

Blood Relationship
John 19:31-37

March 29, 2018
Maundy Thursday

31 Since it was the day of Preparation, the Jews did not want the bodies left on the cross during the Sabbath, especially because that Sabbath was a day of great solemnity. So they asked Pilate to have the legs of the crucified men broken and the bodies removed. 32 Then the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first and of the other who had been crucified with him. 33 But when they came to Jesus and saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs. 34 Instead, one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and at once blood and water came out. 35 (He who saw this has testified so that you also may believe. His testimony is true, and he knows that he tells the truth.) 36 These things occurred so that the scripture might be fulfilled, "None of his bones shall be broken." 37 And again another passage of scripture says, "They will look on the one whom they have pierced."

Well, here it is, the time has come, so much happens during Passion Week that we can't possibly talk about it all in one week. In the Bible, the events of Passion Week take up several chapters; Matthew has 6 chapters, Mark has 4, Luke has 4, and John has 7 chapters covering all the events. Today we commemorate Passion Week as a time of remembrance. We remember the life that Jesus lived between Palm Sunday and the discovery of the resurrection. In this time we see the passion of Jesus. The passion that he lived and the passion that he died. And we share his passion through worship and proclamation of his gospel.

Today is Maundy Thursday where most church services commemorate the Last Supper. We partake of the sacraments on a weekly basis for a very significant reason that is grounded in the American Restoration Movement which sought to reform the church according to the New Testament. Since we partake weekly, and I have periodical messages about the significance of the sacrament, I have chosen to talk about the crucifixion to give attention to the passion narrative. A lot happened on Thursday of Passion Week. Jesus predicts what will happen next. Jesus sets up the Sacraments as a living memorial to remember him - his body and his blood sacrificed - on behalf of all mankind. There is the ceremony of washing the feet of the disciples which is a lesson on humility and servitude. There is the prayer in Garden of Gethsemane and the time when Jesus waited in great passion for his hour to come; at which time the disciples demonstrate great weakness by their inability to stay awake. Judas leads a mob to arrest him and several illegal trials bearing false witness in order to find him guilty. Finally there's the narrative about Jesus being tortured and mocked.

Today's Scripture took place on Friday. Jesus was executed as a criminal by the Roman governor using an extremely harsh form of execution. Crucifixion is a capital punishment but it is more, much more, it is a public display of slow torture. The intent is shame and degradation in order to deter others. Its usage by Rome was limited to slaves and non-Romans. The condemned were stripped down to their undergarments and forced to carry a cross beam. Having undergone such a terrible beating Jesus was weakened to the point where he could not finish carrying the beam of the cross. Spikes were driven through his wrists and his heels and he was hoisted up high for visibility. The weight of the body rested on a short crosspiece which was located directly below the seat, this helped to support the weight of the body which helped to prolong the torture. People often remained alive on the cross for several days until they died of dehydration, starvation, exposure, and their wounds. To hasten death, as in the case on Friday, due to approaching Sabbath, the executioner would break the legs of the victim which would

cause the body to slump down and constrict breathing. In Jesus situation there were no legs broken because he was already dead. John attributes this to the fulfillment of prophecy.

Imagery of the cross is a grotesque and brutal act of torture and execution. Expectations of God's Messiah did not include any suffering and degradation. Suffering was thought to be something that the Messiah would relieve - not endure. But the mystery of God's love is revealed to the world through a suffering Savior. And that is very important for us today. Our problems may be difficult circumstances that may seem insurmountable. And over and over again I encounter people that are disappointed with God for not helping with their issue. Whatever that issue may be. However, it is very important for us to remember that Jesus, on the cross, is a blood sacrifice of pain and torture. God has already given plenty - more than enough - God has given all. And when God has given all, what more can we possibly ask for? Instead of complaining about, our situation, yours, mine, or whomever, and whatever that situation may be, we must testify to God's goodness and faithfulness and be in awe at all of God's love and grace that is extended to us. The significance of the sacrifice is tremendous. It is the price paid. It is divine blood spilled for humanity. Remember this. The sacrifice is divine blood spilled for humanity. It is a blood sacrifice by the Son of God for a blood relationship with us.