

The Most Important News to Which You Will Ever Respond Good Friday 2021

Mark 15:21-47

There was a day when I really liked to watch Headline News. In fifteen minutes you could watch short, seemingly significant recaps of the major newsworthy events of the hour. Then came cell phones. Now with the simple tap of the screen you can access your favorite news outlets. As the homepage opens on their app, you'll find a list of headlines for major opinion pieces about more or less newsworthy events.

The headlines, quite often these days, have a new technical description. They are called "click bait." Their function is to be provocative. They are designed to attract immediate interest causing you to click through to the story. They are not necessarily truthful, or relevant, or sometimes even connected to the story, but they do get you there. We've come to a time and place in the world where it takes sensationalized headlines to get us to view the news.

Can you just imagine what the headlines would have been had CNN and Fox and the Networks been around the day Jesus died? "Miracle Worker Perishes Without Miracle," one might read. Another might declare, "Galilean Prophet Put Down in Jerusalem." Still another might add, "Christ Cancelled by Contemporary Culture." One might say, "Good Teacher Taught Permanent Lesson." A less credible source might say, "Self-proclaimed Son of God Sent Home by Crucifixion."

No matter how the headline might have been framed, there was a newsworthy truth at the heart of each attempt. Jesus, a man like no other in the history of the world, died on the cross. The question that fact raises is this, "Why?" and "Why is the death of Jesus even important?" A perceptive person, familiar with the context of Roman crucifixion might pose the question this way: "Why does Jesus, who did so much good, die like an abject criminal among criminals?"

That's the question I want us to ponder for a few minutes this Good Friday evening before we observe the Lord's Supper together. Why does Jesus die like a criminal among criminals? The answer to that question presents the most important news to which any of us will ever respond.

You do realize that we respond to the news, right? Technology provides us immediate and relentless and instantaneous news and opinion from every corner of the globe. Every single report we encounter demands a response. Shock, disbelief, sorrow, indignation, pride, joy, despair, encouragement, action, change, these and more are the responses each report requires. Buying in is a response. Rejection is a response. Indifference is a response. Every item we encounter demands an act of will, a decision, a choice, a response.

In some instances, our responses may seem to have little significance. I heard recently that a famous British TV personality made public negative statements about Meghan Markle, Prince Harry's wife. It apparently started some sort of British brouhaha. I'm sure that debate has meaning for someone, but I'm like, "So?"

There are other occasion, however, when our responses may have critical, even life-saving implications. News of an impending super-cell tornado may send us fleeing to the storm shelter, saving our lives from coming destruction.

It is in that sense that the news about the death of Jesus demands a response from each of us. You will hear the news of His death and a response will be required of you. **This will be the most important news to which any of us will ever respond.**

Jesus Christ, repeatedly declared by God to be his beloved Son, died on the cross. He died as a criminal died among criminals in the manner reserved for criminals in His day. Why? Why crucifixion, a cross, a death reserved for robbers, and insurrectionists, and murderers, convicted criminals? Why does the innocent, sinless Son of God die the death of a convicted criminal, especially when the ruling governor can find no fault, no blame, no guilt in Him? **Why the cross?**

The apostle Paul provides the answer both in his second letter to the Corinthians and in his letter to the Galatian Christians. In 2 Corinthians 5:21 he writes,

For our sake [God] made [Jesus] to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

And in Galatians 3:13 he writes,

Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree”—

Inspired by the Holy Spirit Who reveals the mind of God to us, Paul tells us that Jesus died on the cross **“For our sake/for us.”** He also tells us that Jesus was **made, or fashioned, by God to be sin, to become a curse on our behalf, and that the goal of this action on God’s part was that we might become the righteousness of God.**

Considering this a little more closely we understand that what Jesus did, dying on the cross, He did on our behalf. So, **we will want to know what our condition is that Jesus’ death would have any benefit for us.** We also know that whatever the condition is that Jesus dies for, God had to do something relative to Jesus that Jesus did not naturally deserve (God “made Him to be sin who knew no sin.”) We also know that whatever God did that led to Christ’s death on the cross results, somehow, in a complete transformation of our status and condition before God.

So what is going on here? What does it mean that for our sake God made Jesus to be sin who knew no sin? Let me take you to August 4, 1990 and **the difference between imputation and impartation.** On that warm and sunny summer day in Norfolk, the commonwealth of Virginia imputed to one Linda Ann Fregeau, at her request and with my eager consent, the name McIntire. Linda, to this day, has not one protein pair of McIntire DNA in her genetic makeup, but, where the civil government is concerned, she is McIntire through and through, subject to all the rights and responsibilities that come with being a McIntire.

She did not become a McIntire in substance, but she is considered by the government as being as fully a McIntire as I am and have been since conception. Had the government made Linda my genetic sister, given her some of my genetic makeup, they would have imparted McIntire to her, but they did not. They did not change the substance of who she is. They simply changed the way they consider her. Under their civil authority, they imputed McIntire to her.

That's the difference between imputation and impartation. Imputation is a decision to consider something as having a quality without changing the substance of the thing. Impartation adds something to the substance of a thing actually giving it a quality it did not formerly possess.

On the cross, God imputed the sin and guilt of every person who has, does, or ever will live to Jesus. On the cross, God held Jesus personally accountable for each and every infraction of God's law, as if He was personally responsible for them, even though He was sinless and innocent. God treated Jesus like the criminal I am, the criminal you are, like the lawbreakers every human being has been since Adam.

For the crime of human sin and rebellion against their holy and glorious Creator, and for all the cumulative guilt of the compounding sin of every man, woman, and child from the beginning to the end of time, God held Jesus personally responsible. God the Father poured out on His Son, as the representative criminal, the full and complete measure of divine justice.

Why does Jesus die like an abject criminal among criminals a death reserved for criminals? Because, dear friends, we are criminals in the sight of God and Jesus died in our place. We are guilty of Adam's sin both by imputation of guilt and enactment of sin. Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 15:21-22

²¹ For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. ²² For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive.

Why do all die on account of Adam? Because God imputes Adam's guilt to all who come from Adam. God counts us, reckons us, considers us, guilty, and then, from the moment we take our first breath, we prove Him right. Adam's guilt is both imputed and enacted. So the punishment of all human sin is both imputed to Christ and enacted by Christ on the cross.

Why is Jesus crucified like a common criminal among criminal on a cross reserved for criminals? Because every single one of us stands before God as a lawbreaker, as one who in one way or another has not loved the Lord our God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength, nor our neighbors as ourselves. We all like sheep have gone astray, each turning to our own way, and God has laid on Christ the iniquity of us all.

All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, so God sent His own Son to become man, to become the One who does not fall short, yet takes the punishment for all those who do. God demonstrates His love for us in this, while we were yet sinners, while we lived before God as guilty and condemned criminals subject to infinite punishment for our infinite crimes against an infinite God, Christ died for us. Christ died like a criminal surrounded by criminals on a cross

reserved for criminals as the demonstration of God's love for us.

Christ died on the cross so that you, a criminal before God, a lawbreaker, would not have to suffer the eternal punishment your sin, your crime deserves. **God imputed your guilt on Christ and Christ enacted your punishment on the cross.**

That is the most important news you will ever hear. It is the most important news to which you will ever respond. **You have two choices tonight.** You can believe and accept the news of God's love for you in Christ and put your faith in Him, or you can disbelieve what you have heard and reject the news of God's love in Christ. You can turn to God or turn away from God. If you turn to God, God in His love and mercy will impute the death of Christ on you, counting you as righteous on account of Christ. If you turn away, then God in His love and justice will hold you personally responsible for your own guilt, and one day you will answer to Him for your sin, and He will impart the justice you've chosen and that you deserve.

God forgives the sin and guilt of those who put their faith in Jesus, accepting His death on their behalf. God does not forgive the sin and guilt of those who do not put their faith in Jesus. It is as simple as that. So, what will you do with this news, on this Good Friday, April 2, 2021? How will you respond? Whatever you decide, this is the most important news to which you will ever respond, for your response has eternal consequences.