

Easter Night Song - Early 1800 (20)

S. N. March 19, 1978 P.M. WRI ✓
Plan Song (P. outline)

'Must Jesus Bear The Cross alone
and all the world go free?
No, There's a Cross for Everyone
and an Easter Bonnet for me.'

"HEARTBREAK HILL"

Hebrews 13:12-13

So Jesus also suffered outside the gate in order to consecrate the people through his own blood. Therefore, let us go forth to him outside the camp, bearing abuse for him.

There are always certain points of interest that have focus in our memory. There are names and places, valleys, islands, villages, scenes - that pass before us as a very familiar place. In history, there are names and battles and places that have memory - like Waterloo, Gettysburg, Williamsburg. These places have a fixed place in our memory.

In a section in Korea we have a place that became known as "Heartbreak Ridge" or "Heartbreak Hill". On that jagged ridge, looking over the valley, thousands of men from the Communist countries and from the United States - and United Nations forces fought the most savage action of the Korean War.

There were (thousands) that were wounded - and there were more thousands that were killed. A wounded American soldier is credited with giving the place the name. After being carried to his own lines - he described the place and struggle in simple pointed words. "It's a heartbreak", he cried, "it's a heartbreak." And then it came to be known as "Heartbreak Ridge" or "Heartbreak Hill". Men die. They drag themselves slowly up the hill and follow the lines that are drawn on a map. And no one would give an inch. And what a heartbreak.

1900 years ago, there was an earlier heartbreak hill - and Jesus also suffered a cruel death on a hill. A skull-shaped hill outside the city wall. It is called Calvary - it is located in Palestine. Have you ever thought of the crucifixion of Christ as it discloses the basic nature of our human situation. There was a conflict between good and evil. And it was deep, and it was deadly.

Who does not know from first-hand experience that the soul is the scene of an inward battle and sometimes, it is a heartbreak ridge experience. For we are contending against flesh and blood. Not that, but against the principalities. And against the powers, against the world ruler of this present darkness. Against spiritual wickedness in Heavenly places.

Lincoln once said - there is no ground between right and wrong except battle ground.

And that is what the cross is all about. Three crosses stood on Calvary. Star against the sky. Roman soldiers laughed to me. Three ways a man may die. Who builds the cross on Calvary. Star against the sky. Who laughs at pain and want. Can it be you or I.

Think of the evil, in this world, that breaks God's heart. It's just like heartbreak hill - Calvary is to God. God so loved the world that he gave his only son. John wrote.

The key to the whole campaign is often the key to the top of a lonely hill.

The major said.

I thought, how true - the key to all of our love and hope. All of our joy and kindness, all our forgiveness and faith. Was found 1900 years ago on the top of a lonely hill.

This is bitter memory. Peter said to the Jerusalem council - God of our Fathers raised Jesus, whom you killed. And here is the key for this season on Palm Sunday. As we think about the cross.

Let us look at some of the things that took place around that hill. First, there was a conflict. Second, there was a contemplation. Third, there was a coalition. And fourth, the consequences.

I. CONFLICT

There, at that hill, that principle of nature was taking place. A great battle, a great struggle between God and the demons. This we can take from even the doctrine of man. In Romans 7, Paul interprets the human situation in these words. It is not I who do the deed but sin that dwells in me. Here is a force that is personal - it is alive.

And this force has power I John 3:4. And this was ultimately responsible - for this hill. And we need to deal with it because it would make havoc of the Gospel. And something would have been lost here in this battle that was staged - had Satan prevailed.

In fact, the very redemption of man was at stake at that very moment.

And we have Paul saying that he was fighting with wild beasts as Ephesus.
And Luther flinging the ink pot at the Devil. This has something to show about
the nature of demons. And the cross is set forth as a climax to the revelation
of all of this that was taking place.

There would have been no religion at all. And we believe that here the
cross of Christ is a solution of man's hardest problems.

To be right with God is the most important thing in the world.

To be in Christ is the most vital relationship - that it means - Christ to
me.

All we guilty sinners are torn in conflict of what we ought to be and what
we have power to be. And the only way to solve the conflict is to come to the
saying power of Christ. Our lives daily slip back to compromise.

Now the cross of Christ is the clue to understanding the power that can be
released in our lives. And what a struggle was carried on on that hill. Here
is a pledge of love. And here is the place where the meaning of his cross really
brings help to us.

Now we do not believe that the blood of goats and bulls does anything. No more than the writer in Hebrews talking about it. But he says, apart from the shedding of blood - there is no remission of sins. And Jesus suffered outside the gate in order that he might sanctify the people, by his own blood.

How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal spirit, offered himself. In the love of God and in the mind of Christ then - here we have the suffering of God. And what a battle.

"When I survey the wondrous cross - that says something. This is the good news that we have today. And it is the most amazing truth in the world. "Not of the blood of beasts. On Jewish altar slain. Could give the guilty conscience peace. Or wash away the stain. But Christ, the Heavenly lamb, takes all of our sins away. A sacrifice of nobler name, and richer blood than they,"

Now that will challenge even a young person. That helps because here is the view of the cross that ought to possess my mind. Here is the answer of a great struggle and a conflict.

Can you answer such questions. How can the death of a man 2000 years ago have anything to do with my sins today. And the sins that I have not committed yet. How can another person bear my sins. I lay my sins upon Jesus - we sing. How does Jesus take away the sins of the world. The sins of the world remain to blight and to curse the world. Someone had to pay. And surely the Father was bearing the weight under the condemnation. But how does Jesus do this.

If Jesus had not been nailed to the cross, then salvation would have been meaningless. Yes, I could not be atoned by somebody else's blood. I could not find repentance in any other way. How can we explain Christ here on the cross.

This truly was a conflict at heartbreak hill - when Jesus was taken out and nailed to the cross.

II. CONTEMPLATION

Now as we consider the cross, we consider that Jesus was going to die. And his influence from his baptism and through His life - as we try to come to his sacrifice. And contemplate this - there are so (many things) that we might think about. The (words) of Jesus about his suffering and his death. He willingly committed himself to the same mighty task that was costly to him but it was effective for all men. It was a deliverance beyond the own power to achieve. And that it was completely something that God the Father had thought through. And as we contemplate upon this, we discover that this sacrifice was to bring about an entrance into God's presence.

The reality was that the veil of the temple was rent and twain from the top to the bottom. Now, this means, that there was a radical destruction. Of the secrecy of and the exclusion.

And in today's language, we would say - that it lays there, the very heart and presence of God.

For the veil had been hanging there for years. It looked as if it might hang there forever. It was a gorgeous embroidered blue and purple and scarlet. A massive curtain that hung in the inner most part of the temple. And it guarded a secret very well. It had fulfilled its function.

On one hand, it was there to keep (men out.) It was a warning to sinful men. That there lay a mystery in religion. And they must keep a respectful distance. I think even today there are mysteries that God has that some men claim they are going to discover. But they will never discover them here.

If I knew all the mysteries of God, then there wouldn't be much to this religion.

On the other hand, it was there to shut (God in.) For behind that veil, there was the darkness - as black as night. Even while the sun was blazing outside - it had been hanging there for years.

Now, those who came to worship in the temple - they were sure that there was something behind the veil - but what. None of them could clearly tell. It was an awesome, mysterious holiness. And there was a perpetual frustration on man's part to search. But one day, when (heartbreak hill) took place and Jesus died - from the top to the bottom - the veil was ~~gone~~. Here was a decision and revelation that man's age long quest was at an end.

The great part of the urgency that so many think about - was back before this

thing really happened. Here was righteousness of God. Here was God - that they could come and pray too. He is the God now who knows all the miseries of man. He knows the heartache of the world. He is God who can bring men hope and a new beginning.

And men who were wretched and ashamed before, could not penetrate that veil. But the death of our Lord on Calvary brought about an event that was unique. And the veil had remained there. The prophets had preached and they had hammered home their truth. But when Jesus died, it was rent in twain. It is an act, God's act - and all that we can do is preach Christ crucified and God's truth revealed. And this thing had been a barrier as for the Holy of holies behind the veil. Only one man on one day of the year might enter there. And that was strange. That in Jesus' time that one privileged individual should have been Caiaphas. And all the rest even when their hearts were crying for the living God, were cast back from this barrier. And here was a veil that even meant death to the touch. Now this finished the monopoly. And it said, let all come. And that the word is now open. It is a highway for every man. There are no restrictions. And we cannot re-erect barriers. Jesus at great cost on heartbreak hill leveled this to the dust. And here is something that has great contemplation in it for us.

Jesus had now given his life for (a ransom) for many. A ransom for all. And this says that the Lord can now bring your life into harmony through his death. That is a (fantastic proposition) - isn't it.

And as we contemplate upon this great theory that happened here - such words as that we have coined, we have used to describe it.

There is a word expiate - which means to pay the penalty of. We have just seen this cannot be done by another in the case of sin. Guilt cannot be transferred - then what another suffers through our sin, may be very terrible. But if words are used accurately - it cannot be a penalty. For that other has done nothing that is wrong.

Another word is satisfaction. It means the measure of suffering - that is regarded as the equivalent for the sin against God. Now this idea is that if a child here sins - he is sorry of it. But I have to demand suffering to satisfy this. It is sort of like a pagan idea of suffering, for something.

Another word is propitiation. That is take away - it takes away. And this means appeasement. The meaning of buying off the wrath of God.

It is a means by which sin is forgiven. God's love and man's sin. If you think of it in the dictionary meaning. God's anger at man's sin could be bought off if a victim could be found on whom the wrath could be vented. So that the demands of vengeance could be satisfied.

But these words and even substitution that Christ died for us is used to mean (instead of us). In a sense of suffering and being substituted for us. Now our Lord did not use any such words that we have been talking about here. But he did refer to his death. And this was his understanding of the cross. But Jesus through his death, shed his precious blood. The word is blood. And life is in the blood. And this is the obvious meaning of heartbreak hill and the cross - the self-giving of Jesus.

III. COALITIONS

At heartbreak hill there were certain dark coalitions made, that worked together. The drama there that led to the crucifixion. Palm Sunday, the first day of the week - and the Sunday next was Easter. And the victory day after a long week. But in between this Palm Sunday and the next, you have to travel a road that leads up a hill. On which there are three crosses.

And there is something more here than just if you are going to walk this road and discover the revelation of love and mercy, that goes much farther.

And the decision to defeat the powers of darkness. As put in Gal. 3:1. All of these powers were interlocked as in the days of heartbreak hill. The Communists, the United Nations, and America. The design of man. But here is the design of man - the will of Jesus, and what God has planned - all working out.

There was first of all the design of history and her forces - pride, love, traditionalism, all of these resulted into the death of the son of God. These were mere agents. Visible powers but they were dangerous.

Some of these were (religious people) of this day. And this was the group that erected the cross. It was a group that made the loudest religious profession. Who came to censor Jesus and to protest. They saw him heal on the Sabbath Day. And they thought he was undermining the laws of Moses. They heard him speak about destroying the temple. And they could hear just folly.

They didn't measure the authority - what right has a man that is a carpenter to speak like this. This is blasphemy against God.

He is a friend of Publicians and sinners. And organized religion branded him. And the cross is coming to life.

Another thing that was there was politics. There was both the Jewish side and the Roman side. And there were the nationalists. Who wanted to head up a revolt. And no one could praise him too high - if he would certainly lead the revolution. Now they were disappointed some of them. Yes, and this was bitter business. Because on the Roman side you had Pilate. Who had his reactionary forces. And others who accused Rome. And here is politics as they join hands.

There was another part of this group called the crowd - the masses of people. They must bear their part of the blunder as well. They had lost interest. They were tolerant of the crowd. And they shouted that Jesus should go to death. They were at the very bottom of the cross in the crucifixion.

So these rulers - the anti-Christ, the peers and works were radical difference from Christ. He may look like Christ. They may come and stand in Christ's place. And deceive the very elect. But here it is - politics at the cross, history at the cross, the people at the cross. And they crucified the Lord of Glory. The average man was at the cross. For when the cry was raised - his blood be upon us. And our children. What held these people in such a grip as this. I John 2:18-20. There was another law in the members of these people and their minds that were waring one against another.

Let me ask you a question. Who did it? This is uppermost in your mind when a crime is committed. Police immediately go to work on it. And they aren't happy until the murderer is caught. Who is to blame. We ought to find it out. You say, justice requires it. Look at heartbreak hill, look at Calvary. You ask the same question - who did it. The innocent one dies - age 33. He went from court to court as the law required - and that's a puzzle. How did they ever bring this thing off.

Pilate - that's who. Why, it was he who sent Jesus to the cross. But he mostly did that because he wanted to be popular. Rather than to be right. And so politics played a part. And we have the words crucified under Pontius Pilate. Judas did it - that's who. If he hadn't betrayed the Master in the garden and with a kiss, at that - the soldiers would not have taken him. The one who made a deal with the high priest, and there are people today who are ready to make a wheel and a deal. Just for a few pieces of silver. Greed for money.

Ananias and Caiaphas did it. They were responsible ones. They were religious leaders. Why, they made a deal with Judas - they were looking for someone like that. How lucky could they get - finding one of the twelve to get their man. They ignored all the teachings of mercy and forgiveness.

The soldiers are responsible ones - why, they take their orders, and they pound the nails, through his feet and his hands, and they dug the hole. To put the cross up in. And when one is doing wrong, he is taking his orders from a higher power. Is that excuse enough.

So who did it - was it Pilate, Judas - everyone played his part. Now the Bible makes it clear that the general public had a lot of say about this cross. Why, the people had power. They had the say in what was done with Jesus. And they said it - crucify him.

Now the trial before Pilate and the Roman governor, he wished to get it off of his hands and release the prisoner. At the year of the pass-over, so he could release Jesus. He gave him a choice. Between Barrabus and Jesus.

Pilate asked them - whom do you want to release. Matt. 27:17. The crowd had the power in their hands. Now Pilate had no business giving them the decision. But that is what he did.

Moreover, than you like to admit it - the general public determines the course of events. The people are more important than we think. And officials in higher places go no farther than people let them go. The powers of the people - it is a real power.

Pilate wished to satisfy the crowd. He released Jesus. Even today, day by day events - people go to bed upset with the news and the broadcasts, and the change in society in which they live. And we say, well, somebody else is responsible for it. The next time that we get a few stones and get ready to throw them, about somebody in a position of responsibility - take a good look at yourself. What is my attitude in this matter.

We would rather talk about them than us. We'd say the public schools are wrong - they are not cracking down on crime. They, we say. What is the church doing. They talk about we.

If we are going to do anything about crime, and if we are going to stand behind the church - the power is in our hands. But you are the only person, you say. And I cannot turn the tide.

Some year, at a camp meeting - in 1800, there was a young man who felt called to preach. He presented himself to the church in a bashful way. Why, they said, this young man stutters so bad. Why, one after another spoke in the negative. Well, I don't know. I'm afraid that Matthew will not make it.

There was one old gentleman with long whiskers and he said, it seems to me it doesn't matter so much what a man has in him, or what he doesn't have in him. As long as he has the spirit of God in him, he can preach. Not that was enough to turn the tide. And so they took young Matthew under their care. And, he did quite well. He became a preacher, a college president. And he became a bishop - Bishop Matthew Simpson. And he preached the (funeral sermon) for Abraham Lincoln in Springfield, Illinois. He almost didn't get started in the ministry because people thought he couldn't make it. Then one man expressed himself and the door was open. The people who carry on the church today - must have the same foresight and vision. And make the same type of choices. So here were coalitions that got together. And they brought about heartbreak hill.

IV. CONSEQUENCES

Now the last word that we will have to say about the cross and heartbreak hill, is that Jesus, with his eyes open as a deliberate act identified himself with sinful man. And he would not have been our Saviour had he not. And what Jesus was doing that day at Jordan, was identifying himself with the broken, the burdened, the unfortunate, the troubled, the shameful. He took his place beside sinners. And this was the symbol of his whole life - even as he went to the cross.

Remember, no man taketh my life from me. I lay it down, of myself. John 10:18. He could have avoided it. He was tempted to avoid it. By many forces. He said, on one occasion - get behind me Satan. And then he said, my Father has angels that he could send to help me. But Jesus was no helpless victim - he could have avoided it. But he chose not to avoid it. He was willing to become identified in his love and in giving himself. And what a great sacrifice he made. In advancing into enemy occupied territory. And meeting all of the forces on their own ground.

This is indeed something to understand, heartbreak hill. His sacrifice, his power, and his victory have brought purity, peace, and pardon to people. The resurrection was a great decisive battle. He turned back the tide of war and settled the issue that day. Even that last enemy, he said, was death itself. Men still have to die. But in the cross and the resurrection of Jesus' death, comes the final answer and has conquered this by giving victory.

Now there are those who felt like the cross was a scandal. There were others who looked at it as folly. And why did some of them feel this way.

The cross offered victory over principalities and over powers. Behind Calvary is the throne of Heaven. And God is acting at the cross. And here is the conquering grace that we have to yield up our souls absolutely to. And this is the mystery of the glory of the kingdom.

And in conclusion, we think about the consequences, of heartbreak hill, we think of the precious blood of Christ. For as much as you know - that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things. As silver and gold - but with the precious blood of Christ. I Peter 1:18-19. The most precious thing in man's body is blood. A beautiful body, but if it is drained of blood - it is nothing. It is dead. For the life is in the flesh. It is in the blood. And the pulling out of blood meant that life had been given. And that is why we speak of the precious blood of Jesus. And this precious blood brings justification. Being now justified by his blood.

→ Over the doorway of a church in Germany, there is cut in the stone, a beautiful lamb. This is how the lamb happened to be there. A man at work on the steeple of the church lost his footing. He plunged to the ground below. A flock of sheep chanced to be grazing in the church yard. And the fall of the man was broken on a little lamb. The lamb was killed. But the man's life was saved. In his gratitude he cut in the stone over the doors of the church, the lamb that saved his life.

So we are forgiven, pardoned, and saved from the penalty of death by Christ. Who is the lamb of God. Who died on heartbreak hill.

This precious blood redeems us - it sets us free.

This blood, that is precious, reconciles us. Even in our human relations there are wrong doings that separate us. And drives us apart.

I read about a husband and wife in a Western city - they became estranged, from one another for awhile. And leaving the city where they had lived - they went to different parts of the country to reside. Some years afterwards, the husband chanced to return to the city on a business matter. When he had concluded his business, he went out to the cemetery where his only son was buried. As he stood by the grave in tender memory thinking back over the good times - he heard a step on the gravel behind him. Turning, he saw his estranged wife who had come on the same errand. For a moment, the inclination of both was to turn away. But in another moment, they thought better of it - realizing that they had common, binding interests in that grave. Instead of turning away, they (clasp hands) over the (dust of their son). And were (reconciled one) to the other. It took nothing less than death to reconcile them.

It takes nothing less than the cross and the death of Christ, and his precious blood, to reconcile men to God.

Another consequence is - it pardons. It brings pardon. And this is a mystery of the cross. But how valuable this is - that it brings the forgiveness and the pardon that only God can offer in this way.

Would you be prepared to say, I have never deliberately done anything wrong. Has there never been a moment when you stood face to face with right and wrong - and you chose the wrong. There is not a man or a woman that is honest, that will admit that personal wrong -doing. Oh, we say, it was passion, or it was temptation. But my sins rise like a mountain. Because I have chosen the pathway that was easy.

It was dishonorable, we knew it when we chose it.

But here is the truth. Dr. Pierson gave an illustration of a man who was condemned to die, for having murdered another man. Now a brother of the condemned murderer who was a strong Christian, with a lot of influence, pleaded the cause of his condemned brother with the authorities. And was able to obtain a pardon. They gave the pardon to the brother. He took the pardon and he went to prison and sat down beside his condemned brother. He did not tell him immediately - but he began to talk to him. He said, if you had your pardon, and suppose you had it now. And you could go free. What would you do. And a gleam of malice and hate was in his eyes. And the murderer said, I would find the principle witness and I would kill him. Then I would go and find the judge and I'd kill him.

And that brother said nothing of the pardon - but leaving the cell, he tore it into pieces and destroyed it. And you know that he did right.

Pardon for a man who persists in sin is impossible. It would continue the disorder and it would be worse. God will give you perfect pardon if you will trust him. At his grace, and at his word.

The final thing about the consequences of heartbreak hill, and the cross is that it cleanses Christ's blood instead of staining, washes the soul white. There is a fountain filled with blood, drawn from Immanuel's vein. And sinners plunge beneath that flood. Lose all their guilty stain. There is power in the precious blood of Christ.

A British general Hedley Vicars waiting one day in his quarters for another officer to come. He began to leaf through the Bible that lay on his desk. His eyes fell on those words of John. "The blood of Jesus Christ, his son, cleanses us from all sin." Closing the book, he said, if this is true henceforth I will live by the grace of God as a man should live. Who has been washed in the blood of Christ.

Yes, if that is true, that for you and me, the precious blood of Christ has been shed.

Swing now to the opposite end of the social scale. The scene is the Queen's Hall, London. A cultured audience has gathered to listen to a concert. Here you have not the uncivilized savage possessing little of culture or education. You have the West End of London rolling up in expensive motor cars and stepping from them dressed in evening

dress. One of the items on the program is a song by a young girl whose name is unknown. She is making her first appearance before the critical musical public of London. She sings, with perfect voice and that artless grace which is the height of art, a song which she has practiced many hours with her distinguished tutor. At the end of the song the applause is deafening and continued, and both tutor and audience demand that she shall sing again. Once again she sings the same song.

But it is a long time since the audience has heard anything so fresh and understanding and altogether captivating. It is imperative that she should sing yet again. Hurriedly she and her tutor confer together. She has arranged to sing only this one song. The tutor was not ready to risk more. She was to have this one chance only. "What else have you got?" he asks. From her music case she takes out a song and says very simply, "I should like to sing this to them." She goes on to the platform. The noise and tumult and cheering subside. In perfect stillness she begins:

There is a green hill far away,
Without a city wall,
Where the dear Lord was crucified,
Who died to save us all.

She sings it to Gounod's glorious setting. The effect is electrical. It is a long time since many of those who listen have heard any religious message, and a very long time indeed since they have heard the message of the Cross. The beautiful voice goes on:

We may not know, we cannot tell,
What pains he had to bear;

But we believe it was for us
He hung and suffered there.

The silence becomes almost tangible. The tension is almost more than people can bear, and still the voice goes on:

He died that we might be forgiven,
He died to make us good,
That we might go at last to heaven,
Saved by his precious blood.

No chocolate boxes are passed during that song. No whispered comments of the singer's ability are exchanged. That night, in the Queen's Hall, the singer is forgotten by many, in a song which carries them away on its wings to a lonely hill outside a city, where a Man whose great loyalty and love nothing could break—a Man who was all that God could pour of himself into a human personality—hung in anguish on a cross of shame.

There was no other good enough
To pay the price of sin;
He only could unlock the gate
Of heaven, and let us in.

There are not many dry eyes. Women weep openly, unable to restrain their tears. Men grip the seat in front of them, their knuckles white with the intensity of their grip, their faces strained by the depth of their emotion. The singer seems almost unconscious of the audience. She is singing a song so precious to her own heart that she is not singing to please the audience. She has forgotten it is there. She is bearing out through Gounod's music the adoration

of her own heart for the crucified Lord. So to those final and wonderful notes the young voice travels on:

O dearly, dearly has he loved,
And we must love him, too,
And trust in his redeeming blood,
And try his works to do.

The soloist forgets to bow. Certainly the audience notices no omission. There is no applause—only a great silence.

So in Africa, so in London, ^{America} so with the outcaste, so with the educated and civilized, so with men in olden days, so with modern men and women who are willing to be quiet and to consider, his words are true, and they are true only of him: "I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto myself."^a And when, bound to his Cross, he is lifted up before men's eyes, by some strange power which defies analysis, dying he brings them life; bound he brings them liberty; suffering he redeems them from the greatest anguish the soul can know, the agony of hopeless despair; and everlastingly loving he challenges them, and claims them, and will never let them go until he makes them his forever.

^a John 12:32.