

The King on the Cross *Mark 15:16-32*

There are 969 chapters from *Genesis 3* where Adam sinned with the tree in the garden which caused man's separation from God; ...until the time of the other tree which seemed so brutal to Jesus but bought our freedom and rectified all the sin issues of mankind, that the fall of Adam, brought upon us!

This morning, we are in the chapter of scripture which speaks about the second brutal tree so, please open your Bibles to *Mark 15*, as we return to that study.

Last time we learned about Jesus' false trials before Pilate and how the religious leaders asked for a murderer to be set free and Jesus was condemned to be crucified.

In the passage we studied last time, it was about 5 a.m. and Jesus had already been brutally beaten at the High Priest's house.

The religious leaders had already broken many of their own laws with the trials and beating of Jesus and they wanted to stone Jesus themselves, but they didn't have the authority to do so.

The religious leaders sent Jesus to Pilate, who **did not** want to upset the Jewish leadership again, for fear of another uprising.

I think Pilate was hoping to appeal to the masses by asking the crowd if they wanted Jesus released. But the religious leaders manipulated the crowd who asked for Barabas to be released.

Not only did Pilate think Jesus was innocent, but his wife had a vision in a dream and told Pilate not to touch that **innocent** man.

Pilate did not want a political catastrophe on his hands so, Pilate ordered Jesus flogged before He was sent off to be crucified.

This morning, we will pick up the narrative where the soldiers came and led Jesus away to be crucified at Golgotha.

I. Mock worship of the King.

Read *Mark 15:16-20*

The soldiers led Jesus away into the palace which was the governor's residence and called the whole company together.

The *Gospel of Matthew* tells us this was a cohort, which was 600 Roman soldiers.

Titus Kennedy said, "*The Praetorium was in the palace of Herod since that is where Pilate initially installed the golden shields for Tiberius.*"

Notice the Roman soldiers dressed Jesus in purple and gave Him a crown of thorns. Purple, of course, was a sign of royalty.

Mark Wessell in his commentary said, "*It was probably a scarlet military cloak, 'a cast-off and faded rag, but with color enough left in it to suggest the royal purple.'*"

Jesus wore a purple robe, a crown of thorns, and was given a reed for a scepter. A scepter represented the authority and power of a king. They gave Jesus these items to **mock** our King.

Matthew 27:29 When they had twisted a crown of thorns, they put it on His head, and a reed in His right hand. NKJV

The soldiers placed a reed in Jesus' hand as if it were a scepter, then they took it out of His hand and hit Him in the head with it, adding insult to injury against Jesus.

Soon the mocking turned to more brutality as Jesus was beaten, spit upon, and as they pretended to pay homage to Him as a King, the soldiers salute Him and say, "***Hail, King of the Jews***".

The Roman soldiers would greet the emperor with, "*Hail, Caesar*", because it was believed the emperors were divine.

One of the charges against Jesus was He claimed to be a King, so, these soldiers mock Him saying, "***Hail, King of the Jews***".

After all the trials, beatings, and mockery, Pilate declared Jesus not guilty of any crime, yet He still took the cross for our sin.

Here the soldiers were beating Him, spitting on Him, and harassing Him with mock worship. But there has never been any one like Jesus, He is the perfect One and the only God-man.

Imagine Barabbas and the other criminals looking on as all of this was happening to the innocent Lamb of God. Barabbas was the murderer insurrectionist who deserved what Jesus received.

This is a tough portion of scripture, because as we sit here and listen to all that happened to Jesus, we realize that like Barabbas, we actually **deserve** what Jesus was receiving for our sin.

After the mock worship, beatings, and humiliation, the soldiers finally led Jesus out to be crucified.

II. *Would you carry the Cross for the King?*

Read *Mark 15:21-24*

The book, “*Cold Case Christianity*” discusses many different opinions on what the cross of Christ would have looked like.

The book said Justin Martyr from 100 AD expressly described the cross of Jesus as being constructed from two beams.

Jesus had been awake for over 24 hours. He suffered at Gethsemane and endured all of the illegal trials and beatings.

David Guzik said, “*The weight of the entire cross was typically 300 pounds. Typically, the victim carried only the crossbar, which weighed anywhere from 75 to 125 pounds.*”

After the beatings and being awake for 24 hours, Jesus was having a hard time standing let alone carrying this crossmember.

Josephus said, “*The Jews caught outside the walls of Jerusalem were first whipped, and then tormented with all sorts of tortures, before they died, and then crucified before the wall of the city.*

The soldiers, out of the wrath and hatred they bore the Jews, nailed those they caught, one after one way, and another after another, to the crosses, by way of jest.”

The soldiers see Simon, a proselyte, who had come to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover and made him carry the cross.

The place they led Jesus to crucify Him was called Golgotha by the Jews and is known as **Calvary** in Latin. This is the same mountain where Abraham was supposed to sacrifice Isaac.

If Jesus owned a home in Jerusalem, they would have crucified Him at His house, to shame Him more. Since He didn't own a home, He was led to the place where criminals were executed.

Understand this: Criminals were executed for the justice of the government, but the Lord Jesus Christ was sacrificed for the justice of God to be satisfied for sin's atonement.

Justice and mercy do not normally go together so, the concept of Justice and mercy mingled together is hard for people to grasp.

We expect either justice or mercy, but how can they both happen at the same time. The Lord is both a God who judges with justice. **But**

The Lord is also a God of mercy and compassion, as He paid the price for our sin. The sacrifice of Jesus on the cross at Calvary made it possible for God to combine both justice and mercy.

Billy Graham once said, *“We need Christ, for only He can take away our sins and make us pure in the eyes of God.*

He was without sin – but He willingly allowed the stain of our sins to be transferred to Him and took the judgment we deserved.

*“It's as if you were taken before a judge and pronounced guilty for something you had done – and then the judge stepped down and **paid** your fine out of his own pocket.” (Billy Graham)*

Some commentators think this place was called the place of a skull because it was where the bones and skulls of dead people were laid so that no one would touch them and become defiled.

But most commentators believe the hill was called the skull because it was shaped similar to a human skull.

Then notice they tried to give Jesus a drink to deaden the pain.

Posca was the name of the mixture of vinegar and water that was fermented and consumed by the lower classes in ancient Rome.

Gall is actually a form of poison or wormwood, used to make the drink intoxicating.

It was customary to give those about to be crucified a pain, and mind-numbing drink, to lessen their awareness of the agony, dull the senses, and make the cross easier to bear.

Jesus refused the pain and mind-numbing drink, rather He chose to face the terror, completely **aware** of what He was accomplishing as He sacrificed His life.

F.F. Bruce said, “*Jesus declined the drink, desiring to suffer with a clear mind.*” Nearly 1000 years before Christ, David wrote...

Psalm 69:20 Reproach has broken my heart, And I am full of heaviness; I looked for someone to take pity, but there was none; And for comforters, but I found none.

Psalm 69:21 They also gave me gall for my food, and for my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink. NKJV

Jesus took the cross to suffer for our sins, and the gall they offered Him was symbolic of His bitter suffering.

Because Jesus was willing to suffer all these things for our sakes, He was not willing to refuse any part of the suffering.

Everything Jesus did was necessary for our salvation in His great work of making **atonement** for our sins.

Jesus knew exactly what His was doing, dying for our sin so He knew He could not drink this vinegar mixed with gall.

This was yet another temptation Jesus faced, but Jesus came for a mission, and He was going to complete it.

Matthew 18:11 For the Son of Man has come to save that which was lost. NKJV

The painless path is what the world would tell us to thrive for, always take the way of least resistance.

The easy way out is what our self-preserving flesh desires, but Jesus knew what He was there to do, and He is not self-seeking.

Jesus chose to fulfill the will of the Father having all of His faculties intact.

Notice *vs. 24*, the soldiers divided up His garments.

John 19 tells us they took His garments and made four parts, but they agreed not to tear the tunic because it didn't have a seam, so they cast lots for it instead.

In one of the over 300 Old Testament prophecies Jesus fulfilled, *Psalm 22:18* says, “*They divide My garments among them, and for My clothing they cast lots.*” *NKJV*

It was a common practice during crucifixions to allow the soldiers to keep the garments of the executed, but there is a practical lesson for us as well.

Our Savior was stripped in humiliation before He was nailed to the cross.

Jesus came from heaven to earth to accomplish our salvation. He willingly let go of absolutely everything, even His clothing, becoming poor for us, so we could be spiritually **rich** in Him.

III. The ridicule of the King on the Cross.

Read *Mark 15:25-32*

“*THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS*”. When the Pharisees brought Jesus to Pilate, they said He blasphemed God.

But Pilate didn't care about Judaism, so they said Jesus claimed to be a King, which was seen as insurrection, against Caesar.

We are told in *John 19:20*, *Then many of the Jews read this title, for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city; and it was written in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin.*

John 19:21 Therefore the chief priests of the Jews said to Pilate, "Do not write, 'The King of the Jews,' but, 'He said, "I am the King of the Jews.'"

John 19:22 Pilate answered, "What I have written, I have written." NKJV

The religious leaders objected to this title and felt it was false, because they did not believe Jesus was the *King of the Jews*.

It also showed Rome's power to humiliate the *King of the Jews*.

But Pilate said, "*What I have written, I have written.*"

I believe the Lord led Pilate to write this in the major languages of the day to ensure all the people who had descended upon Jerusalem at this time, would know who Jesus was.

Not only is Jesus King of the Jews, but He is also King of the world. The Father wanted the whole world to know it that day!

Pilate intended this to be an accusation against the Jews for killing their King, but Pilate unknowingly wrote the first ever Gospel tract that day and put it above Jesus' head on the cross.

We are not told much about these two men who were crucified with Jesus, but **Barabbas** should have been the third in this trio of condemned prisoners on crosses, but Pilate released him.

Luke tells us much more. *Luke 23:39 Then one of the criminals who were hanged blasphemed Him, saying, "If You are the Christ, save Yourself and us."*

Luke 23:40 But the other, answering, rebuked him, saying, "Do you not even fear God, seeing you are under the same condemnation?"

Luke 23:41 And we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds; but this Man has done nothing wrong."

Luke 23:42 Then he said to Jesus, "Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom."

Luke 23:43 And Jesus said to him, "Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise." NKJV

It seems both criminals were blaspheming Jesus at first, but one of them had a change of **heart** and received eternal life.

What did the second criminal's heart change look like?

- He respected God; he asked, "***Do you not even fear God***".
- He knew he was a sinner (he said, "***And we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds.***")
- He knew Jesus had done nothing wrong.
- He called out to Jesus as Lord (*kyrios*) Master, boss, God.
- He believed Jesus was who He said He was (***remember me when You come into Your kingdom***).

Clarke said, "*It is worthy of remark, that this man appears to have been the first who believed in the intercession of Christ.*"

Jesus recognized the faith of the second criminal and assured him that he would be with Jesus in Paradise, and not in torment.

The thief who trusted in Jesus at the last moment inherited heaven and demonstrated the **grace** of God, and this shows us that salvation is not earned by any human work or merit.

Jesus told the thief, because he believed, he gained eternal life.

This assurance was so important to Jesus that it cost Him everything. Imagine, the almighty King of the universe listening to mocking as He is dying for the sins of the world He created.

In *Mark 15:31*, their **accusation** was somewhat **true**, “*He saved others; Himself He cannot save*”. If Jesus saved Himself, He would not have fulfilled His mission to save lost sinners.

Jesus called Lazarus out of the grave and back to life so, we know He had the power and authority to save people.

The angel said to Joseph in *Matthew 1:20* “*Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take to you Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit.*”

Matthew 1:21 And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name JESUS, for He will save His people from their sins.” NKJV

It is not that He didn't have the power to come down from the cross, but He would not come down so that we might be saved.

No nail ever formed could ever keep God the Son on the cross.

If the truth were told, even if Jesus did come down off of the cross, the religious leaders still **would not believe** in Him.

The religious leaders told Jesus to come down from the cross to prove He was who He said He was, but staying on the cross is what ultimately proved that He was the promised **Messiah**.

After Jesus' baptism, *Matthew 4:1 Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. NKJV*

Satan tried to get Jesus to take a short cut to the throne, but Jesus would not go the easy route so that He could fulfill His mission.

Here again is another temptation to take the easy way out, but Jesus will not leave His children without a way of salvation.

The religious leaders wanted Jesus to come down from the Cross to prove He is God the Son, instead, the proof He offered for being the Son of God was rising from the **dead** on the third day.

IV. Practical Application.

Other than the obvious crucifixion of Christ, there are two main take home points from our passage for us this morning.

1. The mock worship of Jesus.

We would never admit to worshipping the Lord in a mocking way, but when we worship the Lord in a way we desire, rather than worshipping Him in a biblical manner, it is wrong as well.

Some of the new movements in modern worship going through the Church, are nothing more than emotionalism and power of suggestion, rather than worshipping the Lord for who He is.

John 4:24 God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth." NKJV

Worship and praise are what we use to express our amazement and thankfulness to the Lord for His mighty acts.

When someone worships something or someone else, they become like the object of worship. The object of worship does not become like the worshipper.

We are to become like Jesus, we do not get to make a god of our own making. Praise also recognizes the Lord's abundant goodness, righteousness, His grace, mercy, and patience.

Worship is not just a time of singing, it is a lifestyle where we express our praise and love to God as a **response** to who He is and what He has done, in a biblical manner, *in spirit and truth*.

Our response to who Jesus is and what He's done for us should *worship in spirit and truth* and the result is an expression of worship that engages all that we are blessing His Holy Name!

2. Simon was compelled to **carry** the Cross for Jesus.

Jesus said in *Mark 8:34*, "***Whoever desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.***"

Jesus wants His followers to pursue Him with the same passion they would pursue someone romantically, a pursuit that should consume a follower's thoughts, resources, and energy, as well.

Adam Clarke says, "***Let him deny himself***" means, "*To renounce self-dependence, and selfish pursuits.*" "***Take up his cross***", Jesus was talking about complete surrender to God's will

And follow Me". *Follow*, here means to continually *follow* in a specific **direction**, following a specific person. *Mark 8:34*

Following Jesus is the only way to find the Abundant Life. You will never truly live, until you die to yourself and follow Him!

As Christians we pick up our cross and follow Jesus. i.e., we are to fully submit to the leadership of the Holy Spirit in our life.

As practical application let's discuss the 3 men on the crosses.

The first man: This robber represents the world that wants to be saved without receiving Jesus as Lord and Savior.

He said, "*If You are the Messiah, then take away the judgment and show us what You can do.*" He wanted to be saved on his own terms and he was not willing to follow Jesus.

The kind of Messiah the world desires is a god of their own making, where they call the shots and have no consequences.

The world is not willing to pick up their cross and follow Jesus.

They are only concerned with self-interest and fulfilling the lusts of the flesh. They say, show me, give me and then I will believe.

The second criminal said in ***Luke 23:40 "Do you not even fear God, seeing you are under the same condemnation?"***

Luke 23:41 And we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds; but this Man has done nothing wrong.

The second criminal put his burden of sin on Him who bore the sins of the whole world, and because he trusted Jesus, he received the assurance that he would be with Jesus in Paradise.

The thief who trusted in Jesus inherited eternal life.

The third man is the God-Man, Jesus Himself. Jesus not only took our sins on His body up on the tree, but He also bore sin in His body. He who knew no sin, was made sin for us.

God did what was impossible for the Law to do, by condemning sin in Christ's flesh. Everyone who desires to be saved from their sin, must receive Jesus' sacrifice made at Mount Calvary.

The religious leaders were calling on Jesus to come down from the cross to prove He is, who He said He was. But by staying on the cross, Jesus really proved He was the promised Messiah.

God entered the world through the person of Jesus Christ, and those who reject the gift of salvation are sealing their own eternal future. May we never take the cross of Christ lightly.

May we never forget what our salvation cost the King of the universe, how He loves us and suffered to pay for our sin!

A relationship with God is like no other relationship you have experienced. It is not based upon meeting certain conditions or working to earn His favor. God loves you because He loves you.

There is nothing you can do to cause God to love you any more than He does, and nothing can make God to love you less.

Once we are in relationship with the Lord, He then makes the statement..."*Whoever desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.*"