

The Gospel According to Luke

Luke 23:26-31

Reading: Isaiah 53

Parallel Passages: Matthew 27:32-44 and Mark 15:21-32

Sermon #102

December 13, 2020

The Cross Of Christ

The Innocent Dies For The Guilty

The court proceedings are over. Herod and Pilate have declared Jesus to be innocent of all crimes. Yet, this innocent Man is on His way to be crucified. To keep the peace, Pilate has sentenced this well-known innocent Man, the only completely innocent One to ever have lived, to His death, a death by crucifixion. An evil act that God used for salvation.

Luke does not tell us anything about what happens from Pilate's decision to crucify Jesus until He is at Golgotha. However, both Matthew and Mark report that after Pilate had released Jesus to the will of the people, to their desire to crucify Him, he had Jesus scourged. Reading from Matthew 27 beginning at verse 24, "[So when Pilate saw that he was gaining nothing, but rather that a riot was beginning, he took water and washed his hands before the crowd, saying, 'I am innocent of this man's blood; see to it yourselves.'](#)"²⁵ [And all the people answered, 'His blood be on us and on our children!'](#)"²⁶ [Then he released for them Barabbas, and having scourged Jesus, delivered him to be crucified."](#) So, not only did Pilate condemn to death an innocent Man but decides to have Him scourged.

A Roman scourging was a very intense torture. The torture of scourging was so severe that Roman citizens were exempt from it. The Romans were the masters of torture. The victim was stripped of clothing, bound and usually bent over so the back skin and muscles were tight. The two soldiers one on each side holding a rod

with leather strands and on the ends of the strands were tied bits of bone, sharp pieces of metal and even glass. When the whip hit it actually implanted these sharp objects into the victim's back. The torturer would then pull back the whip ripping deep into the victim's back. Many times, the scourging itself would kill the victim. Many times, after it was over the victim's skin was all but gone. The customary number of lashes was 39. As we learn from Paul, who was also scourged, he wrote, **"Five times I received at the hands of the Jews the forty lashes less one."** (2 Corinthians 11:24) Can you image the scaring of Paul's back? It seems by biblical and historical accounts; Jesus' scourging was especially brutal. It is amazing Jesus lived through it, but He does survive because God is in control and His Son would die according His to plan for mankind's salvation. On this bleeding and ripped back Jesus has to carry the beam of the cross.

After the scourging, Jesus was barely alive, but He is forced to pick up the cross beam and carry it to the site where He would be crucified. Beloved, never forget the price of your salvation, ⁵**"But ~~he~~ Jesus was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed."** (Isaiah 53:5) Those there that day witnessed Jesus coming out of the Praetorium (**prē'tōrēəm**) beaten beyond recognition with a bloody scarlet robe (*the color of the Roman god of war, Mars and it was the color worn by Roman soldiers, the color of Rome*) and He had a crown of thorns pressed deep into His scalp. This crown of thorns was used by the Romans to cause pain and to mock Jesus as the King of the Jews. If you had been there you too would be weeping and feeling sorrow for Jesus and you would have heard His response to all who felt remorse and sorrow for Him, Jesus said, **"...do not weep for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children."** (Luke

23:28) Without Jesus as one's Lord and Savior there is no hope and we weep for the lost.

Jesus Christ, the Rabbi, the Teacher of eternal truth, who went from town to town preaching the Good News of salvation, this Jesus, the One who had the power to heal all who came to Him and raised the dead to life, is now beaten, bloody and walking the final path to die for the sins of all mankind. Matthew tells us in chapter 27, verses 27 to 31, “Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the governor's headquarters, and they gathered the whole battalion before him. ²⁸ And they stripped him and put a scarlet robe on him, ²⁹ and twisting together a crown of thorns, they put it on his head and put a reed in his right hand. And kneeling before him, they mocked him, saying, ‘Hail, King of the Jews!’ ³⁰ And they spit on him and took the reed and struck him on the head. ³¹ And when they had mocked him, they stripped him of the robe and put his own clothes on him and led him away to crucify him.” (Matthew 27:27-31) We deserve to suffer for our sins, but Christ brings salvation by His suffering.

My beloved, I wanted us to feel the weight of what Jesus was enduring and that every bit of it was so that He could reconcile us to God. It is we who should have been scourged and hung on the cross as sinners against a Holy God. When we begin to understand that a crucifixion was horrific in its torture and that Christ was there in our place, we must begin to see just what is involved and what it took for God to forgive us. We learned that repentance must accompany forgiveness. In God's case not only is repentance necessary but also restitution. Someone must be punished and for those who place their trust in Christ, He is the One who takes our place of punishment. Jesus is the One, as Isaiah wrote the words of God, ²⁵ “I, I am he who blots out your transgressions for my own sake, and I will not remember your sins.” (Isaiah 43:25) So, this morning the theme that runs through this

message and the theme that runs through history is; ***the cross is Jesus' greatest achievement, what man meant as an instrument of torture and death, God used as an instrument of life and reconciliation.***

The Right Place & Time (v.26)

Nothing concerning Jesus was an accident. I hope after studying 23 chapters of Luke we can all comprehend that event after event was being accomplished by God's divine plan. Even to the degree that God used sinful people to accomplish it. God's Providence continues, reading at verse 26, "And as they led him away, they seized one Simon of Cyrene, who was coming in from the country, and laid on him the cross, to carry it behind Jesus." Cyrene is modern day Libya. Luke weaves his narrative very carefully in just a few simple words, he shows us that all those in power and control of Jerusalem who were out to have Jesus eliminated were in complete agreement as Jesus was led away to be crucified. In contrast to those seeking Jesus' death is Simon of Cyrene, an outsider, one whom no one has really ever even met. Simon is not famous; he is not one who stands out in the scriptures. However, God knew Simon and it was Simon whom God wanted to carry His Son's cross. So, in God's amazing providence, Simon is at the right place at the right time. Yet for Simon, I am sure in that moment thought otherwise.

What seems to be a situation of someone being in the wrong place at the wrong time was in fact the exact right place at God's appointed time. No one knows for sure what all Simon heard that day while he was carrying Jesus' cross. But, I believe, he most definitely heard the Gospel. He came to know by the end of the day that ***the cross is Jesus' greatest achievement, what man meant as an instrument of torture and death, God used for an instrument of life.***

Do Not Weep (v.27-30)

The cross of Christ is not death or defeat but eternal victory. He wants those who are seeing Him suffer in agony to realize that their tears are, in a sense, being wasted on Him because unless they repent something worse awaits them. Reading at verse 27, “And there followed him a great multitude of the people and of women who were mourning and lamenting for him.”²⁸ But turning to them Jesus said, ‘Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children.’²⁹ For behold, the days are coming when they will say, ‘Blessed are the barren and the wombs that never bore and the breasts that never nursed!’³⁰ Then they will begin to say to the mountains, ‘Fall on us,’ and to the hills, ‘Cover us.’” It is not easily apparent who these women were. It seems from what many scholars believe, they were women who wept and mourned for all Jews who were led away by the Romans to be crucified. They wept over the fact that Rome was in power. They wept because it was Jewish people who were those so often crucified. If this is true, they were not necessarily weeping for Jesus because He was the Christ but they wept for all those who were crucified that day. This was what was known as the Jewish death wail. It was often done as a lament for the dead or in the case of Jesus it was a lament for One about to die.

On the other hand, Jesus as the Son of God knows what judgment awaits the inhabitants of Jerusalem and earlier in Luke gospel, He wept for them in chapter 19,⁴¹ “And when he drew near and saw the city, he wept over it,⁴² saying, ‘Would that you, even you, had known on this day the things that make for peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes.’⁴³ For the days will come upon you, when your enemies will set up a barricade around you and surround you and hem you in on every side⁴⁴ and tear you down to the ground, you and your children within you. And they will not leave one stone upon another in you, because you did not know

the time of your visitation.” (Luke 19:41-44) The cross of Christ is not something that should illicit continual weeping from those in Jerusalem because the cross is the plan and purpose of God to save many. Jesus commands them to take their tears and begin weeping for themselves. The sadness of the cross should and must point to sins yet to be cleansed. Weeping should occur for those whose sin God will demand payment for. Jesus will endure an unbelievable judgment bearing the sins of God’s people. Yet this judgment will last but a few hours. It is Friday, but Sunday is coming; the people may have lost hope but Jesus knew He would rise and live eternally. Jesus sadness is because He knows that the sins left unpaid will bring God’s eternal punishment.

As the Son of God and as God; Jesus’ payment for the eternal sins of mankind was because He was the only One who could pay for our sins. For man to pay for sins committed against an eternal God requires an eternity of punishment. That is why Jesus tells these mourners that they had better start weeping for themselves and for their lost children. Only those who believe in Christ as God and Savior will have their sins be atoned for.

The cross of Christ demands that the lost weep over their sin. Someday, all the lost will mourn and weep because of their sins. I pray today that we have all trusted Christ as Lord and Savior and know our sins were paid in full on the cross.

Not only does Jesus tell these women to weep for themselves and their children because of sins eternal punishment but also because of sin’s immediate punishment. Not only is the cross the symbol of salvation for Christians, but because of the cross we must realize there is punishment for sin. The cross is proof that all sin will be punished. Isaiah told us that the cross was planned by God and we can see that God’s hand is at work bringing all these events together to produce

the death of Christ for sin. Since this is taking place as a payment for sin, then the cross is a symbol that all who are outside of Christ will suffer even a worse fate. All sin is punished! All sin is paid for by Christ or paid eternally by the sinner.

We are familiar with the Beatitudes Jesus spoke in Matthew 5 and Luke 6; blessed are the poor in spirit, blessed are those who mourn for they will be comforted, blessed are the meek, the merciful, pure in heart and peace makers, but now Jesus speaks what is referred to as “*unholy*” Beatitudes in verse 29; “**Blessed are the barren and the wombs that never bore and the breasts that never nursed!**” You might be thinking, pastor, why would you say this. Because Jesus knew the destruction of Jerusalem was just 40 years in the future. Jesus knew the Romans would be so brutal and the suffering so difficult that it would be a blessing for all women who were barren and had no children. Women with children would have to watch them suffer and die. Historians called the Jewish wars the most horrible time in human history, because the suffering would be so intense the people welcomed death. The people would cry out, ³⁰ “**to the mountains, ‘Fall on us,’ and to the hills, ‘Cover us.’**”

God’s Judgement (v.31)

Finally, Jesus draws an allusion from a common proverb or saying of the day in verse 31, “**For if they do these things when the wood is green, what will happen when it is dry?**” Jesus compares what is going on currently to Himself to what will take place in due time to those in Jerusalem.

It seems a little confusing at first, but here is what Jesus is getting at; the contrast is concerning physical realm between wet, green wood compared to dry

wood. Green wood makes good hotdog sticks because the wood will not easily burn as compared to a dry branch that will immediately burst into flames.

I believe Jesus' logic goes like this - if God does not spare Jesus (green wood) from certain judgment; even though we know that Jesus was sinless and innocent and He was bearing the sin of His people. Then how much more ready for judgment are those evil unrepentant sinners in Jerusalem (dry wood)? Jesus' point is; do not weep for Me, even though I am being executed it is not for my sin but the sin of others that I am dying for. Rather weep for yourselves and your children because you all are dry wood ready for God's white-hot wrath and will immediately burst into eternal flames. As we read history, we observe everything Jesus predicted concerning Jerusalem's destruction took place in 70 A.D.

My beloved, please understand, even the horror of their coming destruction by the Romans in 70 A.D. will be nothing as compared to eternal destruction in the last day. If people cry out for death and ask that the mountains fall on them in Jerusalem, how much more will they cry out when faced with God's eternal wrath? We should see here in Jesus' very words, even within hours of His death, these are words of warning and these can even be words of hope – these are words of hope if these women see their great need for God's Son and repent.

Hidden Power of the Cross

I end our time together and our study of Luke's gospel passage with something, somewhat hidden in our text; by God's providence Simon hears and believes in Jesus as his Savior. Where do I find this? As Jesus spoke Simon listened as he carried the cross beam. Like other Jews, Simons had come to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover, but the Romans force him to carry the cross of Christ. Even though he may not have thought so, Simon was in the right place at

the right time. As he stood there watching the procession, he may even have thought Jesus deserved death. Suddenly he is thrust right into the middle of the procession. As Simon followed Jesus, he heard what He said. I believe God began to melt Simon's heart of stone and give him a heart of flesh. Thoughts began racing through his mind; why was a noble and righteous Man being put to death? Why would One about to die a criminal's death be speaking to others about repentance? As Simon followed Jesus in this slow journey towards the place outside of Jerusalem called Golgotha, which in Aramaic means "place of the skull" and the Latin word for skull is "calvaria" which is translated in English as "Calvary", I think it is possible by the journey's end Simon may have become aware that Jesus was the real Passover Lamb and become a believer.

I have come to this conclusion after reading Mark's gospel and Paul's letter to the Romans. In Mark we read, "And they compelled a passerby, Simon of Cyrene, who was coming in from the country, the father of Alexander and Rufus, to carry his cross." (Mark 15:21) So, Mark tells us that Simon had two sons, Alexander and Rufus. Both of Simon's sons would later hold prominent positions in the Church and Simon's wife was sort of a spiritual mother to the Apostle Paul. Years later, Paul remembers Rufus and his mother and sends them a greeting as he ends his letter to the church in Rome. Paul wrote, "Greet Rufus, chosen in the Lord; also his mother, who has been a mother to me as well." (Romans 16:13) Something happened to Simon as he followed the Lord, carrying His cross. Simon was converted. Simon at some point repented. Simon, just as surely as he took up the cross and was following Christ, literally, took up his own cross and followed Christ with his life for we see the result in the life in his sons and wife.

Jesus said to all who had ears to hear and hearts open to the truth of God, in Luke chapter 9, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up

his cross daily and follow me. ²⁴ For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it. ²⁵ For what does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses or forfeits himself?” This are words of truth, words saying everyone must choose God or the world. Jesus then gives words of judgment for those who choose the world, ²⁶ “For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words, of him will the Son of Man be ashamed when he comes in his glory and the glory of the Father and of the holy angels.” Jesus knew some would hear and believe and would be saved, for He continues, ²⁷ “But I tell you truly, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the kingdom of God.” (Luke 9:23-27)

I pray today that as we have listened to Jesus through the Gospels and that we too are passionate followers. That we can put ourselves into the place of Simon following Jesus to Golgotha and listening to His words of truth, of hope and of judgement. Who could have ever guessed that this Simon of Cyrene would be converted? Not only Simon but also his wife. Not only his wife but his two sons. Not only this but they would meet and minister to the Apostle Paul.

All this because the world would say Simon was at the wrong place and the wrong time. But, for God, ²⁸ “we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. ²⁹ For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. ³⁰ And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.” (Romans 8:28-30) Simon was truly in the right place at the right time.

So, we observe the cross got amazingly brighter and lovelier, as our Lord, even at the point of His death, cares for the daughters of Jerusalem and man behind Him who was forced to carry His cross. My beloved, is not God's providence is truly amazing!

This is the cross, the cross of Christ. So, my beloved of Canyon Bible Church, do not weep for Jesus but weep for all who have not believed in Christ as their Savior. The eternal truth is, ***the cross is Jesus' greatest achievement, what man meant as an instrument of torture and death, God used as an instrument of life and reconciliation.*** If you have listened to this message and are not a believer in Christ; weep for yourself. For those of us who believe in Jesus as our Lord and Savior, this is the most amazing truth! Amen and amen!