

Jesus Changes the Future
Conclusion to Jesus Changes Everything
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WATCH/LISTEN: <https://www.fbcjc.org/sermon/jesus-changes-the-future/>

Jesus Changes Everything

It has all the ingredients of a good sermon illustration. It's emotional. It's dramatic. And it's a story that'll break your heart. Heaven only knows how many times preachers have used it.

Maybe you've heard it. It's the story of an engineer who operated a drawbridge across a mighty river. With a control panel of levers and switches, he set into motion a monstrous set of gears that either lifted the bridge for the river traffic or closed it for the oncoming train.

One day he took his young son to work with him. The fascinated boy hurled question after question at his dad. It was not until the span had opened to allow the passage of a ship that the father noticed the questions had ceased and his son had left the room. He looked out the window of his control cabin and saw the young boy climbing on the teeth of the gears. As he hurried toward the machinery to get his son, he heard the whistle of an approaching passenger train. His pulse quickened. If he closed the bridge there would be no time to retrieve his son. He had to make a choice. Either his son would be killed or a trainload of innocent passengers would be killed. A horrible dilemma mandated a horrible decision. The engineer knew what he had to do. He reached for the lever.

A powerful story, isn't it? It's often used to describe the sacrifice of Christ. And it is not without its parallels. It's true that God could not save man without killing his son. The heart of God the Father did twist in grief as he slammed the gears of death down on Jesus. And it's sad, yet true, that the innocent have whizzed by the scene of the crime oblivious to the sacrifice that has just saved them from certain death.

But there is one inference in the story that's woefully in need of correction. Listen to this quote from the first sermon ever preached about the cross and see if you can find the revealing phrase. Acts 2:22-23 *"All of you Israelites, listen to my message: it's about Jesus*

of Nazareth, a man whom God authenticated for you by performing in your presence powerful deeds, wonders, and signs through Him, just as you yourselves know. This man, Jesus, who came into your hands by God's sure plan and advanced knowledge, you nailed to a cross and killed in collaboration with lawless outsiders."

Did you see it? It's the solemn phrase in the paragraph. It's the statement that rings of courage, the one with roots that end back to eternity. It is the phrase which, perhaps as much as any in the Bible, describes the real price God paid to adopt you. Which phrase? "*God's sure plan and advanced knowledge.*" The Revised Standard Version calls it "the definite plan and foreknowledge of God." Today's English Version translates the phrase, "In accordance with his own plan."

Regardless how you phrase it, the truth is ever so sobering: the cross was no accident. Jesus' death was not the result of a panicking, cosmological engineer. The cross wasn't a tragic surprise. Calvary was not a knee-jerk response to a world plummeting towards destruction. It wasn't a patch-job or a stop-gap measure. The death of Jesus was anything but an unexpected peril. No, it was part of a plan. It was a calculated choice. The cross was drawn into the original blueprint. It was written into the script. The moment the forbidden fruit touched the lips of Eve, the shadow of a cross appeared on the horizon. And between that moment and the moment the man with the mallet placed the spike against the wrist of Jesus, a master plan was fulfilled.

What does that mean? It means Jesus planned his own sacrifice. It means Jesus intentionally planted the tree from which his cross would be carved. It means he willingly placed the iron ore in the heart of the earth from which the nails would be cast. It means he voluntarily placed his Judas in the womb of a woman. It means Christ was the one who set in motion the political machinery that would send Pilate to Jerusalem.

And it also means he didn't have to do it-but he did. It was no accident-would that it had been! Even the cruelest of criminals is spared the agony of having his death sentence read to him before his life even begins. But Jesus was born to be crucified. Whenever he became conscious of who he was, he also became conscious of what he had to do. The cross-shaped shadow could always be seen.

This explains the determination on his face as he turned to go to Jerusalem for the last time. He was on his death march. This explains the resoluteness in the words, John 10:17-18 *'The Father loves Me because I am willing to lay down My life-but I will take it up*

again. My life cannot be taken away by anybody else; I am giving it of My own free will. My authority allows Me to give My life and to take it again. All this has been commanded by My Father." The cross explains . . . Why he told the Pharisees that the "goal" of his life would be fulfilled only on the third day after his death. Why John the Baptist introduced Jesus to the crowds as the "Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!"

Maybe the cross was why he so loved children. They represented the very thing he would have to give: Life. It adds gravity to his prophecies, "I lay down my life for the sheep." "Jesus began to explain to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life." (Matthew 16:21) The reference to the rejected stone, the anointing for burial, the dismissal of Judas from the Last Supper: All of these incidents take on a sobering dimension when the imminence of the cross is considered.

Our Master lived a three-dimensional life. He had as clear a view of the future as he did of the present and the past. This is why the ropes used to tie his hands and the soldiers used to lead him to the cross were unnecessary. They were incidental. Had they not been there, had there been no trial, no Pilate and no crowd, the very same crucifixion would have occurred. For it was not the soldiers who killed him, nor the screams of the mob: It was his love for me. So call it what you wish: an act of grace; a plan of redemption; a martyr's sacrifice. But whatever you call it, don't call it an accident.

So why the Incarnation? Because He loved us and He wanted us to be in relationship with Him for eternity! It could not have happened without the Incarnation!!!