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JOHN 19:23-30

John Series: Get a Life in Jesus

[PRAYER] Lord, the cross of Christ has made an impact on history, changing the timeline. It's made an impact on countries and movements. It's made an impact on our own hearts, families. So we're grateful for that. Thank you for the privilege we had today to celebrate communion and focus in on the personal relationship we have with you. Lord, now as we look at your word, what it has to say to us about the crucifixion, we ask that you would use it in our hearts in a very special way. We ask this in Jesus' name, amen.

This morning I'm going to talk to you about a special place inside of our hearts. This place where we experience mistreatment, injustice, abuse, disappointment. The heart is a real fragile place and it gets damaged. Our hearts get damaged and often that damage takes place because of other people around us who are foolish, broken, self-centered. Sometimes it's targeted at us and people are malicious at us personally, you or me or whoever. Other times it's a result of living in a broken world where people get hurt and more pain takes place. It happens often in our lives. We have to have a way of processing this. If someone has stolen something from you, whether it's something physical or a job or dignity or a hope or a dream, it's that place in your heart that we have to be able to process these things. They're just so difficult. It's where we experience a lot of turmoil and challenges inside and we need to have a plan for dealing with that. God has made that plan something that we have access to and we can address.

Yesterday I went out and played golf. When you go out and play golf by yourself, they pair you up with other people. So I got paired with these other two guys I don't know. One of them his name was John.

Because the course was a little bit slower (we had to wait for the other people to play), you're there with the other guys and we're talking. Our conversation continued and it led to this really interesting place in the dynamic where John started talking about his post-traumatic stress in regards to 9/11. He told us the whole story about the 9/11 experience for him, how he's been taking depression medication since then. I listened to him tell his whole story. It took a couple of holes to tell the story, but we listened to him tell the whole story. And then on the next hole I said to him, "I've got to tell you something. Every Sunday I teach sermons. I preach." Because we talked, he already knew I was a pastor. I said, "On Monday I start preparing my sermon. And as I prepare the sermon, I know what I'm going to be teaching on and then I come into contact either personally with experiences in my own life or I come into contact with other people who are experiencing things that help me to be sensitive to the needs of other people as I'm teaching so it's not just truth without love, but there's this compassion there. This Sunday I'm talking

about post-traumatic stress. This Sunday I'm talking about emotional healing. I'm going to share your story with other people."

He says, "I hope you do. It would be great if you share my story. And when you share my story, be sure to tell people that it's okay to take medication." That was his kind of thing that he wanted to make sure I shared with you. So I'm sharing that that's John's message to you that it's okay to take medication. And I would concur with that. There are biological solutions that our society and technology provides that can aid us in the challenges that we face.

Today I want to talk about spiritual resources that help us deal with the challenges that we experience that are traumatic, painful. We're going to look at the crucifixion of Jesus Christ, which I would consider ranks at the top of the list of unfair situations, abusive situations by people who are self-focused, selfish, not thinking about others, certainly not thinking about Jesus. He suffered unjustly.

As we look at the crucifixion we can look at it from several different vantage points. We can look at it from the place of all of the prophecies that were fulfilled in the crucifixion of Christ and we go wow. If we did that that would be a great study and we would say to ourselves, "Wow, this all fit into God's grand plan," and we would be encouraged because we would realize that God cares about us, He has a plan for each one of us, and we can rely on that. It's a great way to approach the crucifixion story.

Another way that we can approach the crucifixion story is by looking at it theologically. We are sinners living in a broken world and God sent Jesus Christ to bring about salvation, which is the solution to the sin problem so that we can receive Jesus Christ into our lives and we can have a satisfying life, we can have new life in Christ. That's a theological look and that's usually what we do when we come to the crucifixion.

But today I want to look at it a little bit differently. Today I want to look at the crucifixion story the way that Peter does in his writing in 1 Peter on a very practical level about dealing with mistreatment and unjust suffering. We'll see how Peter reflects on the crucifixion itself, then we'll go back and we'll actually look at the crucifixion ourselves. But I want to start with Peter's writing.

So would you stand with me as I read God's word in 1 Peter 2 starting in verse 18. He starts this way: *Slaves, in reverent fear of God submit yourselves to your masters, not only to those who are good and considerate, but also to those who are harsh.* I read the first verse because I want you to see this is in a context about slaves.

But it doesn't stop there. In verse 19 it broadens us to everyone, to someone. I'm the *someone* in verse 19. *For it is commendable if someone bears up under the pain of unjust suffering because they are conscious of God.* Literally translated their conscience is facing toward God. They're doing what's right is the idea. Their conscience is facing toward God and they're bearing under the pain of unjust suffering.

Verse 20 – *But how is it to your credit if you receive a beating for doing wrong and endure it? But if you suffer for doing good and you endure it, this is commendable before God.* And this is a powerful statement. *To this you were called* (that is, to suffer for doing good and endure it), *because Christ suffered for you* (now we're in this part about the crucifixion), *leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps.* That's what we're going to look at in a moment is the example of Christ. *“He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth.”* The mouth is a place where we tend to get off track.

When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly. That's going to be a key component of our study today. *He entrusted himself who judges justly. “He himself bore our sins” in his body on the cross, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; “by his wounds you have been healed.”* I want to say today that this is an opportunity for you to experience healing. That God wants healing in your heart from emotional pain, emotional healing in our lives. Today you're going to learn more about what that healing looks like.

It is a practical study of the crucifixion. But Peter tells us that by the crucifixion of Jesus Christ our wounds are healed. If you're wounded emotionally today, you're going to have an opportunity to learn and to see the solutions, the spiritual resources that God offers to us as we look at the crucifixion of Christ. You ready and excited about that?

Alright. Have a seat. Let's get to work.

Let's look at the crucifixion itself. I want to draw from it some of the illustrations of how Jesus handled with immense, painful suffering experience that He found Himself in.

Verse 23 – *When the soldiers crucified Jesus, they took his clothes, dividing them into four shares, one for each of them, with the undergarment remaining. This garment was seamless, woven in one piece from top to bottom.*

“Let's not tear it,” they said to one another. “Let's decide by lot who will get it.”

This happened that the scripture might be fulfilled that said, “They divided my clothes among them and cast lots for my garment.” So this is what the soldiers did.

I just imagine this scene of people, of soldiers who were very self-focused and thinking about their own agenda, thinking about their own things. Not even paying attention to the suffering and pain that was going on just a few feet from them, likely. Inflicting some of that pain on Jesus, but not paying attention to that. Not realizing or not caring about anyone else, just focused on themselves. We live in a broken world where people like these soldiers were without excuse. They are definitely guilty. But how Jesus handles this in this very instant is very important because what He does is one of the things we can do in our response to the pain that we experience in our lives.

I want to take you back to Luke that I read earlier during the communion time where it reflects back on this same passage. Notice Jesus' response because this is going to be the first of four

different ways that we can experience emotional healing. In Luke 23:34 it says – *Jesus said, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.” And they divided up his clothes by casting lots.*

Forgiveness is an exercise that softens the heart. You see the heart is a very fragile part of each one of us. When pain and hurt and unjust suffering come into our lives, it hurts our heart. It's very painful. It damages who we are. We start going forward in a way that it starts affecting us in different ways. It's very painful to deal with that, so we must have some tools to address it and forgiveness is one of those.

Let me just show you that we're going to end up with four different tools for emotional healing and this first one is to practice forgiveness. Let me just broaden this for a moment and help you understand that there are three primary emotions, negative emotions that we deal with in our lives and those are groups of emotions. You're going to want to think about this in your own because maybe there is something in there that is challenging for you and that the Lord will draw attention to in your life.

The first one has to do with the anger kinds of responses – bitterness, hatred. The second one is sadness and discouragement, disappointment. The third one is anxiety that has to do with fears, nervousness. Those three different emotions. When some kind of traumatic event or some unjust treatment takes place in our lives, it affects us because those emotions are really close to this fragile part of our heart. So they get activated in a way that sometimes makes our fragile heart become hard.

We don't want our heart becoming hard because when it becomes hard then bad things happen. When we start viewing ourselves as a victim, we start closing things in and building walls around us, it builds the garden for things like hatred to develop inside of us. That's what ruins us. It's not the hurt. It's not the suffering and the pain that damages us. It's our response to that. It's actually the suffering and the pain that we go through that makes us more compassionate people or can, unless we tie anger to it and we start becoming more ugly and we start hating. When that starts taking place, it hardens our heart and makes it a really damaged heart.

So there are exercises for each of these that we can involve ourselves in. The first one is in Luke 23:34, which is forgiveness. So instead of becoming angry and the situation where personal justice is at stake in Jesus' life, He forgives. But when it comes to sadness and discouragement, usually it's related to some kind of a loss that we've had. We've lost something. We feel upset about what we've lost. The solution is a grateful heart. That we'll be grateful for what we have and not complaining or upset or dragged down by the things that we don't have. When it comes to anxiety, which is then often met in our own hearts with a desire to control and be demanding and want things to be a particular way. Sometimes people who have perfectionist tendencies are this way. It's got to be this particular way. The solution, of course, is to learn how to have a trusting heart, to give up control and allow God to work. There are spiritual resources that can help deal with the pain that we experience inside of our heart when our emotions get rattled. Sometimes when they get rattled they start affecting our heart and making our heart hard. These three tools will help soften our heart in order to help it to move forward in a positive way.

The first thing that Jesus did is He was forgiving. Let's go onto verse 25. *Near the cross of Jesus stood his mother, his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus saw his mother there, and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby (who is, by the way, John. He's the one writing this. That's how he refers to himself, as the disciple whom Jesus loved), he said to her, "Woman, here is your son," and to the disciple, "Here is your mother." From that time on, this disciple took her into his home.*

You have to imagine. This just seems to be so contrary to our popular thinking that we would be able to turn around and help other people in the midst of our suffering. Sometimes what we say is I can't help anybody else. I've got to get myself squared away. I've got to build myself up before I strengthen others. Maybe that's okay. But there's something Jesus does here that I think is a ticket to our emotional healing and that is that we get out there and start caring for others, not just thinking about ourselves. There's a tendency when pain takes place in our lives for us to contract, build walls, become secluded. In the midst of that armor that we build, we can start developing some real negative stuff. Our heart becomes hard. It's damaging.

One of the things that softens the heart is to get out there and care for others. Jesus is doing that and modeling that from the cross. So we're doing what Peter is doing. We're looking at Christ's example. How do we deal with emotional stress, post-traumatic stress, trauma, abuse. How do we deal with that using spiritual resources? This is another one – we need to be out there caring for others. It helps us to get outside of ourselves to become others focused instead of self-focused, which is part of the healing process.

Let me take you to this passage of scripture that talks about this very thing. In 2 Corinthians 1, Paul says this: *Blessed be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God. For just as we share abundantly in the sufferings of Christ... See, he's going right back to the cross. Peter is saying the same way that Peter went back to the cross Paul is going back to the cross. Here's an example of the sufferings of Christ overflow to us, so also through us our comfort overflows. If we are afflicted, it is for your comfort and salvation. If we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which accomplishes in your patient endurance of the same sufferings we experience. And our hope for you is firm, because we know that as you share in the sufferings, so you will also share in the comfort.*

There is this process that Paul is saying you don't wait till all the suffering is over before comfort takes place. You're comforting others in the midst of the challenge. Caring for others is an important part of emotional healing.

Let's go on in the passage. This is back to John 19. In verse 28 it says – *Later, knowing that everything had now been finished, and so that Scripture would be fulfilled, Jesus said, "I am thirsty."*

Now the reason He said, *"I am thirsty,"* is because He wants to say something really important. Of the seven sayings He says on the cross, the next one is probably going to be the most important one and He can't really speak well because of the pain, the suffering that He's going

through. His lips are all parched, His mouth is constricted, His tongue isn't working well. So He says, "*I am thirsty.*" That's why He is asking for a drink so that He can make His final statement that He's going to make.

A jar of wine vinegar was there, so they soaked a sponge in it, put the sponge on a stalk of the hyssop plant, and lifted it to Jesus' lips. When he had received the drink, Jesus said, "It is finished." With that, he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.

The three words *it is finished* are one Greek word *tetelestai*. It means the debt is paid. If you had a mortgage or you had a debt and someone was going to write on the receipt "paid in full," they would write *tetelestai*. That's the word Jesus used. *Tetelestai*, it is over.

We call this theologically the finished work of Christ. There's nothing you can add to it. Sometimes we think we're going to do this great act or this good deed and we're going to do this righteous thing, we're going to give to the church or give to the poor or we're going to serve somehow, and that somehow is adding to our salvation. There is nothing we can add. It is the finished work of Jesus Christ. That finished work of Jesus Christ for our emotional strength, for our emotional healing. We go back to the cross of Christ. That is where we go. It is the cross of Christ, the finished work of Christ that gives us then the foundation for the healing we're going to receive in our lives.

Now I want to take you back to 1 Peter 2 again. This the passage we read at the beginning. I want you to track with me on the passage and see what it's saying because Peter is looking back at the crucifixion. He's trying to help these poor servants, slaves who are being mistreated in their relationship. What should they do? What's he going to tell them to do? So he's giving them some advice and broadening that for us and he's saying it is commendable if someone bears up under the pain of unjust suffering because their heart or their conscience is facing toward God, they're doing the right thing.

But how is it to your credit if you receive a beating for wrong and endure it? If you're escalating or provoking or initiating conflict and you get hurt by that, he's saying there's no benefit to that. We are called to something different. But if you suffer for something good and you endure it, this is commendable. It's like you get a certificate of commendation or you get points, if you would, if I can use that illustration. That there's something in your relationship with God that takes you above the mistreatment that's going on in your situation right now to something God is doing in your heart. That is big and that is powerful and that is going to contribute to your emotional strength and healing in your life. That is big.

To this you are called. That just stands out. *To this you were called.* That God has called us to suffer for doing good and enduring it? It's just part of what happens. All of us live in a broken world and is an important part of our understanding of what it means to be a Christian because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example that you should follow in His steps. And then it gives these illustrations. "*He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth.*" Mouths get us into trouble and often invite abuse. We've got to be really careful about that.

When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly. I want to just park here because this is going to be our third principle. He entrusted himself to him who judges justly. Your heart was not designed to be big enough to handle the injustice of the world or your personal injustice. It's just not big enough. And if you try to balance the scales by getting revenge or you try to protect yourself with anxiety and control things that are going on, your heart will become hard. There is no way to move forward with that.

In order to have a soft heart, in order to experience the joy and the love and the peace that God wants you to experience, you must let it go. That is so hard to use those words because I know some people have been abused in terrible ways at work or at home in their family of origin, growing up. In order to be free, in order to experience the healing that God wants, you've got to come to a place where you're entrusting it to the Lord. He's the one who's going to judge justly.

Notice the words *judging justly* here is very important because it talks earlier about unjust suffering. It's unjust and in our minds we're going, "This is not fair!" So we want to balance the scales by getting back at someone. And what he's saying here is Jesus entrusted himself to the one, to the Father who judges justly.

"He himself bore our sins" in his body on the cross, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness (and these next words are just so touching and I hope they will touch you today because he says); *"by his wounds you have been healed."*

Healing is possible. It's not only possible, it's something that God desires for you and for me. That the pain we've experienced is something that... God doesn't take away the pain off it or the hurt. Those become parts of the ministry where He comforts us and allows us then to minister to other people through the pain and suffering that we experience. What we're talking about here is an emotional healing that frees us in a way that changes the way things are going on inside of us. *By his wounds you have been healed.*

I was so excited to think about this and as I was pondering this this week, here's what I found or discovered. There are three parts of the fruit of the Spirit that tie into these three problems that we have of anger and sadness and anxiety. When we practice forgiveness we can move from anger to this sense of love inside our hearts. When we practice grateful heart, we can move from sadness to joy. And when we practice trusting God, we can give up that anxiety that's caused by situations and we can experience peace. When I saw that, I was just jumping up and down. I'm going yes, this is what God has called us to. This is what healing looks like in our lives. This is what He wants for me. This is what He wants for you.

So I would suggest that the fourth thing, this is one of the verses in the bottom, the one about joy. This is the verse in Isaiah. I was just having a lot of fun meditating on this verse this week. It says – *And provide for those who grieve in Zion—to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of joy instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair. They will be called oaks of righteousness, a planting of the Lord for the display of his splendor.*

See, I believe that the heart is a very fragile piece that can easily be damaged and hurt, that trauma can harden us unless we have spiritual resources that can provide for us this experience to be oaks, this strong tree, oaks of righteousness that God does for us. He does this healing inside of us that is just so powerful and something that we can greatly appreciate in our lives.

Each one of those verses I think are worth a study. In fact each of these columns are worth a study in our lives. But I'm trying to lay out the map in hopes that God may use this in a special way to bring you to a place where you're ready to receive the healing that He offers. God just enjoys working in our lives. He enjoys doing things inside of us. So the fourth idea here is this fruit of the Spirit idea is to allow the Holy Spirit to produce the fruit in our lives.

This is a very personal message, I'm sure for some of you, that you live with the pain and hurt every day. That the challenges that you experience are daily and you're looking for ways for solutions. What I'm suggesting here is that God offers some spiritual solutions that can equip you and empower you. God wants to heal that heart to make it a strong heart. Not a hard heart, but a strong heart so that you can move forward and be the person that God desires you to be. Let's stand and pray together.

[PRAYER] Lord, I pray for those who are in pain at the moment and those who maybe have somehow put away the pain, but this message from your word brings it back up again. I just pray that you would provide new resources, new tools to address that pain. Lord, help us to use the pain that we experience to bless others and to have compassion for other people and to care about others. I pray that you would help all of us to overcome, to have the victory that you want for us. Lord, give us that joy inside of us that just cannot be quenched, that bubbles up inside because we know you because of the things you're doing inside of our heart. We ask this in Jesus' name, amen.