

# Good Friday Sermon

## Matthew 27:27-66 – “The end of rejection”

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Full text and audio available at [www.waitara.anglican.asn.au](http://www.waitara.anglican.asn.au)

III – 3D Avatar.

Earlier this year, Heather and I went to see the movie Avatar in 3D. It was my first 3D movie and it was pretty amazing! Everything seemed so real. Right in front of you. Really clear. But half way through, my eyes got a bit tired, so I took my glasses off. And when I looked at the screen it was all blurry and hazy. I put the glasses back on – and it's all clear. I did that about 10... 20... maybe 30 times – because it was fun!

Sometimes we see Easter in a bit of a haze. So it's important as we come together, to see it clearly. The glasses we put on is the Bible. God's word makes clear to us what Easter is all about. So as we begin today, let me pray that God will make this Good Friday very clear to us... (Prayer)

The Easter story begins with Jesus being arrested and convicted of claiming to be a King. He was beaten and flogged and then handed over to be crucified. Yet for all the incredible suffering and punishment he faced, the gospel of Matthew hardly mentions any of it. What Matthew focuses the story on is the **rejection** of Jesus.

### Rejection

The soldiers mock Jesus. They put a fake crown on his head and a robe and pretend to worship him as King.

The people passing by cry out: “Come down from the cross if you are the Son of God!”

The chief priests, the teachers of the law, and the elders of the church all mocked him, saying: “He saved others but he can't save himself!”

Even the thieves he was crucified with insulted him. **Everyone** rejected Jesus.

But you might also notice who is **not** there – Where is Peter? Where is John? Where is James? Where are the disciples? Where are the people Jesus healed? Where are the people Jesus raised to life? You expect in this story that perhaps just **one** person might stand up for him: Where is the leper who was healed? Or the widow who had her son raised from the dead by Jesus? Or the blind man who had his sight restored by Jesus? Where was Lazarus, one of Jesus' closest friends, who Jesus raised from the dead? Where are they?

**No-one** is there for Jesus. He was rejected by everyone. And what does Jesus say throughout all of this?

Jesus says nothing. He takes the abuse, the mockery, the laughter, the pain... all without a word. Why?

**Because this is why he came.** He came to die. He came innocent. And he came to take our guilt upon himself. Jesus didn't say: “I'm innocent”. He didn't say “You can't kill me, I'm the king of the universe!” He didn't say: “I've done nothing wrong.” He went to the cross and he *became our sin*. He became the one **rejected** so we could be **accepted** by God.

- 2 Corinthians 5:21 says: “*God made him who had no sin to be sin for us.*”

On that cross, Jesus took the sin of the world. He took the punishment that we all deserved.

But Matthew's account of the crucifixion reminds us of something **else** very important at this time – **everything that is happening is being done by God**. God is the one making this happen. God is the one who allows the crucifixion. God is the one who allows Jesus to be rejected. God allows him to die. God is in control of everything that is happening here. Think about the events Matthew shares with us:

Darkness across the whole land for 3 hours – only God could do that.

The curtain of the temple is torn from top to bottom – only God could do that.

The earth shook and rocks split. Only God could do that.

Tombs broke open and dead were raised to life – only God could do that.

### **This is a God event.**

From 12noon until 3pm, darkness comes over the whole land. And at the ninth hour, at 3pm in the afternoon, Jesus cries out in a loud voice: "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"

The darkest hour, the moment when Jesus took upon himself the guilt and punishment of every one of our sins, the moment when God forsakes him, when God's wrath is laid upon him. The moment when Jesus took the punishment for every evil, the punishment for every murderer, for every adulterous spouse, for every lying, cheating, gossiping, hating, raping, thieving person in this world. You AND me.

And why? To bring you to God. God did all of this to save you. All of this so YOU could be acceptable before God.

### **III – Saving Private Ryan**

Have you seen the movie "Saving Private Ryan"? It's about a family who has 4 sons sent to war. Three of them die in battle. So the General immediately orders a group of men to find the remaining son who is alive, Private James Ryan, and return him home safely, so his mother doesn't lose all 4 children.

Most of the group sent to find him die trying to save Private Ryan. In one of the final scenes, Tom Hanks, the leader of the squad, is dying. And he leans over to Ryan and whispers in his ear these final words: "*James, earn this. Earn it.*"

Then we come to the final scene. Private Ryan is much older now. And he sits at the graves of the men who rescued him. He's thinking of all these men who died to bring him home safely. And he turns to his wife and says: "*Tell me I've lived a good life. Tell me I'm a good man.*"

He wants to know that he was worth dying for. That he had "earned" the sacrifice that others made for him. Has he been good enough? Was his life worth it? Did he **earn** it? Did he **earn** being saved?

Everyone rejected Jesus. Every person he healed, every follower, every disciple, every family member. And if we were there... we would have rejected him too. No, we didn't deserve it. No, we cannot earn it. What Jesus did was beyond earning. It was beyond measure. In fact, we deserve what happened to him. **We** are the guilty people who deserve no mercy. **We** deserve that rejection. We deserved it. But he took it for us.

Let's take a closer look at just one of the most symbolic events of the whole passage – the tearing of the curtain.

Matthew takes us away from the scene of the cross and into the middle of Jerusalem – to the temple of Jerusalem. He takes us inside that temple to the temple curtain. A very important curtain. You see, this was the curtain that separated the **people** from the **presence** of God. Throughout the Old Testament, God symbolized his presence on earth with the temple – in the place called the holy of holies – the inner room of the temple. This is where the altar was for sacrifices. This is where the high priest would go once a year to make a sacrifice for the sins of the people. No-one, except the high priest could go in to this holy of holies.

### **III – The first class curtain.**

We flew back from Korea on Wednesday afternoon. And on the plane, there are of course curtains. Curtains that separate the different sections. We sat in the economy section, and there was a curtain dividing us from the business class, with their comfy lie seats that turned into beds, and their big TV screens. And I'm sure there is another curtain somewhere to separate first class. Everyone had their own section - depending on how much you paid for tickets.

The Jewish temple had these different sections dividing the people. There was a public gallery, a women's gallery, a men's gallery, a leader's gallery, but the biggest barrier was the **curtain of to the holy of holies that divided God from the people**. It separated them from his presence. But through the death of Jesus, the **perfect, complete and final** sacrifice for sin, God opened up the curtain to his presence. There was no longer anything dividing or separating men from God.

Then Matthew takes us **back** to the scene at the cross.

<sup>54</sup>*When the centurion and those with him who were guarding Jesus saw the earthquake and all that had happened, they were terrified, and exclaimed, "Surely he was the Son of God!"*

The temple curtain was torn and the way was now open for ALL people to come to know God personally through Jesus. And the first person we hear of is the centurion. He recognised Jesus and saw him clearly.

What about you? Is everything clear and real for you at Easter?

Do you see clearly the claims of Jesus as the Son of God and the sacrifice for our sins?

Do you see clearly that we cannot earn what he has done and that we don't deserve what he has done?

Do you see clearly that the one who was rejected by everyone, died for everyone?

And do you see, most importantly, that he did this for you because of his love for you?

I suspect many of us here have faced rejection. Many of us have faced a time in our lives when we have been thrown aside. Lost. Maybe even despised, hated, persecuted. Maybe because we did something wrong. Maybe even when we did *nothing* wrong. Maybe you've been rejected by horrible people. Or maybe you've been rejected by loved ones: a father, a mother, a close friend.

Good Friday is personal. It is THE day God wants you to know that HE accepts you. As you are. No matter what you've done, or who you have been. God wants you to see very clearly today, that he shook the earth, split the rocks open, tore the curtain and allowed Jesus to die on that cross for YOU. To bring YOU to God. To accept YOU. This is personal. Today was for you. This is David's Friday, ... Ian's Friday, Lorraine's Friday, ... Janet's Friday. Good Friday was for you.

End.