

Communion Service

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 17 March 2024

Preacher: Rev. Andrew Macleod

[0 : 00] Luke chapter 23, seeking God's help, we'll focus on God's word for a time together.

When you sit down to watch any sporting or national event, we get the benefits. When we watch it on our TVs, we have the benefit of there being so many cameras that are there at the event.

In fact, you could argue that it's actually better to watch it on TV than it would be sometimes to be there in person. Because you're getting to see all of the different angles.

You're getting behind the scenes shots. You're getting to hear from the commentators and others what's been said. You don't miss anything. Even if you're trying to buy a house, you can take a virtual tour of that house just by sitting on your seat on your phone and scrolling through, wandering from one room to the next before you ever need to go and visit the property for yourself.

As we come to Calvary, this most important moment of history, we are given a thorough view of what happened.

[1 : 28] Because of our four gospel accounts, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. We can tune in to Jesus' own words and his actions. The women who followed, the crowd who stood around, the disciples who ran away, and Pilate's decisions are lack of.

The perspective I want us to see from today in particular is that of the Roman centurion. He and his men bring us behind closed doors and then on to the center stage.

So I want us to observe it from four different angles, from four different shots. I want us to see what the centurion and his men, what they did, what they heard, what they saw, and what they said.

What they did, what they heard, what they saw, and what this Roman centurion in particular, what he said. Let's see what they did.

When I return back to Tain this week, we are going to be doing something called Easter Cracked. There's never a dull moment in the life of ministry.

[2 : 55] This will be our second time doing it. We did it last year in a different school. But this school that we're going into in the town itself this coming week, we were there at Christmas as well doing Christmas Unwrapped.

At Christmas Unwrapped, we were obviously telling and sharing with them in an interactive way the good news of Jesus' birth into this world. And now this week we'll follow on the story and tell them of Jesus' death and resurrection and ascension, sharing with them the Easter story.

Back in December, I was assigned the role of Joseph for Christmas Unwrapped. But this coming week, I will be dressed as the Roman centurion.

And so you can decide for yourself whether I've been promoted or demoted between these last four months. But I think the outfit of the Roman centurion at least is a big upgrade.

But the real centurion in our passage today, he has been promoted. He would have been an ordinary soldier.

- [4 : 09] But because of his exemplary bravery and his boldness in the battlefield, he's been awarded this senior position. He is now the one who's at the front.
- He's the one who's leading his squad as the century, his squad of a hundred men as they carry out the Roman regime. And so we read about him in verse 47.
- In verse 47, Now when the centurion saw what had taken place, this centurion and his men, they were given front row seats to all that unfolded with Jesus.
- But they weren't just passive in all that they saw and in all that they did. They didn't even just do their job.
- But these vile men went below and beyond the call of duty. This centurion most likely would have been the one tasked to arrest Jesus, to guard him, to be in charge over him as he made his way to the cross.
- [5 : 30] What a role this man had. At one perhaps, he didn't think too much of it. This was his job after all. He's arrested many men up to this point.
- This Jesus was just another one to add to the list. And yet, he was the one who would oversee the capture and crucifixion of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.
- From one court to another, they took him. But it's what they did to him. We read it in the Gospels of them taking Jesus into the praetorium room.
- When they took Jesus in there, that's where it was most alarming of what they did to your Jesus. The centurion at least watched, and I think then got involved, as his men abused the Savior of the world.
- We sang about it in Psalm 22. We can refer to this as Satan's zoo. Strong bulls of Bashan circle me.
- [6 : 46] Wild bulls approach on every side. As roaring lions tear their prey, at me their mouths are open wide. Dogs have surrounded me.
- A band of evil men encircled me. We can refer to this as Satan's zoo. Three animals are listed here, used to attack and to intimidate our Savior of what these men did to our Jesus.
- The lion's den, of course, reminds us of what happened to Daniel in the Old Testament when he was unfairly thrown into it. What happened in the morning when the king, he hurried to the den.
- He was hoping that Daniel had been preserved. And when the king went to the den in the morning, he anxiously called down and he asked, Has your God, whom you serve continually, been able to rescue you from the lions?
- And he got the reply. My God sent his angel and he shut the mouths of the lions. The mouths of the lions were shut for Daniel.
- [8 : 15] But there was nobody to shut the mouths of the lions for Jesus. Like lions who circle their prey, these band of wicked brothers encircled the Son of God.
- It was all part of the process to play with him, to dress him up in purple, to crown him with thorns, to spit on him with venom, to beat him with joy, and to bow down to him in laughter.
- This centurion then, climactically, in his role and responsibilities this day, calls on four men to nail Jesus Christ to the cross and erect it on Calvary's hill.
- This is what they did to Jesus. But this is what we've done to Jesus too. It was my sin that held him there until it was accomplished.
- This is what they did. But secondly, let's see what, listen to what they heard. Secondly, listen to what they heard. Due to their tactical position, these men heard the chants of the crowd, the decisions of Pilate, and the grace of Jesus.

[10 : 04] What a privilege for them that they were able to hear the voice of Jesus. And you, who now sit at the Lord's table today, you have heard the voice of Jesus in your life and in your experience already.

But the question is, can the rest of you, even today, hear Jesus calling? Can you hear the voice of Jesus say, come unto me and rest.

Lay down, you weary one, lay down your head upon his breast. If we confine ourselves just to Luke's account and what we read here, we can listen to Jesus speaking three times.

He speaks to the daughters, he speaks to his father, and he speaks to this brother. To the daughters, the father, and this brother. You see, and we read there, that the daughters of Jerusalem, you read in verse 28, the daughters of Jerusalem were weeping because of all they saw happening to Jesus.

But maybe curiously, you wonder, why does Jesus tell them to stop crying? He says to them, don't weep for me, but weep for yourselves.

[11 : 36] The tears of these women were not wrong, but they were shed in the wrong direction. They were right to be crying, to be upset, to be moved in their hearts, but they were crying about the wrong person.

They were weeping because they felt sorry for Jesus, because of all that was happening to him, because of what we've described these men were doing to him, and what they knew was going to happen to him.

And so they were weeping for Jesus. Plenty people can feel sorry for Jesus. Plenty people have sympathy for Jesus.

Plenty people have a respect even in this room for the Christian faith. And so you come out of respect. But Jesus is not a poor soul requiring your pity.

Jesus is dying to save your soul, requiring your repentance. Jesus doesn't want sympathy.

[13 : 00] He wants surrender. And as you see God's people sitting at this table, this is what they are doing. again, surrendering.

And if even since the last time they sat here, they tried to pick it up their lives themselves and do it, today again they surrender. And they profess once more to this community that it is Jesus, only Jesus.

But also to the Father. These men, the centurion, they heard Jesus speaking to the Father. This is the first of the seven sayings on the cross.

And Jesus says, Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do. How unbelievable must it have been for this centurion.

Okay, the day started out that this was just another man, another prisoner. But after all that he's seen Jesus endure, after all that they've heard that there was a heart accused of this man, all that they were saying that he hailed the king of the Jews, all the torture, physically and verbally, that they saw, surely they recognized this prisoner was like no other.

[14 : 26] father. And yet, even after what they've done to him, they hear him say, Father, forgive them.

Forgive them for what they've done. Because they're doing it in ignorance. They do not know what they are doing. And one of the two criminals was also listening to Jesus.

And him, having started the day, also mocking Jesus, now we can hear him pleading with Jesus to grant this forgiveness to him too.

And now to his brother, to this brother Jesus says, today you will be with me in paradise. paradise. We've been looking at Psalm 51 over this weekend, Friday and Saturday, and again tonight, Lord willing, you'll be here with us.

But last night we asked the question, what does it sound like when David says he wants to hear the sound of joy and gladness? What does it sound like to hear joy and gladness?

[15 : 42] It sounds like these words, you are forgiven. it sounds like hearing Jesus say, you will be with me in paradise.

The reason that you and I can sit at the Lord's table is because we have heard him say these words to us. Because we are assured, not because of anything we've done.

For we are just like these men. but because of what he has done for each one of us. You are forgiven.

You will be with him in paradise. So there are different angles which show what this centurion and his men did, what they heard, and now thirdly, what they saw with their own eyes.

What they saw with their own eyes. Let me just stop for a moment, and going back to even our opening illustration of maybe we can't just, sometimes it is better to just sit on the couch at home and watch the event on the television.

[17 : 02] We can be passive in all that's going on, but we can't do that with Jesus. We can't continue just to be those who watch what happens in church.

Watch what happens on the communion Sunday. We cannot just be spectators. We cannot be passive in what is happening here today.

We must be involved, and actually you are involved. Nobody is spectating today. Everybody is acting.

Everybody is making a decision about Jesus. Whether we make it about if you sit on one side of the white cloth or the other. More importantly, what you decide to do with Jesus, who is standing at the door and knocking.

That's what's crucial. And maybe you say, well, I'm not saying I don't want Jesus in my life, but by not saying you want him, it is rejecting him. So it's impossible to be passive.

[18 : 17] It's impossible to be a spectator to the Christian faith and to Jesus. And we hope and pray that Jesus himself, that you are hearing his voice as these men did, that you're hearing it through the word of God in your heart, Jesus speaking to you, calling you to himself through the power of the Holy Spirit as we join together in worship even today.

But we read here in verse 47 that the centurion, after all that he saw that day, he and his men saw Jesus and were involved in Jesus being beaten and bruised, questioned and accused.

nailed and crucified. He was surely like no prisoner they had ever seen before. And despite the injustice, Jesus didn't cry out or retaliate.

And so the men finish up this part of their work, they erect the cross, they take their seat and they watch Jesus die. they watched the Savior of the world save the world.

They also saw something that they had never seen before. The day became as night. The light was replaced with darkness.

[19 : 58] And for three hours it was more what the centurion couldn't see than what he could. He couldn't see his army anymore. He couldn't see in front of him.

He couldn't see Jesus. As Jesus was forsaken by the Father, as sin was being dealt with, Jesus was out of sight.

is there anything worse than for Jesus to be out of sight and out of your reach?

Today, Jesus is within reach, but soon he will be out of reach. Today, there is opportunity to come to him.

soon the opportunity will be over. Jesus ended this time on the cross by praying to the Father with a loud voice and with authority.

[21 : 08] And this is something the soldiers would never have seen before. For every prisoner, every individual who was crucified on a cross, life would have just slowly and painfully ebbed out of them.

But what they saw with Jesus was so different. They saw Jesus with strength be able to fill his lungs with this power to say, Father, into your hands I commit my spirit.

it. Incredibly, it was the hand of God that had given Jesus into the hands of these sinful men.

It was the hand of God that was raised above his son in order to punish him for our sin. It was the hand of God now that was welcoming his son home.

And this is true for the Christian too. Do you know, post resurrection, after all we've read here today about what these soldiers and many others did to Jesus, how he was in the hands of these sinful men, after the resurrection, we never read of Jesus being in the company of people like that anymore.

[22 : 58] Always with his people, always in fellowship and in worship with them. Into the Father's hands love I commit my spirit.

And that's the amazing truth for God's people, that nothing or nobody shall snatch you out of his hands.

So we've seen what they did to Jesus, what they heard, what they saw, but then let's think lastly at this point, what this Roman centurion said.

See again in verse 47, he praised God, saying, certainly this man was innocent. But if you look at Matthew and Mark's account of this, of what the centurion said, he doesn't use the word innocent, he uses the word son of God.

Certainly this was the son of God. God, but since we're here in Luke, we'll refer to the innocents. There's no certainty, you can debate this maybe for yourself if you like, there's no certainty that this man came to faith with this expression.

[24 : 16] The word innocent can be, and I think perhaps should be, better translated as righteous, the word is dikaios, which gives us most naturally the translation of righteous.

It doesn't seem to square with me that the centurion would praise God, or as the King James Bible has it, if some of you are using it, the King James says, glorify God.

I don't think he would be doing that just because you think somebody's not guilty. I don't know a lot about the Roman justice system, but I don't think that Jesus would have been the first.

To have been wrongly convicted and sentenced to death for a crime he didn't do. Was this a profession of faith from the Roman centurion?

Well, we don't need to think about him or anybody else, how likely or unlikely it is that they have been saved. We only need to think of ourselves. We only need to think about our profession of faith about what we say in regards to Jesus.

[25 : 33] We know exactly what we have done. We know the sins that we have committed. We know the punishment that we deserve.

And yet, because of God's grace, you can sit here around his table and you too can praise him with all of your heart and soul. We can say and even say more than the centurion.

Certainly, Jesus was innocent. He is the Son of God. But what is important to note here in the Gospel of Luke?

That Luke is trying to make a point about Jesus. He is trying to make this clear. He is trying to make this clear for those who are reading this account that he has compiled for us.

The centurion had heard at least six times throughout all of his interaction over the last few chapters that Jesus was innocent. And four times in this chapter, very different people make that same conclusion about Jesus.

[26 : 50] He is innocent. He is not guilty. We read of Pilate, Herod, the converted criminal, and now the centurion pronounces him not guilty.

It's a vital point that he's making, that he is not guilty. And maybe a point that some of us even here are doubting.

It's vital that Jesus was sinless, the spotless Lamb of God. he had to be. He had to be.

If there was any defect, if there was any truth to the crimes that he was accused of, it would make the sacrifice invalid, would make our sins still weigh heavy upon us, would mean that God had failed.

But time and time again it was declared that Jesus was innocent. innocent. That's the point that Luke is trying to make to us, that he is innocent, innocent, innocent.

[28 : 08] That Jesus is not guilty, not guilty, not guilty, not guilty. But we are guilty. We are not innocent.

But this is again why we are here, to remember what he has done for us, to praise God, not out of some religious and ritualistic performance or tradition, but out of heartfelt love and devotion to our God.

Peter writes in his first letter, Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the Spirit.

When Jesus was born, they took him to the temple and he was held in the arms of Simeon. And when Simeon held him in his arms, he looked at Jesus, the baby Jesus, and he said, my eyes have seen your salvation.

Of the four men who declared Jesus innocent, some could say he wasn't guilty, he wasn't guilty of the crimes that he has been wrongly convicted of, but at least one, the forgiven thief, knew Jesus was sinless and could even save him from his sins.

[29 : 40] Could the centurion say the same? What matters is that you and I can say the same. as you look back to the cross, what do you see?

Do you see your Savior bearing your sins so that you can hear the fact that you are forgiven?

open the eyes of my heart Lord. I want to see you. Let's pray together.

Lord our God, we thank you. We thank you for Jesus' perfect, the fact he was spotless, the fact that he went to bear all of our sin and we haven't even contemplated how repulsive that must have been or we are those who live in sin and yet he knew none of it but became it for us.

Gracious God, continue with us open the eyes of our heart. In Jesus' name, Amen. We're going to sing again, this time in Psalm 103, the Scottish Psalter, page 369.

[31 : 34] We'll sing from verse 1 verse 1 to verse 5. O thou my soul, bless God the Lord and all that in me is, be stirred up his holy name to magnify and bless.

Psalm 103 from verse 1 to 5 to God's praise. ■ O thou my so blessed God, the Lord, and all that in me is, We stand up his holy name to magnify and bless.

Bless, O my so blessed Lord, thy Lord, and all that in me is, O for this gracious benefit, he hath been stoned on thee.

- O thy iniquities, the Lord, those graciously forgive.
 Who thy diseases, all that pains, doth heal and thee relieve.
- [33 : 46] Who doth redeem my life, the love to tend this auto-dumb.
 Who thee with loving kindness doth, and tender mercies come.
 Who with abundance of good things doth satisfy thy mouth.
 So that he must sing, he calls it, renew it is thy youth.
 Well, we come to the part of our service where we term it as the fencing of the table.
- [35 : 18] The purpose of the fencing is to determine who should take their seat at the Lord's table.
 And should you, even now, take your place?
- We've been looking at all that happened to Jesus. We've been to Gethsemane, and we've been into the Praetorium, the Courts, and Calvary.
- However committed the centurion was, it's not our decision to say if he was saved or not. But it is our decision what we do with the God-man Jesus Christ.
- And you have seen, I have no doubt, in the Word, through reading it yourself, reading your Bibles, even as the young folks are a reminder to us, and as you too, read your Bibles from childhood or was read to you.
- As you've all heard the preaching from this pulpit over recent years or over many years. Through the Old Testament, you've seen, in the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.
- [36 : 37] And Isaiah prophesying, Behold, my servant shall act wisely. He shall be high and lifted up, and he shall be exalted. That's prophecy.
- That's prophecy. And that servant is born into this world. And his mission is made clear. And God so loved the world, that whoever believes in him, his one and only Son, he will not perish, but have eternal life.
- And as you read past the Gospels, and into the Acts of the Apostles, we read of the explosion of the Gospel that went from Jerusalem to Judea, to Samaria, and to the ends of the earth, and even to Barvis.
- On these shores, blessed perhaps more than many other shores throughout the world, the Gospel seed has been sown, and sown, and sown.
- And men and women, young people, have been, and praise God, are coming to faith in Jesus Christ.
- [37 : 53] You've watched some of them be baptized, and even now profess their faith here at the Lord's table. Others, perhaps, you've only known them since they've been living their lives faithfully as Christians, and you've attended their funeral services as they left this world, but assured that they were going to be with the Lord in glory.
- After all that you have seen, heard, what will you do? What will you say? Can you also praise God, saying, certainly, certainly, Jesus is innocent.
- He is the righteous one. Certainly, Jesus is the Son of God. Can you say, Jesus is my Lord and my God.
- He died for my sins. Then if so, you must do what you are commanded to do by Jesus Christ is to come and do this in remembrance of Him.
- Well, let's approach the Lord's table by singing Psalm 118 in the Scottish Psalter, page 398 from verse 15 to 21. In dwellings of the righteous is heard the melody of joy and health the Lord's right hand doth ever valiantly.

[39 : 34] Psalm 118 from verse 15 to 21 to God's praise. In dwellings of the righteous is heard the melody of joy and health the Lord's right hand doth ever valiantly.

The right hand of the mighty Lord exalted exalted is on high the right hand of the mighty Lord doth ever valiantly hear.

I shall not die but live and shall the works of God discover the Lord heart and he just I said so but not to death give no word.

O set ye open arms to me the gates of righteousness then will I enter into there and I the Lord will bless this is the gate of God by it the just shall enter in thee will I praise for the may earth and has my safety been as we've said already the Lord's table is not somewhere that you sit passively it is a place that requires us to use all of our senses so I want us to highlight that but first of all you're to use your nose you're to use your nose

Christians give off a sweet smelling fragrance according to the apostle Paul in 2 Corinthians chapter 2 we who know him and love him he says are the aroma of Christ there can be no more beautiful smell and there's something very attractive about God's people but that fragrance it divides all people it divides those who are being saved from those who are perishing to those being saved Paul says we are the fragrance of life and to those who are perishing we are the smell of death people but also use your eyes the result of what happened to

[44 : 06] Jesus physically and all the more spiritually is you you are the result all of these people that you see around you also professing their faith in Jesus these men and women your brothers and sisters are the recipients of the grace of Jesus look at them love them love them here in church but love them throughout the week you are a family that has been brought together use your hands as you touch as we take the elements in our hands we are remembering Jesus' body body the body that suffered his blood that was poured out for us on the cross

Jesus was thrust into the hands of evil men but in the end he said father into your hands I commit my spirit use your ears there is always to be the word the word of God to be read to be proclaimed as it's accompanied with this sacrament the reading the preaching to accompany the taking of these elements it is through the Bible that we are able to hear God's voice to know the truth for ourselves to hear the invitation and the command that Jesus gives you do this in remembrance of me use your mouth the psalmist writes come taste and see that God is good we are not literally eating the body and blood of Jesus as some would heretically teach but as we take of these symbols we are reminded of what is spiritually true that I am in

Christ and Christ is in me and because Christ is in me I have the hope of glory Christian breathe it in this aroma this fragrance of life and keep on going keep on persevering and if you are not passive but looking on may the Holy Spirit today work through your senses and into your heart as you watch these Christians remember Jesus' death just as the centurion watched Jesus die maybe you will be able to leave this place praising God glorifying God like him and more than him certainly this man was innocent he is my Lord and my God

Amen let us read our warrant for coming to the Lord's table we find it in 1 Corinthians chapter 11 on Corinthians chapter 11 and from verse 23 let's hear the word of God for I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed he took bread and when he had given thanks he broke it and said this is my body which is for you do this in remembrance of me in the same way also he took the cup after supper saying this cup is the new covenant in my blood do this as often as you drink it in remembrance of me for as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup you proclaim the Lord's death death until he comes let us follow the

Lord's example and let's pray Lord our God we come not to the free church table but to the Lord's table we come not as people who have achieved but as people who have surrendered we come Lord to you our Savior Jesus Christ as we've considered the suffering yes the suffering physically was there for all to see but oh what it cost in these hours of darkness in the bearing of our sin even as he acknowledged what was to happen in the garden of Gethsemane what Jesus

[49 : 55] Christ was willing to do for us oh Lord we give you thanks we give you all of the glory and so we pray Lord that our eyes would be fixed upon you here and now and as we rise from this place oh that your people here would be strengthened in their faith Lord that it would be a living faith that impacts every relationship that they have every person that they meet every place that they go that we are taking Jesus with us because I am in Christ and Christ is in me so Lord as we consider him consider Jesus specifically together just now may our hearts be warmed in the good news of this gospel which we have been enabled to believe it's in your name that we pray amen amen we read in verse 24 when he had given thanks he took the bread when he broke it he said this is my body which is for you do this in remembrance of me in the same way also he took the cup after supper saying this cup is the new covenant in my blood do this as often as you drink it in remembrance of me for as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes from me thatALLY that Toronto will do

Was Thank you.

We can rise from the table, Lord willing, strengthened, encouraged, full of the joy of the Lord.

So we can sing together these words for Psalm 72 in the Scottish Shelter, page 314. His name forever shall endure, last like the sun it shall.

Men shall be blessed in him, and blessed all nations shall them call. Now blessed be the Lord our God, the God of Israel, for he alone doth wondrous works, in glory that excel.

[53 : 18] And blessed be his glorious name, to all eternity. The whole earth let his glory fill. Amen. So let it be. Let's stand and sing to God's praise.

His name forever shall endure, last like the sun it shall.

Then shall be blessed in him, and blessed all nations shall have been born.

The blessed be the Lord our God, the God of Israel.

God of Israel. Glory, O Lord, the Lord of all nations shall. Glory, O Lord of all nations shall.

[54 : 42] Glory, O Lord of all nations shall. Glory, O Lord of all nations shall. Glory, O Lord of all nations shall. Glory, O Lord of all nations shall.

Glory, O Lord of all nations shall. And blessed be his glorious name, to all eternity.

The whole earth let his glory fill Amen, so let it be Now may grace, mercy and peace from God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit rest and remain with each of you both now and forever. Amen.