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Sermon preached at BETHEL, GUILDFORD, by Mr L.S.B. Hyde, on 11th November, 1970.

Reading: John, chapter 19.

Hymns: 158, 950, 1025.

Text: John 19, v.37.

"And again another scripture saith: They shall look on Him whom they pierced".

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In reading a text of this great solemnity we are bound to stand before you in fear, in weakness and in much trembling, but at the same time we do know that the Lord hath promised to send forth His Spirit into our hearts whereby we may be led sweetly and blessedly to view that which is all glorious in such a great scripture that we have ventured to read to you this evening.

We may say that this is one of the, if not the focal point, in all true Christian experience. Though it is solemn to observe, yet this is a very necessary experience to the people of God, to "look on Him whom they pierced". We see here then the work of the Spirit of God, because whenever it comes to "they shall", we must ever consider that it is God's work. Our nature would not wish to engage itself in such a blessed experience as this, because it would find no blessedness in it; we have the evidence of this nature's working in the expressions used by the Jews when they said "Crucify Him, crucify Him" - with this spirit in our hearts there would be no desire to look on Him whom we pierced. And yet I venture to believe that amongst those who cried out "Crucify Him" there were those who were later to look on Him whom they pierced. Those at Pentecost, when they were reminded of this solemn deed that had been done by them, cried out and said "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" They shall look on Him whom they pierced. And it is through the preaching of the gospel that God's children are brought to look on Him whom they pierced. These people had remained quite hardened before the crucifixion and between the crucifixion and the day of Pentecost, in relation to their dastardly act; there was no question of any, and no desire for any repentance, but God's appointed time came. Oh, how glorious are the words of John Kent:

"The appointed time rolls on apace
Not to propose, but call by grace,
To change the heart, renew the will,
And turn the feet to Zion's hill".

And this is Zion's hill. For are we not reminded in the 13th chapter of Hebrews: "Let us go forth, therefore, unto Him without the camp, bearing His reproach. For here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come." But before that the apostle reminds us: "We have an altar, whereof they have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle. For the bodies of those beasts, whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin, are burned without the camp. Wherefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered without the gate". And so He went to Mount Calvary, there to suffer for the sins of His people. It is one thing for us to acknowledge the truth and perhaps to consider the wonder of it, but how much more so when it comes personally to you, personally to me. They shall look on Him whom they pierced.

Now, first of all, may we clear a few points: "They" - who are these people? Well, evidently there is some limitation, because the Word of God makes it very clear that not all shall look on Him whom they pierced. So in this simple word "They", we are bound to set before you that they who shall look on Him whom they pierced will be the whole election of grace, that is, those people whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life. The solemn characteristic of the whole thing is this: that without being numbered with the election of grace we shall have no desire to look on Him whom we pierced. The Election of grace shall look on Him whom the Election of grace

pierced. Those people - the Jews or the Roman soldiers that were instrumental in the crucifixion of the Lord Jesus Christ, not all of them, we may surely say, looked on Him as the scripture here declares it; but were there not some that did? And if we bring the matter into our present generation, we are bound to see the same thing. Now we are all born in sin and shapen in iniquity, we have all gone astray; but can we all say that we have been to that place where they shall look on Him whom they pierced? Well, those that are favoured to be within this text are the election of grace. Now God is sovereign in His divine choice. We are not the judges of men, and we know not finally who are the election of grace, except that the scripture says "by their fruits ye shall know them". Our desire is (if we are blessed with the grace of God ourselves) that all may know the sovereign grace of the Lord, that sovereign grace spoken of by one of our hymnwriters:

"Ah, but for free and sovereign grace,
I still had lived estranged from God,
Till hell had proved the destined place
Of my deserved but dread abode."

But O, amazed, I see the hand
That stopped me in my wild career;
A miracle of grace I stand;
The Lord has taught my heart to fear." (Paice).

So there has been a radical change in our hearts, a radical change that cannot be denied. When that radical change takes place is not always definable, although the fruit of it will be seen, and there is an evidence of the grace of God being in our hearts and that we are born again of the Spirit and numbered amongst the election of grace. In consequence we come within the context and scope of this word "And again another scripture saith: They shall look on Him whom they pierced."

Then we may comprehend the word in this way: They are among those whom the Father has loved, whom the Son has loved, and whom the Holy Ghost has loved: "Beloved of the Lord". Jedidiah was the name given by God to Solomon. Solomon, though he was greatly favoured, yet he was also a sinner. Many people, in reading that account of Solomon, especially in his latter days, would, if it were possible, have taken his name out of God's book. They would have said: Surely such a man as this could not have been saved by God. But the Lord put it out of all question - He gave Solomon this name Jedidiah, "Beloved of the Lord". And if God has given you the least intimation that you are loved of God, then it will land you in heaven. You see, we do not depend for our salvation upon our good tempers and frames, although they are very desirable; we do not depend for our ultimate salvation and entering into the glories of that place, upon anything that we have done. "For it is not by works of righteousness that we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, by the washing of regeneration" (Titus 3,v.5). Therefore it is they, they whom God has loved with an everlasting love and who, in consequence, have known something of being drawn by the Father. It may be that some of you will be at a point this evening, as to whether you are among the election of grace, and are loved of God the Father, of God the Son and God the Holy Ghost. I may say, to you, that if this is so, then you will come within the scope of this word: "They shall look on Him whom they pierced".

Now there are two things mentioned here: "They shall look on Him", and, "whom they pierced". Now it is the work of the Spirit to take a soul along this pathway. Do you know that to be true? How do you know it to be true? Have you tried to get into this text? Do you say, Well, this is something I must know; and have you done your utmost, have you prayed, let tears drop from your eyes in the fervency of your spirit, as you tried to get within this text? - and yet proved all to be unavailing?

That has only been a preparation, a means of taking you off all your own emotions. You see, friends, there is no room for pride here; it will be by the free grace of God. You will not be able to say even such things as "Oh, I got that in answer to prayer". Although prayer is a blessed channel God has ordained, God shows us ever so clearly that it is not our prayers that bring the blessing. "Thus saith the Lord God: I do not this for your sakes, O house of Israel, but for mine holy Name's sake" (Ezek.36,22). Now it is a blessing to be brought to this place, and it will be a rich blessing and favour beyond compare. You will say when you come to this place, with a mixture of sadness and of joy, that it is the most blessed, most sacred, most enjoyable experience that you have ever known. "They shall look on Him whom they pierced".

But who can reveal Christ? You see Christ is the central figure before us in this text. The Word of God tells us, by this same apostle, that "When He, the Spirit of Truth is come, He will guide you into all truth: for He shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and He will shew you things to come. He shall glorify Me: for He shall receive of Mine, and shall shew it unto you." (John 16; 13,14). Now that which is before us is by divine revelation; it is not to be found by the researches of men, but it is to be discovered to us by the Holy Ghost, and when it is discovered to us by the Holy Ghost it will drop subtly upon our spirits, and that which we have just been singing in the hymn (Gadsby's No.950) will be a very blessed and sweet experience. Now we shall not easily come to this place. Our hearts are filled with pride. As we were singing, my mind went vividly back to my feelings at one time in singing this verse:

"O blessed sight, O lovely form,
To sinful souls like me;
I'd creep beside Him as a worm,
And see Him bleed for me."

My heart was too proud to get there at that time; oh yes, I had made a profession of the Name of Christ, been baptized and followed Him, and would perhaps have felt very disturbed if people had questioned my Christian profession, but, as I remember what my heart was, this was a verse in the hymnbook which I did not like at all. I am thankful to say, friends, that God has brought me to it, and I have since rejoiced in this same blessed verse -

"I'd creep beside Him as a worm,
And see Him bleed for me."

So we are surely the subjects of the Spirit's working if we are blessed with this great view of the Lord Jesus Christ. Now my mind goes back to that which is pre-figured when, because of the people's sin, fiery serpents were sent into the midst of the camp, and the Lord commanded Moses to fashion a brazen serpent and set it upon a pole in the midst of the camp, and whosoever should look unto it should be saved. The Lord brings this forth in His teaching and says: "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up" (John 3,14). Now then, what do we see when we see the Lord Jesus Christ lifted up as the brazen serpent was lifted up in the wilderness. What was the condition of and what was the effect on the people? They were serpent-bitten, sin-bitten; in other words, they were ready to die. If we may look upon the matter, a feature of serpent bites is that poison is conveyed into the blood stream, and how very quickly people may die! We know that solemn truth that we are sinners before God, and that it is deadly sin. I know the Roman Catholics make a distinction between venial and deadly sins, but when you are taught by the Holy Spirit every sin will be deadly - "Who so shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all" (James 2,10).

And so therefore the most simple sin (if we can describe sin in this way - but we are speaking after the manner of men) will be absolutely deadly. Just one point, yet it brings a person in guilty. So there is sin biting us, coursing through our blood stream, as it were, reaching our hearts ready to destroy us, and in that destruction will land us in hell itself. And yet, you see, there was the gospel preached to these people in the wilderness, in the book of Numbers (ch.21). When this pole was to be erected and the brazen serpent set upon it, as the people looked there would be healing as the reward of their faith. "And they shall look". Perhaps we might conclude that since there was this way of salvation open to them, that all these people in the wilderness could have looked; but is it not clear that not all those people looked? Oh, how very clear it is! there were some that looked and those that looked lived; but there were some that did not look, and those that didn't look died. And the same thing applies today. Have you looked? have you looked toward the cross of Christ? It is not an easy thing. You see, you have got a proud heart to deal with, and a proud heart will say: I am not going to look that way and depend upon that crucified Man, that Man that is derided. Are you going to join sides? - to stand by the cross of Christ when others are going to pass by wagging their heads and fingers? Are you going to take up your stand there? It is no easy matter to take sides in such a way beside the cross of Christ. We shall only do it by the grace of God, and as we are led to that faith by the Spirit of God.

"They shall look on Him whom they pierced". There were those that passed by, that looked on Him with the natural eye, and they considered Him in a natural way; they saw Him as a man, and as a man that had been overcome, a man that had risen up as though he were going to be somebody, and to all intents and purposes had been proved to be nobody - this is the natural account. But there were some (and oh that we may be amongst them), those who by the Holy Ghost looked on Him, and as they looked on Him their faces were lightened, and as their faces were lightened they were not ashamed - isn't that a wonderful word? How did they look upon Him? How have you looked upon this blessed person, Jesus Christ? The dying thief looked upon Him; why did he look upon Him? - because he was chosen and loved of God. And what did he say when he looked upon Him? - well, we have the words in his conversation to the other thief: "We indeed justly, but this Man hath done nothing amiss". Oh, think of it - this Man, this Jesus Christ, this Man who has declared that He is the Son of God, this Man who has heard the profession of His disciples "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God" - this Man now hanging between the heaven and the earth, numbered with the transgressors, this Man - what is this Man doing? Is this the Man who is dying, the just for the unjust?

"Is this the Man? can this be He
The prophets have foretold
Should with transgressors numbered be,
And for their crimes be sold?"

This Man. Oh how blest are those people who will come within the compass of this word: "They shall look on Him whom they pierced"! May you not think that to look on Him whom they pierced would be more than you could do? Will not your heart be filled with shame, will not you hang your head down? Whatever you may feel about it, the Word of God says this: "They shall look on Him whom they pierced", and they shall look on Him as the Son of God. Those precious scriptures in the Old Testament that speak of His birth, His life, death and burial, His resurrection - they shall look on Him, and they shall see that this is very God and very Man, and what else shall they see? John Newton had a blessed view of the matter:

"I saw One hanging on a tree
In agonies and blood,
Who fixed His languid eyes on me,
As near His cross I stood".

They shall look on Him. And He will look on you; you see, this is no one-sided affair, friends; it is when He looks on you that you are going to be affected:

"Sure never till my latest breath
Can I forget that look;
It seemed to charge me with His death,
Though not a word He spoke".

- "charge me with His death" - what kind of death was this? It was a vicarious death, it was the Son of God dying for the sins of His people, it was a death to put away sin, and the Lord Jesus Christ was obedient to the death of the cross. And do you see the Lord's eyes looking upon you? did you look this way by the Holy Ghost and did the Lord's eyes fix upon you?

"My conscience felt and owned the guilt,
And plunged me in despair;
I saw my sins His blood had spilt,
And helped to nail Him there."

What a consideration! How quickly that was conveyed to John Newton; how quickly it is conveyed to individual members of Christ as they stand in the same place! Perhaps when you think on conviction and condemnation we may feel that it is quite true to say that "the law is our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ". But you know, there is conviction in another way - and condemnation in another way, and that way is described to us by John Newton here:

"My conscience felt and owned the guilt,
And plunged me in despair;
I saw my sins His blood had spilt,
And helped to nail Him there."

Condemnation, condemnation from the very cross of Christ as we stand there:

"They shall look on Him whom they pierced". You see, there is a remembrance at this particular stage in experience, of our piercing the Lord Jesus Christ by our sins:

"The soldiers pierced His side, 'tis true,
But we have pierced Him through and through".

Who can convey this knowledge but the Holy Ghost? But the blessed hymnwriter, you see, he stood there a little longer:-

"A second look He gave, which said,
I freely all forgive;
This blood is for thy ransom paid;
I die that thou may'st live!"

"They shall look". Are there those who feel a longing come up in their hearts that such a blessing might be theirs? Then, if God has a favour towards you - and has He a favour towards you? - may we just digress for a moment to settle this point: has He a favour toward you? Has He loved you with an everlasting love? How may we determine the truth of it? Well, Jeremiah tells us that with lovingkindness God will draw us. Have we been drawn with God's lovingkindness, have we felt something of God's mercy? It is the goodness of God that brings us to repentance. Have we been brought to this: "One thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see"? Then God has begun a good work of grace, and the Word of God declares: "He Who hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ". Now have we settled this point to this end, that God has placed you amongst the election of grace, God has loved you and manifested His love to you in calling you out of an ungodly world, in speaking to you such a word as "Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye

"shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." (II Cor. 6; 17, 18.)

And have you a hope? And if you have hope, to what will you attribute the power? Power belongeth unto God, power to bring out and power to keep out once you have been brought out. And so we may look at this text again: "They shall look on Him whom they pierced". Now you may feel, because the grace of God is in your hearts, the desirability of being amongst these people, yet at the moment you dare not say that you have had this precious view. Now let me say this, friends, "They shall", and you will. The Word of God is certain, and this is one of those things which are most certainly believed amongst us. "They shall look on Him whom they pierced". It won't be in your time, it won't be in my time, but it will be in God's own time when God shall lead you to this place where you will be able to ascribe to the blessing of it. "They shall look on Him whom they pierced" - what a softening effect it will have upon your spirit. I don't know how you are really, but I so often have to complain about the hardness of my spirit; well, what is going to soften it? - a look like this, a look like this! It is not a natural emotion, though our natural emotions may be moved, but it is a spiritual emotion, an emotion of faith to be able to look upon the Lord Jesus and to see Him as your sin-bearer, to see Him as crucified for you. This is the fulness and substance of the gospel. Paul sums it up in the opening verses of the 15th chapter of his first epistle to the Corinthians: "For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the scriptures". Here is the substance and fulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ. We may rejoice in God's wonders in His providence, we may seek unto Him daily for His provision, wisdom, and strength to be made known unto us, but let us not rest in these things - because it is very important for your strengthening and comfort that the Spirit of God may lead you to this blessed place at the foot of the cross: "They shall look on Him whom they pierced." Now you see, friends, you have a coming together here: Jesus Christ, to many that saw Him, had no relationship, there was no blood relationship. Blood relationship amongst human people does something for them. Our blood relations will have a love for us and we for them which distinguishes us from all other people. Now here is a blood relationship between Christ and His church. Perhaps we may look upon the blood relationship in a different way, but it is a relationship established by blood - our sins are put away by the death of His Son, by the blood of Christ which is able to bring us nigh unto God. There is also that relationship and the spirit of adoption which is granted to them, and how differently we shall view it. In the prophet Zechariah the word is: "They shall mourn for Him as one mourneth for his only son" (Zech. 12, 10) - now there is a blood relationship, think of it for a moment or two. How many, perhaps, think about an only son (whether you have been in this position literally or not), it may be that you can imagine the feelings of your heart if your only son had to be crucified & had to be killed in place of another. Well, the blood relationship would touch a very tender spot in your heart, wouldn't it? And we come to the same kind of situation, only on a much higher plane, as we are moved spiritually. "They shall look on Him whom they pierced". "My brethren" - He is not ashamed to call them brethren. And yet we have pierced Him - pierced Him with what? Need we enumerate the points? It is a personal matter. These things are heart sins. We may have pierced Him outwardly; indeed, our very actions in the days of our unregeneracy have dictated these words of the Jews: "Crucify Him, crucify Him". "Away with this Man". And if your outward actions have not demonstrated it, well, you know whether your inward thoughts did,

when you sat in the house of God and listened to the preaching of the gospel. - Some people can remember how they persecuted in their heart the Lord Jesus, they did not want to know anything about the Lord Jesus. Did it have this effect upon us? It will if we have this blood relationship, if we see the precious blood of Christ by faith being spilt from His side, if we are favoured to observe His sufferings, if we can get near enough to the cross to hear Him cry out in the midst of His agonies: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do". You know the apostle, in writing to his son in the faith, Timothy, speaks about the former days, and he speaks of God's wonderful patience towards him. And he says: "I obtained mercy because I did it ignorantly in unbelief" (Tim.1,13). Look at the kind of man Paul was - not a man gradually moulded up over the years, carefully shielded from an ungodly world so that he was an impeccable man: No, the apostle Paul was a man who had got to go and preach the gospel to sinners, and so we read here he "was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious, but I obtained mercy because I did it ignorantly in unbelief". Do we find some measure of comfort in this? Have we been blasphemers, persecutors, and injurious? - other people may not have known about it, but we know about it, don't we? We know what the thoughts of our heart and the feelings of our mind have been, and we know what unbelief has done. But he goes on: "And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief." Here was a man who had been led by the blessed Spirit to look on Him whom he had pierced. Now if you consider the case of Saul of Tarsus, he did not want to look on Christ until the Lord appeared to him on the Damascus road; he thought he was doing God service, he didn't want to come into this verse:

"I'd creep beside Him as a worm
And see Him bleed for me".

But what made the difference in the apostle? The same powerful influence and Person Who will make the difference in you and me. You are familiar with it, I am sure: there was a Voice from heaven which spoke to Saul on the Damascus road and said "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me? It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks". Whereupon Saul of Tarsus said: "Who art Thou, Lord?" He said: "I am Jesus Whom thou persecutest". And when ^{are} you persecuting Jesus Christ? - every time you are trusting in your own righteousness. Are you a persecutor of Jesus Christ, or are you depending wholly upon the Lord Jesus Christ for your salvation? Well, if you are, it will be because the Spirit of God has led you and brought you to the foot of the cross, and caused your eyes to look, and your eyes to meet those compassionate eyes of Jesus Christ "They shall look on Him whom they pierced." One of our hymns says this:

"On such love, my soul, still ponder,
Love so great, so rich, so free;
Say, whilst lost in holy wonder,
Why, O Lord, such love to me?" - (Kent:766)

the veriest wretch on the earth, the vilest of sinners that has ever lived. They shall look on Him whom they pierced. What do we see? What do the scriptures say concerning the Lord Jesus? "He was holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners". Is that what we see? - the same view that the dying thief had: "We indeed justly, but this Man hath done nothing amiss". But do we hear His sighs and His groans?

"Who can it be that groans beneath
A cross of massy wood,
Whose soul's o'erwhelmed in pains of death
And body bathed in blood?" (950)

Wherefore have these things come upon this holy Man? Replete in righteousness, He was made sin for us Who knew no sin. He was made a curse for us. "They shall look on Him Whom they pierced; and this is what you will see: He has taken your sin from you to Himself, your curse from you to Himself. He was made a curse for us: "They shall look on Him". Well, there is one thing that I am quite sure about, friends, that when Christ takes your sin from you and puts it upon Himself, by gracious revelation, it is going to touch your spirit, make you feel you are the most unworthy creature that ever lived. Perhaps they are oft-repeated words, but there is a deepness in those words:

"Why me, Why me, O blessed God,
Why such a wretch as me?
Who must for ever lie in hell
Were not salvation free." D.Herbert (680)

And we see on yonder cross the Lord Jesus expiring, but not expiring in weakness: "He gave up the ghost", "And He said with a loud voice, It is finished". It was a voice of triumph. "It is finished". Then they shall look on Him whom they pierced, and as they look, will their ears be attuned to this word: "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" Oh, the sufferings of Christ! But there was glory to follow, as Peter speaks of it. The sufferings of Christ - we speak about them but we cannot get into them. We can speak about this text tonight, but only the Holy Ghost can bring us into it; Now, our desire is that we may be brought into it: They shall look on Him whom they pierced. And when you are brought into it, friends, you won't want to know anything about the world or anybody else:

"Had I a glance of Thee, my God,
Kingdoms and men would vanish soon,
Vanish as though I saw them not,
As a dim candle dies at noon". Watts. (480)

And certainly that will be the case when you are brought to this precious spot, this holy, sacred piece of ground, to look on Him whom you pierced. Not other people - you will be amongst the "they". Can we say this: I shall look on Him whom I pierced? - as bringing it down to the personal and individual content. I shall look on Him whom I pierced. Now this is a sign of love, a sign of love indeed. How beautifully does Mr.Hart describe it:

"Oh love of unexampled kind!
That leaves all thought so far behind;
Where length, and breadth, and depth, and height
Are lost to my astonished sight.
For love of me" . . .

-(just think of it, friend, you standing there looking at Christ, your eyes meeting His eyes, your ears listening to His voice)

"For love of me, the Son of God
Drained every drop of vital blood.
Long time I after idols ran;
But now my God's a martyred Man." Hart (153)

"And again another scripture saith. . ." Mark that - "another scripture saith". And the scriptures must be fulfilled, fulfilled not only in relation to the sufferings

of Christ, but also fulfilled in relation to this experience of the whole church of God: "They shall" - you will. If you are amongst those who have felt the love of God at any time in your heart, then this will come to pass: They shall look on Him whom they pierced. And then when earth is exchanged for heaven, they shall look on Him whom they pierced, because He has ascended into heaven with that same body now glorified. And they shall look on Him. O glorious sight, glorious sight, wondrous form! Truly we may be ready to say

"I'd creep beside Him as a worm
And see Him bleed for me".
