

## LIFE IN HIS NAME

### LOOK AND LIVE

John 19:16-42

Jesus has already died here, but just to make sure, one of the soldiers, it says in verse 34, “pierced his side with a spear, and at once there came out blood and water. He (referring to John) who saw it has borne witness – his testimony is true, and he knows that he is telling the truth – that you also may believe.”

Let’s pray. Father, I pray that every person here would receive this testimony, because it’s true. And Lord, as we look to the cross of Jesus Christ, as we heard through song already, I pray that we would look and live. **The promise you make over our lives, Jesus, is: “Everyone who looks to me will receive eternal life, will pass from death to life. Everyone who looks to me will live.”** So I pray that every heart and every eye in this room would fix our gaze on Jesus and find life. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

In John chapter 3, it was night when Nicodemus came to Jesus. Nicodemus had some questions for Jesus. He knew that Jesus had come from God, yet he really couldn’t make sense of who he was or what he was about. He represented the Pharisees, the religious elite leadership group of the day. So he came to him by night secretly to inquire of Jesus. This is the classic passage, the famous passage where Jesus says, “Listen, you must be born again if you are going to enter the Kingdom of God.” They go back and forth. “What does this mean?” Jesus talks about being born of the water and the Spirit. Then as we heard Brian share earlier, Jesus pulls out this Old Testament analogy from Numbers. He said, “Just as the bronze serpent was lifted up, so I will be lifted up, and everyone who looks to me will live.” **“Look and Live.”**

**In John chapter 19 we are going to look at Jesus Christ lifted up.** We are going to look at the cross of Jesus Christ through the eyes of four eyewitnesses. As we look, really, exclusively through John’s testimony, he also shows us various characters on display at Calvary. He shows us Pontius Pilate. He shows us Jesus’ mother, Mary. He certainly shows us himself, and we’ll go back to that passage we read. Then finally, we see the witness in the eyes of Nicodemus. So that’s how we are going to break up this message this morning.

We are going to look first through the eyes of Pilate at the cross of Jesus Christ.

#### I. **The Eyes of Pilate.**

Look at verse 16. This is after Pilate has sentenced Jesus to crucifixion. It says:

*So he (Pilate) delivered him (Jesus) over to them to be crucified. So they took Jesus, and he went out, bearing his own cross, to the place called The Place of a Skull, which in Aramaic is called Golgotha. There they crucified him, and with him two others, one on either side, and Jesus between them. Pilate also wrote an inscription and put it on the cross. It read, "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews." Many of the Jews read this inscription, for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city, and it was written in Aramaic (that would be the language of the people), in Latin (that would be the language of the Roman Empire), and in Greek (that would be the common language used by most of the people, especially in business and trade).*

So, in Aramaic and Latin and in Greek it says that he is the King of the Jews. Verse 21:

*So the chief priests of the Jews said to Pilate, "Do not write, 'The King of the Jews,' but rather, 'This man said, I am King of the Jews.'" Pilate answered, "What I have written I have written."*

We see the cross of Jesus Christ through the eyes of Pilate. Of the four characters we are going to look at this morning, the last three believe in Jesus and are saved. Pilate is much more of a challenging character to get our hands around. In Church history it's interesting. Some actually believe that Pilate got saved and venerate him as a saint. Others view him as a villain. Yet, he is a much more mixed character than I think either side makes him out to be.

We see here that Pilate puts over Jesus' cross: "The King of the Jews." He writes it, really, as a way to sort of stick it to the religious leaders. "What I have written I have written, and I'm not changing it." Pilate is a mixed person, kind of like all of us are mixed people. Listen: He is one of the most powerful people in that region at that time. He has the ability to say "Yes, you live. You die. You get locked up. You're free. Barabbas, you're a criminal but I'm going to let you go." He's got all this power! And yet he is a fearful person.

If you haven't heard Brian's sermon from last week, go back and listen to it. Go up to verse 7. Pilate has said three times, "I find no guilt in this man." In verse 7: "The Jews answered him and said, 'Well, we have a law, and according to the law he ought to die because he has made himself out to be the Son of God.' When Pilate heard this statement, he was even more afraid." "More afraid" -- do you know what that implies? He has been afraid the whole time. He has been trying to figure out how to get this guy free. Yet a riot is emerging. In Matthew's gospel, his wife is literally calling to him and saying, "Get him free! I have had really bad dreams because of this man."

Pilate is looking for a way to set Jesus free. He says, “I find no guilt in him. No guilt in him. No guilt in him. But I’m going to wash my hands of this whole thing and crucify him anyway.” And that’s what he does. **Pilate represents somebody who loves his own life so much that he is willing to crucify the King of the Jews and the King of the Universe to preserve his own power and his own position.**

You know this from the context earlier where it says, “Pilate sought to release him.” Look at verse 12 again. “...but the Jews cried out, ‘If you release this man, you are not Caesar’s friend. Everyone who makes himself a king opposes Caesar.’ That is a threat. They are looking at him and saying, “He has claimed to be a king, and we are going to tell Caesar on you if you don’t put him to death.” He hears that threat. He understands what they are saying. He says, “Fine, I’m going to crucify him. I’ll crucify and kill the King of the Jews.” Pilate was in power, and yet Pilate was afraid. So Pilate did the expedient thing and terminated – killed Jesus Christ – to save himself.

Jesus already told us in chapter 12: “Everyone who loves his life will lose it. But whoever hates his life for my sake will keep it.” Pilate lost it. He loved himself far too much. He was afraid. He was even intrigued by Jesus. He thought there was something to him. He inquired of him very often, yet I don’t believe he got saved. I could be wrong. If I see you, Pilate, in heaven one day, praise the Lord, because God’s grace is big. But John wrote this long after Pilate died, and I think if he got saved he could have tipped his hat to that, because he does that at times.

We didn’t know this at the time, but later we find out. It doesn’t seem to me that Pilate ever repented. Five years after this account, Church history records that he is deposed of his position and Eusebius, one of the church historians, recounts that he committed suicide. Some aren’t confident in that. I think it’s likely accurate. If you think about that – how tragic. A man committed to saving himself at all costs crucified the Son of God, and he loses it all anyway.

There are some of us here in this country, in this place, at this time – we look to Jesus, we are intrigued by the cross, we are intrigued by Christ, but if it means losing our reputation, if it means losing authority or power or wealth, or really giving up anything, we are not interested. We look like Pilate. **We look through the eyes of Pilate and say, “I’m going to preserve my life. If Jesus gives me more, I’ll take Jesus.” And Jesus says this: “If you love me, pick up your cross and follow me. Die to yourself. Sacrifice yourself and find the glory that will never end.” The first eyes we see are through the eyes of Pilate. These are the eyes that we want to reject. The eyes of Pilate look, and he does not live.**

The second eyes we are going to look through are the eyes of Mary.

## II. The Eyes of Mary.

Follow along from verse 23:

*When the soldiers had crucified Jesus, they took his garments and divided them into four parts, one part for each soldier; also his tunic. But the tunic was seamless, woven in one piece from top to bottom, so they said to one another, "Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it to see whose it shall be." This was to fulfill the Scripture which says, "They divided my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots." So the soldiers did these things, but standing by the cross of Jesus were his mother and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved (John) standing nearby, he said to his mother, "Woman, behold, your son!" Then he said to the disciple, "Behold, your mother!" And from that hour the disciple took her to his own home.*

Let's pause and look at the cross through the eyes of Mary, the mother of Jesus. This is every parent's nightmare. For those of us who are parents, to see your own child die before you would be one of the worst things we would ever have to experience. But to see it happen like this would be unbearable and unthinkable.

Mary is also an interesting character in Church history. Some want to hold her up, almost as co-equal with Jesus, like she redeemed us just as much as Jesus. Sometimes in the Protestant traditions we want to downplay her importance. I don't think either of those cases are where we need to go, but Mary plays an incredible role in redemptive history. When the angel appears to her and tells her that she is going to be the mother of the Son of God, that the Holy Spirit will come upon her, that she will give birth to Immanuel – God with us – that he'll take on the throne of David, King David, and rule over God's people forever, she says, "Behold, I am a servant of the Lord. Let it be to me according to your word." When she said yes to that, she didn't know what she was signing up for. She had no idea.

For those 30 years with Jesus growing up in her household, she knew he was special. I mean, the wise men dropping off gifts, the shepherd coming, "Hey, angels told us – here we come," all of this – their fleeing to Egypt because Herod was trying to kill their child – she knew that he was extra special. An angel told her that. But she, like the disciples, didn't know how it was going to go down, and here she is witnessing firsthand the crucifixion of her firstborn. All her other children at this point, as far as we can tell, still don't believe in Jesus.

In chapter 7, do you remember that Jesus was thinking about going up to the Jerusalem festival? They were like, “You know, Jesus, if you’re really who you think you are, if you’re such a big deal, go up there and show yourself.” And Jesus said, “Well, it’s not my time. It’s not my hour yet, guys.” But John inserts this commentary, because even his own brothers didn’t believe in him.

Throughout the gospels you see that. At times his family is coming for him. Mary is sometimes mixed into that. They are like, “Jesus, you are making us look a little funny here. You’re a little crazy.” They are trying to figure it out. Now Mary clearly does believe in Jesus. In John chapter 2, when Jesus turns water into wine, she goes to her son. She knows. She has experienced firsthand testimony from the angels and others. She knows that this boy is special, but she doesn’t know exactly what that means – until this moment where her son is lifted up and everything Jesus said comes to pass.

We see the fulfillment of scripture in this moment, just like David prophesied that they would gamble away his clothing. All these scriptures are being fulfilled in rapid fire. It’s all clicking. She believes and John believes. Jesus sees John, the disciple, and says, “Mom, you’re with him.” I think that’s incredible. “John, take care of her.” Jesus has all these brothers, yet he says, “John, you take care of her.” Because our loyalty is first to the family of God. And at that point they are not saved.

Here is the cool thing. In 1 Corinthians 15 we learn that Jesus appears to James, his brother. James gets saved and write the book of James in your bible. That’s one of the half-brothers of Jesus. Jude is one of the half-brothers of Jesus. They get saved, but at this point Jesus entrusts his own mother to John. **He entrusts his own mother to the family of God, because we are part of the family of God and we take care of each other.** So he entrusts his mom to Jesus.

We read earlier about the spear piercing through. I told you that Mary probably didn’t fully understand what was going to happen, but if you are able to, flip to Luke chapter 2. This will be our last point under Mary’s eyewitness account. I really believe that these words would have been echoing in her soul and would have shown her that this was God’s plan.

Look at Luke chapter 2, verse 29-35. They go to the temple to have Jesus circumcised, to present him before the Lord, and Simeon prophesies and blesses Jesus as an infant. He was told by the Holy Spirit he wouldn’t taste death before he saw the Christ. Look at verses 29-35.

*“Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace, according to your word; for my eyes have seen your salvation (He is saying Jesus is God’s salvation) that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles (that means to the nations – Jesus is going to be a light to the nations) and for glory to your people Israel.” And his father and his mother marveled at what was said about him. And Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, “Behold, this child is appointed for the fall and rising of many in Israel, (and look at this) and for a sign that is opposed (and a sword will pierce through your own soul also), so that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed.”*

**As the heart of her son is being pierced, as the spear goes through his heart, I believe that’s the moment Simeon’s prophecy is fulfilled, predicted to prepare her, that her own soul would be pierced in that moment. But Jesus is a light to the nations, and he will bring salvation to all people -- and she knew it. She looked and she lived.**

We saw Pilate and Mary. Now let’s look through the eyes of John.

### III. The Eyes of John.

Verse 28:

*After this, Jesus, knowing that all was now finished, said (to fulfill the Scripture) (again), “I thirst.” A jar full of sour wine stood there, so they put a sponge full of the sour wine on a hyssop branch and held it to his mouth. When Jesus had received the sour wine, he said, “It is finished,” and he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.*

*Since it was the day of Preparation, and so that the bodies would not remain on the cross on the Sabbath (for that Sabbath was a high day), the Jews asked Pilate that their legs might be broken and that they might be taken away. So the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first (next to Jesus), and of the other who had been crucified with him. But when they came to Jesus and saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs. But one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and at once there came out blood and water. He who saw it has borne witness—his testimony is true, and he knows that he is telling the truth—that you also may believe. For these things took place that the Scripture might be fulfilled: “Not one of his bones will be broken.” And again another Scripture says, “They will look on him whom they have pierced.”*

**John says, “My testimony is true and I am writing this so that you may believe.”** Now, John shows up at times in the gospel that he penned. There is some debate about whether John wrote it. Don’t believe any of it. I just believe it’s John. But here’s the point. John emerges at times to show his hand, to show, “It’s me.” In John chapter 1, verse 14, he says, “We have beheld his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.” He shows up, giving the purpose for which he wrote the book. He says at the end as well that he’s the one that penned it. He is telling the truth. “All the books in the world can’t contain all the things that Jesus did, all the things that he said.” But right here he shows his hand again and says, **“Listen, I was there. I saw it. I am bearing witness to this truth. Jesus truly was lifted up. He truly died on the cross. He truly died for our sins. He truly was speared through. It was Jesus!”**

This covers a lot of bases for us as believers, to know that this testimony is true. Because, listen, there are still people today, there are entire religions that say Jesus didn’t die. Islam to this day says that somebody else was swapped out at the last moment and died, and it wasn’t Jesus. There are entire false heresies built on this idea that Jesus didn’t really die. John says, “Listen, he died.” There are entire heresies that say Jesus wasn’t really human, that he didn’t really come in the flesh. If you read John’s first epistle, one of the things he wants to get home is: “I saw it. We touched it. We felt it. He came in the flesh. Anything else is from the Antichrist. It happened. It happened. I was there. All the scriptures are pointing to the prophecies, showing how Jesus has fulfilled scripture after scripture after scripture. **This was God’s plan. This was God’s savior. This is the deliverer we have hoped for. This is the Son of David. This is the Son of God. This is the King of Israel and this is the King of the World, and I am writing this so that you believe, so that you will be saved. I am writing this so that you will look -- and live.”** John tells us Jesus died for your sins.

People go back and forth about that spear puncturing incident. You see that the soldier thrusts the spear in his side. Most medical professionals believe that his blood is – I don’t know if this is the right word – “coagulated.” There is a separation because he is dead, and blood and water come out. Or maybe there is a heart sac that was pierced, so both the blood and some of the fluids from the heart came out to prove that Jesus is dead beyond doubt. I think that’s probably historically accurate.

But John also seems to have a theological purpose for drawing our attention to the water and the blood. If you read, for example, 1 John chapter 5, he draws attention to the testimony of the water and the blood and the spear, and how they bear witness to who Jesus is. Throughout John’s gospel, blood and water play a special theme. Jesus says in John chapter 6: “If you are going to live you

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have to eat my flesh and drink my blood. And in John 3 he says you have to be born of the Spirit, born of the water. He says to the woman at the well: “If you had come to me you would have asked me for living water.” On the last great day of the festival, the Feast of Tabernacles, Jesus pours out the water and says, “If anyone is thirsty let him come to me and drink, and out of his soul will come living water.”

As John sees that spear thrust into his side, and the blood and the water come out, John is drawing our attention to this: that **Jesus is the source of life, that the blood of Jesus that will cover your sins, that the water of Jesus is going to cover you, wash you, and cleanse you.** Think about this, church: The sacraments that we partake of, the baptism of water, the communion cup that we take representing the blood of Jesus -- he says, “Listen, everything Jesus said about the blood and the water is true. He is the source of living water.” This true historical event becomes an image, a metaphor of the source of blood that gives life, and the source of water that cleanses us.

I love the old hymn “Rock of Ages.” Do you know that hymn? It is becoming a day where a lot of our kids don’t know the hymns anymore. If you haven’t heard this, I’ll say the line for you. It opens like this:

*Rock of Ages, cleft for me (referring to Jesus, the Rock of Ages),  
Let me hide myself in Thee;  
Let the water and the blood,  
From Thy wounded side which flowed,  
Be of sin the double cure,  
Save from wrath and make me pure.*

**The blood of Jesus propitiates. It covers. It takes away the wrath of God. Jesus died so we wouldn’t have to experience the death sentence for our sin. The wages of sin is death. His blood covers our sin and the water represents the cleansing. Jesus cleanses us. He cleanses us from all that defiles us. And as he looks and he beholds Jesus Christ, he says he is: “the source of cleansing, the source of all forgiveness.” As we look to Jesus Christ, we will live.**

“There is a Fountain” -- do you know this song?

*There is a fountain filled with blood  
Drawn from Immanuel’s veins*

*And sinner's plunged beneath that flood  
Lose all their guilty stains.*

**When you look to the cross of Jesus Christ, what do you see? Do you see the savior bleeding and dying for you? John says, "I saw it." And if you see it with his eyes and believe, you will have the eternal life that Jesus promised. Amen. "Look and Live."**

The eyes of Pilate, the eyes of Mary, the eyes of John and finally, fourthly, the eyes of Nicodemus.

#### **IV. The Eyes of Nicodemus.**

Verses 38-42:

*After these things Joseph of Arimathea, who was a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews, asked Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus, and Pilate gave him permission. So he came and took away his body. Nicodemus also, who earlier had come to Jesus by night, came bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about seventy-five pounds in weight. So they took the body of Jesus and bound it in linen cloths with the spices, as is the burial custom of the Jews. Now in the place where he was crucified there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb in which no one had yet been laid. So because of the Jewish day of Preparation, since the tomb was close at hand, they (referring to Nicodemus and Joseph) laid Jesus there.*

**Nicodemus reemerges, and he reemerges, I believe, as a hero.** Do you remember I shared earlier that in John 3 Nicodemus comes at night, secretly? "We think you're from God. We're not sure. How do I get to heaven? Born again?" I am confident that when Nicodemus saw Jesus lifted up, that bronze serpent just *blasted* in his ears. He remembers Jesus, "When I'm lifted up, I'll save the world." He sees Jesus Christ lifted up, and he gets to work fast. He decides, "I am going to take care of the body of this man." He goes and gets 75 pounds of spices. That's beyond what you need even for a king. **He gives him a king's burial!** Even if you wrapped all those spices, there is a ton left over. They are going to put it in the tomb, saying, "That's how special, that's how precious this man is."

We know that Nicodemus is reconsidering his position along the way because he reemerges in chapter 7, where they are all debating back and forth about what to do with Jesus. "Nothing good comes from Nazareth. He is deceiving the people." All these things -- the religious leaders are going back and forth. "Why didn't you guys arrest him?" The officers are like, "Well, no one ever talked like

this guy.” “Are you guys from Galilee too? What’s going on?” And Nicodemus emerges and defends Jesus, ever so gently, not to cause a stir. He says, “Does our law allow somebody to be prosecuted before they get a fair hearing?” Then they rebuke him and say, “Are you from Nazareth too? Are you a Galilean too? No prophet comes from that area. It couldn’t be!” And he disappears until this moment.

But think about this. **What Nicodemus does in this moment would have been the end of his career.** He is a religious leader. He is a political leader. Do you remember the account of the man born blind? Jesus heals him, so they call in his parents, and his parents won’t even stick up for Jesus because they are afraid that if they say Jesus healed him, they’ll be put out of the synagogue. Anyone who stands for Jesus -- the leaders are going to excommunicate them, cast them out. Your religious life is over. And by the way, everybody you live with – they are all Jewish – this is your *life*. You turn to Jesus, you lose *everything*. You lose. Nicodemus had power, authority, and money. He was well respected. **And when all the religious establishment turned against Jesus to crucify him, Nicodemus steps apart, asks for the body of Jesus, and says, “I’m not with them. I’m with this guy.” He identifies with Jesus.**

What a contrast from Pilate, right? Pilate is willing to throw Jesus under the bus to save his own tail. At this point Jesus is already dead and Nicodemus says, “Forget it. I’m going to lose my life. I’m going to lose my career. **I’m going to lose everything, but I’m going to stand with Jesus because he represents the truth. What I’ve been standing for represents falsehood, a lie. It’s evil, it’s dark. Jesus represents the truth and I’m giving it all for him. I’m giving it all for Jesus.” He was willing to lay down everything! And Jesus isn’t even alive yet. He’s banking everything on Jesus being who he claimed to be. Right? Because if Jesus doesn’t rise from the dead, he’s got nothing. He puts all his chips on the table and plays that hand, because he knows that Jesus is the one lifted up, and that if he looks to Jesus he will live.**

So we turn to every person here this morning. We are looking at Jesus. **You are looking at Jesus. What do you see?** Because there were hundreds of people who saw the cross, most of whom never made it. **It’s not just seeing the cross, it’s believing.** It’s like Nicodemus -- putting all the chips on the table, banking your life on this, saying, “My hope is found in nothing less than Jesus’ blood and righteousness. I dare not trust the sweetest frame, but wholly lean on Jesus’ name.” **I look to Jesus as the source of eternal life.** Jesus says this in John chapter 6, and this is where we’ll end. **“For**

**this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day.” Everyone.**

Some of you are here this morning, and for the first time you need to look on the Son and believe in him. We have one more song that we are going to sing, and church, I want to invite you to stand up as we are about to sing this. But before we do, I want to go to the Lord in prayer, and I want to give you an opportunity -- maybe for the first time, maybe it's a recommitment of your life to Christ. But the promise of Jesus speaks to you today: **“Everyone who looks to me and believes in me will live.”**

So church, let's bow our heads and close our eyes. If you are here this morning and you are looking at the cross and you say, “I want that, I want to know that I will live. I believe in Jesus Christ and I want to receive him. I want to place my faith in him,” today can be your day. I see you. Raise your hand so I can pray with you and pray for you. I see you. Anybody else? I see you. Raise your hand. I see you. Yep. Anybody else?

Let me give you some instructions. Scripture says that everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. As we are going to see next week, Jesus rises from the dead. He goes back to heaven and he is at the right hand of glory. He will give you the forgiveness that he purchased for you right now if you call on his name. So call out in faith. It's not a prayer that saves you, it's your faith. But call out to him. Look to the cross and say something like this: **“Jesus, thank you for dying for me. Lord, I know that it is finished. My sin is paid for. I can have life, and I will have life, and I do have life in your name. Jesus, I'm putting all my chips on the table. I believe this and I'm willing to die to everything to find life in you. So I come to you, Jesus, and I pray, Spirit of God, come into my life and cause the new birth, Lord. Make me a new person. Give me life that I might see your kingdom, enter into your kingdom, and live forever with you. Jesus, thank you. Thank you that you have died for me. I look to you and I receive your life. I pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.”**

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