



MATTHEW

The Savior-King and His Kingdom

The King is Dead!

Matthew 27:51-66

Message #78 of 80 – S1119

Sermon given on September 15, 2024



Sunday Morning Service

Pastor Rick Lancaster

The King is Dead!

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Opening Comments

- Open your Bibles to **Matthew 27**
- Today, we continue a series through the gospel of Matthew – **The Savior-King and His Kingdom**
- Let's open this time in our service with a word of prayer. - **Pray**

Teaching

- **The King is Dead!**
- Last week I said that suffering and sacrifice are topics we don't typically like talking about.
- We come to another of those unpleasant topics this morning – death.
- It is a distasteful reality that, barring the coming of Christ, we and everyone we know will die.
- But that is not how it is supposed to be – death is not natural.
- Death is a consequence of the Fall.
- The existence of sin is the reason death happens (**James 1:14-15**).
But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed.
¹⁵ Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death.
- God created mankind to live with Him forever.
- Sin creates a separation between God and man and death would make that separation final.
- And because mankind is helpless to save themselves from eternal separation from God, He sent His own Son to suffer and die and pay the penalty for our sin.
- And because He did that, we are invited back into the relationship God always intended for us through faith in Christ and His perfect sacrifice.
- Last week we looked at the account of Jesus being crucified and dying on the cross.
- For three hours prior to His death there was a supernatural darkness over the land.
- Our text today opens with another miracle.

- **Matthew 27:51**

- The veil in the temple was massive – thirty feet tall and about four to six inches thick.
- It would be humanly impossible to tear.
- The Jewish temple in Jerusalem was divided into two rooms.
- The Holy Place is where the priests performed most of their daily religious duties.
- There was also the Most Holy Place or Holy of Holies.
- It was behind this veil that is torn.
- In that place was the Ark of the Covenant and within the ark were the stone tablets with the Ten Commandments.
- Covering the ark was the Mercy Seat.
- No one was allowed to go behind the veil except the high priest once a year on the Day of Atonement.
- The fact that it was torn from top to bottom is very symbolic.
- The veil represents the separation between God, who is perfectly holy, and mankind, who is desperately wicked.
- God reached down from heaven to open the way for mankind to approach Him based on Christ's death on the cross (**Hebrews 4:15-16**).

For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all *points* tempted as *we are*, yet without sin. ¹⁶ Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

- In addition to the veil being torn, there is an earthquake and rocks miraculously split in two.
- And then Matthew describes another miracle.
- **Matthew 27:52-53**
- 'fallen asleep' – Idiom for dying.
- In the New Testament, it is only used for believers.
- This reminds us of Lazarus who was raised from the dead after being dead for four days.
- How long had these people been dead?
- Only Matthew mentions this miracle.
- What happened to them after they were raised?

- How long did they live? Did they ascend to heaven with Jesus?
- We don't know! I have so many questions about this.
- The spiritual message this miracle expresses is that Christ's death and subsequent resurrection have forever destroyed the power of death over humanity.
- No longer is death something to be terrified about (**1 Corinthians 15:54-57**).

So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: "*Death is swallowed up in victory.*"⁵⁵ "*O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?*"⁵⁶ The sting of death *is* sin, and the strength of sin *is* the law.⁵⁷ But thanks *be* to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

- As our faith grows, our desire to be with Jesus grows and our desire to remain on this earth diminishes (**Philippians 1:21-26**).

For to me, to live *is* Christ, and to die *is* gain.²² But if I live on in the flesh, this *will mean* fruit from *my* labor; yet what I shall choose I cannot tell.²³ For I am hard-pressed between the two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, *which is* far better.²⁴ Nevertheless to remain in the flesh *is* more needful for you.²⁵ And being confident of this, I know that I shall remain and continue with you all for your progress and joy of faith,²⁶ that your rejoicing for me may be more abundant in Jesus Christ by my coming to you again.

- This desire to be with Jesus is coupled with a diminishing desire for self and a growing desire to serve Christ by serving others.
- Obviously, these miracles do not go unnoticed.
- **Matthew 27:54**
- This centurion had probably presided over many crucifixions.
- He could see something unique had happened when Jesus died.
- 'feared greatly' – Crucifixions had probably become routine for them.
- This was not normal and so it was alarming to them.
- What did they mean when they said, "Truly this was the Son of God!"
- Did they become believers?
- We can't say with any certainty but if they did, they are the first Gentiles saved by the death of Christ.
- Others witnessed these events also.
- **Matthew 27:55-56**
- Of the disciples, only John is recorded as being present when Jesus died, but many women were there.

- **Matthew 27:57-60**

- Joseph was also joined by Nicodemus.
- These are prominent men in the Sanhedrin.
- To do this publicly was a bold and risky thing to do.
- They had come to believe that Jesus was who He said He was, and they disagreed with what the other religious leaders did to Jesus.
- Unclaimed bodies were not treated with much dignity.
- It was customary for the Jews to bury people who executed on the same day they died (Deuteronomy 21:22-23).
- The Romans had no such laws. They would sometimes leave the body on the cross until the cross was needed again.
- This added to the humiliation and as a warning not to break Roman law.
- Jesus' burial in a rich man's tomb was predicted more than 700 years earlier (**Isaiah 53:9**).

And they made His grave with the wicked— but with the rich at His death...

- It is interesting that God appointed a Joseph to care for Jesus' body in the virgin womb and then another Joseph to care for Christ's body in a virgin tomb.
- There are many other details included in the other gospels.
- For Matthew, the main point is the King is dead!
- He will move quickly in his narrative to the wonder of the resurrection.
- Joseph and Nicodemus put Jesus into the tomb quickly.
- Jesus was crucified and died on Friday afternoon.
- At sunset, the Sabbath began.
- Even though they believed in Jesus, they were still devout Jews.
- Preparing Jesus' body properly would have to wait.
- Even though Jesus said repeatedly that He would be raised the third day, no one seemed to believe it.

- **Matthew 27:61**

- These are the women who would return on Sunday morning with the intention showing Jesus one last act of love – to prepare His body for death.

- We know that was a wasted journey, but they don't – not yet!
 - Others respond differently to the burial of Jesus.
 - **Matthew 27:62-63**
 - They didn't believe that Jesus would rise from the dead, but they believed that Christ's disciples would try to make it look like He had.
 - The enemies of God remember what the disciples of Christ seem to have forgotten.
 - Jesus told them He was going to be killed but then on the third day He would rise again.
 - Why weren't the disciples at the tomb on Sunday morning expecting Him to come out of the tomb?
 - Why were they surprised when they saw Him raised from the dead?
 - It is one thing to say you believe what God says, it is quite another to live like you believe what God says.
 - The Bible teaches us to forgive (**Ephesians 4:32**).
- And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.**
- We are to forgive just as God has forgiven us.
 - But if we don't forgive, we are not living what we say we believe.
 - In fact, to withhold forgiveness is sin and will create a barrier between you and God.
 - Unforgiveness is also toxic to our own soul.
 - To withhold forgiveness is to continue to carry around someone else's sin.
 - I have lived long enough to have witnessed some foul, nasty, and disgusting things.
 - If we could see sin the same way God sees it, we would know that the sin we carry around is nastier than anything we have ever experienced.
 - Forgiveness of others gets that nastiness out of my heart.
 - And it allows me to live freely and with greater peace and joy.
 - **Matthew 27:64-66**
 - The Jews did claim that the disciples had stolen the body, even with the guard present and the tomb sealed.
 - Their ignorance about who Jesus was made it so that they believed they could hold Jesus in the tomb.

- Nothing in the universe could keep Jesus in the tomb.
- On the third day He would be raised from the dead.
- That is important for us because Jesus has promised to raise all His people from the dead.
- If nothing could keep Jesus in the tomb, then nothing can keep Him from keep His promise to raise us in the last days.
- The King is dead, but he is not going to stay dead.
- Everyone believed He was dead, and believed He was going to stay dead.
- The religious leaders were jubilant because the troublemaker from Nazareth was out of their hair.
- The followers of Christ were feeling hopelessness and loss.
- In a couple of days everything would change.
- We will look at that next week.
- Change is a fundamental reality of Christianity (**2 Corinthians 5:17**). **Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.**
- Some things change immediately, but others can take much longer.
- I met a man this week who was imprisoned by the emotions connected to things from his past.
- It is my prayer that the Holy Spirit helps him to find the freedom Jesus died to give all who would believe in Him.
- As we close, I would like you to ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to you some area of your life that He would like to change.
- You can't do it yourself, surrender yourself to the loving hands of your Heavenly Father, and He will do the work.
- The abundant life Jesus died to give us is lived out in absolute surrender to God.
- Let's pray and ask the Holy Spirit to help us surrender!
- **Pray! Last Song!**