

# Creation-Providence-Redemption - Part 5

by William MacDonald

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*The sermon explores the significance of Christ's life, death, and sacrifice, and how it demonstrates God's love and willingness to redeem us.*

**Duration:** 34:30

**Scripture:** Psalm 95:6, Matthew 18:12, Luke 23:33, John 4:24, John 20:29, Romans 8:11

**Topics:** "Redemption"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the wonder and significance of Jesus as both fully human and fully God. He encourages the audience to constantly remind themselves that Jesus, despite being perfectly human, was also God. The preacher highlights the loneliness and humility of Jesus' earthly life, where he walked among the people and experienced rejection. The sermon also emphasizes the purpose of Jesus' coming, which was to seek and save the lost. The preacher concludes by reading Luke 23:33, reminding the audience of the crucifixion of Jesus and the importance of the cross in their lives.

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## Transcript

Work so diligently behind the scenes. I guess the best thing to do would be to quote Ruth 2:12. The Lord recompense thy work and a full reward be given thee of the Lord God of Israel under whose wings thou art come to trust. This morning I'd just like to read a single verse of scripture.

There's enough in here for the meditation of a lifetime. Luke 23:33. Luke 23:33. And when they had come to the place called Calvary, there they crucified him. I'm just going to stop there.

When they had come to the place called Calvary, there they crucified him. Harold St. John said, the cross of Christ will never mean anything to you until it takes your breath away and becomes the most important thing in your life. The cross of Christ will never mean anything to you until it takes your breath away and becomes the most important thing in your life.

When I heard that, I thought, hmm, take your breath away. Breathless. Most important.

I said, okay, I'm going to go and read the gospels, and I'm going to look at those adjectives expressing amazement and at the superlatives that are found in the gospels. After all, you need words like that, don't you, to describe the person and work of the Savior. But I couldn't find the word amazing.

I couldn't find the word astonishing, astounding, awesome. That's a great word today, isn't it? Awesome. Awe-inspiring.

I thought, well, I'll look for some others. Breathtaking. Wasn't there.

Dazzling. Extraordinary. Fantastic.

Greatest. Couldn't find it. Apparently these words weren't in the vocabulary of the gospel writers.

Incredible. Magnificent. Marvelous.

Mind-boggling. Miraculous. I looked for the words remarkable, sensational, startling, staggering, stupendous.

Not there. Super. Superlative.

Surprising. They're not there. In other words, the most important person and the most important event in the history of the universe, and they're handled without superlatives or without adjectives really expressing amazement.

The Spirit of God handles them not the way a modern journalist would handle them. I, as a journalist, could get a hold of a story like that. He handles them with supreme simplicity.

And this is one of the marks of divine inspiration. And if you've never thought of that, let me quote a writer on the subject. The pen of the gospel writers is firmly held by the Spirit of God simply to record Christ's wondrous life without a single note of adoration, admiration, or even appreciation at the wonders that flowed from their pen.

Such is the marvel of the Word of God. I submit that it would be impossible for any pen not so restrained to write the life of such a person without constant expression of wonder and amazement at the character that it unfolds. But what was forbidden to them is granted to us.

And no restriction need be placed upon the expressions of our worship when Christ is its object. I like that. In fact, we ought to punctuate our worship with them, with that vocabulary that I read to you a little while ago.

Think, for instance, of the incarnation. It boggles the mind to think of the eternal Son of God coming down to this planet as a little baby. One of the less-known Christmas anthems says, Come see your God extended on the straw.

And that's exactly right. Come see your God extended on the straw. And Charles Wesley said, Our God contracted to a span, incomprehensibly made man.

And yet you look down at that baby there in the straw and in him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. It's really hard to take it in, isn't it? It's just hard to take it in. Why did he do it? He came down as a baby to grow to be a man so that as man he might give his life for you and for me.

Imagine God who fills the universe choosing to confine himself in a human body. It's marvelous when you stop. There I go, using those adjectives again.

The union of God and man is, in one person, is just more than our minds can take in. In him most perfectly expressed, the Father's glory shines. Of the full deity possessed, eternally divine, worthy, O Lamb of God, art thou that every knee to thee should bow.

I like to remind myself that his birth borrowed nothing of the glory of this world. I think when some of you had your first baby, you repapered the room and you got a lovely bassinet and all new little blankets. I mean, it was quite a scene of glory when that baby came home from the hospital, wasn't it? It wasn't anything like that with the Lord Jesus.

He was born in a cattle shed with a manger for his cradle. He held the highest place above, adored by all the sons of man. Yet such his self-denying love he laid aside his crown and came to seek the lost.

And at the cost of heavenly rank and earthly fame, he sought me. Blessed be his name. And we should never forget that he didn't have to do it.

He didn't have to do it. Sometimes we just lean back in our chairs and say, yes, it was very nice that he would come and die for me. It was astounding.

He didn't have to do that. He could have stayed in heaven in unperturbed bliss there and unperturbed fellowship with his father and the object of angelic worship. And he would have been just as much God as he had done it.

What an amazing thing that in all the universe, his delight should have been with the sons of men. It's really enough to cause sensory overload in each of us. But we've only begun in the catalog of marvels, largely unrecognized and certainly unappreciated.

He walked the lonely paths of this world. You know, I feel I need a hammer to be hitting my head all the time and reminding me it's God. It's God walking those lanes of Nazareth.

It's God rubbing shoulders with the people of Samaria. Because I forget he's so beautifully human as a man down here on earth. It's just hard to remember that it's the creator being pushed around by his creatures.

It's the architect of the universe being shoved aside. Absolutely amazing. Just think of the creator and the sustainer of the universe, the architect of creation.

And he could say, foxes of holes, birds of the air have nests. The son of man has nowhere to lay his head. When you read the Bible and you read that the disciples went to their home and Jesus went to the Mount of Olives.

Listen, it was God who slept there on the Mount of Olives, wet with the dew of heaven. Too easy to forget it, isn't it? Too easy to forget it. And yet, absolutely true.

He allowed himself to be jostled and pushed around and ridiculed and some thought he was crazy. Some thought he was an idiot. And I think I mentioned last week twice, I think I was reading in John 8 the other day, twice in the Gospel of John you find people saying to him, you have a demon.

How do you like that? Here's people whom his hands had bathed. And they turn on him and they say, you have a demon. I tell you, it's awesome to me just to see this all happening before the eyes of faith.

And yet, he was unperturbed by it all. He went around doing good and giving sight to the blind and hearing to the deaf and causing the lame to walk and restoring the limbs of the maimed and healing those who were oppressed by the devil. And yet, all of that didn't change the heart of man toward him.

He was in the world and the world was made by him. The world knew him not. He came unto his own and his own received him not.

Punctuated with a gas. Incredible as it seems, he was despised and rejected of men. A man who knew really what sorrow was like no other man has ever known it.

He came from his blessed throne salvation to bestow, but men made strange and none the long for Christ would know. But all my friend, my friend indeed, who at my need, his life did spend. His was the only beautiful, truly beautiful life ever lived upon this earth.

He never sinned. He never had an evil thought. He never violated his conscience.

He never spoke an idle word. And this is exactly why men didn't want him around. His life was too convicting.

You know, I used to think it must have been a wonderful thing to be with the Lord Jesus when he was here and be one of the disciples, you know, and you go walking along and everything is so lovely and you hear the swish of their long garments and all. I tell you, I think it was a terribly convicting thing to be with him. I think it was being like being dipped in hot oil, a perfect life like that.

And me walking with him. Don't tell me, don't tell me that would be comfortable. His life revealed us exactly as we are.

That was the true light which lightens every man coming into the world, shows him up for what he is. That's not very comfortable. Yeah, what a wonderful story of that life lived here on earth.

Thoughts of his sojourn in this veil of tears, the tale of love unfolded in those years of sinless suffering and patient grace. We love again and yet again to trace the Lord Jesus knew loneliness in a way that you and I could never know it. There were things in his life that nobody could enter into.

He taught the disciples to pray, but he never prayed with them. There were emotions and experiences in his life that none of the disciples could ever enter into. You know, the more holy a person is, the more repulsive sin is.

And you take an elegant lady, a lady of character, and you take her down to a skid row mission. Think of what it was like for the Lord Jesus to be here on earth. It was a lonely path he trod from every human soul apart, known only to himself and God with all the grief that filled his heart.

Yet from the track, he turned not back to where I lay in sin and shame. He found me blessed be his name. He didn't come on a search and destroy mission.

Actually, he would have been completely justified if he had done that. But that wasn't his purpose in coming. He came to seek and to save that which was lost.

Imagine God coming down into the world to seek and to save that which was lost. It leaves me spellbound. To think of him, the good shepherd, ninety and nine in the fold, and he goes out over the desert to seek

that one sheep that was lost.

And as we sit here this morning, I think each of us can say who that sheep was. It was I. And you can say it was I too. What was his reward for that life of unselfish service to others? Well, he was hounded by men who were little more than snarling dogs.

Pardon me, that's what they were. He was betrayed by one of his close friends. He could say my own familiar friend has lifted up his heel against him.

He was denied by one of those who was closest to him, denied three times with odes and curses. He was arrested. I can't believe it.

I can't believe it. They came out with ropes and staves to take him. He hadn't done anything wrong.

I mean, daily he had taught in the temple, and there was no uprising against him then. And now they come out as if he's a felon of the first degree, with all those ropes and staves and all the rest to take him to arrest him. Imagine.

And who is it? It's the one who gave them breath. It's the one who designed their hands that are now used to capture the Son of God. And we need that voice saying to us all the time, who is it? Who is it describing? The Lord of life and glory.

Then he was tried. What a farce. Imagine, the judge.

The judge of all mankind. And he's taken and tried by the guilty. What a comedy of errors, huh? Ridiculous.

That's the way it was. And he opened not his mouth. That is a lamb to the slaughter.

The sheep before her shearers is dumb. So he opened not his mouth. Condemned.

Condemned. Innocent, yet condemned. Pilate had to say repeatedly, I can't find any fault in this man.

And he delivers him over to be scourged. Talk about justice. Talk about justice.

And who is it? It's the sovereign of the universe. That's who it is. It's one who is both God and man in one person.

Dear friends, if you're not breathless, it's because you've forgotten who we're talking about. You think he was just another man like ourselves. But he was not a mere man.

He was the maker, the Lord of life and glory. Poet said, the maker of the universe. I like that.

The maker of the universe as man for man was made a curse. The claims of law which he had made unto the uttermost he paid. And then the astounding climax.

We've already sung about it this morning. The astounding climax. He died.

God died? Charles Wesley. I love those lines of Charles Wesley. 'Tis mystery all.

The immortal dies. Who can explore his strange designs? You know, immortal means not subject to death. What a paradox.

There he is hanging on the cross of shame. I look up and I see my God. And it's nothing less than that.

The God-man hangs between heaven and earth. An unfathomable paradox. The source of all life.

Take a breath. It's the one who gave us that breath that's dying there on the cross of Calvary. Not subject to death.

He dies on that shameful. I tell you, the angels must have gasped when they looked down and saw what was happening. Never any doubt in their mind who he was.

They knew him from ages past and they saw him leaving the glory of heaven, laying aside, emptying himself of all of that position of equality with God. Not person, position of equality with God. And they saw him taking that tremendous scoop, coming down to this speck of cosmic dust.

And dear friends, if this world, if this earth is a speck of cosmic dust, just think how big you and I are. That's what he did. He came down.

The angel watched him do it. And now they see him uplifted by creatures whom his hands had made. They see him dying there on that cross of shame.

I bow at his feet. Lost in wonder, love, and praise. I think J. Sidlow Baxter captured something of the amazement of it all.

He said, think of the fact that he died. That in itself is a strange marvel. Remember, he's God the Son.

He had to become human in order to be capable of death. I like this. It's a mysterious wonder that God the Son could die, still more than he should die, still more than he would die, still more than he did die.

Let me say that again. It's a mysterious wonder that God the Son could die, still more than he should die, still more than he would die, and most of all, that he did die. His death was unique, just like his birth and his life were unique.

I said that his birth borrowed none of the glory of this world, neither did his death. I was lying in bed last night thinking of death today, and how the body is placed in a, well first of all, it's laid out there in the funeral home, and it's in a casket with shiny metal and all kinds of frills inside the casket, you know, the glory of death. There was none of that connected with his death, and there was no other death like it.

No man took his life from him. He said, I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it up again. It was a unique death.

Even nature seemed to react to the enormous significance of what was taking place there at Calvary. We sang it, well might the sun in darkness hide and shut his glories in, when Christ the mighty maker died, the man, his creature of sin. The cross of Christ will never mean anything to you until it leaves you breathless and becomes the most important thing in your life.

And it was a horrible death, if you don't mind my saying so. Every torture and indignity that the mind of man could conceive was heaped upon him. Imagine that.

Who? God. That precious body was beaten beyond recognition, bruised and pierced. They covered his face with their filthy spit.

Who? God. Their God. They plucked the hairs from his cheek, and prophetically he says that his back was plowed like a plowed field.

Can't you see the furrows in his back? And the crowd stood there, and do you know what they thought? They thought, hmm, he must have sinned terribly to be suffering like this. They thought him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgression.

He was bruised for our iniquities. The chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed. It wasn't just the physical sufferings.

Worse than the physical sufferings were his sufferings at the hand of God. When God took all the guilt of my sins and your sins, and all the sins of the world, and he laid it on him there. None of the ransomed ever knew how deep were the waters crossed, or how dark was the night that the Lord passed through.

There he found the sheep that was lost. Well might we sing, oh, make me understand it. Help me to take it in, what it meant to thee, the Holy One, to bear away my sin.

Even as we talk, we're apt to forget who it was who was suffering there on the cross. It was not a mere man, but the brightness of God's glory, and the express image of his person. It was the Jehovah of the Old Testament, the one whom Isaiah called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Prince of Peace, the Father of Eternity.

He's hanging there on the cross. And of course what makes it most staggering of all is that he was dying there for me. Dying there for you.

Not for good people, but for outrageous sinners. Christ died for the ungodly. It blows me away.

For his enemies. Amazing grace. No truer words were ever spoken.

Amazing grace that the Creator would die for the people whom his hands had made, and who had turned out to be no good. Many hymn writers try to capture the wonder of it all. It's interesting to me that they abandon prose and resort to poetry in order to capture it.

But was it for me? For me alone, the Savior left his dazzling throne, the dazzling splendor of the sky. Was it for me he came to die? It was for me. Yes, all for me.

Oh, love of God, so rich, so free. Oh, wondrous love, I'll shout and sing. He died for me, my Lord and King.

I tell you, it passes understanding that he should have had you and me in mind two thousand years ago, when he hung upon that cross of wood. Now, how appropriate it was that we should sing. And when I think that God, his Son not sparing, sent him to die, I scarce can take it in.

That on the cross my burden gladly bearing, he bled and died to take away my sin. Then sings my soul, my Savior God to thee, how great thou art, how great. And I want to tell you something, dear friends, this morning.

If you'll think about it for a minute, you'll have to agree that the price he paid was too much. You and I weren't worth it. We weren't worth it.

The God of sons should have ever come down and die as a substitute for us and pay the price of his own precious blood. The price was too high. We're not redeemed with corruptible things such as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ as of a lamb without spot and without blemish.

But you know that should make us worshipers for all eternity, shouldn't it? I tell you, should make us worshipers for all eternity. We should be overcome with gratitude, dumbfounded with thanksgiving. I'm telling you, the poet hit it right on the head when he said, wonder of wonders, vast surprise.

Can greater wonder be that he who built the starry sky once bled and died for me. Amazing, startling sacrifice. Here are the adjectives coming in.

Amazing, startling sacrifice, confounding all our thoughts. Stupendous, staggering purchase price, which our redemption bought. Another poet struggles with a thought.

Oh, can it be? Upon a tree, my savior died for me. My heart is filled. My soul is thrilled to think he died.

Oh, it's wonderful. So very wonderful that he should care for me enough to die for me. Oh, it is wonderful.

Wonderful to me. Here might I stay and sing no story so divine. Never was love dear king.

Never was grief like thine. This is my friend in whose sweet praise I all my days could gladly spend. But we must move on to the tomb.

Picture the loving hands of Joseph of Arimathea taking that precious lifeless body and laying it in his own new stone carved sepulchre. Makes me think of an experience I had years ago, some years ago when one of our fellows was stricken with melanoma and died and I got a call at three o'clock in the morning that he had passed. They'd gone in to see the king in his beauty.

And I rushed over to the house to be with his young widow. And we waited there until the undertakers came. And I'll never forget an emotion that went through my soul as they were wheeling out the body.

I knew that he was with the Lord. I knew the body was just the shell, just the house in which he had lived. But I wanted to say to the undertaker, you take good care of that precious body.

I didn't say it, but I felt it. And I wondered if that went through Joseph's mind. As he handled the body of the Lord Jesus.

I wonder if he realized it was the body of God. Makes me think of another experience I had years ago up in Portland where an eminent servant of the Lord had died and the family had gathered. But one daughter had to travel across the country and she came late.

And she wanted to get out in the funeral home. And so I said, well, I would go down with her. And when we went in and she just moved forward to the casket and she stood there by the casket looking down on the body of her dear father.

And she paid the most eloquent tribute I've ever heard. She looked at his hands and she said, Daddy, she said, I think of those hands and all their loving work for us and for all the people of God. Your lips now silent were constantly sounding out the gospel and ministering God's word.

Your eyes were full of compassion looking for people whom you could help. And there by the casket of her father she paid a most eloquent tribute to a great man of God. Maybe something like that went through the mind of Joseph of Arimathea as he prepared the Savior's body for burial.

It seems almost ironical that the one who had known nothing but poverty in his life is buried in a rich man's tomb. They made his grave with the wicked, but he was with the rich in his death. They planned to throw that body down the valley of Gehinnom where it would be either consumed by fire or eaten by the foxes.

But God said, no, you've done enough. God permitted him to be his body to be buried there in Joseph's new tomb. He wasn't in the tomb, of course, just his body.

He was in paradise with that thief to whom he had said today, thou shalt be with me in paradise. And then, of course, on that Lord's Day morning his spirit was reunited with that body. Death could not keep his praise.

Jesus, my Savior, he tore the bonds away. Jesus, my Lord. What we must do is when we go to the gospel narratives and we read about the wondrous life, death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus, we must constantly be asking ourselves, who was it? And just remember, it wasn't a man like ourselves, although he was perfectly human.

The wonder of it all. May the wonder of it all never leave us, not even for an instant. And may we worship him in spirit and in truth.

Our brother is going to lead us in a closing hymn and then we'll look to the Lord in prayer.

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