

The Rescue Mission of Jesus Christ

1 Peter 3:18

Leader Discussion guide

Sermon Summary:

Jesus suffered and died on a cross. This is true, but alone, it misses the depth of what was happening and forgets the resurrection. The three steps in Christ's heroic rescue – he suffered, he died as a substitute for sinners. He went into death, and overcome it by rising from the dead. This means that we don't have to be punished for our sin, we don't have to fear death, and we can be reunited with God.

Illustrations Used:

- 33 men trapped in the mine
- Berlin wall was torn down
- Massive debt that has been paid in full
- Mark finding waterfalls to jump off of as kids
- Skyline Trail vs. Palm Springs Tramway

Comprehension Questions:

1. In the Easter sermon, Mark began where 1 Peter 3:18 begins and he described the suffering of Jesus. As a group, talk through the events from Gethsemane to the Cross.
 - a. Which parts of this stick out to you?
 - b. As you have thought of these events again, what impact, if any, does it have on you?
 - c. Why is this message important for someone who is not a Christian?
 - d. What good, if any, does meditating on the work of Christ on the Cross have on the life of the believer?
2. Jesus did not suffer for his own sins on the cross. "The righteous (suffered and died) for the unrighteous."
 - a. Why is Jesus suffering as our substitute important?
 - b. Why is it necessary for us to think of ourselves as "the unrighteous?"
3. Why do Christians believe that one man's death in the past, guarantees our forgiveness?
4. Breakdown as a group the gospel message that Mark shared for unbelievers.

Application Questions:

1. In question 1a and 1d we talked about what happened to Jesus on the cross and the value of meditating on the work of Christ on the cross for the believer. How does meditating on the Cross impact various aspects of everyday life?
2. As Christians, we exist in the "already, not yet." We already have Jesus' righteousness but we do not yet experience sinless holy living. What value is there in regularly remembering out unrighteousness? How does acknowledging sin, confessing sin, and repenting fit into the regular rhythm of your walk with Jesus? If it doesn't why should you?
3. Mark said that the cross and substitution was not the main point. The main point was the Jesus' work makes possible the reunion of us with our heavenly Father. What impact does this have on your life as a believer?

Extended Outline:

Illus: On August 5, 2010, 33 men were trapped underground while working in a mine in Chile. They were working 2,000 feet below the Earth's surface.

- **App:** We love these stories of heroism of sacrificial rescue. And we love these stories of restoration and reunion.

2,000 years ago, the greatest rescue in human history took place.

- This verse tells us about 3 aspects of Christ's heroic rescue mission that was accomplished from Good Friday to Resurrection Sunday. We will see what Jesus Christ did. But we will also look at what his rescue accomplished.

1. The suffering.

- a. "Christ also suffered." – in a passage about suffering as Christians.
- b. On Palm Sunday, a week before Resurrection Sunday, Jesus entered Jerusalem. At that moment, it didn't look to his disciples like Jesus was headed for suffering.
- c. But Jesus knew what he was walking into. On the way there he said things like this to his disciples:
 - i. Luke 9:22 - "The Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised."
 - ii. Luke 18:31 - "Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and everything that is written of the Son of man by the prophets will be accomplished. For he will be delivered to the Gentiles, and will be mocked and shamefully treated and spit upon; they will scourge him and kill him." When Jesus set his face to go to Jerusalem, He knew what he was walking into. He was going there to lay down his life.
- d. On Thursday night Jesus agonized in prayer alone, Gethsemane.
 - i. Judas greeted Jesus with a kiss, and Jesus was taken into custody in the dark of the night.
 - ii. During the night he was beaten and mocked.
 - iii. A series of hasty trials began.
 - iv. Jesus was mocked and beaten.
 - v. Despite not finding any wrongdoing on Jesus' part, the Roman Governor Pilate sentenced Jesus to death by crucifixion.
 - vi. A crown of thorns pressed onto his head. Blood was pouring from open wounds on his back – the result of a brutal whipping.
 - vii. He was taken to a place called Golgotha.
 - viii. At about 9 am they drove nails into the base of his hands, and his feet, and they dropped the cross into a pre-dug hole. There he languished, laboring for every breath.
 - ix. At noon, darkness covered the land. As one person puts it, "At the birth of the Son of God, there was brightness at midnight; at the death of the Son of God there was darkness at noon."
 - x. Then around 3 pm, Jesus cried out to God the Father, "Into your hands, I commit my spirit. And he died." Jesus suffered.

2. The substitution.

- a. When we look at these historical events we see great suffering. But the Bible tells us there was something more going on. It is possible to see the facts of an event, and to miss the full significance.
 - i. **Illus:** I remember when the Berlin Wall was torn down. I saw people taking picks to a wall, smiling, dancing, and celebrating. I saw the event, but I didn't get the significance. The freedom, end of the cold war, the reunification of German families.
 - ii. **App:** What God tells us in the Bible is that there is a deeper layer of reality, of significance underneath and all through Christ's suffering. This was so much more than just a remarkable and innocent man dying an unjust death. Things were being accomplished, history was being changed, and not just for Jesus. But for us.
 - iii. The Bible teaches that Christ suffered as a substitute for sinners.
- b. **"Christ also suffered once for sins."**
 - i. "Once." This was a unique suffering.
 - ii. This was a suffering for sins.
 - 1. Death entered humanity because of sin. Romans 3:23 – The wages of sin is death. Sin merits punishment from God.
 - iii. But Jesus didn't suffer for his own sins.
 - 1. His disciple, Peter, here calls Jesus "the righteous."
 - 2. 2:22, he committed no sin, nor was deceit found in his mouth.
 - 3. Another disciple, John, wrote that Jesus came to the world to take away sins, and in him there is no sin (1 John 3:5).
 - 4. Even Pilate went to the crowds and said, "I am bringing him out to you that you may know that I find no guilt in him."
 - 5. Jesus was the one person ever who did not deserve to be punished for sins.
 - iv. So if he didn't sin, what does it mean he suffered for sins?
- c. **"The righteous for the unrighteous."**
 - i. He suffered for those who are unrighteous. For people like us. Unrighteousness is a major problem. It doesn't feel big to us.
 - 1. Our sin, and God's just penalty against our sin is like a massive block of a mountain, cutting us off from life, from a relationship with God. We can't remove that block.
 - ii. **App:** We don't like to think of ourselves as "the unrighteous." Jesus said, he came not for the righteous, but for sinners.
 - iii. Jesus suffered in our place, and took our punishment. He was punished in the place, as a substitute for sinners. To remove the giant mountain that is our sin and guilt.
 - 1. Read Isaiah 53:5-6

3. The resurrection

- a. "put to death in the flesh but made alive in the Spirit."
 - i. After about 36 hours in the tomb, his heart started beating, his chest raised and lowered. He breathed. He got up.
 - ii. On the first Easter morning, several ladies woke before the sun -- Mary Magdalene, Joanna, and Mary the mother of -- they walked to the tomb where Jesus' body was laid on Friday.

- iii. They arrive. The stone is gone. The tomb is empty. 2 angels say to them, “Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen.” That Sunday the rise Jesus appeared to several people. One was Peter. What became clear is that God’s Spirit had brought Jesus to life again. 1:18-21.
 - b. These 3 steps in Christ’s heroic rescue – he suffered, he did as a substitute for sinners. He went into death, and overcome it by rising from the dead.
- 4. What did his rescue accomplish? What is the outcome?:
 - a. We don’t have to be punished for our sin.
 - i. **App:** At the cross, Jesus paid our wages, he took our punishment. He died our death. So now, everyone who links themselves to Jesus by faith is forgiven by God.
 - ii. How can we know? Why believe that one man’s death in the past, guarantees our forgiveness? The resurrection.
 - 1. **Illus:** Imagine you have some massive debt. Maybe a car you are upside down on. A student loan you can’t imagine paying back. A medical bill. Back taxes. It hangs over you. Now imagine, someone said, “I have paid your debt.” Well, that might intrigue you. But what would you want to see? A receipt, from the debtholder that says, “paid in full.”
 - iii. **App:** When Jesus walked out of the grave, God was saying, I have accepted the death of my righteous Son on behalf of the unrighteous. The resurrection is a giant receipt stamped across history, that says, “paid in full.” Sins put onto Jesus. Our account is clear. You can know for certain your sins are forgiven, if you trust in Christ.
 - b. We don’t have to fear death.
 - i. **Illus:** I grew up in the mountains. We would go to the river. Many times on a rock or cliff. “I’ll do it if you do it.”
 - ii. **App:** Jesus jumped off the cliff of death for us. And he came up out of the water. Now, as we head toward physical death, if we are in Him, we don’t have to be afraid. He will raise us.
 - c. We can be reunited with God.
 - i. As we look at Christ’s death and resurrection – at his rescue mission, we must not forget why He did it.
 - 1. **Illus:** Think back to those miners in Chile. Did all the reporters and cameras go home as soon as the miners were out of the earth? NO. The reunion was the point.
 - 2. **App:** Christ’s death and resurrection is not the end of the story. If we go home only remembering the rescue mission, we have missed the point.
 - ii. “So that he might bring us to God.”
 - 1. God created us to have a relationship with Him. To know Him. To enjoy Him and all of His gifts, forever. We have separated ourselves. He didn’t leave us down in the mine.
 - 2. And he didn’t send just down word of some extraordinary labor (some penance) we must do to get back to him.
 - a. Instead, he came down here with us. He clothed himself in our flesh. Then at the cross he put on our sin. And plunged

himself under the waves of death. All so He could crush everything that separates us from God – all so we could be reunited with our God.

3. **Illus:** In Palm Springs there is a trailhead for the Skyline trail. One of the hardest day hikes in America. It rises 8000' feet in just 9.5 miles, much of it through the desert. Ending at Long Valley in the San Jacinto mountains. There is another option. You can get in the Aerial Tramway and **it brings you**.
 - a. Sometimes we can think having a relationship with God is like the Skyline trail. Long, steep, uncertain, up to our strength and effort. Here is what Easter is about. Christ came to “bring us to God.” Christ is the tramway. And there is no trail. He knows the way to God, He has done the work to remove the obstacles in our way. He has blazed the path. If we come to Him, He carries – HE BRINGS us right into God’s presence.
5. **Conclusion:** This is what Easter means: you don’t have to pay for your sins. Christ suffered for sins. You don’t have to fear death. Jesus defeated it. You can be with God – if you come to Him, He will bring you there.