

Rejoice! It Really Happened!

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- [0:00] Well, Jesus went to the cross, went to his death with his eyes wide open.! We generally blindly stumble to our deaths.
- ! Maybe we don't see it at all and all of a sudden it happens. No warning. Or we don't see it coming at first.
- And then we go to the doctor and we have bad news. And then there's this process of going from one treatment to another, to one thing to another.
- And like a pinball, we're bounced around by forces outside of ourselves until the end. And perhaps it's assisted living home and then the nursing home and then into dementia.
- Well, what I mean is usually our deaths are very much out of our control. We choose neither the time nor the place nor the way it happens.
- [1:09] And it's a very, it's a deeply humbling process. It's a sanctifying process because it is so humbling. As we see more and more of our lives slip out of our control, we need to trust more.
- We need to rely on the Lord more. We need to bow deeper, to hold his hand tighter as we're going down into that valley of the shadow of death.
- And so, we stumble to our death so often. But how different was Jesus' death? It was no surprise at all for him.
- Thought of that. No surprise at all. And it didn't just happen to him out of the blue. No, for this very reason, he was born.
- For this very reason, he was born. We saw that this morning from Hebrews chapter 10. I'm not going to turn you there, but Hebrews 10.5. The author is, in that passage, is talking about sacrifices.
- [2:17] Sacrifices means death. It means the heart stopping, the breath stopping, the eyes closing, the darkness descending.
- And he said, year after year, animals had died. Bulls and goats had died. They had experienced death.
- Their hearts had stopped. Their eyes had shut. Their breathing had ceased. And yet, year after year, nothing had happened to take away sin.
- He says, yes, without the shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness of sin. And yet, still, after all of this time, all of this death, all of this bloodshed, all of these broken bodies, there was sin still there.
- Another had to die. Another had to have his breath stop. His heartbeat stop. Another had to have his blood poured out and his body broken.
- [3:28] Because all of that death before hadn't taken away sin. Sin remained. And sin was still showing itself right through all of that blood.
- A stain that no animal blood could hide. And then that's when, in Hebrews 10.5, there is an important word. It says, therefore. Because these things didn't work.

Because these animals, all their deaths didn't work. Therefore, when Christ came into the world, when Christ was born, when the Son of God became man, so he was glory of glory, the word of the Father.

When Christ came into the world, when he appeared, he said, sacrifice an offering you did not desire, but a body you prepared for me. With burnt offerings and sin offerings, you were not pleased.

Then I said, here I am. It is written about me in the scroll. I have come to do your will, O God. We stumble to our deaths.

[4 : 39] Losing more and more control all along the way. But Jesus came for this very reason. There is a steel corded cable between Christmas and the cross.

Between Bethlehem and Golgotha. You don't see Christmas. You don't see the incarnation. You don't understand it until and unless you see with it this fearsome specter of death looming over that manger.

The only real baby in the manger was the baby marked for death.

The only accurate nativity scene you'll ever see is with a cross and a shadow hanging over the nativity scene.

We stumble through life and on to death, not knowing how it will happen, when it will happen. But not our Lord. He walked to death with his eyes wide open.

[5 : 57] And so as he stood on the shore between eternity and time, between earth, between heaven and earth, he knew that this was why he was coming.

He said, this is a body you prepare for me. I've come to do your will. And what is the will of the father? What is it that God has put into his hands and said, now you work this out.

You carry this out. Well, the will of his father is to sacrifice that very body prepared for him for our sin. So as the son of God took on flesh, he did it unto death.

He did it unto death. Now, some ancient and some even modern heretics make this claim or think that this is how it happened.

And they teach this, that the son of God entered into the body of a man. And yet, when it came time for that body to die, when it came time for that man to die, the son of God fled the cross and he was not there.

[7 : 09] And so terrible is this idea. And I think, I mean, we're so used to not thinking that as something crazy. We can't appreciate why they would want to think that.

So terrible is this idea that the son of God, that God himself in the flesh would die. They run from it.

And yet, this is the gospel. This is the gospel. This is the terrible truth that the son of God walked to his death and he embraced it.

I'm just saying it, the cost embracing. And his heart fluttered and ceased. His eyes shut.

And sin's payment embraced him and took him. All the sting of death. All the fear, the grief, the darkness, the pain, it took him because it was for those very moments.

[8 : 18] For this very reason, he came. My Savior, my God, took on flesh for me. And your Savior and your God walked to his death with his eyes wide open for you.

Now, turn in your Bibles to Matthew chapter 26. And I want to reinforce this idea again that Jesus walked to his death with his eyes wide open.

He knew what he was going for. He knew what was going to happen. And yet, the constant movement is towards the cross.

So Matthew chapter 26. It was this thought that Jesus walked to his death with his eyes wide open that just really struck me as I read this chapter in my devotions a few weeks ago.

And as you read it, it doesn't happen just once or twice. There's this growing, growing, looming presence of the cross.

[9:28] It's getting closer and closer. And Jesus sees it. And right until the very end, his disciples miss it. They don't see it. They don't hear it. They can't understand it.

It doesn't fall in line with their theology. And so they just tune it out. But Jesus saw it. And he is staring death, his own death in the face.

And he walked toward it. It didn't just come toward him. That was our case. Death takes us. No. In this case, he walked toward it.

Look at verse 2. Verse 2. Matthew 26. As you know, the Passover is two days away.

And the Son of Man will be handed over to be crucified. Imagine.

[10:29] I want you to imagine. Imagine knowing that in two days' time, you will be crucified. On Tuesday morning, you will be crucified.

The dawn of the darkest day is now two days away. And Jesus sees it. He says, now let me tell you what's going to happen. How would you feel if Tuesday morning was going to be your day to experience a horrific death?

And not only the physical aspects, but the spiritual side of it as well. That you are going to die being cut off from God and being punished for sin.

Well, Jesus saw it. He knew it was going to happen. He felt it. And he didn't run away from it. Instead, he walked to it. Many people had, before this time, tried to take his life from him.

And he had always managed to escape. But now, he says, now that's not going to be. It's going to happen. It's on his mind. And now it's beginning like this is all he can see.

[11:52] This is what is the most pressing thing on his heart. It's all he can see now. And so, in the next little bit, a woman anoints his head with oil while he's in the little town of Bethany.

And she doesn't even know why she does it. I mean, she does it for love. She does it because she loves him. But she doesn't understand the meaning behind it. She doesn't understand what it's signifying and what it's all about.

And yet, he does. Jesus knows what this means. That you're anointing my body with beautiful and wonderful perfume.

And he says, verse 12, when she poured the perfume on my body, she did it to prepare me for burial.

That's not what she was thinking, I don't think. But that's what he saw. It's on his mind. My body. And if Jesus was a man as much as we are, we know that he cherished his body.

[13:01] He loved it. He cared for it. He felt a sense of ownership of it. It wasn't a piece of garbage to him. It was God's creation. And like we care for our bodies, he cared for his body.

But now here he is saying, my body. I'm going to die. And she is now preparing me for burial. And now they're at the Last Supper.

And he says these very strange words. And again, it's only it's not strange to us because we've heard it so many times, but he says, take and eat.

This is my body. This broken, torn apart piece of bread. This is my body. And this is my blood.

Death is coming. So can you imagine saying things like that? My body. My blood. Broken.

- [14:05] Poured out. Well, death is going to take him. And he knows that it's coming. And still Jesus goes on. But, you know, it wasn't just the fact that he was going to die.
- It was the fact that he knew all the circumstances of it, too. It would be one thing to know that on such and such a day you would die, but not knowing how.
- But Jesus had to face all the painful circumstances around it. Who wants to know their betrayer ahead of time? Jesus knew.
- He had to carry that burden on his heart. Verse 21, I tell you the truth, one of you will betray me. And they all imagine it is impossible.
- Again, this is not where they're at. This is impossible. And they're all saying, surely not I. Surely not I. Surely not I. And then it's Judas' turn.
- [15:07] And Jesus and Judas look eyeball to eyeball. And Judas says, surely not I. Jesus says, yes, it is.
- It's you. Jesus knew how he would die. He knew how it would come about. His own friend would betray him into the hand of sinners.
- And there's more. Who wants to think that they're going to die alone? Who wants to imagine that?
- Who wants to know that that's the way it's going to be? I saw a headline a couple weeks back. It said something like, World War II veteran dies alone, crying for help.
- They somehow had a video of it. And I didn't click on it. Because who needs to see that?
- [16:12] But look at verse 31. This very night, you will all fall away on account of me.
- You will all fall away. All of you. If we must die, we want to think that we'll die with our friends around us.
- With their love, and their support, and their comfort, and their help. We want to have their love. But as Jesus saw death coming, He knew that that's not how it was going to be for Him.
- He would be abandoned by His disciples. Ignored. And unacknowledged by His closest friends. He knew all the details.
- He knew it all. And you see, how does He know that they're all going to leave Him? Well, He has Old Testament Scriptures. He had the written Word.
- [17:08] The Old Testament haunted Him. Because this was what was written in the scroll. I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered.
- Now can you imagine even that? Of reading your Old Testament. Reading your Bible. And knowing that all of the worst parts were for you.
- All the saddest things about friends abandoning you. And crying out, my God, my God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Were going to be words that you would say. Jesus saw it.
- And yet, Jesus walked to His death with His eyes wide open. Peter says, not me.
- No. You'll disown me three times. He'll disown me three times. Now there's one last verse I want to look at.
- [18:15] Verse 45. Verse 45. And this is now after Gethsemane. And verse 45 says, Then He returned to the disciples and said, Are you still sleeping and resting?
- Look. Look. Look. He's the first one to see it because He's been looking for it. Look. The hour is near. The Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners.
- Rise. Let us go. Here comes my betrayer. Look. The hour has come. The hour has come.

That moment. That long prophesied. That long prepared for moment in Jesus' heart. The reason why He had come. It's now at hand.

It's here. Look. There it is. And what I find so wonderful and encouraging is what He says next. And His response is, Rise.

[19:17] Let's go. Here comes my betrayer. Look. There it is. And He rises up. And He... It's time to meet it. And He walked into the hands of sinners.

No man takes my life from me. But I lay it down. I lay it down.

So Jesus went to the cross with His eyes wide open. It started on that edge between heaven and earth. Between eternity and time. It began in a manger.

And now here it is. It's come. The cross. The cross. The body broken. The blood poured out. The death.

Why? Why? Why did Jesus go to death with His eyes wide open? Well, we saw this morning, but it was to obey His Father.

[20:14] It was to please His Father. If you don't see God about Him pleasing His Father, you don't understand it unless you know the cross was about Him loving His Father.

He's doing this for Him. He's doing this to please Him. He's doing it because He loves His Father. I've come to do Your will. He said, I always do what pleases Him.

Now this is what pleases you. And so, if it is death, it is death. Then I go. So it was love. Love stronger than death.

Love stronger than fear. Love greater than any pain. Greater than any fear. Greater than any pain. Love for His Father.

And that's why. This is His final, fulfilling, complete act of obedience. This is His finishing obedience. This is His last great capstone of righteousness that now this is the righteousness I am working out for My people.

[21:27] And so there He goes. So why did Jesus walk to His death with His eyes wide open? Well, for me. for you.

Because we had no righteousness of our own. Nothing to offer to God. Why did He do it with His eyes wide open? Because I have walked into sin with my eyes wide open.

And you have too. Knowing that what you are going to do is evil. And doing it anyways. because I have rebelled with my eyes wide open.

And because I was blindly stumbling into a world of fire and darkness of separation and condemnation. I didn't know what I was doing.

I had no idea what I was bringing on myself. Because no other blood would do. No other body would do.

[22:32] There was only one sacrifice. And He was the one that had to make it. You wonder in the Old Testament, did those lambs and bulls ever smell the blood?

And think, what am I? What's happening? Well, Jesus smelled the blood. And yet, He went as a lamb to the slaughter.

He went to the slaughter. And He didn't go reluctantly. He went peacefully, calmly, courageously to the cross.

So brothers and sisters, rest your consciences here. Jesus is not a reluctant Savior. not a reluctant Savior.

I've come to do your will. You have a body prepared for me. And I go. And He knew full well what He was going to do. And yet He went. No reluctant Savior.

- [23 : 41] He laid down His life that we could hide in it. He laid down His life in a sacrifice that we could find rest for our souls. That the words, it is finished, could be finally and fully written. that the separating curtain could be torn in two and that we could go into the very presence of God. He did that. And so rest your consciences here in His body and in His blood poured out and shed for sinners.
- sinners. But do more than that. Do more than that. Do more than rest your consciences. Stir up your love. So not only when your sin is like an arrow in your heart and you look for rest and where can you find rest while you go to the cross.
- But more than that, stir up your love. Stir up your love for the Savior. He did this for you. He did it for you.
- [24 : 49] That trail of tears, that trail of blood, that trail of sorrow that led to the cross and finished in the cross. He walked that for you. He knew His own death.
- He knew the betrayal. He knew the abandonment. He knew the pain. He knew the injustice. He knew the separation that was coming. He knew the spiritual, the physical.
- He knew every aspect of the painful cross beforehand. He had taken it upon Him. He was this man of sorrows. And He walked to the cross. And He did it for you.
- Out of love. And what kind of love is that? What kind of love is that? It's a burning love. It's a fierce love. It's a courageous, overflowing love. What words are there for that kind of love? So stir up your love for Him. I guess this is how He has loved you.
- [25 : 52] And you're happy with him.