

Death: Why Jesus Came

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[0:00] Well, let's begin with a question of all the days in a year, January 1 all the way through December 31st.

! It's a sad question, but do you know what day more people die on than any other day of the whole year? January 1 through December 31st.

The sad and the strange reality is that more people die on Christmas Day than any other.

And that's been consistently true since the early 70s when they started taking these, keeping track of this. It's true across all kinds of reasons to die or reasons for death.

Cancer, heart disease, old age. Well, they aren't sure why. It could be the situations in the hospital.

[1:02] They might be more shorthanded on Christmas Day. The doctors, the nurses working on Christmas might have less experience because the more experienced ones are taking their vacation.

It could be the weather. It could be people not wanting to go to the hospital on Christmas Day. They want to stay at their house. But many people think that the overall reason might just be broken hearts.

Broken hearts as a contributing factor. People give up on Christmas. The elderly are struck with how alone they are.

And how their spouses are gone. Or how their family has moved on. And people know they're supposed to be happy on Christmas Day.

And yet their emptiness does nothing but mock them. It's not their experience at all. It's I'm supposed to be happy, but I'm sad instead.

[2:09] And it's consistently year after year, again and again, proven that despair, depression, those things all rise at the holiday time of the year.

And again, it could be many things. But for many, whatever the reasons are, the holidays can be very much like walking in the valley of the shadow of death.

Very dark. And so if you're feeling empty or sad or you're saying to yourself, I know I shouldn't feel this way, but I do.

At least you can know that you're not alone. You might be in the shadow, but there is light. There is light.

We read that this morning. And Jesus was born for this. We started out the sermon with such a sad truth and a sad reality of death because that's why Jesus came.

[3:15] It wasn't because everything was sugar, plums, and fairy tales. It's because of death. Well, you can see that in your Bibles in Hebrews chapter 2.

And I'd invite you to turn there. Hebrews chapter 2 and verse 14. And how about we back it up to verse 10.

And we'll read verse 10 through 18. And that will give you some of this context. Now, I want you to remember that word suffering because it's going to come up later.

And it's going to tell you exactly what kind of suffering he had to be perfected through. Both the one who makes men holy and those who are made holy are of the same family.

So Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers. He says, I will declare your name to my brothers in the presence of the congregation. I will sing your praises. And again, I will put my trust in him.

[4:27] And again, he says, here am I and the children God has given me. I just read that in Isaiah this morning. Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death, he might destroy him who holds the power of death.

That is the devil and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death. For surely it is not angels he helps, but Abraham's descendants.

For this reason, he had to be made like his brothers in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people.

Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted. So verse 14. Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity. That's the incarnation. That is Christmas. And it's not some sort of sentimental Christmas message with the twinkling lights and the perpetually happy Merry Christmases.

[5 : 43] It's not Christmas means love people and let's all get along and I'm dreaming of a white Christmas. It's not the world's sentimental Christmas message.

This is truth, but it's truth with a bite. It's truth with tang. It's truth that's real. It has blood. It has power. He shared in their humanity.

That word is, another way you could translate it is he partook. He partakes in humanity. So the same word is used for eating.

When you partake in something, you take it in and you eat it. It becomes a part of you. You're joining something to yourself.

And so he partook in their humanity. He took it in and it became a part of him. Not somehow distinguished from him. Instead, he joined it to himself.

[6 : 39] So now, while we might be able to divide the divine from the human, insofar as his natures are concerned, as to his person, he is both God and man.

You can't distinguish him as to his person. And so, isn't that funny? When we partake of food, it's one of the strangest things.

It's one of the weirdest philosophical scientific ideas that's out there. You look at the food on the table and it's not you. You can't control it.

It's obviously not you. But then you eat it. And now, all of a sudden, what is it? It's you. And you can control it. And you can use it.

What was not you is now you. You're joined. You're united. And so, you don't say, well, this part of me is lunch. And this part of me is dinner.

[7 : 35] No, it's no distinction. So, Jesus shared in our humanity. He took it to himself. He made it a part of himself. But he did it for a reason. He did it for a reason.

He did it to destroy the devil. He did it to destroy the devil who holds the power of death. So, the baby in the manger was a warrior.

Was a destroyer. He's God's warrior. And so, he was awesome as the commander of the armies of the Lord when he appeared to Joshua. Do you remember back in Joshua chapter 1?

He appeared to Joshua. And he's come to fight against God's enemies. He's come to fight against the city of Jericho. And when Joshua meets him, down Joshua goes, bowing before him.

But now he's born. And his Hebrew name would have been Yahshua. He's now in the manger. And his target is not Jericho.

[8 : 39] His target is the devil himself. He's declaring war on the powers and the authorities in high places. He's not going for a little city on the land.

He's going for the highest. The arch enemy of God. And our arch enemy. And so, brothers and sisters, you don't rightly understand the incarnation if you don't see it as something very fierce.

As something destructive. And so, we sing it in that song, Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah. We give two titles to our Lord in that hymn.

Death of Death and Hell's Destruction. Those are titles for our Lord Jesus. And so, Jesus was born to destroy.

He was born to destroy the one who held the power of death, who worked death, who worked ruin, who was a murderer from the beginning, and whose kingdom and whose slavery is death.

[9 : 45] So, we love a mighty hero, don't we? We love a mighty hero. That's the only reason superhero movies are so popular nowadays. We love heroes.

And we love a king with a sword in his fist. And he's ready to do battle for his people. And so, if you look into the manger, you see the Lord of hosts.

The Lord of the angels of heaven. Of angel armies. And so, he's come with a purpose. He's come with a glint in his eye.

He's ready to destroy God's enemies and Satan himself. So, this is our Jesus. This is our Lord.

And he's become a man to set his people free. Now, what a different view of Christmas that is. It's not just baby Jesus lying in a manger so sweet and so gentle and so kind.

[10 : 47] Because the world can tolerate that Jesus. The world puts figurines, plastic figurines in their yards and lights up Jesus like that.

Or the world still plays songs in the Walmart about that Jesus. But the incarnation, it really is anything but sentimental. It's anything but maple syrup.

It is ruin. It's fire. It's blood. It's destruction for the devil. So, he's God. And he's man. And he's not come to just give a cheerful hand.

He's come to crush the head of the serpent. That's what he was promised to do. That's what he's come to do. And so, thank the Lord. We don't have to stoop to that kind of sentimental, worldly view of this time of the year.

We don't have to stoop to that emptiness that says feel happy when you don't feel happy. And it says ignore death when it's staring you in the face.

[11 : 53] It's something real. And here's something better. Here's something that gives you solid comfort in these days. Something solid.

But Hebrews doesn't only tell us that Jesus became a man. And it doesn't only tell us why he became a man. He tells us how he's going to destroy the devil and to undo death.

And how is it going to be? You saw that. In verse 14, there in the middle, so that by his death, by his death, he might destroy him who holds the power of death.

His death, this is the strange ways of God. His death was going to crush the serpent's head. His death was going to be that mighty engine of war that's going to bring down Satan's kingdom and bring death to nothing.

His death, his sacrifice, his weakness, his humility, his suffering, his shame, his defeat would become his greatest victory.

[13 : 07] So, Anselm of Canterbury, a long time ago, wrote in the Middle Ages, he wrote a book called *Cur Deo Homo*, or *Why Was God a Man?*

Why Was God a Man? And in that book, *Why Was God a Man?* It says, Anselm's answer is, it was to pay for sin.

Why Was God a Man? It was to pay for sin. That's a simple premise. And so, speaking of this payment that had to be made, this sacrifice that had to be offered, this holy requirement, this legal fee, Anselm said, it could not have been done unless man paid what was owing to God for sin. But the debt was so great that while man alone owed it, and man must give it, only God could pay for it.

So that the same person must both be man and God. And since we can't take God into ourselves, God had to take humanity to himself and the Son of God.

[14 : 19] So thus, it was necessary for God to take manhood into the unity of his person so that he, who in his own nature, ought to pay and could not, should be the person that now could.

So why did the Son of God become man? Because man had to pay for his sin. man had to pay for his sin.

It was man's debt. It's not God's debt. It was man's debt. But the payment is so great that only God can make it.

And God so loved you that the Son of God became a man to die for your sins. To pay for your sins. There's no point at all to Christmas if we don't go to the cross. If it doesn't end there. And I think there's everything in us that wants to forget that.

[15 : 31] And that's why humanity is so comfortable with baby Jesus in a manger. Because baby Jesus in a manger doesn't threaten him. And they can do something with that.

And they can tell themselves something about how good they are with that. But you take that Jesus to a cross and say this is the only way that you're going to be saved. And it's a stumbling block.

See baby Jesus in a manger just staying there fits right in with their sentimental bland religiosity.

But you bring the cross in and people have no tolerance for that.

But the whole point of Christmas is to get to the cross. So that a man and God can now pay for sin.

Well what does this have to do with the devil? Because remember Jesus has come to destroy the devil. And it's just simply this the devil is the accuser. The devil is the one who condemns us.

[16 : 31] The devil is the one who is the prosecuting attorney. And he is and the sad and the scary and the frightening thing is he is right. And when he tells God that we are guilty and we should be

condemned for once he's telling the truth.

He has the law on his side. He has God's holy and just law on his side. And so with God's law he works death.

He works destruction. And with God's law he says condemn them. They deserve it. They have to pay. So the sting of death is sin. And the power of sin is the law.

But thanks be to God he gives us the victory through the Lord Jesus Christ. And so we sing good Christian men rejoice with heart and soul and voice.

Now ye need not fear the grave. Jesus Christ was born to save. So when Jesus died he took the law out of Satan's hands.

[17 : 35] He disarmed Satan and now death has no sting because the law's demands are fully met. And now Satan is left powerless with no weapons. He has no legitimacy no standing nothing.

And so now death has no sting for Christians. The devil's power and his ability to terrify is destroyed. And so now all he has is a bark.

But he has no bite. Well before we eat the bread and drink the cup I just want to bring four lessons and four applications out of this text.

And there are four reasons to rejoice even now. And the first one is rejoice in God's unique love.

love. Rejoice in God's unique love. And what I mean is Jesus didn't help angels when they fell.

He helped you. Look at verse 16. For surely it is not angels he helps but Abraham's descendants. The angels fell and God left them in their guilt.

[18 : 47] He didn't help them. He didn't owe them help. And he didn't owe us help. but he has helped.

And we are lower than the angels. Less glorious than the angels. But wonders of wonders Jesus didn't become an angel. He became a man and he died for us.

Lesson number two. You have a savior who can understand you. You have a savior who can understand you. Because he really became a man.

And he suffered in every way just as we did. Verse 17 and 18. He became like us in every way in order that he might become a faithful and faithful high priest. And how is he like us?

Verse 18 says he suffered when he was tempted. tempted. He suffered in other ways. But what Hebrews brings out at this point is that particular suffering of temptation.

[19 : 54] temptation. And he knows what it's like to be tempted. And he felt the power of temptation.

As God, he could not in any way feel that power of temptation. But as man, he could feel it and he knows it. And so now he is merciful. His suffering was the suffering of temptation.

And so are you hard pressed with temptation? And you say, when will it end?

When will be over? When will I stop falling? And the wonderful thing is you have a high priest who does not despise you because you are tempted.

But he understands you and comes close to help. He knows how it hurts. He knows how hard it is. And so he's able to help those who are being tempted.

[20 : 56] Lesson number three, his death has transformed every Christian's death. His death has transformed every Christian's death. The Heidelberg Catechism says this, the death of Christians is not payment for sin, but an entrance into life.

A Christian's death is when he actually begins to live. That's what it's saying. So it is not death to die. It's not death to leave this world and go to worlds on high.

And so we have to remember this not only for ourselves, but we need to remember this for the ones that we have loved and lost. lost. Because this time of the year can be such a sad time when we remember those who aren't here with us anymore.

And family gatherings get smaller and people that were there are not there anymore. more. And we need to remember that, that we have a sure and certain hope of resurrection.

Sure and certain hope of the resurrection. Christ died for their sins, and so death, if they were a believer, had no sting for them. Had no sting for them.

[22 : 17] That means there was nothing bad or painful about it when they crossed over. It was better by far. And when it comes your time to die, death will now become your entrance into life and into glory.

And you will go and be with your loved ones that have gone before, and you will, I'm sure, meet them and say, you know what, it wasn't that bad. I thought it would be worse, but I didn't feel a

thing.

What a Savior. And you will look to Jesus and you'll say, because he took all the sting. He took all the sting for me. You'll give him the worship. Well, Balaam was so right.

Remember back in Numbers? Balaam was so right when he said, oh, give me the death. Let me have their death. Lesson number four is this.

Look to Jesus this season. Focus on him. And I know you probably know that you're supposed to, but isn't it easy not to?

[23 : 15] So just say that again. Focus on him. There's nothing but emptiness and gloom if you leave Christ out of your thoughts.

And you'll come away empty and sad and really nothing to show for all your trees and your cookies and your presents and your get-togethers. But if you focus your eyes on him, remembering his birth, remembering his death, remembering his resurrection, remembering that he is now your high priest, if you make it about him, and I encourage you to, especially if you're lonely or disappointed or you're living with unfulfilled expectations, and that's what can make it so bad.

You want things to be different, but they're not. Your circumstances are what they are. Your family is what they are. You are what you are. And those expectations can't be met, and they won't be.

So look away from them and look to Jesus, because he's taken humanity to himself. And so just like you're going to take bread and partake in the bread and make it a part of you, so in an hour we're not going to be able to make a distinction between the bread and you.

And so he makes no distinction with you. you are his family. You are his brothers. You are his brothers. You are his sisters. And he loves you.

[24 : 52] And that will make the season sweet. So I say rejoice in the Lord. And I say it again, rejoice.