

‘He Chose to Love Us Forever’

On December 25th Jesus was born. The perfect baby...no crying he makes. A lot of calm and peace in that delivery room...the stable. On January 8th he came to the Jordan River to be baptized as a man. And soon after that, around 30 years old, he began his 3-year ministry. If his purpose was to **just die for our sins** – that could have been accomplished before he started to cut teeth.

But that isn’t how it happened. He went through the **terrible twos**, the **start of school** and wondering about friends. His **body grew** and unfamiliar changes occurred. He called **disciples**, formed a team, and then they fell asleep when he needed them the most – the very people who were **fed on the mountainside** – yelled *crucify* when the choice could have been the other guy – “Barabbas” they could have yelled.

Do you wonder why 33 years? Maybe it would take about that many years to **set a pattern for our living, to live what we would live**. He experienced parents dying,

learning, betrayal,

having to earn enough to live and eat,

hurting, leading, teaching,

preaching, anger, frustration, praying,

thirst.

That is our life. Right? **Life changes, emotions, relationships**, loss, physical needs. In the Gospel of John – from the cross, we hear Jesus say, **“I am thirsty.”** Through bleeding, cracked lips ... weak with pain and suffering, he says, “I am thirsty.” Last words. The *full on God* Jesus turned jugs of water into wine. The *full on human* Jesus also was thirsty just before he died. How difficult was it to endure these overwhelming hardships? As hard as it would be for any of us – but he did it to show that when we wonder if Jesus “gets us” the answer is yes. Yes, he has struggled with loneliness, betrayal, agony, and even thirst...a basic human need. He **could have satisfied it himself...but he didn’t**

Jesus lived 33 years because he knew that we would experience the same things as life held for him. Not the **exact story**, but enough similarity that we could **trust the things that Jesus said**. Jesus knew what it was like to not be able to fully **trust friends and family** – those who once cheered for him, laid down their cloaks for him. Jesus was **left with no one to trust**

on earth – and that was the LAST THING he wanted for us. So ... he did everything to build our trust. He knows our pain of being alone.

Jesus took that pain and gave us himself.

He took a lot of pain on that day of his death.

One of the soldiers pierced Jesus' side with his spear (John 19:34) ... and immediately there was a **flow of blood and water**. Zechariah 12:10 says, "they will look on me, the one they have pierced..." What was it about the flow of blood and the flow of water, besides it fulfilling yet another prophecy? In Jesus' life he fulfilled **332 distinct prophecies** from the Old Testament. In John (19:35) it says that the man who saw Jesus pierced, told others.

But what difference does this eyewitness account make? What does the **blood and water mean for us as we prepare for Easter**? Without the shedding of blood, there was no forgiveness. Those Old Testament folks knew this fact. The prophets knew the importance of a **blood sacrifice** – the health of their temples ran on it.

But this ended at the cross. His arms opened to sacrifice for us.

Jesus Christ was one and done!

Remember the description of the tabernacle from last week – the tent on one end of the portable "church" – the tent with 2 rooms – the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place. Routinely, the High Priest would take a blood sacrifice into the Holy Place – and **once a year** into the Most Holy Place. What scripture says about **Jesus' death** is that he took his own blood – **ONCE AND FOR ALL** into the Most Holy Place – the Holy of Holies – and sprinkled it ... his own blood (not the fatted calf or the perfect sheep) ... the **Son of God** became the **Lamb of God**. He did this for us. He did this to show us he would do anything ... for us. He did this to say, "trust me."

The author, Max, in our study writes, **"The cross was the altar where the final sacrifice was offered."** We weren't even there but that **holiness of Jesus** –

was transferred to us as righteousness.

Jesus' sacrifice on the cross was **done for us**. We win – because that holiness – **offers God's love to all who come**. That is an **amazing transfer of blessing**.

In the last couple of days, which I am calling our *Days of Jubilee*, we have scrubbed, spackled, painted, repainted, sorted, and took the kitchen by storm. We raised over \$1500, at the cookies, crackers, brownies and drank the water you donated. But not all of us were able to be there or get

involved. What Jubilee Center knows is that **Grace Church showed up**. We all get in on the blessing.

Last Sunday afternoon, there were 17 teams of cornhole “players”. There were **experts and novices**. One team, which shall remain nameless...consisted of an expert (best I could tell) and someone who was use to watching the experts. But the team stayed in the tournament well into the bracket. The **novice was carried on the wings of his mentor and friend**. He stayed because the mentor played. This confirmation kid had really **chosen a great partner**...or did the partner chose him? Those of us **who believe in Jesus Christ have also chosen a great partner**. The thing is, when as he lived and died – he had already *chosen us*. We have partnered with the one who **gave us life...eternal life**.

The blood that flowed on that day Jesus died, reminds us of our **partner**, our **Savior**, our **once and for all High Priest** who did this for us. Max Lucado calls this positional sanctification. **We are given a prize not because of what we do but because of who we know**. John Wesley would call that **justifying grace**. We are **justified – lined up with – made right with God** because of what **Jesus did for us**.

And the water...that spilled out. What about the water? The passage from II Corinthians today said, **“We are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.”** Sometimes, people have given their life to Christ – and a year later slipped out the back door of church, the back door of a life with Christ. They received the **work of the cross** (positional sanctification) – they were saved, BUT they didn’t change anything...they didn’t let the work of Christ enter into the daily living. **NOTHING CHANGED**.

How many of you have **moved something from one cabinet to another in your house**, and you keep going back to the old place to find it? You move your keys or your belts to a new spot and ***just by habit*** you return to the old place that has been imprinted in your muscle memory. If you want to *create a new habit*, you have to be mindful of your behavior. If you want to eat better for your health – you can’t stress eat on autopilot. If you want to become more Christlike – you can’t continue to do the same things expecting different results. The water represents the Holy Spirit that lives inside of us giving us the strength to transform – grow more Christlike. That is progressive sanctification. We can’t be more saved than the day we accepted Christ – but we can sure become more Christlike.

If you want to grow in your faith, stretch your understanding – you have to let that water of the Holy Spirit flow through you too. It is there. It is in the blood. What will you do this week – to let the water flow?

In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen