

The Greatest Miracle

Matthew 27:32-44

Pastor Peter Hiatt

March 12, 2006

CHILDREN'S SERMON

Aram Haroutunian

How you guys doin'?

[Kids reply] Good!

Well, this morning I was wondering, I was thinking I'd get my courage up to have a game of catch with you guys.

[Kids reply] Yeah!

[Aram and some of the kids go up on stage to play catch. Aram has the ball.]

All right. You ready? You wanna play a game of catch? Okay, it'd be fun, wouldn't it? Okay... ready, ready, ready?

Ooooooh, I don't know if I can do this. I'm so afraid. I mean, if I start getting' to play with you kids, you might get to know me, and you'll see that... you'll make fun of my nose or something and my balding head, and you'll just start making fun of me. I don't know if I can handle that. I'm just so afraid to play with you guys.

[Peter speaks up from the audience] You can do it, Aram. You can do it.

You think so? Okay. Okay. You wanna play? Okay. You ready? 1, 2, 3...

Oooooooh, I don't know. I'm just so afraid. What if we're playing catch, and I drop it? What would you think of me then if I drop it?

[Kids reply] It's okay.

No, no but you'll make fun of me, and I'll be fumbling it.

[Kid replies] I could show you.

You could show me? Okay, but wait a minute. What if we play, and you show me, and what if I do get it? What if I do catch it, and I'm really good? Then you'll have all these expectations of me. Expectations that I just can't live up to. Oooooooh, I'm so afraid. Ohhhh, gosh.

Well, you know what? It's actually time for the children's sermon to end, so come on. Let's go downstairs. Come on.

Oh, phew. Oh. I was just so afraid. Oh, I'm glad the time was just about over. Okay, okay. Phew.

Did you guys have a good time?

[Kids reply] No.

No? How come you didn't have a good time?

[Kids reply] Because you didn't throw the ball.

I didn't throw the ball. What was the problem?

[Kids reply] Because you were too afraid. You were a ball hog...

I was too afraid. I'm a ball hog, yeah. That's right because I was just too afraid. Okay? And when you're too afraid you only think about yourself, right? I was only thinking about myself. I wasn't thinking about any of you.

You know what the Bible says? The Bible says, "Perfect love casts out fear." So there was a problem with love going on there. Because I was just thinking about myself, all afraid. So that means, maybe I wasn't receiving God's love so that I could give love and think about you. I wasn't very loving, was I?

[Kids reply] No.

No. We better pray.

Lord, thank you that perfect love indeed does cast out fear, and we're so shot through with fear so much of our lives. Lord, help us just to surrender that to you. Help us to keep our eyes fixed on You and to receive You, perfect Love, Lord Jesus, so we can love others as You have loved us. In Your name we pray, amen.

Okay, thanks guys. You can go downstairs.

SERMON

So, Lord God, we thank You that You, who are love, gave Your heart away... Jesus, from the bosom of the Father. And so Lord God, we seek to give this offering to You, and yet we know even this offering is Your love returning to You in the form of our gifts, in the form of our praise, even in the form of the Word that I preach, the Living Word that is Jesus.

And so, Lord God, we surrender ourselves to Your life flowing through us. And we pray that as we use those things, You would guard us from the designs of the evil one, that they would be used for Your purposes and Your kingdom, Lord God.

And now we ask that You would guard this place, that is Your sanctuary, that is these people for Your purposes and that You would help us preach. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

We've been preaching through Matthew for three and a half years, so we've read about the most amazing signs and wonders... miracles. Jesus has healed people, stopped a storm, multiplied fish and loaves...

Like the prophet said, "Nothing is too hard for the Lord."

When I was younger, I used to doubt that and doubt God. So I'd pray for miracles in order to believe. I'd pray, "God, if you exist, make a horn honk at the count of three. One, two, three..." [Silence.]

People told me you had to have faith in order to see a miracle

so I tried to have faith
 so I could have miracles,
 so I could have faith.

Do a miracle, Jesus, so I can believe.

One night in college, I went to a healing service. The healer lady said, "Some of you have back pain."

I'd been doing landscaping so I had back pain. I went down front.

She sat me in a chair, held my legs out, and said, "One's longer than the other." (I guess that's fairly normal.)

Well, I knew people faked this kind of stuff, so I thought, "Okay Jesus, I'll let her pray, but I'm not letting her yank my shoe, start to scream, 'He's healed,' and help her fake a miracle."

So I locked my tail in the seat, closed my eyes. She prayed and all at once it was like my leg turned to hot wax and shot out. It was the strangest thing I'd ever felt in my life.

It was so shocking that in that instant, I had like a vision of me. I thought she'd grown my leg too far and would now have to grow the other leg, and if that was too far she'd have to grow the first leg. I instantly had this

vision of me with freaky long legs, forced to play basketball, and I hate basketball!

I shot up in the chair, opened my eyes and my legs were the same length. I know leg length can change with ligaments, etc., etc., etc., but I felt it. Susan and Dad saw it, and I felt it.

Since then I've seen people healed, prayed for people that have gotten healed. I've seen God miraculously intervene with astounding power.

I believe that God is the Healer.

And I believe that His healing power is for today.

And I earnestly want you to believe it for "Nothing, nothing is too hard for the Lord."

Last week, I ended the sermon on the fear of death with the story of Becca from our church and Kavitha, the four year old little girl abused so horrifically by her mother in the slums of India.

Becca prayed for God to be revealed, and you'll remember how Becca cared for Kavitha and then was told she had to return Kavitha to her mother in the slums.

Becca writes of that horrifying experience and then ends with this,

As I stand there in my mind, I am alone. The metal and cardboard shacks staring at me, and I scream, "Why me? Why am I here, what good can come from this?"

And as tears well up in my eyes, I hear a voice, His voice. "You are not alone. I am here. I am filling you. I am feeling the same anger and sadness you are feeling. As your fingers reach for her they become My fingers. And as she sits on your lap, it becomes

My lap. And, and not only that, but I am in Kavitha. And I am her. I have been with her everyday, tied to the ceiling fan; even now I feel pain in my hands, on my face, on my back. It is my eyes that you are looking into, my body that you are so gently hugging. And, and even more I am with her mother. For I have come to love the sinner, the prostitute, tax collector, and child abuser.”

“What?!” I cry. “You are here in the horror. You feel Kavitha’s pain and my pain, how can You possibly...?”

“Yeah, My love reaches that far. And just as I fill you, I dream of filling her [Kavitha’s mother], for I feel her pain, too.”

“But I can’t! I can’t go to her. I hate her.”

Yet, even as these words pour from my mouth I know the Truth. And He says, “Then let Me.” And He fills me. And He fills you. And He longs to fill...
Becca Saby, November 25, 2005

That’s where the sermon ended last week. Then we had communion. After the service one woman came up in tears wanting to know the end of Kavitha’s story.

Like Becca said, “What good can come from this?”

Aram told me he was swamped with calls this week from people wanting emotional help with that story about Kavitha.

My friend, Dale, who’s seen so many amazing visions, some of which I’ve preached on in church, Dale writes,

I was absolutely riveted. The Word of the Lord that ushered from your mouth pinned me to my seat and surrounded me. It was so filled with truth and absolutely beautiful... right up until the end when

you read the letter from Becca about the four year old girl in India, Kavitha.

Dale goes on to say he believes what I said is true but asks,

Why does it have to go so far? Even with all that Jesus has shown me. . . all I can do is fall down weeping and cry out, “Why?!”

My new anonymous e-mail friend “El Perdido, Nada Mucho” writes, “Even a minute of such a life for a child is a hell of a lot, don’t you think?”

And yeah, I think not only is it a “hell of a lot,” it is hell—Hades, the realm of death.

He writes, “I have to say that I have been in similar situations and have backed out. In shame I say that.”

Well, we can all say that. Then my friend shares why he backed out. “I thought, I felt like I would die.”

See, Kavitha’s story kills us. Offends us to death.

El Perdido says, “I see how imagining Jesus there would help, but isn’t that just a head game to self protect?”

Yes, it’s a head game... unless He is really there, and He is. But the fact that He’s really there may make the offense even worse.

God is the Healer and “Nothing is too hard for him.” Yet, still Kavitha is allowed to suffer. And even more still, Jesus suffers in Kavitha. And even more, this world is full of Kavitha’s... hundreds of millions of Kavitha’s. We know that (though we deny it)... hundreds of millions, and Jesus suffers in each

In this church, there are people I know who have suffered more than Kavitha, and Jesus suffers in each. And this is what is so scandalous and offensive about Jesus:

He doesn't have to.

He chooses to bear the cross,
the offense of this world.

He doesn't have to.

He chooses to.

I mean, He grew my stinkin' leg when I didn't even know anything was wrong with it. Sometimes I think He does that stuff just to show us He can. But then He chooses to suffer death and hell in billions of Kavitha's, Kavitha's that He then tells us to love, that He loves more than we can know.

He chooses to suffer there in His temple of sorrow and pain, and we can't stop it. We can't fix it. "Judas, the poor you will have with you always." Perhaps we can soothe it, but we can't fix it. No matter what.

Everybody dies.

We can't fix it,
we can't stop it,
we can't comprehend it.

All we can do is stand there and bleed with Becca, Kavitha, and Jesus.

That's where I left you last weekend... bleeding.
Like this... just bleeding [Peter pours communion wine from the pitcher into the cup.]

And so, of course we cry out,

"Jesus! When does it stop?"

"When does Your suffering stop?"

"When does our suffering stop?"

“When do You come down from that damned cross?”

“When does the bleeding stop?”

“When?! Because we’re not sure that we can believe in You much longer.”

Matthew 27:32,

As they went out, they found a man of Cyrene, Simon by name. They compelled this man to carry his cross. And when they came to a place called Golgotha (which means Place of a Skull), they offered him wine to drink, mixed with gall, but when he tasted it, he would not drink it. [That was probably a narcotic to deaden the pain, and Jesus refused it. He wanted to feel every hurt and endure every sorrow in His temple of pain.] And when they had crucified him, they divided his garments among them by casting lots. Then they sat down and kept watch over him there. And over his head they put the charge against him, which read, “This is Jesus, the King of the Jews.” Then two robbers were crucified with him, one on the right and one on the left. And those who passed by derided him, wagging their heads and saying, “You who would destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, save yourself! If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross.” So also the chief priests, with the scribes and elders, mocked him, saying, “He saved others; he cannot

save himself. He is the King of Israel; let him come down now from the cross, and we will believe in him.

They say, “*When* He comes down from that cross, *when* He stops the bleeding, *then* we’ll believe in Him, but until then we’ll deny Him. See, He’s dying. That’s not life. We know life.”

This week I was reminded of one of my favorite stories. It’s about a child psychologist who helps children cope with life. He begins to work with one little boy who’s having trouble coping with death.

He mutters, “Out of the depths I cry to thee, oh Lord.” That’s Psalm 130. You know that in scripture the deep, that is Sheol or Hades, begins in this life even though it continues in the grave. So the Psalmist can write, “You have delivered my soul from the depths of Hell.” “Hell” is an English translation of the Greek “Hades” and the Hebrew “Sheol.” The deep—Hades, Sheol—it’s the realm of the dead.

Well, the little boy draws pictures of Sheol, but his teachers get upset. They deny it. So he learns to draw only rainbows and keep his secret to himself. But one day he tells Malcolm, his psychologist, “I see dead people.” Eventually, Malcolm believes Cole and helps him cope with his encounters with death.

Malcolm helps Cole carry his cross like Simon helps Jesus carry his cross. But really *Cole* is helping Malcolm come to terms with his own.

Malcolm’s marriage is failing . Malcolm is caught in his own world, his own ideas, problems, and a fear... a fear about himself.

It seems he can no longer communicate with his covenant partner. She seems distant, and he spends all his time alone working under the stairs in the basement.

One day Cole suggests that he just talk to her while she's sleeping, maybe that would be easier. Malcolm does, and then he hears her. Then he sees her at last.

He watches her heart bleed... bleed for him. Then as Cole's words run through his mind all at once he knows.

[A film clip is shown from [Sixth Sense](#).]

[Malcolm walks into his living room. His wife, Anna, is asleep in front of the television. A tape of their wedding reception is playing on the television.]

Malcolm: Anna.

Anna: [still sleeping] I miss you.

Malcolm: I miss you, too.

Anna: Why Malcolm?

Malcolm: What? What is it?

Anna: Why did you leave me?

Malcolm: I didn't leave you.

[Malcolm's wedding ring drops out of Anna's sleeping hand and rolls across the hardwood floor. Malcolm looks shocked, as if he is realizing something. Malcolm flashes back to a scene with Cole.]

Cole: I see people. They don't know they're dead.

Malcolm: How often do you see them?

Cole: All the time. They're everywhere. They only see what they want to see.

[Malcolm flashes back to other scenes from earlier in the movie. Malcolm is realizing that he has been caught in his own world. He now sees that everyone except Cole was acting as if he were not there. The last scene from the clip shows Malcolm getting shot.]

Malcolm's denial is shattered, and Malcolm realizes he's dead. That would explain the lack of communication in their marriage. Some people only see what they want to see, hear what they want to hear... he's dead.

Last week we talked about how Satan works to keep us in lifelong bondage through the fear of death. What if it's not just our impending death, but the fact that we're already dead? Denial that we're the walking dead.

Now, we shouldn't get our metaphysics from Hollywood movies, but

Didn't God say,

"In the day you eat of it , you will die."?

Didn't Jesus say,

"I am the life and apart from me you can do nothing."?

Didn't Paul teach,

"We were all dead in our trespasses and sins."?

In 1 Timothy he writes,

"She who is self-indulgent is dead while she lives."

Like a zombie,

like a golem,

like a white washed tomb.

What if Paul, Jesus, and God are right? It would mean we're dead when we think we're alive, which means we're trapped in an illusion, that is a denial because of fear. We're trapped by the denial of our own death in death. The realm of the dead is called Hades, Sheol, the deep. So although our bodies are walking around, our souls can be trapped in hell.

Remember what C.S. Lewis wrote, "A damned soul is nearly nothing. It is shrunk, shut up in itself."

In other words, it is a soul unable to love. That is, a self that is only self centered. Love shines on that soul, but it cannot receive and cannot believe. It's full of itself, full of *nothing*, and can't receive the *something* who is God, and it is horrifically small.

Lewis writes, "Only the greatest of all can make himself small enough to enter hell. Only one has descended into hell."

Well, if Jesus has really descended into hell and made himself the door, then Satan's only hope is to get us to deny our own death so we won't walk through that door.

That is, deny our sin,
 so we won't surrender to grace.
 That is, believe we save ourselves,
 so we'll ignore the Savior.

He'll make us trust ourselves
 and despise that door.
 He'll make us think we're alive
 although we're dead.

Apart from God's grace, our souls are dead,
 although our bodies are still walking around.

So if Jesus, Paul, and God are right, we think death is life. So if we save our life, we'll lose it. It's not life we're saving. We think death is life, and life is death.

And then when we ask Jesus to make our life work,
 We're asking Him to make our death work.
 Asking Him to help us exist in denial one
 more day.
 Asking Him to assist in our illusion that we
 are our own savior,
 and that He is a tool we use to make our
 world work.

“Jesus,
 I gave 10%, said my prayers, and went to church,
 so grow my leg,
 heal my ulcer,
 kill Kavitha's mother,
 make my life work,
 my world work,
 the kingdom of Peter Hiatt work.
 Work for me, Jesus, the 'me' in which I am
 imprisoned. Guard my clay vessel, full of wax, so I
 don't have to be emptied of myself. Validate my
 living hell by working for me, Jesus... my slave,
 Jesus.”

We have to *lose* our lives before we can find them,
 and we have to lose our *image* of Jesus,
 before we can see the *real* Jesus,
 the door out.

As Jesus hangs on the cross,
we all die to our dream Jesus, slave Jesus.

We die to our illusions of Jesus,
so then we can see the real Jesus, the Lord Jesus.

Maybe He empties Himself and becomes small, healing
our backs, and fixing our finances (making our
lives work) for awhile just so we'll make Him our
servant Jesus, slave Jesus.

But then, according to plan,
He dies on our tree.
He dies on our knowledge of good and evil.
That is, our image of Him,
our expectations of Him,
the cross we make for Him.
He dies there to destroy our illusion of Jesus
and reveal the real Jesus,
the Lord Jesus,
the Way,
the Truth,
the Life,
the Door.

He came to help us die to this world, to ourselves,
and to our illusions of Him. He came to help us die by
admitting we're dead. He even takes our place on the cross
and in our hearts, speaking our words.

Listen to His words on the cross (Psalm 22),

My God, my God,
why have you forsaken me? . . .
I am poured out like water,
and all my bones are out of joint;

my heart is like wax;
 it is melted within my breast;
 my strength is dried up like a potsherd,
 and my tongue sticks to my jaws;
 you lay me in the dust of death.

He invites us to die with Him so we can rise with Him. He is the door out of death. You won't walk through the door if you don't think you're dead. You won't see it.

Religious people often have the hardest time seeing the real Jesus,

Because underneath they think they don't need
 grace,
 Because underneath they think it's all about saving
 yourself,
 Because underneath that's the only reality they
 know,
 Because underneath they think they have Jesus all
 figured out.

He works for them, and that's why they believe.

Religious people don't do well with suffering that they can't fix or suffering to which they can't attach blame. That is, suffering which they can't comprehend and control. So suffering of which all you can do is bleed mercy seems to have no value. So they demand, "Get down, Jesus! If you were the Messiah, you'd get down and stop the bleeding!"

Chapter 27, verse 41,

So also the chief priests, with the scribes and elders, mocked him, saying, "He saved others; he cannot save himself. He is the King of Israel; let him come down now from

the cross, and we will believe in him. He trusts in God; let God deliver him now, if he desires him. For he said, 'I am the Son of God.' " And the robbers who were crucified with him also reviled him in the same way.

You know, there were a lot of Kavithas that day Jesus hung on the cross. His nation of Israel was Kavitha... beaten, abused. He could've stopped it that day. That's what they wanted.

They said, "Come down and we'll believe." They'd believe, but in whom? Jesus Barabbas? Rambo Jesus? American Jesus? Moses? Joshua? Mohammed? Yes, but not the Lord Jesus, the real Jesus.

If Rambo Jesus showed up in Kavitha's slum and stopped her suffering, would you believe in the Lord Jesus?

If American Jesus showed up in Kavitha's slum and started a factory and adopted Kavitha, would you believe in the Lord Jesus?

If miracle Jesus showed up in Kavitha's slum, got down off the cross, healed everybody, and stopped all the bleeding, would you believe in the Lord Jesus?

Would you have seen the Lord Jesus... in His glory?

William Barclay writes,

They were using the glory of Christ as a means of mocking him. "Come down," they said, "and we will believe on you." But as General Booth once said, "It is precisely because he would not come down that we believe in him." The Jews could see God only in power; but Jesus showed that God is sacrificial love.

You know, sometimes we fix people, serve people, heal people just so we won't have to bleed for people, that is, sacrificially love people.

We fix people 'cause we hate sacrificial love. God is sacrificial love. Do we hate God? Don't deny it.

1 John 3:14, "He who does not love abides in death." 1 John 4:8, "God is love."

They think they live, but they're dead.
They think they see Him, but they're utterly blind
They stand at the foot of the cross demanding a sign.

Twice Jesus had said to them, "An evil and adulterous generation seeks a sign, but no sign will be given it except the sign of Jonah." The Son of Man, three days and three nights in the heart of the earth... Jesus Christ and Him crucified.

In Matthew 24, Jesus prophesies wars and rumors of wars, famines, earthquakes, tribulation, the Gospel to the whole world, the abomination of desolation, the sun darkened, the stars falling from the sky, and then He says will appear, "the sign." "The sign of the Son of Man in heaven." "The sign." Then, after that, He says, "Truly this generation will not pass away until all of this takes place."

Remember He says the evil generation would only get one sign... Jesus on a cross which must be the sign of the Son of Man in heaven. That is, Jesus lifted up on a cross. They'd get just that sign.

And yet all those other things—wars, earthquakes, stars falling—would happen in that generation, but they are commanded to read just one sign. They're staring at it... Jesus Christ and Him crucified. Read it. What does it mean?

They would not read that sign but sought millions of other signs. Now Jesus performed healings, He calmed the storm, and multiplied the loaves, but those weren't the signs they were commanded to read.

We seek signs and wonders and write books about wars, earthquakes, and stars falling... books about reading the signs in the last days, but then we ignore the sign of Jonah, the sufferings of the Christ.

Are we an evil and adulterous generation?

Adulterous? That's harsh.

In 2 Timothy 3:1-8, Paul talks about people in the last day who "would be lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God," "holding the appearance of Godliness, the form of religion, but denying its power."

Its power is Jesus Christ and Him crucified—the Truth—but these people will oppose the Truth like "Jannes and Jambres" opposed Moses. Jannes and Jambres were said to be Pharaoh's magicians, and they opposed Moses with signs and wonders... miracles.

So in the latter days people will be into signs and miracles, the form of religion and deny its power—the heart of God. That's adulterous. It's the pornography of religion.

Now don't get me wrong. I love my wife's body, and I'm called to love my wife's body, but if I seek the form of Susan before Susan, it's adultery and pornography. Yet if I seek Susan before I seek her body then her body becomes a means of communion with her heart, a means of knowing her.

I love miracles, and I am to pray for miracles and healings, but if I seek them first I'm evil and adulterous. Yet if I seek Jesus first—the heart of God first—then

miracles are all about Him. They're worship. They are a way to know Him—the heart of God.

They said, “Come down and we'll believe.”

Believe what? That the Messiah exists? Perhaps. But then they could no longer know *who* He is.

And is that faith? Knowing that God exists? Is that what He wants? If so, then why not honk a horn every time I count to three? Why not let us find Noah's Ark on Mount Arrarat? Why not just come down off that cross and kick some Jewish and Roman and liberal secular humanist tail? I mean, is that a problem for God? Is that why God works so hard... to convince us He exists? Is that why He went to the cross... to convince you He exists OR to reveal His heart in order that you might believe in *Him*?

Fleming Rutlege writes,

You can never get a person to believe by talking to him about faith. If you want your child to make friends with the child down the street, you can talk to her about friendship till you're blue in the face and it gets you nowhere. What you can do is arrange a meeting where friendship might occur. Or it might not. It is no longer in your hands.

The cross is an arranged meeting with God—His heart revealed, Jesus Christ and Him crucified. And you can find the cross all over this globe, wherever “the last and least of theses” suffer.

Because He won't come down from His cross when we ask Him, some will not believe.

Judaism, Islam...

many in this world will not believe in Him.

That's judgment.

Because He won't come down, many don't believe.
 And because He won't come down, we do believe in *Him*.

And who is He?

He is the One who chooses to love no matter what
 the cost.
 He is God.

I told you that I earnestly wanted you to believe in
 the miraculous power of God and that "nothing is too hard
 for God."

Because only when you believe
 that He *could've* come down,
 can you believe
 that He *chose* to stay up.

Only then can you begin to believe His love.

I earnestly want you to believe He did and He does
 heal the sick, calm the storm, and multiply the fish and
 loaves, so that when He doesn't heal your sickness, calm
 your storm, and multiply your loaves, you'll know that also
 is His will.

So you won't run.

So you won't hide.

But you'll "know Him and the
 fellowship of His suffering, being conformed to His death."
 And then you'll also know the power of His resurrection.

But you see, the greatest miracle was when there
 was no miracle. The greatest miracle was when He didn't
 come down from that cross but chose to die every

conceivable death for the love of you.¹

When we see His love poured out, Jesus Christ and Him crucified, He melts our hearts of wax. He empties us of our dead selves so He can fill us with life, Himself. He longs to fill.

But now if you're like me or Dale or El Perdido, you think, "Great. But Jesus... enough is enough. It feels like too much. It's more than I, myself, can take so..."

1. When will You come down from Your cross?
 2. When will You stop the bleeding?"
1. When will He come down? When His body dies... His body. And we are His body. He comes down when we die, when we finally surrender to grace and believe. Believe not in a system, a religion, a program... when we believe not in ourselves, but Him. Then the body dies to itself. Then He comes down, and then we live. When the body dies to itself and surrenders to the head, and when it's filled with blood pumped from the heart. Then we live. Then the body lives, rises from death. When the body surrenders to the head and is infused with blood from the heart.

¹ All the other miracles are set up for the grand miracle. Jesus seems to even put the others down. He says, "Don't tell," or "Pay attention to what this means," or does them because he's annoyed and wants some sleep. A miracle usually is defined as something that breaks the laws of nature. It's a silly definition. There really are no "laws of nature," just the way things usually operate. Well, Jesus utterly violated the way things usually operate... "the will to power," "survival of the fittest," "watching out for #1." The absolute first became absolute last for the love of all. It's the greatest miracle... the heart of God.

1. When will He come down? When His body dies.
2. When will the bleeding stop? Never. I think the answer is never. But now, dead bodies don't bleed. The blood clots, and the body gets stiff. Dead bodies don't bleed. Last week when I told the story of Kavitha, you started to bleed. For a moment you forgot about yourself, and you felt for Kavitha. You wanted to help her, hold her, save her, kiss her. In a word, you loved... not because you had to, you wanted to. And "He who loves is born of God and knows God." So an old earthen vessel began to bleed the life of God. Bleed a little bit of the mercy He's already bled into you.

Remember how we said if you're emptied and filled fast enough you're emptied and filled continually? That is, your vessel is a pipe, and you are a river—a river of life, a blood vessel.

Did you know that your body parts, your members, continually bleed? They continually bleed in and out of each other. Once they stop, they're dead.

When I used to ski a lot, my buddies and I used to watch each other for frostbite. When you get frostbite, the blood stops flowing to that part of your body. It won't bleed. And here's the weird thing, once you get it, it doesn't hurt. It doesn't hurt; it's numb and unable to feel. It's comfortable because it's dead.

Satan wants us to be comfortably dead in denial of our own death.

Well, that's why we'd watch each other for those white spots. And get this... once you start warming a spot that's been frozen, once the blood starts to flow, once life

returns, that spot can hurt like hell, and yet actually hell was when that spot didn't hurt at all, when it felt nothing at all.

We are Christ's body and individually members (parts) thereof. He's just beginning to irrigate His body with His blood.

When I was a kid, my favorite thing on Grandpa's farm was to go irrigating. We'd take these steel vessels (irrigation pipes), put one end in the ditch full of water, then pump 'em or suck on 'em enough to create a siphon, then throw the pipes down and a river of water (a river of life) would run from the ditch up through the pipes and down into the field irrigating the fields to produce a harvest of grain.

Sometimes it feels like God is sucking the life out of us. He is... but to start a river and irrigate a harvest.

And what is He harvesting? Faith and mercy. They are eternal. Faith grows where we don't understand, but are forced to trust. Mercy grows where we have no choice but just to bleed.

And you say, "Well, that sucks!"

Yeah, like a river. He's irrigating a dry field, a barren land, a barren bride. He's irrigating a body, His body, His bride. His body is a temple, and a city, and a kingdom.

Dale writes, "Why does it have to go so far? . . . And yet with all these questions, through my tears, I know the foundation of heaven is being built on Kavitha."

Dale had a vision of that once... immense suffering, and Jesus said, "This is what the new Jerusalem is made of."

Jesus told us, "Blessed are the poor in Spirit. Of them is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are the persecuted

and reviled for me. Of them is the kingdom of heaven.”

If your heart bleeds for Kavitha, it is because you are His city, His temple, His bride, His body... beginning to bleed His blood, beginning to love. That hurts in this world, and yet it's absolute ecstasy in the next.

But let me be clear, I do not understand all the reasons

why Jesus chose to suffer so long on the cross, and
 why Jesus chooses to suffer so long and so much
 in Kavitha,
 why Jesus chooses to suffer so long and so much
 in some of you.

However, I am convinced that Jesus did not come down from the cross that day in order that we would believe in Him... in Him. And one more thing (maybe it's the same thing), He didn't come down because He had an appointment in hell.

He was going to get Kavitha.

He was going to get my friend in the box with the
 corpse.

He was going to get you in your place of
 deepest fear and shame.

He was descending into Hades.

With the eyes of my heart, I've seen Him there... bleeding in unending love. I've seen Him there, and I think that's why I believe.

It's not because my leg grew, and I've seen signs and wonders, healings and miracles. When I asked for those things in order to believe, none of them happened.

In fact, the closest thing I have to a conversion experience is the night in high school that I tell people

about in the new members class—the night I wept by the bathtub and told Jesus I didn't think I could believe in Him any more. I told *Him*, who I thought I didn't believe in. He hadn't made any horns honk, and I was beginning to see this world of pain—so I told Him I didn't think I could believe in Him anymore.

I think I was dying to my image and expectation of Jesus and surrendering to the Jesus I had come to know
 in the eyes of my father,
 and the hugs of my mother,
 the love of my youth pastor, Gary,
 the Jesus I know in the sorrows of friends,
 and the pain of my kids,
 in the tears that issue from my own eyes,
 the Jesus I've seen in the mercy, love, and life...
 the blood that shows up when His body suffers.

I'm middle-aged now, and I've seen some mind boggling miracles. But I don't believe because of the times Jesus got down off His cross and stopped the bleeding. I think I believe in Him because of the times He didn't. That is, I believe in Jesus because I want to believe,
 not because I've seen the miracles, signs, and wonders,
 not because I understand and comprehend,
 not because He's a proven philosophical theorem or historical fact, and
 not because I'm scared,
 not because I want to save my butt from hell, and
 not because I want eternal fire insurance,
 not because I'm trying to be holy,
 But because I've seen Him hanging on a cross, Jesus Christ and Him crucified, and I want to believe.

In other words, I'm falling in love with the Heart of God: Jesus.

And so He took bread and broke it saying, "This is my body. See it?" And He took the cup, and He said, "This is my blood of the covenant, poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. Drink of it, all of you. See it? My body, my blood. See it?"

Do you want it? Do you want Him? Then come surrender yourself to Him and be filled with Him and worship.

We thank You, and we praise You, Lord God, that You wrapped Yourself in flesh and You descended into our dungeon, and You broke the chains, and You set us free. Forgive us, Lord God, for still chaining ourselves up by believing the lies of the evil one and living in fear and darkness and shame that You've broken and that You've paid for. May we believe Your Gospel, so may we stand up and rise and follow You wherever You lead because we want You, we love You. If You're in the slums of India, if You're in the poorest place in the city of Denver, if You're in our hurting neighbor, if You're in the darkest place of our own hearts, we'll go there because You're there, and we love You. Thank You, Lord God, for setting us free. In Jesus' name, amen.

And now, before you go, real quick, don't leave... 'cause if you're like me, there are things that follow you

around, voices, thoughts... we battle against says scripture. They say things like this, "You'll fail. You'll fail. You'll screw up. You'll mess up. Didn't you listen to the sermon? It's even worse than you thought. You're worse than you thought. You'll screw up, and you could die. You could die. I'll kill you. You loser. You could die."

Whenever that happens, turn around and say, "I'm dead. I'm dead. What more do you want? I'm dead. I'm dead. And not only that, did you listen to the sermon? I'm dead, it's no longer Peter Hiatt who lives. It's Christ Jesus who lives in me. So you got a problem with me, talk to Him. Talk to Him. He's making me alive."

He's making you alive. He's the life in you. It's His deal. He's doing it. So you see what that means, you once had, like, this body that was living and a dead soul. But now you have a body that's dying and a living soul, a spirit. The Spirit of Jesus that cannot die because He's already been there and done that. The power of an indestructible life. And so although it's Friday all around you, it's Easter in your heart. In Jesus' name, believe the Gospel and you'll live the Gospel.

If you'd like prayer, we have a prayer ministry team, and they'd love to pray with you down front afterwards.

If you're wondering how the Malcolm story ends, you can get [The Sixth Sense](#) and watch the end. But admitting he's dead, he's free, and he can begin to live forever and meet his bride who will live forever.

If you're wondering how Kavitha's story ends, it ends with Jesus, and it ends with you. You are the body of Christ.

But don't be afraid. Because a dead body can't help
 Kavitha,
 only a body that's dead to itself
 and obedient to the Head,
 only a body that's been infused with life,
 only a body of faith and love can help Kavitha.

Relevant Texts and Quotations (from bulletin)

My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?
 Why are you so far from saving me, from the words of my
 groaning?
 O my God, I cry by day, but you do not answer,
 and by night, but I find no rest. . . .
 In you our fathers trusted;
 they trusted, and you delivered them. . . .
 But I am a worm and not a man,
 scorned by mankind and despised by the people.
 All who see me mock me;
 they make mouths at me; they wag their heads;
 "He trusts in the LORD; let him deliver him;
 let him rescue him, for he delights in him!" . . .
 I am poured out like water,
 and all my bones are out of joint;
 my heart is like wax;
 it is melted within my breast;
 my strength is dried up like a potsherd,
 and my tongue sticks to my jaws;
 you lay me in the dust of death.
 For dogs encompass me;
 a company of evildoers encircles me;
 they have pierced my hands and feet—
 I can count all my bones—
 they stare and gloat over me;

they divide my garments among them,
 and for my clothing they cast lots. . . .
 All the prosperous of the earth eat and worship;
 before him shall bow all who go down to the dust,
 even the one who could not keep himself alive.
 Posterity shall serve him;
 it shall be told of the Lord to the coming generation;
 they shall come and proclaim his righteousness to a people yet unborn,
 that he has done it.
Psalm 22:1-2, 22:4, 22:6-8, 22:14-18, 22:29-31 (ESV)

Peter,
 Here is the vision I saw during the recent Living Stones service. I believe this is a corporate message for the church. There was a huge clay pot which represented the church (LMCC). The pot was filled with silver only the silver was hard and not useful. Jesus picked up his word, the Bible, (which symbolized His judgments) and threw it into the pot. (This wasn't a negative thing like he was striking out—it was actually a cleansing thing.) Immediately the silver turned into a fiery liquid substance, and the smoke that rose from the fire was a pleasing aroma to Jesus. When all of the impurities bubbled to the top, Jesus gently reached his hand into the fiery liquid and removed the slag from the top purifying the body. (This represented His complete and utterly merciful grace.) All around the church were human molds of various people in the church. Jesus picked up the pot and poured the purified silver into the molds, and then as each was cooled, He removed the mold and commissioned them to go out and minister.
Stan Bullis, November 2, 2005

The OM leader was called and told us to bring her back to the slum. Kavitha clung to my neck and begged not to go. In her Telugu language she said, “My mommy will kill me if I go back. Please let me stay with Auntie, or send me to a hostel.” Despair and hopelessness strangled my heart as we entered the rickshaw to bring her back to the slum. ~ I close my eyes and immediately I am back standing in the street looking at Kavitha lying beaten on the stoop. Just that morning I prayed that Christ would empty me of myself and fill me with Him. ~ “Please, Father,” I had said, “Please go before me preparing the way. Remove me and all that is within me that stands in the way of You being

revealed. Father, then walk behind me, protecting, healing, encouraging.” ~ As I stand there in my mind, I am alone. The metal and cardboard shackles staring at me, and I scream, “Why me? Why am I here, what good can come from this?” ~ And as tears well up in my eyes, I hear a voice, His voice. “You are not alone. I am here. I am filling you. I am feeling the same anger and sadness you are feeling. As your fingers reach for her they become My fingers. And as she sits on your lap, it becomes My lap. And, and not only that, but I am in Kavitha. And I am her. I have been with her everyday, tied to the ceiling fan; even now I feel pain in my hands, on my face, on my back. It is my eyes that you are looking into, my body that you are so gently hugging. And, and even more I am with her mother. For I have come to love the sinner, the prostitute, tax collector, and child abuser.” ~ “What?!” I cry. “You are here in the horror. You feel Kavitha’s pain and my pain, how can You possibly...?” ~ “Yeah, My love reaches that far. And just as I fill you, I dream of filling her [Kavitha’s mother], for I feel her pain, too.” ~ “But I can’t! I can’t go to her. I hate her.” ~ Yet, even as these words pour from my mouth I know the Truth. And He says, “Then let Me.” And He fills me. And He fills you. And He longs to fill...

Becca Saby, November 25, 2005

Then some of the scribes and Pharisees answered him, saying, “Teacher, we wish to see a sign from you.” But he answered them, “An evil and adulterous generation seeks for a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. For just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. The men of Nineveh will rise up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and behold, something greater than Jonah is here.”

Matthew 12:38-41 (ESV)

“You know how to interpret the appearance of the sky, but you cannot interpret the signs of the times. An evil and adulterous generation seeks for a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of Jonah.” So he left them and departed.

Matthew 16:3b-4 (ESV)

Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken; then will appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory; . . . Truly, I say to you, this generation will not pass away till all these things take place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

Matthew 24:29-30, 24:34-35 (RSV)

As they went out, they found a man of Cyrene, Simon by name. They compelled this man to carry his cross. And when they came to a place called Golgotha (which means Place of a Skull), they offered him wine to drink, mixed with gall, but when he tasted it, he would not drink it. And when they had crucified him, they divided his garments among them by casting lots. Then they sat down and kept watch over him there. And over his head they put the charge against him, which read, "This is Jesus, the King of the Jews." Then two robbers were crucified with him, one on the right and one on the left. And those who passed by derided him, wagging their heads and saying, "You who would destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, save yourself! If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross." So also the chief priests, with the scribes and elders, mocked him, saying, "He saved others; he cannot save himself. He is the King of Israel; let him come down now from the cross, and we will believe in him. He trusts in God; let God deliver him now, if he desires him. For he said, 'I am the Son of God.'" And the robbers who were crucified with him also reviled him in the same way.

Matthew 27:32-44 (ESV)

They were using the glory of Christ as a means of mocking him. "Come down," they said, "and we will believe on you." But as General Booth once said, "It is precisely because he would not come down that we believe in him." The Jews could see God only in power; but Jesus showed that God is sacrificial love.

William Barclay, The Daily Bible Study Series

What a missed opportunity! If only the risen Jesus had reappeared on Pilate's porch to deliver a withering blast against his enemies - that would have showed them! But his dozen or so appearances after

resurrection show a clear pattern: Christ presented himself only to people who already believed in him. So far as we know, not a single unbeliever saw Jesus after his death....The spectacle of the Cross, the most public event of Jesus' life, reveals the vast difference between a god who proves himself through power and One who proves himself through love. Other gods, for example, enforced worship: in Jesus' own lifetime, some Jews were slaughtered for not bowing down to Caesar. But Jesus Christ never forced anyone to believe in him. He preferred to act by appeal, drawing people out of themselves and toward him.

Philip Yancey, Disappointment with God

Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord, nor of me his prisoner, but share in suffering for the gospel by the power of God. . . . But understand this, that in the last days there will come times of difficulty. For people will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, heartless, unappeasable, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not loving good, treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having the appearance of godliness, but denying its power. Avoid such people. For among them are those who creep into households and capture weak women, burdened with sins and led astray by various passions, always learning and never able to arrive at a knowledge of the truth. Just as Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses, so these men also oppose the truth, men corrupted in mind and disqualified regarding the faith. [Jannes and Jambres were believed to be the names of Pharaoh's magicians who opposed Moses' miracles with their own.]

2 Timothy 1:8, 3:1-8 (ESV)

For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. . . . For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. . . . And I, when I came to you, brothers, did not come proclaiming to you the testimony of God with lofty speech or wisdom. For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. And I was with you in weakness and in fear and much trembling, and my speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in

demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.

1 Corinthians 1:18, 1:22-24, 2:1-5 (ESV)

Note well: in the whole Bible of the Old and New Testaments not the slightest attempt is ever made to prove God. This attempt has always been made only outside the biblical view of God, and only where it has been forgotten with whom we have to do, when we speak of God. . . . But when our talk is of Him and we speak of Him as about a familiar entity, who is more familiar and real than any other reality and who is nearer us than we are to ourselves, it is not because there may have been particularly pious people who were successful in investigating this Being, but because He who was hidden from us has disclosed Himself. And it is part of this, that God is not only unprovable and unsearchable, but also *inconceivable*. No attempt is made in the Bible to define God—that is, to grasp God in our concepts. In the Bible God’s name is named, not as philosophers do it, as the name of a timeless Being, surpassing the world, alien and supreme, but as the name of the living, acting, working Subject who makes Himself known. The Bible tells the story of God.

Karl Barth, Dogmatics in Outline

I remember the question and answer session that was held at Princeton in 1963 during Karl Barth's Princeton lectures. One student asked Dr. Barth, “Don’t you think God has revealed himself in other religions and not only in Christianity?” And Barth’s answer was like a shot of white lightning in a packed room. He answered, “No. God has not revealed himself in any religion including Christianity. He has revealed himself in his Son.”

Earl Palmer

(From Gary Reddish’s Sermon, 5/23/99, “The Taboo Text”)

The Gospel says that this is eternal life, to know the only true God and the one whom he sent, the truth (John 17:3). That is, I only know the truth when it becomes a life to me.

Kierkegaard, Provocations

Clergy are often tempted to preach about faith. My homiletics professor, the distinguished Lutheran preacher Edmund Steimle, warned us not to do it. He said, “You can never get a person to believe

by talking to him about faith. If you want your child to make friends with the child down the street, you can talk to her about friendship till you're blue in the face and it gets you nowhere. What you can do is arrange a meeting where friendship might occur. Or it might not. It is no longer in your hands."

Fleming Rutledge, Help My Unbelief

And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience—among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved.

Ephesians 2:1-5 (ESV)

But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you.

Romans 8:10-11 (ESV)

The Father judges no one, but has given all judgment to the Son, that all may honor the Son, just as they honor the Father. Whoever does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent him. Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life. Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming, and is now here, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live. For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself. And he has given him authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of Man. Do not marvel at this, for an hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice and come out, those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment.

John 5:22-29 (ESV)

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