

The Murder of the Son of God

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[0:00] Well, this morning we come to the worst sin ever committed. The murder of the Son of God. And it's this sin above all others that stands as condemning evidence of the wickedness of man.

! So are men innocent? Or are we simply misguided, a little off? That is the question. And so, Judge, I would like to submit for the evidence the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. Mankind finally has God within its grasp in their power. And in a rabid fury, they nail him to a piece of wood.

And they hang him up to bleed and to suffocate and to be mocked and to be scorned. And no one came to rescue. Many hands were raised against him.

None interposed to save. So are you saying, the judge asked, are you saying that no one came forward to stop it? No one made a case for him?

[1:19] No, Your Honor. No one stood up. No hand intervened. They ran. They hid. They watched. They cried. They stood in silence.

But they, no one did anything to stop it. So you are the jury. Man had God in their hands, so to speak.

And they stripped him naked. They spit in his face. They mocked him. They whipped his back to shreds. They nailed him to a piece of wood and let him hang, still living for the crowds to mock him. So is man innocent? Well, someone might say that was them.

And they were a pretty bad bunch. So the question is, were they? Were really they the worst? Were they particularly bad? Were they particularly rotten?

[2:17] And the answer is they were just ordinary people. Ordinary people did this. Normal government officials. Pilate wasn't Hitler.

Pilate wasn't Stalin. It was governors, just like our governors, Governor Pence. Normal officials. Normal people like our local sheriff, our local congressman.

And it was just normal religious church-going folk in town for a week of festivities. On a week's vacation to the big city.

And it was those people that screeched, crucify him, crucify him. And it was those people that stood by and took no effective action. So they were the people that just happened to be there.

But they weren't particularly bad. And if anything, they probably leaned towards the decent side of things. And so, you're the jury.

[3:23] And man is on trial. What do you say? Is man innocent? Well, the greatest sin ever was the murder of the Son of God.

And so, we nailed him to the cross. And if you think about it, it's a wonder that the earth is even still here. But perhaps the greatest thing, the most punch in the stomach, breathtaking thing about it, was that Judas handed him over to get the ball rolling, to start it happening, to make it all happen. So, Jesus had picked out Judas. Judas had been personally with Jesus for three years, at least, from the beginning.

And he had been entrusted with the money bag. He was in charge of the finances for the whole group. So, he was the treasurer. And he was close enough to Jesus at the Last Supper to be dipping bread in the same bowl with Jesus.

And in the Psalms, you hear the agony of Jesus' heart over the betrayal. I think we have a hard time understanding what that felt like because we know that Jesus knew that Judas was going to do that.

[4:51] And so, somehow the betrayal is muted in our understanding. But the betrayal was real. And there is nothing more painful than betrayal.

To trust someone. To think, we're close. We're friends. We're on the same side. They like me. They love me. I can trust them. They are for me.

And then to have them turn against you. And then every inch of love that you had for each other, that you had for them, it turns to poison and it turns to fire.

And that sword cuts through your heart. And there's very little to do to keep you from bleeding. So, of all the despicable things that happened, of all the horrific things that happened, probably on the human side, the most horrific thing was Judas smiling at Jesus.

Meanwhile, thinking, when can I hand him over? When can I find a time and a place to hand him over to his death? And so, the kiss on the cheek that condemned Jesus to death.

[5:59] Well, there was something else going on, wasn't there? It wasn't just Judas acting on his own. There was a power behind Judas.

And so, please turn in your Bibles to Luke chapter 22. Luke chapter 22. And look at verse 3.

We'll read 3 through 6. Then Satan entered Judas, called Iscariot, one of the twelve. And Judas went to the chief priests and the officers of the temple guard and discussed with them how he might betray Jesus.

They were delighted and agreed to give him money. He consented and watched for an opportunity to hand Jesus over to them when no crowd was present.

It says there that Satan entered Judas. And then Judas went away and made the deal. So, when Luke tells us that Satan entered Judas, several questions come to mind.

[7:11] Several questions come to, we wonder about. The first is, was this a hostile takeover? Was Judas an innocent person who Satan hijacked?

Was he basically a good guy and Satan came along and hijacked him? That's the first question. The second question is, why in the world did Satan do this? Since Jesus' death and resurrection was going to be his demise, why would he do it?

Why put into motion his own demise? And the third is, where was God in all of this? And so let's take each of those questions in turn.

Was this a hostile takeover? And the answer is no. Our Judas was a thief already, wasn't he? He was already a thief.

Satan already rules where men are held sway by their desires and the power of the flesh. So Ephesians 2 says, You were dead in your trespasses and sins in which you walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience.

[8:29] So Judas was already following Satan. Satan. So this was nothing new or novel for Judas to do what Satan wanted him to do.

It might have been a step up in Satan's influence, but Judas was already following Satan. He followed him every time he stole out of the bag.

Satan is a thief and a murderer. And Satan steals big things and he steals little things. And so when he steals and murders, Satan just does what is natural to him.

And Judas was his man. And the scary thing is, if that is what we were, and that's what our children are or were.

So Satan does not take innocent people captive. Satan has power where sinful passions hold sway. Judas was a lover of money.

[9:30] And so it wasn't like Satan had to whip him to get him to go betray Jesus. That greed was already there. So was it a hostile takeover?

Not at all. It never is. Never is. The second question, why in the world did Satan do it? Have you ever thought of that?

What an intriguing question. Why would he set in motion this set of events? Now let me ask you. Was it Satan's normal practice to keep Jesus from, or to send Jesus to the cross? Was it Satan's normal practice to get Jesus to go to the cross?

Can you think of a few times or a few things that tell us, that show us, that Satan's ideal plan was anything but the cross? Can you think of a couple things that says, you know, Satan probably didn't want this to happen.

[10:38] Yeah. Can you say that again? Yeah. Go on. What do you mean? Right. So, if we're going to understand the temptations in the desert, in the wilderness, what was going on was, how are you going to become this great king over all the nations?

Will you do it by exerting your authority and your glory, by, you know, taking power and dominion? No. We, okay, so he's, you don't make the stones into bread just to serve.

He, you don't do it just for me. And Jesus is saying, I can't do it just for me. And then Jesus, or Satan takes Jesus and he shows him all the kingdoms of the earth and says, this can all be yours. Well, God had said, the nations are yours, but the path is the cross. And Satan is now offering a much easier path, isn't he? One with no cross, no suffering, no shame, it's just, you bow down and worship and you can have it.

So the desert temptation, Satan tried to turn him away from the path of suffering. I'll give you the nations if you just bow down to me. The other temptations were about avoiding suffering and death and humiliation and trusting God.

[11:58] It was all, show us your right to reign and I can help you do it. Whatever you do, don't go to the cross. So the desert temptations, can you think of anything else?

Any other clues in the Gospels? Yeah. We saw that last week and in Sunday morning, last week or the week before.

Peter's saying, far be it from you, Lord, for this to happen. And Jesus doesn't say, get behind me, Peter. He says, get behind me, Satan.

There was venom in Peter's words. There was a hiss in Peter's words. Peter was revealing Satan's ideas. So Satan's MO, his way of doing things up to this point, had been anything but the cross. Keeping Jesus from the cross. Keeping Jesus from going to the cross. Now all of a sudden, it's an about face. And he enters Judas and he sets in motion the events that takes Jesus to the cross and to his death.

[13:04] So why the about face? Well, we're not told exactly. But I think, I think as we think of things, there's, there's a couple, there's, there's at least three ways to look at it.

They're not really contradictory. They're more adding on to each other, supplementary. John Piper's answer is, Satan saw that his efforts to divert Jesus from the cross had failed.

All the temptations had failed. Putting words into Peter's mouth had failed. Jesus had set his face like a flint to go to Jerusalem.

There was no derailing the plan. So Satan said, fine, if there's no stopping him, I'll make it as bad as possible. Not just death, but death by betrayal.

And not just death, death by abandonment. And not just death, death by crucifixion, death by denial, death by torture. If I can't stop it, I will make it as bad as possible.

[14:09] And I will drag as many people into it as possible. And make, and do as much damage as I can. And so it wasn't just one sin that was clustered around the cross.

It was Judas's sin. His betrayal. It was Peter's denial. It was Pilate's sin. It was the people's sin. It was the Pharisee's sin. It was Herod's sin. It was the disciples' sin. It was the soldiers' sin. It was one thing after another of injustice, and agony, and human failure, and disappointment.

It's one thing after another. So Satan knew this was going to be his undoing, but he just tried to make it as bad as possible. Another way of looking at it is, why did Satan enter into Judas and then begin this process that ended with his own destruction?

I think in part the answer is that Satan really couldn't help himself. And what I mean by that is, I think we misunderstand if we think that Satan is always in control and always does what is in his own best interest.

[15:24] The most out-of-control people, the most self-damaging people, are the most sinful. The most sinful are the most out-of-control, enslaved to every desire.

We know that in our lives. We see that in other people's lives. So drug addicts, porn addicts, gambling addicts, perpetually angry, perpetually stealing.

What do all those people teach us? Yes, they know it will destroy them, but they do it anyways.

They do it anyways. They're enslaved. And so they're wild with desire. They know it's going to kill them, but they do it anyways. And so Satan finally has him.

He's finally maneuvered all the things and now he can get him. And so it's like there's blood in the water. And the piranhas are going crazy on the carcass in the river.

[16:25] And so Satan goes crazy. He knows this is going to destroy him, but he hates him so much. He wants him dead so much that he... He goes after him.

Finally getting God's son sends him into a feeding frenzy. Now I think it might very well be both of those reasons of I'm going to make this as bad as possible and man, I can't.

I want him. I want to see him dead and destroyed. The sinful soul is not whole, is it? It doesn't make sense.

The things that we do as sinners, there are reasons we can't understand ourselves when we sin. Do you ever say that? I don't get why I do this.

I don't understand it. It's not because we don't have enough information. Sometimes I think when we're fighting sin, we think if I could just understand why I did it and I could...

[17 : 31] Then I would stop doing it. But you know what? Sin doesn't make sense. It's not rational. And it's not because we don't have enough information. It's because we really, truly don't make sense.

We are walking contradictions, pulled in multiple ways at once. And if that's how we are, can you imagine what it's like to be Satan? In control. In control.

The king of his kingdom, but in other senses, completely out of control, thrown in every direction. See, everything makes sense sort of, but nothing makes sense really. Remember in Revelation, the dragon is thrown down from heaven.

And he knows his time is short. Does he repent? Does he make peace? He knows he's going to be destroyed, but instead he makes war.

Because he knows his time is short. Satan knows what's waiting for him, but instead of making peace, he makes war. It doesn't make sense. And it doesn't make sense because it just doesn't make sense.

[18 : 38] Now, so why did Satan do it? Well, the ultimate answer is God was doing something. Why did Satan do this despite the fact that it would kill him?

Well, the answer is God was doing something. And that brings us to the third question is, where was God in all of this? Where was God in all of this?

When they were killing his son, and the answer is, he was doing all his holy will. He was carrying out his plan.

He was carrying out his plan. A plan is something that you put together beforehand, isn't it? You have a plan for your vacation. So you write it out, you tell everyone what we're going to do, and then you carry out your plan.

Every detail was planned beforehand for Jesus and the cross. The scriptures show us that evil men would reject him.

[19 : 46] Psalm 118 says, the stone the builders rejected has become the capstone. This is the Lord's doing. So the builders rejecting the capstone, this was the Lord's doing.

And so did men reject him? The scriptures show us that Jesus must be hated. Psalm 35 says, they hated me without cause.

There was no good reason to be so angry and hateful towards Jesus. And so did they hate him without any good reason? Yeah. The scripture shows that the disciples would abandon Jesus. Zechariah 13.7 says, I will strike the shepherd and the sheep will be scattered. Did they scatter? They're running out of Gethsemane. Mark says, one disciple ran away naked.

So, in a hurry to get away from Jesus. The scriptures show us that Jesus would be pierced, but none of his bones would be broken. That's detailed, isn't it?

[20 : 54] Pierced, but not broken. So, Psalm 34, Zechariah 10, and it turned out he was pierced, but none of his bones were broken.

The scriptures show us that Jesus would be betrayed by a close friend for 30 pieces of silver.

Psalm 41, Zechariah 11. So, what was going on with Judas and Satan?

Well, God was carrying out his plan. The Bible is crystal clear, explicit, and plain that God himself had planned all of these things.

He had planned all of these things to happen. But even more than the planning, he was acting in them. It was the will of the Lord to crush him.

He has put him to grief. Who crushed him? Who put him to grief? God doesn't hide behind the skirts of Judas and Satan.

[22 : 04] He says, this is my doing. I'm doing this. Acts 4, 27, and 28. How about you turn there? Acts 4, 27, and 28.

Okay. We looked at this a few weeks ago, didn't we? Acts 4, and verse 27.

Indeed, Herod and Pontius Pilate met together with the Gentiles and the people of Israel in this city to conspire against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed. So that's that verse.

Herod, Pontius Pilate, the people, they're conspiring, they're planning. To conspire is to make a plan. Now, verse 28.

They did what your power and will had decided beforehand should happen. It is power and will. Literally, it's your hand and your will.

[23 : 14] And that's a strange way of saying something. Because hands generally don't plan things, do they? So what are the disciples saying when they say your hand and your will, you decided beforehand what should happen?

It's saying that this was not some sort of theoretical plan. It was a plan executed by God's own hand. Planned and executed by God's own hand.

And so, what is the cross? Well, verse 27 tells us it's sinful men conspiring against God's anointed. And verse 28 tells us it is God at work in death.

It's God at work in weakness. It is God at work in the midst of human sin. It is God at work in the midst of satanic sin.

sin. And if it's not God working, then there is no good news. Then we are lost and there is no salvation.

[24 : 25] Because salvation belongs to God. He saves. And so, if it isn't him doing it, if he isn't doing it, then he isn't saving and there is no gospel and the whole thing with Jesus is just a tragedy.

But the fact is God was working. God was doing something in Jesus' death. He was actively participating and that is the gospel. That God wasn't just reacting in Jesus' death.

He was doing something in Jesus' death. He was doing this action. Romans 5.8 But God demonstrates his own love for us in this, that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Christ's death in this verse, I'm not saying it's not true in other verses, but in this verse, Christ's death is not a demonstration of Christ's love for us.

It's a demonstration of God's love for us. It was God's demonstrating something. It was God showing, God doing.

[25 : 36] And so if you separate what God is doing, if you separate the cross from God's actions, then you lose the gospel. You lose the love of God.

you lose the highest and the deepest point of God's love. And so the cross is God acting.

Not just God receiving, not just receiving the sacrifice, but making the sacrifice. God doing something.

So Satan meant it for evil, God meant it for good. So one in the same act, two intentions. Two, I mean to do this and that.

So one act, two intentions. Satan means it for God's destruction, and God means it for Satan's destruction. And who wins?

[26 : 37] God will have a name? Well, tell us the very same thing. Romans 8.3 says that what the law was powerless to do and that it was weakened by the flesh, God did, sending his son in the likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering.

So on the mountain, God provided the lamb. So we couldn't save ourselves. Romans 8.1-3 is making this clear.

We couldn't save ourselves. You give us the law, holy, just, righteous, great. It's the good law. It's the perfect law. And yet, you give us that law, the best law there is, God's own law, and we can't save ourselves.

And so what we couldn't do, God did, sending his son. And so God condemns him, and he sets us free. 2 Corinthians 5.21 says, for our sake, God made him to be sin.

So God imputed our sin to him, and we go away wearing God's righteousness. Jesus puts on our filthy robes and goes to the cross, and we walk away wearing God's righteousness.

[27 : 55] He becomes sin, and we become the righteousness of God. So he became sin, and we went free. Isaiah 53 says, he was wounded for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities.

And who was it that crushed him? Who was it that wounded him? It was God. So Judas was working.

was it was a sinful man doing something sinful?

Yes. Do we have sinful people in our lives doing sinful things? People we know, people that were under their power? Well, Judas was working. Is there a Satan?

Is there an accuser? Is there someone who opposes us and fights against us working? Yes. He's called the God of this age.

[29:01] So Satan was working. He was working back then. He's working in your life, or at least in your world. But there was a deeper magic, so to speak, like C.S.

Lewis put it, a deeper magic than even Judas and Satan working. God was bringing an amazing good out of this. Amazing grace out of it.

Amazing glory even for the son that he is now crushing. Amazing glory out of this most spectacular sin. And so when terrible things happen, go to the cross, go to the cross, and see again that God knows how to bring good out of evil.

He knows how to bring good out of evil. And when horrific crimes and horrific tragedies and sin happens, we can go to the cross again and see that God really does know how to bring salvation even out of death.

And so when you're tempted to forsake God and to lose heart, this is what we need to remember, and this is the point of the whole series. Remember the Bible has shown us again and again and again and again that sin and sickness and disaster and Satan and evil men, they never can outwork, can escape the glorious grace of God and the sovereign power of God.

[30:38] And so whether it was Satan or Adam or Joseph or Judas or whatever is going on in your life or whatever will happen five years from now or ten years from now or fifty years from now, whatever happens, the divine word, purified seven times, perfect, living and active, still stands.

You meant it for evil, but God meant it for good. good. That was true back then, it's true right now, and it will be true in the future.

So we need to bring our faith to the cross and say, Lord, give me eyes that can see that you work in these terrible things. You know how to bring good even out of evil.

Well, we are dismissed.