

Dallas Area Conference 1993-07

by William MacDonald

William MacDonald emphasizes the profound significance of Christ's life, death, and resurrection, urging believers to recognize the depth of His love and sacrifice for humanity.

Duration: 38:55

Scripture: Psalm 147:4, Isaiah 53:5, Matthew 6:33, Luke 23:33, John 10:11, Romans 8:29, Revelation 21:23

Topics: "Conference"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker reflects on the sacrifices and suffering of Jesus Christ for the salvation of humanity. Despite the immense challenges and betrayals he faced, Jesus remained steadfast in his mission to seek and save the lost. The speaker emphasizes the lack of adoration and appreciation shown by those who witnessed Jesus' miracles and wonders. However, he highlights that as believers, we have the privilege to freely express our worship and awe for Christ. The sermon also touches on the triumphant ascension of Jesus into heaven and the anticipation of his glorious return.

Transcript

I'd just like a very short verse of scripture to begin with. It's in Luke chapter 23 and verse 33. Luke chapter 23 and verse 33.

And when they had come to the place called Calvary, there they crucified him. And the criminals, one on the right hand and the other on the left, there they crucified him. A rather prosaic statement of one of the most wonderful things that has ever happened in the history of humanity.

And the crucial word, the crucial word is him. There they crucified him. Harold St. John said, the cross will never mean anything to you until it takes your breath away and becomes the most important thing in your life.

Think of that. The cross will never mean anything to you until it takes your breath away and becomes the most important thing in your life. When I read that, it made me go back to the Gospels and start to search them.

And I started searching through the Gospels for adjectives and superlatives in connection with the wonderful life and ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ. And you know, I couldn't find those words. I couldn't find the word amazing, astonishing, astounding, awesome.

That's a great word today, isn't it? Our awesome God. Awe-inspiring, breathtaking, dazzling, extraordinary. I looked for those words in the Gospels.

I couldn't find them. Fantastic. Greatest.

Incredible. Magnificent. They all apply, but they're not in the Gospels.

Marvelous. Mind-boggling. Miraculous.

Remarkable. Sensational. Stupendous.

Super. Superlative. The most wonderful events in all the history of the world, and yet they're described with tremendous restraint by the Spirit of God.

He doesn't describe them the way a modern journalist would, does he? But with extreme simplicity. And this, of course, is to me one of the great marks of divine inspiration. No mere man would ever do that.

A. T. Schofield said it very well. He said, 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. It's beautiful, isn't it? Not a single word of adoration, admiration, or even appreciation at the marvelous wonders that flowed from their pen.

Such is the marvel of the word. He said, I would submit that it would be impossible for any pen not so restrained to write the story of such a life 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 the subject.

And that's thrilled my soul. In the Gospels you have that wonderful story told. No superlatives.

We're supposed to supply them. In our daily life, in our worship of the Lord Jesus, and in our speaking of him, it's up to us to add the rousement, isn't it? And I'd like to think of some of those events in the life of the Lord Jesus, and remember the crucial word in Christ the Lord. Think, for instance, of the incarnation.

It boggles my mind to think of the eternal Son of God leaving the glories of heaven, untarnished fellowship with God his Father, and coming down to this planet Earth. This planet Earth seems pretty important to us, but as far as the universe is concerned, it's just a speck of cosmic dust. That's really all it is.

Hardly worthy of the mention. And to think of all that vast universe where there are so many stars, as there are grains of sand on all the seashores of the world, and it was to Earth he came, his delights were with the sons of men. I think if we really realized it, it would sweep us off our feet in amazement.

If we really realized all that was involved in that. Think of that baby there in the manger, a manger, born in a cattle shed, cradled in a manger, and yet I look down at that baby and I say, in him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. Now, you tell me that isn't stupendous.

You tell me that isn't amazing. You tell me that that is not superlative. What condescension that he would take upon himself a human body, what, so that as man he could die for men.

It's really too much, isn't it? Beside he threw his most divine array, and veiled his Godhead in a garb of clay, and in that robe ditched wondrous love display, restoring what he never took away. Makes me say, I

love you, Lord Jesus, that you would ever do that to me. The one who fills the universe, confines himself in a human body.

Just think of the union of God and man in one person. More than my poor, feeble mind can take in. I thank God for our hymns.

In thee most perfectly expressed, that father's glory shine, of the full deity possessed, eternally divine, worthy, O Lamb of God, art thou, that every knee to thee should bow. I love to remember that his birth lacked any of the glory that often accompanies a birth down here, you know. It's a great event when a baby is born, and the house is decorated, the room is painted, you know, and the layeth and everything.

It's marvelous, isn't it? The Lord Jesus didn't have anything like that. Born in more humble circumstances than anybody in this room today. The crucial word is him.

He held the highest place above, adored by all the sons of flame, yet such his self-denying love he laid aside his crown and came to seek the lost. At the cost of heavenly rank and earthly fame, he sought me. Blessed be his name.

And when we think of this, we have to remember he didn't have to do it. Sometimes we have the idea, well, it's a jolly good thing that he did it, you know, that type of thing. He didn't have to do it.

He could have stayed in heaven in that undisturbed fellowship with his father and the object of angelic worship. Just think of the host of holy angels in heaven worshipping him incessantly in that eternity past. What an amazing thing that in all this universe, his delight should have been with us.

It causes sensory overload with me when I think of it. But we've only begun in the catalog of marvels. Just think, going through this world largely unrecognized and unappreciated.

Isn't that amazing? The son of God, the creator and architect of the universe, and he's walking in Nazareth. Nobody thinks anything of it. It's just too much.

A life of poverty. He was rich beyond all calculation, to say foxes of holes and birds of the air. But the son of man is not rare, so lay his head.

Poverty. Never mentioned that the Lord Jesus had a coin on his person, is it? Poverty. I love what Denny said.

He said the only perfect life ever lived on this earth, and he left nothing but the clothes that he wore. The only perfect life ever lived on this earth, and he left nothing but the clothes that he wore. He allowed himself to be jostled, to be pushed around, to be ridiculed.

Some thought he was crazy. His own family, this really hurts me when I think of it, his own family thought he was an idiot, and he tried to take him away. Who was the idiot? That question lingers in our mind.

And yet, unperturbed by it all, he went about doing good. He went around giving sight to the blind, and hearing to the deaf, and causing the lame to jump, to leap for joy, casting out demons, healing all of those who were oppressed by the devil, and yet it didn't change the attitude of men toward him. Incredible as it seemed, he was despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows, who knew what grief was, like you and I will never know it.

He came from his blessed throne, salvation to bestow, but men made strange, and none the longed for Christ would know. But, oh my friend, my friend indeed, who at my need is life to spend. It's so important for us, when we think of this, to remember who we're talking about.

We have a tendency to think he was just another man, another person, like ourselves, but we forget the glory of this person. Only beautiful life, really, the only perfectly beautiful life that was ever lived on this earth, and never sinned, never had an evil thought, never had a regret over something he hadn't done or had done, never came to the end of the day having spoken an idle word. No doubt this is why men didn't like him.

His life showed us up for what we really were. That was the true light which lightens every man that comes into the world. It shines its light so vividly upon us that we realize what depraved creatures.

The Lord Jesus' life revealed us exactly as we are, and what a wonderful life it was. 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 or I will never be able to know it.

Amazing, isn't it? None of the disciples could enter into many of the emotions and experiences that he was going through. 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. The Lord Jesus didn't come on a search and destroy mission.

He came to seek and to save that which was lost. He would have been completely justified if he had come on a search and destroy mission. He didn't do it.

That leaves me spellbound. I think of him, the good shepherd, wandering over the mountains, thunder-ridden to find the sheep that was lost. And I know who that sheep was, don't you? None of the ransomed ever knew how deep were the waters crossed or how dark was the night that the Lord passed through where he found the sheep that was lost.

And what was his reward for that life of unselfish service to others? He was hounded by men who were little more than snarling dogs. Betrayed by a close friend for 30 pieces of silver. That hurts.

Denied by one of his closest disciples three times with oaths and curses. Arrested, tried, condemned, bruised and beaten, and then nailed to a felon's cross. And they covered his face with their filthy spit.

Remember who we're talking about. The one who flung the stars into space. The one who upholds the universe by the word of his power.

Dear friends, if you're not breathless, it means you just don't understand. You just haven't, you've forgotten who we're talking about. Not a mere man, but the Lord of life and glory.

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 taped. And then the astounding climact died.

Sometimes we take it too much for granted. The God-man hangs there between heaven and earth as if worthy of neither. What a tremendous paradox.

The immortal died. Charles Wesley said it so well in that beautiful hymn, didn't he? Tis mystery all. The immortal died.

Who can explore his strange design? It's just an unfathomable paradox. How can the source of all life die? I don't know, but he did. That whole scene is shrouded in the deepest mystery.

I tell you, the angels must have gasped that day when they looked down and saw what was happening, that place outside Jerusalem, when he poured out his life so willingly for you and for me. I bow at his feet, lost in wonder, love and praise. I love you for wearing the thorns on your brow.

Be thou who art worthy, Lord Jesus. J. Sidlow Baxter said, think of the fact that he died. That in itself is a strange marvel.

Remember, he was God the Son. He had to become human in order to be even capable of death. I like this.

It's a mysterious wonder that God the Son could die, still more that he should die, still more that he would die, and most of all that he did die. Absolutely amazing. His death was unique, just as his birth and life were.

And it was unattended by glory, just as his birth had no glory connected with it. As far as outward display was concerned, neither did his death. There was no other death like it.

Nobody took his life from him. He laid it down himself. Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit.

Even nature seemed to be convulsed that was happening there at the cross. Well might the sun in darkness hide and shut his glories in when Christ, the mighty maker, died for man, his creature's sin. It was a horrible death.

Horrible death. Every torture and indignity that the mind of man could conceive was poured out upon him there. Man crucifying his creator.

That precious body was beaten beyond recognition. The back plowed with furrows, bruised and pierced. They plucked the hair from his cheeks.

His back plowed. And the crowd stood there and thought, well he must have sinned greatly to be suffering so greatly. But he was wounded for our transgression.

He was bruised for our iniquities. The chastisement of our peace was upon him. It was his stripes.

We are healed. But it wasn't just a physical suffering. It was what he was enduring at the hands of God.

During those hours on the cross, he was exploring the sea of God's wrath. Awful thing is it to be forsaken by God. My God, my God, buyeth down forsaken me.

He could say, deep calleth unto deepeth the noise of thy waters, for all thy waves and billows are gone over me. God brought all the waters of judgment together there at Calvary. They all burst on his flexed head.

Well might we say, oh make me understand it. Help me to take it in. But it meant to be the holy one to bear away my sin.

And even as we talk, we are apt to forget who it is we are speaking about. This we must not do. Not a mere man.

The brightness of God's glory and the express image of his person. No gospel like this gospel, no story so divine. It was Jehovah of the Old Testament.

It was the Alpha and Omega of God, who was wonderful counselor, Prince of Peace, the Father of Eternity, dying at the cross of shame. You know what makes it so staggering for me is he was dying there for me. Dying there for me.

Dying there for you. Not for good people, for outrageous sinners. Not for his friends, but for his enemies.

Amazing grace. Isn't it strange that that hymn, Amazing Grace, is known by secular men today? But they like it. At one time it was the top of a hit tune, Save the Wretch Like Me.

I once was lost, but now I'm found, was blind, but now I see. Amazing thing that the Lord Jesus would love creatures whom his hands had created so much, and they turned out to be no good, and yet he would die for them. Just the same.

Was it for me? For me alone the Savior left his glorious throne, the dazzling splendors 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.

Dear friends, you can never be too enthusiastic about Jesus. Be a fanatic for Christ. It's perfectly all right, perfectly all right.

It just seems to pass understanding that two thousand years ago he should have had you and me in mind when he expired there on the curse of three. But I think if you and I are going to be honest today, we have to say the price he paid was too much. We weren't worth it, but he loved us, loved us unto death.

But we must move on to the tomb. We don't want to leave the Lord Jesus on the cross, do we? Picture the loving hands of Joseph of Arimathea, taking that body down from the cross and preparing it for burial. The precious, lifeless body of the Savior, laying it in his own tomb, carved out of stone.

I was thinking about Joseph the other day, and I was reminded of an experience I had a few years ago with one of the men in our intern program. He had melanoma, and we knew that the Lord was going to call him home. He was asking the Lord to call him home.

I got a call at three o'clock in the morning that he had slipped away to be with the Lord, and I went over there. We just sat there and talked with the family until the undertakers came. It was a strange experience for me.

When they came and they put his body in that gurney, they were wheeling it up. I wanted to say to him, you take good care of that precious, lifeless body. I knew that Rob wasn't there.

I knew he was with the Lord. It's just that when we associate, we think in terms of the human body, and that was the emotion that went through my soul. I wonder if Joseph didn't have something like that going through his mind.

Whose body was it that he took down from the cross? It was the body of the one who the whole world. It was those hands that formed me while I was in my mother's womb. Same hands that positioned the stars in the sky, with those feet soon to be bound with linen that wandered as a stranger in the world hands had made.

Those eyes now closed in death that looked upon our lost, helpless condition and moved him to seek and to save us. Reminds me of another experience I had important years ago where a dear servant of the Lord went home to be with the Lord. One of his daughters lived at a distant place and was kind of late in coming.

When she arrived at the house, she wanted to go to the funeral home. And so I offered to go down with her to the home. His body, of course, was laid out in the casket.

He was a man of the word, and in the casket the Bible was like this, with his hands clasped over. It was very, very touching. And dear Jane went up to the casket.

I had to stand back. It was too much. And she started talking.

She knew her father wasn't there, but I never heard a more eloquent tribute to a father than Jane Dave that day. She held his right hand and she started to speak to him as it were. She said, Daddy, I think of those hands and all of the loving, hard work you did for us and for all the people of God.

And she said, Your lips now silenced in death. And she said how they love to call sinners to the Savior and to encourage the people of God. Your eyes were eyes of compassion, always looking for people that you could help.

I tell you, it was really too much. Standing by the casket of her father, she paid the most eloquent tribute to a true man of God. I wonder what emotions went through Joseph's body as he saw the print of the nails and the hands and feet and the scars of the crown of thorns on his brow.

Maybe he did something like that as he prepared the body of the Savior for burial. It seems almost ironical, doesn't it, that he who knew nothing but poverty in this life should be buried with the rich. Isaiah had predicted it 700 years before.

They made his grave with the wicked, but he was with the rich in his death. They had planned to throw his body down the valley of Hinnom, you know, where he either devoured by foxes or consumed by perpetual fires. God said, I'll have the last word.

But he was with the rich in his death. The Lord Jesus, the creator of the universe, his body lying in the tomb. But, of course, he wasn't in the tomb, because he had said to that dying thief, Today thou shalt be with me in paradise.

And then that Lord's Day morning, when his spirit and soul were reunited with his body, a body now glorified. Death could not hold him in prayer. Jesus, my Savior, he tore the bonds away.

Jesus, my Lord. I want to tell you, it was an awesome display of power, that Lord's Day morning, because I believe all the hosts of hell were there, encamped by that tomb. Make sure he would never rise.

You read about it in Psalm 18. You hear the cry of the Savior going up to God his Father, and then you see God reaching down and unleashing a torrent of thunder and fireballs, and the enemy fleeing in terror,

and then God reaching down, raising his lovely son from the tomb. The earth is convulsed at the approach of God, and soon we have an empty tomb.

Hallelujah. Christ is risen. He rose the first one in history to rise to die no more.

He rose the first one in history to rise in a glorified body. And now we know that God the Father is completely satisfied with the work of his beloved Son on the cross. The resurrection is God's seal of approval for the work of Calvary.

The debt has been paid. I see Christ in glory today, and I know the debt of my sin has been paid. He paid the penalty.

God said, absolutely satisfactory payment. Those three days were the center of all eternity, really. It seems eternity past and eternity future just converged on those three days.

Marvelous, really. The hymn says, center of two eternities, which look with rapt adoring eyes onward and back to thee. There is a work that could be done in three days, and yet its effects last forever.

Then, of course, there was the Lord's triumphant ascension into heaven. What a wonderful time that was to see him going up through the realm of principalities and powers and spiritual wickedness in high places. A prince and a savior going back home again.

I tell you, all the evil influences of the world must have gnashed their teeth in anger to see him go. Having disarmed principalities and powers, Paul says he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them. Then to welcome home, the psalmist said, lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lift up.

You have a lasting glory, and the king of glory shall enter in. The trumpets are all blaring. I tell you, and then there's a watchman there, the ramparts of glory.

Who is the king? Who is the king of glory? The Lord, strong and mighty. The Lord, mighty in battle. The Lord of hosts.

He is the king of glory. What a wonderful time when our blessed Redeemers recede back into heaven. What a welcome in the ivory palaces.

How glad the Father must have rejoiced to see the son of his love having come down to planet earth to work out this wonderful scheme of salvation, the Calvary tree that brought forth more fruit for God than anything could have ever done. Think of the Old Testament saints looking on the Lord Jesus and seeing the prince of Calvary upon him. Think of the angelic hosts in heaven gazing upon him, shaking their heads in absolute wonder.

The vaults of heaven filled with hymns of adoration. I want to tell you it was a scene of unutterable magnificence and brilliance when he went back to heaven. When every knee in heaven is bending to the Lamb for sinners slain, every heart and voice is swelling worthy of the Lamb.

Dear friends, he is coming again. Just think of that. If you are here today, saved by the grace of God, you are going to see him.

It could be at any moment. How our hearts long for that moment when we will hear the shout, the voices of the archangel, the trump of God, and we will look up to him. Ever think what it will be like that first glimpse

of him? It will be wonderful.

Listen, if that much joy were poured into us now, we would burst. Our bodies, as they are constituted now, just couldn't take it. A joy of meeting him in the air.

Amazing, thrilling, marvelous. Pull out all the adjectives. Pull out all the superlatives.

That's what it will be like when we will meet him. How our full hearts will praise him for his mercy, love, and grace that prepares for us a mansion in the skies. I think Darby's hymn is really marvelous.

And is it so, I shall be like thy son? Is this the grace that he for me has won? Father of glories, thought beyond all thought, in glory to his own blessed likeness, God. We've been talking about the wonder of God invading human history to provide salvation and glory for rebel mankind. I tell you, if it doesn't take away your breath, nothing ever will.

Nothing ever will. Let me read you what Spurgeon says, so good. Lord Jesus, your power, your majesty, and your immutability make up such a man, or rather a God-man, as neither heaven nor earth have seen elsewhere.

Your infancy, your eternity, your sufferings, your triumphs, your deaths, and immutability are all woven in one gorgeous tapestry. Without theme or rent, you are music without discord. As all colors blend in one resplendent rainbow, so all the glories of heaven and earth meet in you.

I like that. Let me read it again. As all colors blend in one resplendent rainbow, so all the glories of heaven and earth meet in you and unite so wondrously that there's none like you in all things.

You've been anointed with the holy oil of myrrh and cashew, which your God has reserved for you alone. As for your fragrance, it's full of holy perfume, the like of which none can mingle, even with the art of the apothecary. Each spice is fragrant, but the compound... Let me just close with dear brother St. John's statement.

The cross of the Lord Jesus Christ will never mean anything to you until it takes your breath away and becomes the most important thing in your life. Let's be worshipers more than we've ever been before. God is seeking worshipers, and the Father seeks such a worshiper, and we've certainly got plenty for which to worship.

The Lord bless us all.

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