

Tusculum Hills Baptist Church  
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## THREE STOPS AND THEN THE RESURRECTION

Mark 15:6-16:7

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There are four points to today's sermon:

- The Place of Decision
- The Place of Dedication
- The Place of the Dead
- The Resurrection

### 1-THE PLACE OF DECISION

**SCRIPTURE:** Mark 15:6-15

*Now it was the custom at the festival to release a prisoner whom the people requested. <sup>7</sup> A man called Barabbas was in prison with the insurrectionists who had committed murder in the uprising. <sup>8</sup> The crowd came up and asked Pilate to do for them what he usually did. <sup>9</sup> "Do you want me to release to you the king of the Jews?" asked Pilate, <sup>10</sup> knowing it was out of self-interest that the chief priests had handed Jesus over to him. <sup>11</sup> But the chief priests stirred up the crowd to have Pilate release Barabbas instead. <sup>12</sup> "What shall I do, then, with the one you call the king of the Jews?" Pilate asked them. <sup>13</sup> "Crucify him!" they shouted. <sup>14</sup> "Why? What crime has he committed?" asked Pilate. But they shouted all the louder, "Crucify him!" <sup>15</sup> Wanting to satisfy the crowd, Pilate released Barabbas to them. He had Jesus flogged and handed him over to be crucified.*

**EXPLANATION:** At this point, Jesus had already received his mock trial in front of Jewish religious and political authorities. They then brought Jesus to Pontius Pilate to do their dirty work. Pontius Pilate, the fifth governor of the Roman province of Judaea, did not believe Jesus was guilty of anything worthy of a death sentence. In Matthew's account, we read how Pilate's wife actually warned him to stay out of the whole matter. The crowd, on the other hand, had a different idea, and they were very persuasive. When given the choice, they called for the release of a known murderer instead of Jesus. Pilate was confused, but his job was to keep the

peace. Rome would not look kindly on him if the people caused an uproar over this. Pilate was in no mind to lose his job. So, he gave the people what they wanted.

**ILLUSTRATION:** According to *Psychology Today*, “A “big” decision is one in which you intentionally made a choice between two or more options knowing that the outcome would have a significant and often long-term impact for yourself or others.” Among the top 20 big decisions that a person has to make in a lifetime, relationship decisions rank #5. For many of us, one of the biggest decisions we’ve ever made is whether or not to marry someone.

A few years ago, public proposals became a big thing—not just marriage proposals but also prom proposals. There was this guy who came into his church youth group, and in front of all the other kids, he gave this girl flowers and with a lot of pomp and circumstance, he asked this girl to the prom. She said yes—only to retract her answer a few hours later when the two were alone. Making important decisions is hard to do in front of a crowd.

**APPLICATION:** Pilate had a decision to make, and, like the proposal, it was a very public decision, a decision that makes a wedding or prom proposal seem trivial by comparison. Despite his wife’s advice and his own intuition, Pilate caved to the wishes of the Jewish officials and the crowd. In other accounts, we read how he famously “washed his hands” of the whole affair. Pilate may have thought that he was avoiding a decision. But by not taking action for Christ, he took action against Christ. There is no such thing as indecision.

In every person’s life, there is a place of decision when it comes to Christ. Sometimes we are extended multiple opportunities, but there is no guarantee that we will ever receive more than one. God gives every person on earth the chance to make a decision about who we believe Christ to be. It’s a very personal decision, but it’s also a very public one. It’s not something we can hide. It’s not something we can ignore. It’s the first stop on the way to the resurrection.

- The Place of Decision

## **2-THE PLACE OF DEDICATION**

**SCRIPTURE:** Mark 15:33-39

*At noon, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon. <sup>34</sup> And at three in the afternoon Jesus cried out in a loud voice, “Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?” (which means “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”). <sup>35</sup> When some of those standing near heard this, they said, “Listen, he’s calling Elijah.” <sup>36</sup> Someone ran, filled a sponge with wine vinegar, put it on a staff, and offered it to Jesus to drink. “Now leave him alone. Let’s see if Elijah comes to take him down,” he said. <sup>37</sup> With a loud cry, Jesus breathed his last. <sup>38</sup> The curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. <sup>39</sup> And when the centurion, who stood there in front of Jesus, saw how he died, he said, “Surely this man was the Son of God!”*

**EXPLANATION:** Jesus had been on the cross for about six hours, and for half that time, the world had turned dark in the middle of the day. God the Father, in his perfect holiness, could not look upon his own son who had taken the sins of humanity upon himself. Even though Jesus understood why God had turned his back, the sense of aloneness was such that Jesus cried out in Hebrew to his Dad, “Why have you forsaken me?” Those at the foot of the cross, who probably spoke Greek, misunderstood. They thought he called out to Elijah, and they made fun of him as if he were a freak show. *“Give him something to drink. Then let’s see what happens! Maybe Elijah will save him.”*

The curtain in this passage is the one that hung in front of the Holy of Holies where the ark of the covenant was kept in the temple. No one except the high priest could enter this area, and only he could enter once a year to make atonement for the sins of the people. The curtain represented the divide between a holy God and an unholy people. The veil, as it was sometimes called, was about 30 feet tall, and while we do not know exactly, it’s estimated to have been between 1 and 3 inches thick. The Bible specifies that it was torn from top to bottom, something that would have been very impossible for any man. The tearing of the veil was God’s public pronouncement of the dedication of his son, the perfect sacrifice – and now the Holy of Holies as the Jewish people had known for centuries was no longer needed. Jesus had paid the price.

**ILLUSTRATION:** Dedications were an important part of Hebrew history. A dedication was an offering to God. When the Israelites dedicated something to God, they were publicly giving that item to God for his use in any way he saw fit. For example, many of you may remember the story of Hannah. In 1 Samuel 1, the Bible

tells the story of the young woman who could not have any children. She cried out to God and promised that if he would give her a son, she would dedicate him to the Lord. The Lord answered Hannah's prayer, and she gave birth to a son whom she named Samuel. Then Hannah did as she promised and brought the child to the temple to be raised by the Eli the priest. Samuel grew up in service to the Lord and was one of God's most faithful prophets.

**APPLICATION:** In the same way that Hannah dedicated her son, God loved us so much that he sacrificed his son, Jesus, as the perfect offering for our sins. Jesus loved us so much that he willingly came and died a criminal's death so that we might have a relationship with God. No longer do we have to rely upon a human priest to go to God on our behalf. Christ bridged the way for us to go into the very throne room of God where he intercedes for us.

For six hours, the Roman centurion watched Jesus suffer and die. This soldier may have been one of the men who pounded the nails into the hands and feet of Jesus, but in those last moments of Jesus's earthly life, the soldier came to the realization that Jesus is who he is says he is. While the Bible does not give us any details, church tradition records that the soldier dedicated his life to Christ, left the service of the Roman empire, and caused such a ruckus preaching the gospel that he was eventually martyred for his faith.

Just like we all must decide who we believe Jesus to be, we all have to decide who we will be to Jesus. Even the demons believe in God, but they do not dedicate their lives to his service. Christ dedicated himself to God on our behalf, and we come to the cross to dedicate our lives to him.

Romans 12:1 says, *"Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship."* The only right response to Jesus is to give ourselves to him as a form of worship to do with as he sees fit. The trial of Jesus was a

- The place of decision, but the crucifixion is
- The place of dedication—not only for Jesus but for us as well.

#### **4-THE PLACE OF THE DEAD**

**SCRIPTURE:** Mark 15:43-46

*Joseph of Arimathea, a prominent member of the Council, who was himself waiting for the kingdom of God, went boldly to Pilate and asked for Jesus' body. <sup>44</sup> Pilate was surprised to hear that he was already dead. Summoning the centurion, he asked him if Jesus had already died. <sup>45</sup> When he learned from the centurion that it was so, he gave the body to Joseph. <sup>46</sup> So Joseph bought some linen cloth, took down the body, wrapped it in the linen, and placed it in a tomb cut out of rock. Then he rolled a stone against the entrance of the tomb.*

**EXPLANATION:** Joseph of Arimathea was probably at the trial of Jesus. While he probably disagreed with the majority, he was most likely there among the religious crowd that mocked Christ and beat him and then brought him to Pilate. John tells us that Joseph was a secret disciple of Christ—at least until now. He may have been too afraid to speak up before Jesus's death, but he came to a decision. His life would be dedicated to his Lord. He would be silent no more. He knew that his religious and political peers would find out about this, but he did not care. He boldly went to Pilate and claimed Christ's body for burial.

Joseph did not have time to perform the typical rituals. Sabbath was quickly approaching, and no work could be done on the Sabbath. As it was, he would already be considered ceremonially unclean because of his contact with a dead body. So, there was no funeral procession. No professional mourners were hired to weep as Jesus was buried. The body was not washed, and no spices were prepared or rubbed onto the corpse. Joseph wrapped the body of Jesus, placed him in the tomb, and rolled the stone in front of the grave.

A tomb is a cave carved into the side of a hill or mountain. The tombs during Jesus's day were usually outside of town. Tombs are a foreign form of burial to us, and not everyone during Biblical times was buried in this way. In fact, had it not been for Joseph, Jesus may have been buried in the ground similar to the way in which most people are buried here in the States. Only the wealthy could afford a tomb, and several family members were usually buried together in one. However, the tomb where Jesus was placed was new and unused.

**ILLUSTRATION:** There are a few notable New Testament stories that take place at tombs. There was the wild man of Gerasenes who lived among the tombs. He was crazy, demon-possessed, until Jesus healed him. There was the story of Lazarus who was dead for four days when Jesus showed up and called him to come out of

that grave. Lazarus rose and obeyed. Then there was that time that Jesus looked at the Pharisees, the most religious men of that time, and called them nothing more than white-washed tombs. *“Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites!” he said. “You are like whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside but on the inside are full of the bones of the dead and everything unclean.”* (Matthew 23:27)

**APPLICATION:** The tomb is not a good place to be. No one accomplishes anything at the tomb, but spiritually speaking, a lot of people still camp out there.

- Some people decide that they do not believe in Jesus. They refuse to dedicate their lives to him and are, therefore, still enslaved to their sins, chained to a life that is barely living, of no use to themselves or anyone else.
- Other people know the truth. They dedicate their lives to Christ, but they act as if they are asleep, unmotivated or afraid to move beyond that which is familiar, to get up and do something with the faith they profess.
- And then there are those who are like the Pharisees. They pretend they are nice and clean on the outside, but inside, they are still dead in their sins.

The trial, the cross, and the tomb—all three were temporary stops for Christ. God never intended that Jesus or his followers ever dwell at

- The place of decision,
- The place of dedication, or
- The place for the dead.

That’s why we celebrate...

## 4-THE RESURRECTION

**SCRIPTURE:** Mark 16:1-7

*When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices so that they might go to anoint Jesus’ body. <sup>2</sup> Very early on the first day of the week, just after sunrise, they were on their way to the tomb <sup>3</sup> and they asked each other, “Who will roll the stone away from the entrance of the tomb?” <sup>4</sup> But when they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had been rolled away. <sup>5</sup> As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man dressed in a white robe sitting on the right side, and they were alarmed. <sup>6</sup> “Don’t be alarmed,” he said. “You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified. He has risen!*

*He is not here. See the place where they laid him. <sup>7</sup> But go, tell his disciples and Peter, 'He is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you.'*"

**EXPLANATION:** Jesus didn't stay buried long. The tomb where he was laid was only borrowed. On the third day, he rose. In doing so, he defeated not only sin and Satan; he defeated death.

**APPLICATION:** Romans 6:4 says, *"We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life."*

There is a time in each of our lives when we have to make a decision about who we believe Christ is. Then we have to decide whether we are going to give our lives in dedication to him. When we do, we are set free from our sin debt. We cannot have the resurrection without the crucifixion. But the resurrection is not just about Jesus rising from the dead, it's about our own personal resurrection to a new life in Christ. Because of the sacrifice Jesus made, we have the power to live a resurrection life.

**INVITATION:** What about you? Where are you today on the road to the resurrection? Are you celebrating your new life in Christ today, or are you stuck at one of the three other stops? It's time to move. Christ did not come and die and rise again so that you can stay dead. He came so that you might have new life and live a new life. Make the decision. Dedicate yourself to Christ, and then live for him. If you haven't decided who Christ is, today is the day! If you haven't dedicated your life to him, then today is the day! And if you have been stuck in a dead-end faith, then what better Sunday than Resurrection Sunday to commit yourself to live a resurrection life, powered by the gift of the Holy Spirit? The altar is open.

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