

Good Friday Sermon
March 25, 2016

[Put up picture of the soldier.] This is a picture of Michael Monsoor. On September 29th, 2006, Michael was one of four Navy SEALs on a rooftop in Iraq providing security for others in the area. In the afternoon of that day, an enemy fighter threw a grenade up to the roof. The grenade hit Monsoor in the chest and fell to the rooftop in front of him. Monsoor yelled, "Grenade!" and dropped on top of the grenade and then it exploded. Monsoor's body shielded the others from the brunt of the blast. The two other SEALs close to Monsoor were only wounded, not killed. But Monsoor died about 30 minutes later from his injuries.

One of the wounded SEALs said the following: "He never took his eye off the grenade – his only movement was down toward it. He undoubtedly saved mine and the other SEALs' lives, and we owe him."

Michael Monsoor risked his life to save the other men with him. He succeeded ... at the cost of his own life.

Take a good look at his picture. Do you suppose you see the same thing that the saved SEAL sees? We see Michael Monsoor, just like the saved soldier. But almost certainly he sees more than we do. We see a man who died to save someone's life. But the saved soldier sees the man who died to save his life.

Would the saved soldier see the same Monsoor if he no longer thought it a big deal that Monsoor saved him? What if he stopped remembering that he could have died that day, would he see him the same then? [Go to next slide.]

In the last 20 minutes you have heard the true story about Jesus's suffering and death on the cross. How do you see him in that story? Are seeing clearly today? I don't just mean, do you believe the facts about Jesus. Most of us believe the facts about Monsoor giving his life to save the others, yet we don't see him the same way the saved soldier does. Do you see Jesus as more precious than your next breath? My goal in the next few minutes is to help you see Jesus rightly, as a beautiful Savior. If you know you need a clearer picture of your Savior, then please pray now with me.

Pray

Some of you in the past have confessed some of your sins to God and repented of them. I'm so glad. Others of you have not yet been ready to do that. I hope you will soon. But no matter who you are, if you are going to see Jesus as he really is, then you must see yourself as you really are. If you think of your sins as light and few, if you think only rarely about your sins, then you will only see a Savior who gave a little for you.

God's good law, the law that Jesus said he did not come to abolish, demands that we love the Lord our God with all of our heart, soul, mind, and strength. And it adds that we must

love our neighbor as ourselves. This is an inside and outside kind of love. This love cares deeply in our heart about God and our neighbor and this love expresses that care in words and deeds. Our sins are a result of loving something other than God and our neighbor. Please let the Spirit of God expose your sins to you right now. I'll read some sins and you close your eyes and listen to the Spirit, asking him, "Is this me?" Anger. Selfishness. Sensuality and lust. Gluttony. Pride. Greed. Laziness. Envy.

Friends, please look at me. You are a lawbreaker. All lawbreakers deserve God's judgment. None of us is exempt. Reminding yourself that you deserve God's judgment is a part of your prizing Jesus because you won't prize a gift you don't think you need.

Likewise, you won't prize Jesus' gift of salvation, if you don't think he saved you from much trouble. God's judgment for your sins is hell, a place of unquenchable fire, a place of unspeakable torment that will continue day and night forever. And because of your sins, you deserve to be tormented in hell. Reminding yourself of the waiting horrors of hell is a part of your prizing Jesus. You won't prize his gift of salvation if you think he saved you from just a little trouble.

But God ... But God planned for and provided a Savior for sinners like you. God planned for and provide for a way of escape from your torment in hell. Let's look at the beauty and worth of this Savior. *Pray:* O God give us eyes today to see Christ's beauty.

In the reading from John that we just heard, we heard Pilate say three times, "I find no guilt in him." God put the truth in Pilate's mouth for all to hear. Open your eyes to see Jesus' beauty number one: Jesus is pure, spotless; he never sinned.

Jesus was arrested, bound, flogged, mocked, pierced, and crucified. Never was a man as innocent and undeserving of suffering and death as Jesus.

Look at the hellish cruelties that were given to Jesus. And tremble as you see what you deserve. Why did this great evil happen? Did God not notice? Jesus himself said that God not only knew it would happen, not only let it happen, but that his Father in heaven was the one giving him this cup of wrath to drink. "Shall I not drink the cup that the Father has given me?"

Let's ask again, why did this great evil happen, this evil that God planned? As beaten and bloody Jesus is stretched on the cross, John writes three times that this was happening so that the Scriptures would be fulfilled. This is not just some point of academic interest. John is trying to open our eyes to see that surely Jesus is the suffering Messiah promised by God through the prophets of old.

Speaking of the Messiah to come, the prophet Isaiah wrote, "⁵ But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed. ⁶ All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all." (Is 53:5-7).

Open your eyes to see Jesus' beauty number two: Jesus is innocent, yet accused, flogged, pierced, and crucified. He is paying your punishment for your sins.

Look with me at one more sighting of Jesus' beauty. That night when the soldiers came for him in the garden, what didn't he do? He didn't hide or run. But "knowing all that would happen to him, came forward and said to them, "Whom do you seek?" He's God; he could have easily escaped. But when Peter tried to help him escape, by using his sword, Jesus told him to put his sword away. Jesus knew that he was about to drink the cup of judgment from God, the cup of God's wrath for your and my sins. Jesus knew it and accepted it, welcomed it, and stepped toward it. Jesus planned and maneuvered his life for some 30 years so that he would be pierced and crushed at the end. He was willing and even glad to suffer for your sins. Jesus saw the end result: the salvation of sinners, the upholding of God's justice, and the unparalleled display of God's glory. His joy over these things carried him to and through the most unspeakable horror of all time. Open your eyes to see Jesus' beauty number three: Jesus willingly endured the cross and despised its shame, with joy.

What do you see when you see Jesus on the cross? Friends, I hope you see Jesus pure and spotless, without sin. I hope you see Jesus innocent, yet pierced and crucified, taking the punishment you deserve. And I hope you see Jesus willingly and even joyfully enduring the cross and despising its shame.

Let's continue to admire and worship the Savior of our soul as we participate together in the Lord's supper.