

42. The ultimate love

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The number one topic of all the songs in current popular song lists is love. I have not met anyone who does not want to be loved. So-called "Popular" kids at the high school you attended wanted to be loved. At the same time, the most unpopular kids in the school also was yearning to be loved.

A wife wants to be loved by her husband, the kids want to be loved by their parents, grandparents and relatives. But we all are looking for love that would depend on the other person's heart. In other words, we were looking for love in all the wrong places.

However, we have God who loves us so much that He gave Himself up for us. Jesus told us in the Gospel of John about His sacrifice for His friends.

John 15:13 Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends.

Who are His friends? That is us. We are no longer His enemy, no longer servant, but we are His friends, His brothers and sisters, and co-heirs with Him in heavenly realm.

John 15:15 No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you.

I say that is true love that will last eternal life. We are going to witness how eternal love displayed on the cross this morning.

A. SCOURGING AND MOCKERY TO THE KING

Matt 27:26-31 Then he released Barabbas to them; and when he had scourged Jesus, he delivered Him to be crucified. 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. And when they had mocked Him, they took the robe off Him, put His own clothes on Him, and led Him away to be crucified.

1) Scourging

The blows came from a whip with many leather strands, each having sharp pieces of bone or metal at the ends. It reduced the back to raw flesh, and it was not unusual for a criminal to die from a scourging, even before crucifixion. The goal of the scourging was to weaken the victim to a state just short of collapse and death.

The blows of scourging would lessen as the criminal confessed to his crimes. Jesus remained silent, having no crimes to confess, so the blows continued with full strength.

2) Mockery

The official indictment against Jesus was that He claimed to be the King of the Jews. The soldiers took advantage of this accusation and paid "homage" to the king. The soldiers disrobed Jesus and dressed Him in an old "soldier's cloak." Matthew

described the robe as scarlet, while Mark used the word purple. There is no contradiction; "reddish-purple" would be a good description of an old faded garment.

They repeated this mock homage not realizing that the One they were mocking was indeed King of kings and Lord of lords. When these soldiers will stand in front of the Great White Throne Judgement after the Millennium in the future, they are going to be reminded of what they have done to Jesus. I am sure that they will say, "We are so dead."

Jesus took all of this humiliation and pain without speaking or fighting back. His submission was not a sign of weakness. It was a sign of strength.

With a single word, Jesus could have wiped out these soldiers and ascended into heaven, saying, "Enough of this atoning sacrifice stuff. HELLO, after all I am God." But He didn't. In the process of His scourging and beatings and ultimately His crucifixion, Jesus was thinking of and absorbing it all for you and me.

B. THE KING ON THE CROSS

Matt 27:32-38 Now as they came out, they found a man of Cyrene, Simon by name. Him they compelled to bear His cross. 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. Then they crucified Him, and divided His garments, casting lots, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet: "They divided My garments among them, And for My clothing they cast lots." Sitting down, they kept watch over Him there. And they put up over His head the accusation written against Him: THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS. Then two robbers were crucified with Him, one on the right and another on the left.

1) Crucifixion

Crucifixion was the most shameful and painful way to execute a criminal. Like all victims of crucifixion, Jesus was forced to carry the wood He would hang upon. The weight of the entire cross was typically 300 pounds. The victim only carried the crossbeam, which weighed anywhere from 75 to 125 pounds.

Although the Romans did not invent crucifixion, they perfected it as a form of torture and capital punishment that was designed to produce a slow death with maximum pain and suffering.

Driving the nail through the wrists would sever the large median nerve - this stimulated nerve would produce excruciating bolts of fiery pain in both arms, and could result in a claw-like grip in the victim's hands.

Beyond the excruciating pain, the major effect of crucifixion inhibited normal breathing. The weight of the body, pulling down on the arms and shoulders, would tend to fix the respiratory muscles in an inhalation state, and hinder exhalation. The lack of adequate respiration would result in severe muscle cramps, which would hinder breathing even further. To get a good breath, one would have to push against the feet, and flex the elbows, pulling from the shoulders. Putting the weight of the body on the feet would produce searing pain, and flexing of the elbows would twist the hands hanging on the nails. Lifting the body for a breath would also painfully scrape the back against the rough wooden post. Each effort to get a proper breath would be agonizing, exhausting, and lead to a sooner death.

How bad was crucifixion? We get our English word 'excruciating' from the Roman word 'out of the cross.'

The most significant thing about Jesus' sufferings was that He was not, in any sense, the victim of circumstances. He was completely in control.

John 10:18, no one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself.

It is terrible to be forced to endure such torture, but to freely choose it out of love is remarkable. Can we ever doubt God's love for us again? Has He not gone to the most extreme length to demonstrate it?

2) The name 'Calvary'

The original Hebrew word is 'Golgoeth' that changed to 'Golgotha' in Greek. It was translated to 'Calvaria' in Latin Vulgate where we get the English word 'Calvary' which means "Place of a Skull." So welcome to "Place of a skull" chapel of Sahuarita.

3) Carrying the cross for Jesus

In order to hasten the procession, the soldiers drafted a visitor to Jerusalem, Simon from Cyrene which currently is Libya. He had come to Jerusalem to celebrate Passover, and now he was humiliated by being forced to carry the cross of an unknown criminal.

Mark referred to Simon as though the people reading his Gospel would recognize him: "the father of Alexander and Rufus" in Mark 15:21. Apparently these two sons were well-known members of the church, because Rufus' name was mentioned in Romans 16:13. It seems likely that this humiliating experience resulted in Simon's conversion as well as in the conversion of his family. Simon came to Jerusalem to sacrifice his Passover lamb, and he met the Lamb of God who was sacrificed for him.

4) Fulfilling the prophecies from the OT

It was customary to give a narcotic drink to those about to be crucified, for this would help to ease the pain. Jesus refused this drink. He did the will of God in full awareness. Also this act fulfilled Psalm 69:21.

Psalms 69:21 They also gave me gall for my food, And for my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink.

It was customary for the soldiers to share the loot at an execution. This was a fulfillment of Psalm 22:18.

Psalms 22:18 They divide My garments among them, And for My clothing they cast lots.

5) The first Gospel tract by Pilate

By combining the Gospel records, we arrive at the full accusation that was put over His head: "This is Jesus of Nazareth the King of the Jews." The Jewish rulers did not approve of what Pilate wrote, but for once the governor did not change it. In one sense, this title proved to be the first "Gospel tract" ever written. In a result of this first Gospel tract, one of the thieves who was crucified with Him believed that Jesus was the Saviour and a King.

C. MORE MOCKERIES

Matt 27:39-44 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. Jesus could have come down from the Cross and saved Himself. But had He saved Himself, He could not have saved us.

This is what the world still wants. The world wants Christ - but not crucified. The world wants a Jesus figure, a Christ-consciousness, a cosmic spirituality, a harmonic convergence, teachings on love, truth, and global unity. The world still says, "Give us Christ - but not on the Cross." Why? Because Christ crucified means we have to acknowledge the part our sins caused Him in this horrifying death. We have to acknowledge that we are murderous sinners in need of a Savior. And the world doesn't want to do that. They want Jesus as a Hero, but not as a Lamb slain for their sin.

D. REJECTED BY THE FATHER

Matt 27:45-49 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!" 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. The rest said, "Let Him alone; let us see if Elijah will come to save Him."

1) Total darkness in the middle of daylight

Jesus was crucified at 9 o'clock in the morning. From 9 until noon, He hung in the light. But at noon, a miraculous darkness covered the land. At His death, darkness covers the earth because when men rejects 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 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.

2) Rejected by the Father

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 of the Father's fellowship, 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.

E. THE DEATH OF THE KING

Matt 27:50-56 And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice, and yielded up His spirit. 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.

1) An awesome spiritual transaction

John 19:30 tells us that He said, "it is finished," which is one word in the ancient Greek - tetelestai, which means, "paid in full." Jesus came to pay a debt He did not owe, because we owe a debt we could not pay. An awesome spiritual transaction took place on the cross.

Isaiah 53:3-5 He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.

2) The veil of the temple

The veil is what separated the holy place from the most holy place in the temple. It was a vivid demonstration of the separation between God and man. This veil was massive: sixty feet high, thirty feet wide, and ten inches thick. It was made of seventy-two braids, each consisting of twenty-four cords. The veil was so heavy that it took three hundred priests to hang it. Notably, the veil was torn from top to bottom, and it was God who did the tearing and He was giving all of us the access to the Throne of Grace directly without any human's assistance.

The moment Jesus died with the proclamation, "It is finished," the veil in the temple was torn from top to bottom and it was the same time a priest who was located on the top of the temple blew a ram horn to declare that the sacrifice had been accepted by God. Try to orchestrate that.

3) The earthquake opened many graves

The earthquake reminds us of what happened at Mount Sinai when God gave the Law to Moses. The earthquake at Calvary signified that the demands of the Law had been met and the curse of the Law forever abolished.

4) Dead men walking

If I am understanding correctly these verses between v52 and v53, there were three days and three nights gap. What were these resuscitated saints who were raise from death? Sitting inside of their stench filled tombs and reading comic books and popping 'Bon Bons'? Or just laying around and staring at the ceilings and listening to the 'Sound of Silence'?

from the dead. It is not likely that many Jews would be in the cemetery on Passover, since they might be defiled by the dead.

What do I think? I don't know.

F. BURIED IN A RICH MAN'S TOMB

Matt 27:57-61 Now when evening had come, there came a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who himself had also become a disciple of Jesus. This man went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Then Pilate commanded the body to be given to him. When Joseph had taken the body, he wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, and laid it in his new tomb which he had hewn out of the rock; and he rolled a large stone against the door of the tomb, and departed. And Mary Magdalene was there, and the other Mary, sitting opposite the tomb.

1) The secret disciples

If it were not for the intervention of Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus, the body of Jesus might not even have had a decent burial.

Isaiah 53:9 And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death

We often hear Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea criticized for being secret disciples. But where were the prominent disciples? Where were Peter, James, and John? They were hiding. But these secret disciples - Nicodemus and Joseph - were ministering to the body of our Lord.

Perhaps you feel like you don't do much. You don't walk on water very often. You haven't healed a whole lot of lepers lately. You're not real vocal on the job about your belief in Christ. But like Joseph and Nicodemus, you'll have your opportunity. Stay in the Word.

G. APPLICATIONS

1) The key to true Christian life lies in taking up the cross and dying to self.

Even as Jesus died for our sin, so we too are to die to ourselves. If you live for yourself, you'll end up dying. Life will be a drag. You'll be unhappy, cynical, bitter, and mean. But if you die to yourself and you'll find that His burden easy and His load light. The cross is a sweet yoke. Ask Simon from Cyrene.

2) We must remember that sin is not bad because it's forbidden. Sin is forbidden because it's bad.

God is grieved by the sin we commit so easily and nonchalantly. Why? Is it because He's hypersensitive? No. Is He upset that we're not behaving like "angels"? No. The Father hates sin because He sees the devastating effects it brings about. He sees the sorrow, the suffering, the problems and the pain that sin leaves behind in our lives. Sin is serious - deadly serious. In Leviticus 17, God declared there can be no remission of sin, no forgiveness of sin, without the shedding of blood. That is exactly what Jesus did for us.