

114. 6 hours on the Cross

March 18, 2018

A couple of Sundays ago, we studied the portion of the Gospels where Jesus carried the cross beam of His cross to Golgotha to be crucified. The Roman soldiers put Jesus on the cross at 9 am. Each breath became a labor; each move of His muscles shot excruciating pains all over His torn body. Jesus chose to be on the cross, not because He was a helpless victim, rather He knew that this was the ONLY way for mankind to have salvation. He was there for 6 long painful hours, because of His grace, mercy, and love for us.

We will continuously study Jesus' 6 hours on the cross in depth this morning.

A. MOCKING CONTINUES

Mark 15:27-31 With Him they also crucified two robbers, one on His right and the other on His left. 28 So the Scripture was fulfilled which says, "And He was numbered with the transgressors." 29 And those who passed by blasphemed Him, wagging their heads and saying, "Aha! You who destroy the temple and build it in three days, 30 save Yourself, and come down from the cross!" 31 Likewise the chief priests also, mocking among themselves with the scribes, said, "He saved others; Himself He cannot save. 32 Let the Christ, the King of Israel, descend now from the cross, that we may see and believe." Even those who were crucified with Him reviled Him.

The third hour of Jewish hours was 9 A.M., the sixth hour noon, and the ninth hour 3 P.M. Mark followed the Jewish system, whereas the Apostle John used Roman time in his Gospel.

It seems incredible that the religious leaders hated Jesus so much that they even went out to Golgotha to mock Him. What these mockers said was true in v30. Jesus would not come down from the cross, because He wanted to save us. That was the choice He made in the Garden of Gethsemane. Jesus humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.

B. THE THIEF WHO ACCEPTED JESUS

Luke 23:39-43 Then one of the criminals who were hanged blasphemed Him, saying, "If You are the Christ, save Yourself and us." 40 But the other, answering, rebuked him, saying, "Do you not even fear God, seeing you are under the same condemnation? 41 And we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds; but this Man has done nothing wrong." 42 Then he said to Jesus, "Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom." 43 And Jesus said to him, "Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise."

At the beginning, this thief also mocked Jesus. But in the course of their crucifixions, he realized that this man was not the ordinary fellow criminal. Not only that, but also he even came to a conclusion that He was the king of the Jews and the Christ the chosen of God. As a matter of fact, he was the only one who believed in the upcoming resurrection of Jesus on that hill.

I've heard a story that two drops of rain that land on the top of the Rocky Mountain. Depending on which side of the mountain each rain drops, its ultimate destination is either the Pacific Ocean or the Atlantic Ocean. Depending on the individual personal decision, the ultimate destination of each person's spirit is either heaven or hell.

In this case, the thief who ridiculed Jesus on the cross ended up in hell with many others who reject Jesus as their Savior and Lord. But the one who asked Jesus to remember him when Jesus comes into His kingdom ended up in heaven with His Messiah.

Heaven is heaven because of the presence of Jesus. On the other hand, hell is hell because of the absence of Jesus. A few days ago, the renowned physicist and atheist Stephen Hawking died. Until his death, he denied the presence of God in the universe. But now he truly knows who is really in charge of the universe. Not his brain, not his physics, not his fancy theory. He just realized that there is a God who owns the universe and He cannot be fathomed by Hawking's limited intelligence. Because Hawking denied the presence of God, God allowed him to have his wish granted to the place where God doesn't reside.

I want y'all to notice another very important thing: The thief who acknowledged Jesus as the King and believed in Him did absolutely nothing other than receiving Jesus into his heart to be saved. He didn't knock on the door; he didn't follow a denomination's rules; he didn't get baptized; nor did he speak in tongues. But he simply believed in Jesus Christ and he had assurance of salvation from the very lips of Jesus.

C. REJECTED BY THE FATHER

Matt 27:45-49 Now from the sixth hour until the ninth hour there was darkness over all the land. 46 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?" 47 Some of those who stood there, when they heard that, said, "This Man is calling for Elijah!" 48 Immediately one of them ran and took a sponge, filled it with sour wine and put it on a reed, and offered it to Him to drink. 49 The rest said, "Let Him alone; let us see if Elijah will come to save Him."

From 9 until noon, our Lord was on the cross in the light. But at noon, a miraculous darkness covered the land. At His death, darkness covers the earth because when men reject the Light of the world. There were three days of darkness in Egypt before the first Passover. And there were three hours of darkness before the Lamb of God died for the sins of the world.

Phlegon, Roman historian wrote this: "In the fourth year of the 202nd Olympiad, there was an extraordinary eclipse of the sun: at the sixth hour, the day turned into the dark night, so that the stars in heaven were seen; and there was an earthquake." This is especially remarkable because during a full moon – which Passover was always held at – it was impossible that there be a natural eclipse of the sun.

Jesus encountered great pain and suffering – both physical and emotional – in His life, but had never known separation from His Father. Now He does. Why? Because God made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

But Jesus not only endured the withdrawal from the intimate fellowship with God the Father, but also the actual outpouring of the Father's wrath upon Him as a substitute for sinful humanity. Horrible as this was, it fulfilled God's goodness and loving plan of redemption.

Isaiah 53:10 Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise Him; He has put Him to grief. When You make His soul an offering for sin, He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days, And the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hand.

I said this at our last Midweek service, but I believe that it is worth repeating. God loved mankind, but He didn't save us by His love. Love is the divine motive, but God is not only love, He is righteous and holy and just. The holy demands of God and His righteous standard had to be met. The love of God may long to save us, but the immutable law of justice makes love powerless to do so. Therefore, the atoning sacrifice of Jesus for our sins met the holy demands of God's justice, and He can now save us by grace.

D. BE HOLD YOUR MOTHER

John 19:25-27 Now there stood by the cross of Jesus His mother, and His mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. 26 When Jesus therefore saw His mother, and the disciple whom He loved standing by, He said to His mother, "Woman, behold your son!" 27 Then He said to the disciple, "Behold your mother!" And from that hour that disciple took her to his own home.

A group of women, along with the Apostle John, stood near the cross. It took courage to stand there in the midst of such hatred and ridicule against the One whom they loved, but their presence there must have encouraged our Lord.

The first time we meet Jesus' mother Mary in the Gospel of John, she was attending a wedding in Cana in chapter 2. Now she was preparing for a burial. The hour had come! She was experiencing "the sword would pierce through her own soul" that had been prophesied by Simeon in the temple years before.

Jesus' mama Mary's silence was significant. Because if anyone could have rescued Jesus, it was His mother. All she had to do was lie that His claims were false, so that she could save His life. But she said nothing! What a testimony to the devotion to her Messiah!

By the way, don't think that Jesus was being rude to Mary by calling her "Woman," because it means "Ma'am." It is another word that was lost in translation.

E. IT IS FINISHED!

John 19:28-30 After this, Jesus, knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the Scripture might be fulfilled, said, "I thirst!" 29 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. 30 So when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, "It is finished!" And bowing His head, He gave up His spirit.

Please don't think that Jesus was hanging around on the cross, shooting the breeze with His mama. During those 6 hours, each breath of Jesus gave horrible pain to Him.

The people who were crucified on the cross die from exposure, exhaustion, and suffocation. To them, death came painfully slow and publicly humiliating.

While our Lord Jesus was on the cross, He made seven statements which are known as "the Seven Statements from the Cross."

1) He prayed for those who crucified Him

Luke 23:34 "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do."

2) He gave assurance to the believing thief

Luke 23:43 "Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise."

3) He took care of His mother

John 19:26-27 "Woman, behold your son!" 27 "Behold your mother!"

4) The central word had to do with His relationship to the Father.

Matthew 27:46 "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?" that is, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?"

5) He mentioned about His thirst.

John 19:28 "I thirst!"

6) He pronounced the end of His earthly ministry.

John 19:30 "It is finished!"

7) He surrendered His Spirit to the Father.

Luke 23:46 "Father, 'into Your hands I commit My spirit.'"

The drink of vinegar did not fully quench His thirst, but it did enable Him to utter that shout of triumph, in a loud voice, "It is finished!" In the Greek text, it is "tetelestai".

The word 'tetelestai' is unfamiliar to us, but it was used by various people in everyday life in those days. A servant would use it when reporting to his or her master after one's work is finished. When a priest examined an animal sacrifice and found it faultless, this word would apply. Jesus, of course, is the perfect Lamb of God, without spot or blemish of sin. When an artist completed a picture, or a writer finished a manuscript, he or she might say, "It is finished!" The death of Jesus on the cross "completes the picture" that God had been painting, the story that He had been writing, for centuries. Because of the cross, we understand the sacrificial ceremonies and prophecies in the Old Testament.

Perhaps the most meaningful definition of 'tetelestai' was that used by the merchants: "The debt is paid in full!" When He gave Himself on the cross, Jesus fully met the righteous demands of a holy law; He paid our debt in full. None of the OT sacrifices could take away sins; their blood only covered sin. But the Lamb of God shed His blood, and that blood can take away the sins of the world.

What was made an end of? Jesus ended our sins and the guilt that accompanies them. What was paid? He paid the price of our redemption with His perfect atoning sacrifice. What was completed? Christ completed the righteous requirements of the law. What was accomplished? He accomplished the work that the Father gave Him to fulfill.

Jesus Christ finished His work on the cross for you and for me. That was His purpose, His mission. Now our purpose, our mission is to believe in Him.

F. THE CENTURION

Luke 23:46-47 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. 47 So when the centurion saw what had happened, he glorified God, saying, "Certainly this was a righteous Man!"

When Israel was in Egypt, three days of darkness preceded the first Passover according to Exodus 10:21. When Jesus was on the cross, three hours of darkness preceded the death of God's Perfect Passover Lamb for the sins of the world.

The type of people, like this Centurion is open to the salvation message more than any other people. Are you the one whose heart is now opened to receive Jesus into your heart? If so, don't let anything stop you from doing that.

G. APPLICATIONS

- 1) It is our privilege to give everything we have to the One who gave us everything on the cross..
- 2) Faith in Jesus Christ is not a passive static thing that we get automatically, rather it is a moving dynamic life. We need to keep on believing in Him.
- 3) At the cross, Jesus fulfilled the law of God the Father with His own sacrifice, and dispensed God's grace to those who believe in Him through His death.