

## Victory of the Lamb – Good Friday 2017 – Pastor Bill Limmer

### John 19:31-37 - Our Savior's Glory Hidden in His Promises

Years ago, when I had been gone for a number of nights in a row, I told my young son that we would play catch after supper that night. While we were eating supper, the phone rang. One of our church members was rushed to the hospital. I almost got to play catch with my son. I almost go to keep my promise. Unfortunately, this wasn't the first time or last time that I didn't keep a promise. A couple of weeks ago I had appointments on Tuesday morning; one at 9:15 and one at 11. The 9:15 ran late so I was late to the 11. I was close but I didn't keep my promise. Are there any areas in your life where you came close but not quite with your promises?

Today as turn into God's ancient narrative of timeless truth, we are going to take a look at the faithfulness of God as promises hundreds even more than a thousand years ago come true. The setting is the first Good Friday and the scene has Jesus and two criminals, one on Jesus left and one on Jesus right, crucified. John 19:31-32 **Now it was the day of Preparation, and the next day was to be a special Sabbath. Because the Jewish leaders did not want the bodies left on the crosses during the Sabbath, they asked Pilate to have the legs broken and the bodies taken down. The soldiers therefore came and broke the legs of the first man who had been crucified with Jesus, and then those of the other.** Some crucifixion victims died from asphyxiation, but they usually died more quickly from shock (due to blood loss from scourging and sometimes being nailed to a tree), or dehydration. Those who did not die from blood loss could linger for days. Sometimes in crucifixion a block of wood was placed at the seat or at the foot so the crucified person could sometimes rest himself, allowing him to pull up his frame and keep breathing. When the legs were broken by the blow of a hammer or club, it prevented this opportunity of rest and hastened death. And while the Romans were not averse to leaving corpses on the cross for days at a time to be picked clean by vultures, they deferred to unobjectionable local customs. About 1400 years before Christ, God instructed the people bring a hanging body down before night fall because justice had already been served and so that the criminal and the crime he or she committed would not be given too much attention. It is ironic that the Jewish leaders were following God's Word even though they rejected the one who kept all of God's Word.

<sup>33</sup> **But when they came to Jesus and found that he was already dead, they did not break his legs.** And with these words God kept his promise that King David had written about 1000 years before: (Psalm 34:10) **He protects all of his bones, not one of them will be broken.** The rough and rugged, barbaric Roman soldiers in disdain for the alleged criminal surely could have used their hammer or clubs just to desecrate the dead body of Jesus, just for the fun of it, just for the brutality of it, but they don't. And through their lack of action God's promise is kept. It wasn't a case of close but not quite. And don't miss the beauty of this: As the children of Israel were getting ready to be set free from their Egyptian slavery by God 1400 years earlier, God gives them the instructions to celebrate the Passover meal. The meal that Jesus and his disciples had just celebrated the night before. God commanded them not to break any bones of the Passover Lamb Exodus 12:46 **"Do not break any of the bones."** At the start of Jesus ministry, John the Baptist proclaimed of Jesus, "Look the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world." Jesus is our true Passover Lamb, who had no bones broken, who died to set us free from our slavery to sin.

<sup>34</sup> **Instead, one of the soldiers pierced Jesus' side with a spear, bringing a sudden flow of blood and water.** <sup>35</sup> **The man who saw it has given testimony, and his testimony is true. He knows that he tells**

the truth, and he testifies so that you also may believe. <sup>36</sup>These things happened so that the scripture would be fulfilled: “Not one of his bones will be broken,” <sup>37</sup>and, as another scripture says, “They will look on the one they have pierced. The rough and tumble soldier, wanting to be thorough and perhaps a little sadistic, wanted to make sure Jesus was dead, pierced a spear through Jesus side piercing the pericardial sac releasing a flow of blood and water. And now in the action of one of the soldiers the promises of God are kept. The soldiers, just as they left the bones of Jesus unbroken could have left the spear out of his side too but the promises of God had to be fulfilled. Isa 53: 5: “**But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities.**” This wasn’t a case of close but quite. This is key because if Jesus doesn’t fulfill God’s promises, God is a liar and he is not our Savior. Through Jesus sacrifice we have full forgiveness, not most sins but ALL sins. We have God’s promise on it.

Growing up I played a lot of baseball. They say one of the hardest thing to do in sports is to hit a fast ball. I was always so close to doing it. Jesus wasn’t so close to fulfilling God’s promises. He fulfilled all of God’s promises. Nothing can keep God from keeping all of his promises not even death. Amen.