

42. The Crucifixion

Jesus said in Mark 10:45, “For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.” He left the glory of heaven in order to submit to death in our place. So today, we will contemplate the fulfillment of our Lord’s mission.

We have already seen that in the course of Jesus’ trial before Pilate, he was beaten by the Roman soldiers. The Roman way of whipping one who was condemned often killed the prisoner, even if he had not been condemned to death. The instrument used for this beating was made of several leather strips interlaced with pieces of bone or sharpened stones, attached to a handle. It left the flesh of the victim looking like minced or ground meat, with all the nerves exposed. Most of the victims lost consciousness before the soldiers finished the job. It was not unusual for the victim to lose his mind during this torture. Jesus endured this, and after that he was again struck, humiliated in many ways, and then forced to carry the heavy wood to which he would be attached.

But the crucifixion which would follow this lashing and painful trek was even worse. This was a death so shameful and so cruel that it was forbidden, even inconceivable, to administer it to a Roman citizen, regardless of his crime. It was reserved for slaves or the most detestable criminals, being the most dreaded form of death anywhere in the world in the first century. Our lesson is taken from Matthew 27, Luke 23 and John 19.

THE STORY

“Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the Praetorium and gathered the whole garrison around Him. And they stripped Him and put a scarlet robe on Him. When they had twisted a crown of thorns, they put it on His head, and a reed in His right hand. And they bowed the knee before Him and mocked Him, saying, ‘Hail, King of the Jews!’ Then they spat on Him, and took the reed and struck Him on the head.” (Matthew 27:27-30)

“They took Jesus and led Him away. And He, bearing His cross...” (John 19:16,17)

“Now as they came out, they found a man of Cyrene, Simon by name. Him they compelled to bear His cross.” (Matthew 27:32)

“And a great multitude of the people followed Him, and women who also mourned and lamented Him. But Jesus, turning to them, said, ‘Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for Me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. For indeed the days are coming in which they will say, “Blessed are the barren, wombs that never bore, and breasts which never nursed!” Then they will begin to say to the mountains, “Fall on us!” and to the hills, “Cover us!” For if they do these things in the green wood, what will be done in the dry?’ There were also two others, criminals, led with Him to be put to death.” (Luke 23:27-32)

“And when they had come to a place called Golgotha, that is to say, Place of a Skull, they gave Him sour wine mingled with gall to drink. But when He had tasted it, He would not drink.” (Matthew 27:33,34)

“And when they had come to the place called Calvary, there they crucified Him, and the criminals, one on the right hand and the other on the left. Then Jesus said, ‘Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do...’” (Luke 23:33,34)

“Now Pilate wrote a title and put it on the cross. And the writing was: Jesus of Nazareth, The King of the Jews. 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. 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.’” Pilate answered, ‘What I have written, I have written.’”

“Then the soldiers, when they had crucified Jesus, took His garments and made four parts, to each soldier a part, and also the tunic. Now the tunic was without seam, woven from the top in one piece. They said therefore among themselves, ‘Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it, whose it shall be,’ that the Scripture might be fulfilled which says: ‘They divided My garments among them,

and for My clothing they cast lots.' Therefore the soldiers did these things." (John 19:19-24)

"And those who passed by blasphemed Him, wagging their heads and saying, 'You who destroy the temple and build it in three days, save Yourself! If You are the Son of God, come down from the cross.' Likewise the chief priests also, mocking with the scribes and elders, said, 'He saved others; Himself He cannot save. If He is the King of Israel, let Him now come down from the cross, and we will believe Him. He trusted in God; let Him deliver Him now if He will have Him; for He said, "I am the Son of God."' Even the robbers who were crucified with Him reviled Him with the same thing." (Matthew 27:39-44)

"Then one of the criminals who were hanged blasphemed Him, saying, 'If You are the Christ, save Yourself and us.' But the other, answering, rebuked him, saying, 'Do you not even fear God, seeing you are under the same condemnation? And we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds; but this Man has done nothing wrong.' Then he said to Jesus, 'Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom.' And Jesus said to him, 'Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise.'" (Luke 23:39-43)

"Now there stood by the cross of Jesus His mother, and His mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus therefore saw His mother, and the disciple whom He loved standing by, He said to His mother, 'Woman, behold your son!' Then He said to the disciple, 'Behold your mother!' And from that hour that disciple took her to his own home." (John 19:25-27)

"Now from the sixth hour until the ninth hour there was darkness over all the land. And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, 'Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?' that is, 'My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?' Some of those who stood there, when they heard that, said, 'This Man is calling for Elijah!'" (Matthew 27:45-47)

"After this, Jesus, knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the Scripture might be

fulfilled, said, 'I thirst!' Now a vessel full of sour wine was sitting there; and they filled a sponge with sour wine, put it on hyssop, and put it to His mouth." (John 19:28,29)

"The rest said, 'Let Him alone; let us see if Elijah will come to save Him.'" (Matthew 27:49)

"So when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, 'It is finished!' And bowing His head, He gave up His spirit." (John 19:30)

"And when Jesus had cried out with a loud voice, He said, 'Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit.' Having said this, He breathed His last." (Luke 23:46)

"Then, behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom; and the earth quaked, and the rocks were split, and the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised; and coming out of the graves after His resurrection, they went into the holy city and appeared to many. So when the centurion and those with him, who were guarding Jesus, saw the earthquake and the things that had happened, they feared greatly, saying, 'Truly this was the Son of God!' And many women who followed Jesus from Galilee, ministering to Him, were there looking on from afar, among whom were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Joses, and the mother of Zebedee's sons." (Matthew 27:51-56)

"And the whole crowd who came together to that sight, seeing what had been done, beat their breasts and returned." (Luke 23:48)

"Therefore, because it was the Preparation Day, that the bodies should not remain on the cross on the Sabbath (for that Sabbath was a high day), the Jews asked Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away. Then the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first and of the other who was crucified with Him. But when they came to Jesus and saw that He was already dead, they did not break His legs. But one of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear, and immediately blood and water came out. And he who has seen has testified, and his testimony is true; and he knows that he is telling the truth, so that you may

believe. For these things were done that the Scripture should be fulfilled, 'Not one of His bones shall be broken.' And again another Scripture says, 'They shall look on Him whom they pierced.'" (John 19:31-37)

HE THOUGHT ABOUT OTHERS

Even during the atrocious suffering at Calvary, Jesus was thinking of others. When the women beside the road wept for him, Jesus thought about the suffering that awaited the city of Jerusalem when its destruction would come several years later. If the green wood burns, won't the dry wood burn even more surely? If this is how Jesus, the innocent one, was treated, what would be the fate of the city whose inhabitants had unjustly demanded his death?

When the Roman soldiers pounded hard iron nails into his hands and feet, Jesus thought about them and prayed, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do..." The Jews, who in jealousy and hate had demanded his death, knew what they were doing. Pilate also knew that he was delivering an innocent man to death. But the Roman soldiers were probably brought from Caesarea to increase security in Jerusalem during the Passover holiday. They may not have known the man they were putting to death. Their crime was actually wicked beyond description, but they were acting out of ignorance and Jesus asked that God forgive them.

When Jesus was in agony on the cross, he thought about Mary, the one who had given birth to him and raised him. He thought about the sadness and loneliness of Mary after the death of her first son. Jesus' brothers did not yet believe in him (John 7:5). So he entrusted his mother Mary to John, his disciple, so that he might comfort and help her. Jesus thought about others despite his own suffering. Isn't it certain that he also thought of you and me and all those for whom he was giving his life?

HE GAVE HIS LIFE WILLINGLY

Long before his arrest, Jesus said in John 10:17,18: "Therefore My Father loves Me, because I lay down My life that I may take it again. No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This command I have received from My Father." When Peter wanted to defend him so they would not seize him, Jesus told him, "Or do you think that I cannot

now pray to My Father, and He will provide Me with more than twelve legions of angels?" (Matthew 26:53). But he didn't do that. Through the course of his trial, he made no attempt to defend himself to defend himself against the false and unjust accusations that were brought against him against the false accusations and injustices that were brought against him. He could have saved himself easily by saying that he was not the Christ. But he didn't do this. When he was offered vinegar mixed with gall, a bitter drug that would have reduced his pain, he refused it. He was ready to fully endure the punishment deserved by our sins.

Those who mocked Jesus—the soldiers, the priests, the thieves, the passers-by—told him to come down from the cross if he was the Son of God so they could believe in him. Thank God he didn't do that. And it is because he stood firmly until the end that we can put all our trust in him today for our salvation.