

3/31/24 Christ Fellowship

“Why?” – Matthew 28

How many of you have ever had kids? How many of you have ever had dogs in the house? A lot of similarities aren't there? I don't have kids but it seems like I am always cleaning or washing something. I don't know how people do it that have kids AND dogs. My niece came to my house the other day and she brought her two little boys who are about 5-6. They were in my house for literally 3-5 minutes and when they left, I looked around and thought, *“Well, I don't know if I should just move or maybe I just need to burn it down again.”* The place was a wreck. How do people live with little kids?

My house isn't very big so it doesn't take long to clean it up but that also means it doesn't take long to mess it up either. Have you ever gotten your house really, really clean? I mean no dishes in the sink, no dirty clothes, the floor is clean, the furniture is dusted. And you look around and wonder how many seconds will this last? It always gets dirty again, and so fast! Don't you wish it would last a little longer? Don't you wish that once you cleaned it, it stayed clean?

All through scripture sin is referred to as uncleanness. If you have sin in your life, you are considered to have a spiritually unclean house. And all through the Old Testament people were required to offer animal sacrifices to get that sin forgiven and so they would then be clean again. Moses wrote in **Leviticus 4** that when someone sinned the priest would take an animal and slit its throat and then sprinkle the blood of that animal over the altar. And it was said to cover over their sin and that blood would make atonement for their sin.

That word “atonement” simply means to be made right with God. The sin has been forgiven and the house has been cleaned. But just like when you clean your house and it gets dirty again, the sin would have to be atoned for again and again. Every so often, the priest would have to make that same sacrifice and another poor, helpless animal would have to be killed.

Have you ever felt sorry for those animals? Have you ever wondered why they had to die? I mean, what did they do wrong? There was no sin in their lives. But, in fact, some of those animals were born and raised just to be sacrificial animals. They would live their lives only to be used to slaughter and for their blood to make atonement for somebody else's sins. That's not very fair, is it? Have you ever wondered why something had to die?

Well, that was God's rule. That was the only way that people could be right with God. And it has always been that way. Even with Adam and Eve in the garden, what did God tell

them? If you eat from this tree, you will die. If you do this one thing I'm telling you not to do, the one thing that will displease me, you will die. Where there is sin, it has always led to death, one way or another.

And that is where Jesus comes in! I just said one way or another, sin equals death. Well, one way is for animals to die. Another way is for us to die. And another way is for Jesus to die. I'm not going to spend a long time on it but I want to read about that. Turn to Matthew chapter 27 and let's read verses 45-54. **Matthew 27:45-54** says, *From noon until three in the afternoon darkness came over all the land. 46 About three in the afternoon Jesus cried out in a loud voice, "Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?" (which means "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"). 47 When some of those standing there heard this, they said, "He's calling Elijah."*48 *Immediately one of them ran and got a sponge. He filled it with wine vinegar, put it on a staff, and offered it to Jesus to drink. 49 The rest said, "Now leave him alone. Let's see if Elijah comes to save him."*50 *And when Jesus had cried out again in a loud voice, he gave up his spirit.*51 *At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. The earth shook, the rocks split 52 and the tombs broke open. The bodies of many holy people who had died were raised to life. 53 They came out of the tombs after Jesus' resurrection and went into the holy city and appeared to many people.*54 *When the centurion and those with him who were guarding Jesus saw the earthquake and all that had happened, they were terrified, and exclaimed, "Surely he was the Son of God!"*

At the moment of the death of Jesus, we see the veil of the temple that was maybe as much as six stories tall and four inches thick torn like a Kleenex from top to bottom. Then there was an earthquake. Then the rocks split open. Jesus had said if His disciples didn't praise Him, the rocks would cry out and here we see the rocks splitting open with cries of praise and obedience to the God of miracles.

And as they say on TV commercials, *"But wait! There's more!"* Dead people long buried came back to life and walked around and told people their stories. Can you imagine? But then we see – even here – God's providence that allowed this soldier who was just doing his job guarding Jesus to see what all happened and he believed.

But then...the scene changes. The mood is oppressive for three days. Don't you know it was hard to breathe for the disciples and the friends of Jesus who were expecting Jesus to be their military and political leader? All their hopes and dreams were dead and buried in a grave sealed up with a huge rock and guarded by soldiers and there was nothing they could do.

But let's read next from **Matthew 28** and read just the **first verse**. *“After the Sabbath, at dawn on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to look at the tomb.”* Have you ever done that? Have you ever gone to the grave of a loved one? I think it's fine to do. We all know they aren't there but there is something about seeing the grave, even talking to the person that is sometimes helpful to the grief process. Don't spend too much time there. It can get to be unhealthy but you can sure understand why the two Marys went there that morning even if we can't put it into words.

I just imagine that they had hardly slept, hardly eaten anything and they are overcome with grief. Bless their hearts. It was so unfair. The trial was a sham, even illegal. And why didn't Jesus protest more? Why didn't He explain things to the Pharisees? Why didn't He just call a couple of thousand angels to come and smite all His enemies right into the grave like they deserve? This is just awful.

Have you ever wondered why Jesus had to die? He didn't do anything wrong. He had no sin. Don't you know all His followers were wondering why as well? Why Him? Why now? Why not kill the Pharisees or the real criminals like Barrabas? Why not kill the Romans who were tyrants in their country right now? Why not set the captive Israelis free? Why not overthrow the Romans when He had a chance? Why? Why? Why?

Do you ever wonder why in your life? Of course you do. We all wonder why sometimes. Why did my spouse leave? Why did I get fired? Why did my child die? Why did my loved one get cancer? And don't you wish the next part of this message would explain all of that to you? Don't you wish the great preacher, prophet and expositor Todd Blair would explain why that happened to you? Well, I do too. I wish I knew. But I don't. Some questions will never be answered this side of Heaven.

We have had a lot of reasons to ask why here at Christ Fellowship. I think about Belinda breaking her legs. I think about several of you getting cancer. Some folks have left our church. Some have passed away too soon. What about leaving Lake Bridgeport? Why did that have to happen? We didn't do anything wrong. That's not fair. That's not right! Does that sound like you sometimes?

Sometimes bad things happen to us because we make bad decisions. Sometimes bad things happen because people are mean and because we live in a fallen world. And sometimes we may never understand it. That's where faith comes in. We can trust God because we know He is in control and He loves us and if He is in control then that means He has a plan for our lives. And we know that because He has proven Himself all through the Bible and all through our lives as individuals and all through our life as a church.

Mary Magdalene and the others at the tomb and all the followers of Jesus who were so depressed those three days couldn't understand why God would allow such a thing to happen to Jesus. Why would God allow such a thing to happen to THEM? They couldn't see it. It wasn't fair. They didn't deserve it. It wasn't right.

But as you know...and as you would expect me to read...that's not the end of the story. God is not done making a way of atonement. **Verses 2-7** say, *“There was a violent earthquake, for an angel of the Lord came down from heaven and, going to the tomb, rolled back the stone and sat on it. 3 His appearance was like lightning, and his clothes were white as snow. 4 The guards were so afraid of him that they shook and became like dead men. 5 The angel said to the women, “Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. 6 He is not here; he has risen, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay. 7 Then go quickly and tell his disciples: ‘He has risen from the dead and is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him.’ Now I have told you.”*

In the Old Testament, God said through Ezekiel, *“The one who sins is the one who will die.”* In the New Testament, the Book of Hebrews says, *“without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.”* So, why did Jesus have to die? Because God the Father said that was the penalty for sin. And instead of using the blood of animals to cover over the sin, Jesus said, *“I'll be the perfect sacrifice that takes **AWAY** the sin of the world.”* And because He died our sins can be forgiven, forgotten and thrown away as far as the east is from the west.

Then! THEN Jesus raised Himself back to life on that first day of the week, and is alive today. That tomb was empty. The angel said, *“He is not here; he has risen, just as he said.”* No, dying on a cruel cross wasn't fair to Jesus. It wasn't right. He didn't deserve it and it was painful. Just like what you have to go through in this world but more. And He did it to show us grace, mercy and love, the same attributes He expects from us now.

I heard the great preacher, Alistair Begg, say that when he gets to Heaven, he wants to look up the thief on the cross. He said he wants to ask him about how it went when he got to Heaven. Can't you just imagine? St. Peter asks him why he is there. *“I don't know.”* Why should I let you in? *“I don't know.”* Do you believe in the inerrancy of scripture? *“What's that?”* Have you been baptized? *“Nope.”* Ever taken the Lord's Supper? *“Never heard of it.”* Hang on. Let me get my supervisor. God shows up, smiles and asks him, *“Why should I let you into my Heaven?”*

The man says, **“The guy on the middle cross said I could come in and I believed Him.”**

That's all it takes! It's that easy and that difficult. All you have to do is believe but that belief will change your life. Submit to Him today. Ask Him to forgive your sins and repent of those sins. Then confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and you will be saved (Romans 10:9). Do it right now as the music plays.