

# Behold the Man

*Good Friday*

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**Bible Text:** John 19:5  
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Let's turn again to John 19 and verse 5. John 19:5.

5 Then came Jesus forth, wearing the crown of thorns, and the purple robe.  
And Pilate saith unto them, Behold the man!

Especially these last three words, "Behold the man!"

Pilate was an ungodly man and yet he preached a number of sermons. In the midst of his ungodliness and in the midst of some of the most ungodly acts that were ever committed, he preached truth without realizing it and one of his texts, you might say, is the one we find here, "Behold the man!" And when we look at these words, the first thing that strikes us is that it's a statement of the facts, it's a statement of truth for all the lies and deceit that were in Pilate's life and lips through these days and hours, yet here is truth, "Behold the man!"

Jesus was fully human. He had a true body, a true human body, a true human soul. He had flesh and skin like you and me. He had eyes like you and me, ears like you and me, a nose, a mouth, hands, feet, all the internal organs exactly like you and me. He had all the human senses just like you and me. Somebody once said that he was as fully human as though he were not God, and as fully God as though he were not human. When people looked at him, they saw a man. He looked like an ordinary man and was an ordinary man in many aspects, especially to those who didn't really know him. You could pass him on the street and not give him a second look. He was a man therefore what Pilate is saying here is, "Behold the man. Behold a very human person here."

These are words that we also find in other parts of the Scripture. For example, John the Baptist said, "There comes after me a man whose shoes I'm not worthy to untie." The Apostle Peter said in one of his first sermons in Acts, he speaks of Jesus as, "a man approved of God among you by mighty wonders and deeds." And the Apostle Paul, of course, in one of his epistles speaks of, "the man, Christ Jesus." He had very human experiences. He looked like a man, lived like a man, spoke like a man, felt like a man. He grew as a man from baby, to infant, to toddler, to child, to adolescent, to young man, to in these days middle-aged man. He knew what it was like to eat and drink and be hungry

and thirsty too. He knew what it was like to sleep and be refreshed in his body. He was fully man, in fact, in him we find the truest manhood possible in this world.

"Behold the man." In him the parallel lines of God and man that never met up until this point, God and man, they were very separate, they were very apart, they were going together but apart, here they cross in one person. For the first time and the last time, we have God and man perfectly united together. Perfect God, perfect man, perfect union that did not confuse either his humanity or his deity. It's a statement of the facts. It's a statement of truth, truth that we have to re-believe even if we're God's people again and again. Behold the man. Never doubt. Never question. Never in any way undermine the real manhood and manliness of the man, Christ Jesus.

We have a statement of the facts, we also have here an experience of suffering. An experience of suffering. That's the context in which these words are uttered but even before that, we have in the man Christ Jesus, an experience of suffering as Job said in his book, "Man is born unto trouble even as the sparks fly upwards." He's saying just as sparks always fly upwards, so any man that's born is going to experience trouble, any human being that lives in this world is going to go through trouble and strife and Jesus was no different. He had a life of suffering. He had life-long suffering. The very fact of him being a man meant he suffered. Man equals suffering. Humanity equals suffering. But that was never more true than here.

However many degrees and kinds of suffering he had up until now in these words, in these verses, we find degrees and kinds of suffering that are way beyond anything experienced up until now. When Pilate is saying, "Behold the man!" we are beholding a suffering man, a man suffering as no man ever did or ever will. He knew tiredness to the point of exhaustion. He knew sadness to the point of depression. He knew loneliness to the point of forsakenness. He knew fear to the point of anxiety. All without sin but all these human sufferings were his. He knew physical sufferings, emotional sufferings, mental sufferings, spiritual sufferings, relational sufferings, cognitive sufferings, every kind of suffering to the greatest degree he knew, he experienced.

When Pilate's pointing to him, he's pointing to a man who is in agony. Indeed if you read through the words here, in verse 2 they "platted a crown of thorns, and put it on his head, and they put on him a purple robe, And said, Hail, King of the Jews! and they smote him with their hands." Verse 5, "Then came Jesus forth, wearing the crown of thorns," and it goes on and on and on. Bleeding shoulders covered by a purple robe, a precious head crowned with cruel thorns, thorns which both mocked him and tortured him.

I remember reading about the wounds inflicted on Christ in these hours, that there are medically five different kinds of wounds, five classifications of wounds, and that Christ experienced every single one of them and that's only speaking physically. The invisible wounds were all the deeper and all the more painful.

"Behold the man," an experience of suffering. We cannot look at this man without seeing suffering at least up until his resurrection, and that's what today is all about, isn't it, the

sufferings of Christ, an experience unparalleled, unimaginable, indescribable experience of suffering. And remember, the manhood of Christ was more sensitive than any other manhood there has ever been. We often in our false cultural ideas of manhood think of manhood in its prime as some kind of stoic, unfeeling, untouchable kind of manhood, stiff upper lip, you never shed a tear, you don't admit weakness, you never express any sorrow, you don't admit to pain. You are impregnable. You're above it all. You're not like other people. That's not Jesus. The manhood that he presents to us unashamedly as the most sensitive, tender manhood that there's ever been and, therefore, experienced sufferings far more than any humanity, of any man, any woman, any boy or any girl ever did. You know, you sometimes think of suffering children, you see how tender they are and how sensitive and yet even the most tender, sensitive child's heart in the world was not as tender and sensitive as Christ's. He wasn't receiving these blows and experiencing these sufferings as if it was water off a duck's back. Not at all. He felt this deeply. He suffered greatly, infinitely so.

An experience of suffering, and as we look at that we're looking at for God's people, what we deserve, what should be our experience. We can't look at his suffering without looking at what we will not suffer for all eternity. We can't look at his sufferings without thinking of the sufferings we've been saved from. His sufferings are our salvation.

A statement of the facts, an experience of suffering, thirdly, we have an invitation to admire. An invitation to admire. Pilate here unknowingly probably, unwittingly probably, grudgingly probably, is looking at this man with admiration, with a degree of awe. He'd never seen anyone like this. He'd never encountered this in all the executions that he ever came across. He never stood there and said, "Behold the man!" Not just a man, the man. He saw something absolutely unique, unparalleled, rare, in Jesus Christ. Grudgingly yes, not in faith, no not in faith, but probably despite all his instincts uttering words that expressed the true judgment of his heart. "Behold the man!" Look and keep on looking. Admire and keep on admiring. See this and see what you're seeing. Gaze. Study. Ponder. Meditate. Don't take your eyes off. You've never seen anything like this before. Behold the man, Christ Jesus.

Pilate could find no fault in him. This was a man, he's a trained prosecutor and judge, probably responsible for multiple capital crime cases. He was your, you might say, your special prosecutor, your Robert Mueller of the day, and despite repeated trial, despite repeated interrogation, despite all the charges that were heaped up against him, he dismisses them all and says, "I find no fault in this man." And Pilate wasn't alone in this, seven times in this account declarations of Christ's innocence come from the mouths of various people. Again, these were not believers but they were people who could not deny what they were seeing with their eyes and who could not help but admiring, this is a flawless, faultless individual.

So Pilate here is calling us, even a heathen man, even out of heathen motives, calling us to look, to admire, to see what we've maybe not seen before or not seen for a long time, or see something deeper and better and more enjoyably than we've ever seen before. To admire, yes even to worship the man, Christ Jesus.

"Behold the man!" That's why you hear in other parts of Scripture exclamations like this, "What manner of man is this? What kind of man is this that even the wind and the waves obey him in that case. Here that he can maintain such innocence, that he can maintain such perfection in the midst of so much evil and wickedness. "Behold the man!" An ordinary man and yet an extraordinary man. An invitation to admire.

Then we see, fourthly, an example to imitate. An example to imitate. He's the perfect role-model. We look to Jesus. We behold the man, Christ Jesus, because he's the perfect role-model for all humanity, for all kinds of humanity: for men and women; for rich and poor; for black and white; for educated and uneducated; for American, African, Australian, you name it. This is the role-model. The example. The man that's held up not just by Pilate but throughout the Scriptures as the model humanity, as the example to follow, as the one to imitate, the one to copy, the one to be like, and this is the great purpose of God, isn't it? We're told that in Romans 8:28. Why? Why, God, are you doing this? And the answer for every believer, "Why am I going through this? Why am I experiencing this? Why am I enduring this? What is the point? What is the meaning?" The answer to every believer is the imitation of Christ. He has predestined us to be conformed to the image of his Son. That's what Jesus is doing here, he's setting forth an example for imitation. He's saying, "Be conformed to this. Copy this. Be like me. Keep your eyes on me." No other role-model. No other idol. No other man, woman, anyone, celebrity, sports star, minister, anyone.

Christ and Christ alone is to be our example, especially our example in the midst of suffering and, therefore, here brought before us as we hear these words, "Behold the man!" it's not something we do on Good Friday and then forget about. It's something that is to be life-long, week-long, day-long, hour-long, continually. "Lord, help me to behold the man, to keep Jesus in front of me, that he be the one I am following and forming my whole being around and into. Let your purposes, Lord, be fulfilled in me. Predestinate me, yes, and conform me to the image of your Son."

What Jesus is doing here is giving us examples and fuel and power to be like him. He's in the business of multiplying himself in his people and that happens as we behold him, as we keep our eyes on him, an example to imitate. But that leads very quickly on to this, an opportunity to repent. It's an opportunity to repent because when we look at this man, when we obey Pilate's sermon text here and we behold the man and especially when we behold his example and we hear that we have to be conformed to this image and we have to copy him and be like him, who cannot but be convicted? "I have to be like Jesus? I have to copy him? I have to imitate him? He's my example? Who can live up to that?" Therefore we remind ourselves though we come to the cross to see the example of Christ, we don't come to the cross to use Christ's example for our salvation, we come to the cross and we use Christ's example to devastate us. To devastate us. To make us realize, "I will never be like that in this world, especially unaided, unassisted. I cannot be Christ. I cannot be like him, not even in the best of days, never mind the worst of days."

We come to this cross and we see this example of purity and perfection in the midst of penalty and provocation and we throw our hands up and say, "Who can be this? Who can do this? Who can possibly be like this?" His perfection devastates us and then we look at how he's treated here, so we see his perfection and that devastates us and then we see the sin that he's the victim of, we see the injustice, the rebellion, the hatred, the enmity, and we see ourselves in it. We're not standing here on Good Friday and looking at Pilate and the Jews and the Romans the people and the Pharisees and all these people going, "Tsk, tsk, tsk. Really this is dreadful." You know, imagine that they should do this to Jesus. No, if we have any self-knowledge we're looking at it and going, "It's me. I'm Pilate. I'm the Pharisee. I'm the Roman soldier. I am this inhumanity in the face of such glorious humanity." And therefore as we face the perfection of Christ and the imperfection of man, as we see his humanity and our inhumanity, we cannot but fall, prostrate, confessing, repenting, looking back, now looking forward, everywhere we look in our lives, we know wherever we look is sin and, therefore, this calls us to repent. Christ in all his perfection, sin in all its hideousness is saying to you and I today, "Turn. Change your ways. Reflect on your own inhumanity. Reflect on your own imperfection in the light of his perfection. See how badly you respond under the slightest provocation compared to this perfection in the midst of unprecedented provocation." It devastates us, doesn't it? Who can stand tall beside the cross? Who can stand at all? Who cannot but fall and say, "Woe is me! I am undone! God, be merciful to me, a sinner!"

It's an opportunity, Good Friday is an opportunity to repent and believe, and believe, not to stay devastated, not to stay broken, not to stay as a convict, but then to feel Christ's hand reaching out to us through the Gospel and saying, "Come. Come unto me all you who labor and are heavy-laden and I'll give you rest. Your sins which are many are forgiven you." To see his suffering as a perfect cover for our sins, to see his salvation not only in terms of our devastation but ultimately our salvation, our construction, our reconstruction. An opportunity to repent and believe again or repent and believe for the first time.

We also have here an encouragement to pray. An encouragement to pray. You know, it's one of the tragedies of Roman Catholicism, it's very sad to see the Maryolatry, the centralization of Mary, the idolizing of Mary, and it all stems from this, refusing to behold the man because Mary is resorted to when there's a sense that she is more sympathetic, she's more accessible than Jesus is; that somehow she's more approachable, more human, and that's a tragic failure to understand these words, "Behold the man." The man. When we see the humanity of Christ, it is the greatest encouragement to pray. He is a high priest, an intercessor, a mediator, who has his position and his potency, as such, because he is man, because he is able to succor, to encourage, to strengthen, those who are tempted, seeing as he was in all points tempted like as we are. If you truly behold the man, you don't need Mary or anyone else. You have the most accessible, approachable, sympathetic intermediary you could have in this whole universe.

There is no one more sympathetic. He's been where you are. He knows what it's like. In fact, let's not just talk about past tense, it's right now. He's not been man, he is man, and will forever be man. God and man, two natures, one person forever. He is no less man

today than he was here when Pilate said, "Behold the man!" This very day we can point to him in heaven and say, "Behold by faith the man." He's no less man, no less human, no less approachable, no less sympathetic. What more encouragement do we need to pray when we are pulling away from prayer? When we're discouraged in prayer? When we think God doesn't hear prayer? When we think God doesn't understand our situation? Hear these words, "Behold the man!" There's one mediator between God and man, the man, Christ Jesus.

If you at all feel that you are distanced from the Lord, that you're hesitant to come to him, the way back is through the humanity of Christ. The more we will get this, the more we will pray, the more we will draw near, the more we will reach out in faith. It's a great encouragement to pray. He knows. He gets it. He's with you.

The humanity he has, it's never going to be blurred. It's as clear and as strong today. It's not going to change either and that's why I say here we have a foretaste of heaven. We have a foretaste of heaven because these words we will hear forever and ever. When Jesus died in this chapter, his body was laid in the grave but his human soul, his human spirit went to heaven and as his soul entered heaven, what did heaven cry? "Behold the man!" And then even more some 40 odd days later when he was resurrected and when he ascended to glory not only in his soul but in his body too, in his full humanity, the song of heaven turned up the volume even more because it was never more true as he entered the courts of heaven, as the gates of heaven were lifted up, all of heaven looks and says, "Behold the man!" And that's what the saints in heaven are hearing right now. Yes, they're hearing, "Behold your God and your King," but they're also hearing, "Behold the man!" And as we enter glory for the first time, Pilate will disappear and all we'll hear is heaven saying to us, inviting us, calling us, urging us, "Behold the man!" All eyes on the man. We'll never tire of it. We'll be forever and ever and ever and ever and ever and ever, "Behold the man!"

I want to close tonight with a meditation that I read today. I've read it before and it really powerfully struck me. Today it's a meditation by an S. M. Lockridge, a pastor of Calvary Baptist Church in San Diego and it goes like this.

It's Friday.  
Jesus is praying.  
Peter is a-sleeping.  
Judas is betraying.  
But Sunday's coming.

It's Friday.  
Pilate's struggling.  
The council is conspiring.  
The crowd is vilifying.  
They don't even know that Sunday's coming.

It's Friday.

The disciples are running like sheep without a shepherd.  
Mary's crying.  
Peter is denying.  
But they don't know that Sunday's a-coming.

It's Friday.  
The Romans beat my Jesus.  
They robe him in scarlet.  
They crown him with thorns.  
But they don't know that Sunday's coming.

It's Friday.  
See Jesus walking to Calvary.  
His blood dripping.  
His body stumbling and his spirit is burdened.  
But you see, it's only Friday and Sunday's coming.

It's Friday.  
The world's winning.  
People are sinning and evil is grinning.

It's Friday.  
The soldiers nail my Savior's hands to the cross.  
They nail my Savior's feet to the cross.  
Then they raise him up next to criminals.  
It's Friday, but let me tell you something, Sunday's coming.

It's Friday.  
The disciples are questioning what's happened to their King.  
And the Pharisees are celebrating that their scheming has been achieved.  
But they don't know it's only Friday and Sunday's coming.

It's Friday.  
He's hanging on the cross, feeling forsaken by his Father.  
Left alone and dying.  
Can nobody save him?  
Oh, it's Friday, but Sunday's coming.

It's Friday.  
The earth trembles.  
The sky grows dark.  
My King yields his spirit.

It's Friday.  
Hope is lost.  
Death has won.

Sin has conquered and Satan's just a-laughing.

It's Friday.

Jesus is buried.

A soldier stands guard

And a rock is rolled into place

But it's Friday.

It's only Friday and Sunday's coming.

Let's pray.