

# Sermon Text for August 21, 2016

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John 11:32-37, Genesis 42:18-25

## ***Why did Jesus Do What he Did?"***

The Olympics are almost over. I think this will mark the 3<sup>rd</sup> week in a row that I have a reference to the Olympics. Who has been your favorite crier in the Olympics? I like the two Brazilian guys who won silver and gold on the floor exercise. Maybe you liked something more homegrown where you have the American winning the 100m swim. Or how about...or the ...

In our first Scripture we hear about Jesus Christ, the living water, who weeps in the shortest verse in Scripture, because of his love and compassion for Mary and Martha and his disciples, the people he loves, his family. He weeps because they don't fully hear and understand who he is. Likewise in Genesis today we find Joseph who weeps out of compassion and love when he hears his brothers say that because they had not listened to God they now find themselves in trouble. Why did Jesus do what he did? Because we did not understand what it meant to be a child of God. God had shown us His way time and time again and yet we do not listen and we suffer for it and so we are separated from God.

God calls us as Christians to listen and obey the voice of God that comes from Scriptures, that come from these Sunday experiences as well, that even come from the many voices that lead us to understand our duty before God. Let us hear the Word of God and understand why Jesus did what he did.

There are so many theories and ideas as to why did Jesus have to die, on a cross, suffer and be humiliated the way he was, the fancy terms are theories of atonement. 1) Some say that a price had to be paid for our sin, my question to that is who demands that this price be paid. Is it God who will not be happy unless this price is paid that he requires, and why does he require a price? 2) Jesus did what he did because in his death and resurrection he had to win over Satan, a type of Christ the Victor who conquers death and thereby wins a cosmic battle over death. 3) Or did he do what he did just to give us an example of what it means to live on this earth as a child of God and so gave us a good example for us to follow.

These are all good reasons, they all have elements of truth in them for explaining to us why Jesus did what he did. But Scripture tells us that because of our sin, our

historical and constant turning away from God, we've created a distance between us that only Christ in his death could close and draw us together. You know in Genesis we have a great parallel between what Jesus does for us and what Joseph does for his brothers. These two stories are brought together by this single act of a grown man doing that which we have always heard is wrong, but which I say is not only right but it is absolutely crucial for us grown men to do and that is, two grown men crying. Whoever said grown men don't cry never read Scripture and seen the likes of Joseph and Jesus. I'm not saying this just because I'm a softy, I know I'm a softy, but there is something to be said about the emotion that the people in Scripture do show. Let's look at the Genesis account to try to understand why Jesus did what he did.

Remember, the brothers don't know that this right hand man of Pharaoh is in fact their long lost brother Joseph. He is speaking through an interpreter so all they know he doesn't understand a word they say unless the interpreter lets him know. The brothers are called out of the cell and are given by Joseph an ultimatum. Joseph's demand is that one of the brothers stays while the others go back and bring Benjamin back. If they do this then this will prove that they are not spies. The brothers comply and you get the feeling that they don't think this is too harsh a request. In fact the brothers get together and say that this is basically what they deserve. They say, we are now paying the price for what we did to Joseph, God rest his soul. We knew it was wrong when we did it, in fact he even pleaded with us, but because we did not listen, we are now paying the price.

Part of this self-indictment is that they realize on their own, granted after the fact, but they are the ones who recognize that they did not listen to God. If they had only listened things would have been fine. We all hear that hindsight is 20/20 but one of the reasons that we have hindsight is so that we can learn in the future when a similar situation arises.

These brothers really represent us, humanity. How often do we say, Oh if we had only listened, how often are we able to look back and correct our mistakes. But let's be honest. We actually often do face the same situations and for some reason we think that if we do the same thing, disobey God, follow our own desires despite God's warnings, we'll get a different result. I've said this before, the true sign of insanity is that we do the same thing over and over again expecting a different result. How many of you continue to battle insanity as I do? Why don't we learn? Well the brothers are not about to let another mistake happen.

Reuben, one of the brothers, remember he is the one who spoke up and really saved Joseph's life by selling him off instead of killing him, well he speaks up again. This time he says to his brothers, I told you it was a bad idea back then but you all didn't listen to me. Don't you love those who come after the fact and say I told you so. Well, Reuben is like the prophets, the one speaking God's word and reminding us of what is going to happen and when it does eventually happen they can come back and say, I told you so. I hope that Sunday in worship also serves as that type of reminder, as a time that we are reminded of our insanity and shown a way to go forward.

It is those who remind us that if you do not allow yourself to commit your life to Christ, to live a disciplined life in his freedom then you will suffer in the long run because God will be a stranger to you and you will be a stranger to God. Finally we see Joseph who even though he speaks through an interpreter understands what the brothers are saying. He understands that they recognize that they did not listen to God, that they were in the wrong, and that they deserve any punishment that they get. Joseph could very easily demand their life, after all they had tried to eliminate him. But he knows that their confession amongst themselves is sincere. They knew and they admitted that they did not listen, but then they are repentant, sorrowful. Sometimes it takes being challenged and called out to make you listen and pay attention. But this was genuine repentance.

Joseph weeps because he already paid the price that his brothers made him pay. He was the one who truly suffered, but he knows that he is the one who is ready to receive his family, and forgive them, and love them. Only Joseph was able to make this reconciliation happen.

For some reason this week I couldn't help but find myself thinking about the many, many holidays that we have that are directly tied up to war. Why can't we have a world peace day? A day that we get together and reconcile and embrace each other. I know. Sounds way too impractical and unrealistic. A day that the North Koreans embrace the South Koreans. A day that the Japanese embrace the Chinese. A day that the Russians embrace the Georgians. A Day that the Americans embrace the Iranians. Even if it is just a symbol, let it be a powerful one. Instead of tanks rolling down the street we would have music of our cultures. Instead of soldiers marching in a row we would have mothers and their children. What an insane idea, crazy, it would never happen. But that's the kingdom of God, isn't it?

Why did Jesus have to live a life of sacrifice, ultimately die a painful and tortured death? Well, because quite honestly we did not listen. We still kill our family and then celebrate when it stops. Jesus weeps, like Joseph, in John because the people just did not understand who he was in spite of the fact that he had told them repeatedly that he was the Son of God. Jesus weeps because he has compassion and love for them.

But we find ourselves in a position where we have to recognize that we haven't listened to God's voice in our lives. Selective hearing doesn't just apply to spouses but also to our relationships with God. We feel that we can pick and choose and pursue what we want when we want, listen to God if it matches our understanding of where we want to go in life or else God is tuned out.

But the biggest step we have to make is to be able to say, I did not and I am not listening. Sometimes it takes an event like the brothers of Joseph went through. We all come to that point of recognizing our need of God. We don't all come to that stage in our life in the same way. I call them Peter and Paul conversions... When we say yes, I am a sinner, I have not listened to you Lord, but today I am going to listen, I am going to obey, it is then that God weeps out of love, compassion, and joy. God is anticipating a joyful reunion that will take place.

The first thing that happens when we hear the Word's of our Savior is that we realize that we have not listened to him, we have all sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. Because of this a price has to be paid for our action. Who is willing to pay this price? Who is willing to be responsible for the reckoning of his blood that was shed. Praised be to God that through Jesus Christ the price has already been paid. This is why Jesus did what he did, so that we could be reconciled to God and to each other.

Baptism/rededication at the Hess pond. Amen.