, said, *“I am thirsty.”* The Father’s cup was now empty. The full fury of God’s judgment had been poured out, fully spent on Christ—not one drop spared. Then Jesus cried out with a loud voice, *“It is finished! Father, into Thy hands I commit My spirit!”* Even to His final breath, Jesus entrusted every moment of His life to His Father. And He breathed His last....

Song – **The Gospel Song**

“God made Christ who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him” (2 Cor 5:21)

The Extraordinary Grace of the Beloved

Jesus offers you extraordinary grace. We call it extraordinary because it comes to us from an extraordinary life—the infinite, holy Son of God who deserves nothing less than divine glory. Yet through extraordinary humility, He humbled Himself to the point of death, even death on a cross—a death reserved for the lowest of criminals.

But why would Jesus, who deserved the highest glory as God Himself, humble himself to humiliating torment and death?

He did it to fulfill the Father’s will, to reveal the astonishing mercy and grace of God, and to rescue sinners from the condemnation of their sin.

It’s true that at the cross we see the worst of mankind, gloating in their abuse, torment and execution of the sinless Son of God. Yet in the cross we also see the best of God’s gracious love for sinners.

The most important question we can ask about the cross is, what was God doing through the cross? 2 Cor 5:21 captures God’s purpose for the cross. *“God made Christ who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.”*

Let me say it this way: God caused His *Beloved* to bear the punishment of our sin so that we could become His *beloved* and bear His eternal favor! At the cross, God treated Christ as though He had committed every one of our sins, so that in eternity we could be treated as though we had lived His perfect life. That’s what the cross is about.

Yet, you might ask why God is so particular about sin? Why would He require death as the payment for sin? Why would He suffer His Son’s brutal death as the only means for us to escape sin’s penalty? Let me give you 3 reasons. God passionately opposes sin to the point of death because...

1. **God is holy**, meaning there is no sin or impurity whatsoever in Him. Therefore, He cannot look favorably on any sin of any degree. *“You shall be holy for I am holy,”* says the Lord (1 Peter 1:16).
2. **God is good**—infinitely, perfectly good—which means that He must ultimately destroy all that is wicked or sinful. God could not be good and let sinners go unpunished. *“God is light and in Him there is no darkness at all”* (1 John 1:5).
3. **God is the source of all life**, which means that those who rebel against God are cut off from life and must bear the eternal consequences for their rebellion against God.

So God must be unwaveringly opposed to sin because He is both holy and good. And death is the only possible result for those who rebel against God with their sin because He alone is the source of life.

It’s important for you to understand that sin is not just a category of behavior like lying or cheating. Sin is a relationship of opposition to God. It’s the heart that says, *“I’m going to do what I want to do, when I want to do it, and however I want to do it,”* with no consideration for what pleases God. We do this all the time. We just go

through life following the dictates of our own heart with no consideration of where it puts us in relationship to God.

And of course, no one is exempt from this posture of sin—“all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God” (Rom 3:23). In recent days we’ve been all too aware of the contagious coronavirus, knowing that it’s possible for a person to be infected with it for days without even being aware of it. This, coupled with the fact that it could be deadly for some, makes it worthy of respect. Yet do we realize that every one of us is infected with a sin nature and that often sin goes undetected in our own lives, just like the coronavirus does? Unlike the virus, however, sin exacts a death penalty of eternal judgment on *every single person*—Unless they receive the cure.

What is the cure? Christ is the cure. God sent His Son to this earth to live a sinless life, overcoming every temptation and living every moment of His life with the intentional focus of pleasing the Father. Why? So that His death could be an acceptable, holy sacrifice before God on our behalf. And all who turn from their sin to trust in Christ alone to save them become one with Him by faith so that the assets of His righteous life and the payment of His death wipe out the debt of our sin.

Jesus is the cure for our sin-sick hearts, and He is the *only* cure. Jesus said, *“I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father, except through Me”* (Jn 14:6).

Here’s what you must understand. If sin is a rebellious relationship of independence from God, then repenting of your sin to believe and follow Christ means coming under the loving authority of Jesus as Lord. It means turning from self-rule to follow Christ as Lord.

The apostle John said, *“Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God’s wrath remains on him.”* (John 3:36).

Tonight, you stand at a crossroad of decision. Will you continue to live your life independently of God under the doom of His coming wrath for your sin or will you surrender to Christ as Lord and receive the forgiveness and mercy of His extraordinary grace?

The apostle John assures us that everyone who receives Jesus as Lord is not only reconciled to God, but given the right to become a child of God (John 1:12). In other words, if you will embrace God’s beloved Son as *your* beloved Savior and Lord, God will receive you as His beloved child. That means that all the guilt, shame, condemnation, and fear of your sinful past is replaced with the enduring, eternal promise of God’s grace and favor.

I urge you, from the depth of your heart, to have an honest conversation with God, to confess that you have been living in rebellion by living independently of Him. Confess your trust in Christ alone to reconcile you to the Father and confess your submission and allegiance to Him as Lord.

The Bible says that *“if you confess with your mouth, Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses resulting in salvation. For the Scripture says, whoever believe in Him will not be disappointed.”*

Song - **The Power of the Cross**

Closing slide: Please join us for Resurrection Sunday Livestream, 10:30 am