

THE ACTIONS OF JESUS: DEATH

With a loud cry, Jesus breathed his last. (Mark 15:37, NIV)

FOR ALL THE WORDS of the prophets about the coming of the Messiah as the Savior of God’s people, those words would be lost to the dust—but for one thing.

For all the wonder of Jesus’ words, they would bear no greater worth than the collective wisdom of the ages—from Plato and Socrates to Ben Hogan and Harvey Penick—but for one thing.

For all the preaching of the apostles, from Jerusalem to Rome, and the preaching of the centuries by those the Holy Spirit has gifted and raised up, their words too would be dispersed by the winds—but for one thing.

Paul, in writing to the Corinthians, stated that he “resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified” (1 Corinthians 2:2). And why not? For as we studied last week, Jesus designated that what we are to do in remembering him is to focus on his broken body and his shed blood.

Among the actions of Jesus we have been surveying in recent studies, death was the hardest one, the one that demanded all of Jesus’ enduring will—and his surrendered will, too. In the Garden of Gethsemane on the night he was betrayed, Jesus pleaded with the Father to relieve him of this crushing responsibility: “Take this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will” (Mark 14:36). Jesus had to submit to the plan of the Father. Then he had to allow that plan to whisk him away in betrayal and false accusations and mockery and torture and death.

I don’t know how often this action of Jesus moves you to tears, but it should undo even the least emotional among us. It was driven not by his words, but by his love, and his stubborn willingness to act on that love.

Recorded in John 15:13, Jesus said: “Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends.” They were Jesus’ words first for himself—he was hours from giving his life for his beloved friends—but also words directly spoken to his disciples, educating their own understanding of love: it will go as far as death.

The question is, how ready are we to allow these words to turn to action in our own lives as God calls us to the plan he has for us? Will we reckon our own plans unto death for the sake of following his?

Opening questions How often do you think or talk about death? Is it a topic you would rather avoid? • What does it mean to you that Jesus actually lived and died as a man on earth?

READING Mark 15:21-41; Hebrews 9:24-28; Romans 6:11-14 & 8:12-14

Jesus’ crucifixion (Mark 15)

Looking at the narrative’s details, what did Jesus have to endure to bear our sin? What do you think it was about Jesus and his death that sparked the affirmation of the centurion in verse 39?

Our death and Christ’s (Hebrews 9)

How does the death of Christ bring life to us even though we must all die?

Our old life and our new one (Romans 6 & 8)

As those who have found life in Christ, what of our life before him are we to put to death? What specifically does this mean for you, as you “count yourself dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus”?

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