

JESUS WAS CRUCIFIED AS KING OF THE JEWS

Mark 15:16-32

Key Verse: 15:26

“The written notice of the charge against him read: THE KING OF THE JEWS.”

We're in the middle of an intense political battle in Chicago right now. The candidates are trying to convince us that each is the perfect guy for the job, making tons of promises they won't keep. They have the plan, they have the qualifications, they have the supporters, they are the strong leader we need in these difficult times. This is politics in this world, you have to claw and fight your way to the top and only the strongest will survive. And that is what people want, they don't want a weak leader but one who exudes strength and make them feel safe and secure, someone they can put their hope in. However, in this passage we see Jesus who is the “King of the Jews,” and yet he is weak and seemingly defeated by the crushing power of Rome. How can such a king save me? Living in this cruel world actually each of us has many wounds. These often are not outward, like Jesus, but painful inner wounds that never heal. Living with such wounded hearts we inevitably wound others, we are directionless, powerless, we can't sleep, we have anxiety, uncontrollable crying, trouble breathing, we can't think clearly, we can't work, we can't play. Who can take away such wounds? Sure we can take a pill but it only covers it up. We can talk to someone but we only learn to cope. You see through the crucifixion, we know that Jesus died to pay for my sin—it's true. Through S. Dennis' message next week we will study about the meaning of his death, but there is more than that. Through this passage we see, that Jesus was *wounded* that he might take our *wounds* upon himself and we may be healed. What seems like weakness and defeat is actually the most beautiful thing in all history. I want us to think about two things in this passage: 1. How we can see Jesus' kingship through what he suffered for us and 2. What his wounds mean to you and me personally.

I. We see Jesus' kingship through what he suffered for us. (16-21)

As we studied last time, after a mock trial before the Sanhedrin Jesus was sentenced to death by Pilate, though he knew that Jesus was innocent. Then Jesus was flogged and then handed over to the guards to be crucified. All this had taken place on the stone pavement outside the palace, the Jews being unwilling to enter the home of a Gentile. But now the soldiers brought him into the palace, specifically the Praetorium, that is the hall where the Praetor (the Roman judge) would hear cases and condemn the guilty. It was a hall of judgment. They had been charged to simply take him to his

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crucifixion but as soldiers they wanted to have a little sick fun with this defeated king. **“The soldiers called together the whole company of soldiers.”** We cannot know how many there were, but there would have been a large number stationed in the palace. Even one Roman soldier would be intimidating enough—a cold, well trained, burly, fearsome warrior, who can deal out pain and death without remorse. Imagine for a moment, what a heart wrenching scene it was, as they came out like hungry dogs eyeing their prey, encircling him, snickering at him and barking at him and more and more came out till their jeering rose to such a deafening clamor. Someone found an expensive purple robe, the color of royalty, and put it on him, and another jeering, said “here I have his crown,” grabbing a thorny vine, he twisted it together and pressed the long thorns into Jesus’ forehead until the blood trickled down his face. They all roared in laughter and one by one fell before him in mock homage calling out to him “Hail, king of the Jews!” And then took a staff and beat him on the head and spat on him. Already his back, arms and legs were torn to shreds from the flogging, his blood pouring from many gaping wounds, but what was lacking, they now happily provided, disfiguring his face and traumatizing his brain. Isaiah 52:14 says, **“his appearance was so disfigured beyond that of any human being and his form marred beyond human likeness.”** How much does a person have to be beaten before they don’t even look human anymore?

So many of us have watched in pain as our children were bullied—maybe many of us have been the victim of bullying. The psychological cyberbullying that children are subjected to these days leaves wounds so deep, that children often end their lives in suicide. How much more the humiliation of Christ. To the soldiers Jesus’ kingship was a joke because they only respected militaristic power. Yet, Rome’s power was empty, they were only respected because they were a bully that crushed and oppressed everyone around them. In contrast, Jesus is **actually** great. He displays his character and nobility through choosing to suffer. His power gives life and so his kingdom has spread to this day to the whole world.

In 1640, the Jesuit, Father Brebeuf, went as a missionary to the Iroquois Indians. Nine years later he was captured by a hunting party. It was their joy to hear the screams of their victims. They poured boiling water over him in mockery of baptism but he would not cry out. They put a collar of red-hot hatchets around his neck, they set him on fire, but by the grace of God he didn’t make a sound. Instead, he began to shout out encouragement to the other prisoners, so they cut off his lips and shoved a hot iron down his throat. Then they cut strips of his flesh off and ate them before his eyes. Yet, as he was dying, he was gaining victory, just like Jesus and they sensed it. So, they cut out his heart, hoping they could get the spirit power that gave him more courage than any man they had ever seen. Now **that** is real power.

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Jesus is, in fact, **the** king. Before him every knee must bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. (Php 2:10) And yet he condescended to **allow** his very creations to abuse him and mock his kingship, to save us. It's possible to bear random insults and cruelty but when someone mocks who you are, it's unbearable. "Wait, Tim **you're** the choir director for Chicago UBF?...**really** what a joke." "Oh you're just a **CBF** Bible teacher." Such words destroy us on the inside, and our anger flares up in an instant. How often this tactic of Satan has caused even the greatest Christian among us to stumble. With one insult to our pride we commit terrible, irreparable sin against each other. Satan was, tempting Jesus with every taunt, spit and blow to retaliate. And Jesus, just sat there and bore it. This is not weakness, Jesus has all power in heaven and on earth. In the garden Jesus told Peter "**Don't retaliate. If I wanted to save myself, I could ask my Father for twelve legions of angels and he would send them instantly.**" (Mt 26:53) Do the math, that's at least 60,000 angels! Jesus could snap his fingers and obliterate every enemy he has, Jesus **has** power right at his fingertips. Yet, he held back everything. Who can do that? What majesty and nobility! Jesus truly is "**The King of the Jews.**"

Verse 20 says, "**And when they had mocked him, they took off the purple robe and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him out to crucify him.**" The distance from the palace to Golgotha was about two miles. Tradition says (Cornelius a Lapide) that the cross would have been fifteen feet long and eight wide, weighing around 300 pounds. Though the spirit was willing, Jesus' body had nothing left. He had been awake all night, on trial twice, beaten twice, and flogged within an inch of life. In fact, historically many died from Roman flogging alone. He had lost so much blood, and his head was dizzy from being beaten with the staff, his face swollen, his eyes clouded. He could barely carry his own weight, there was simply no way he could go on, but despite all this, he tried.

So, look at verse 21, "**A certain man from Cyrene, Simon, the father of Alexander and Rufus, was passing by on his way in from the country, and they forced him to carry the cross.**" Simon tried not to look at the condemned man but his eyes were drawn to Jesus. Anyone in Jesus' place would be running the other direction. But Jesus had a resolute determination in his eyes. His eyes were fixed on that terrible hill and he marched out in front of Simon like he going to victory.

There is a particularly poignant moment in the movie "**The Passion of the Christ.**" If I haven't gotten choked up till that point, this one always gets me. In it, Mary is running through the streets trying to get close to Jesus as he is carrying his cross to

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Golgotha. She goes down all these little alleys and by fate, turns a corner and there is Jesus passing by through a narrow street and he stumbles and falls beneath the cross. She has a flashback to when he fell as a child and she runs to scoop him up into her arms. At just that moment, he catches sight of her and with a great groan, using every ounce of his strength, pushes himself to his feet and says resolutely, “Look Mother, I make all things new!”

Mark is a rushed gospel. He takes no time for extraneous details, but he alone among the gospel writers mentions that Simon was the father of Alexander and Rufus as if these were people all the readers knew very well. In other words, they were part of the church. Why is this important? Through simply **participating in Christ’s sufferings**, Simon saw the kingship of Jesus and he and his whole family (Rom 16:13) were saved. Paul says in Philippians 3:10, **“I want to know Christ—yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death.”** Knowing Christ is inseparable from suffering with him. In fact, Christianity is inseparable from participating in the sufferings of Christ. There is something that we can never know about Jesus from just reading a book. We must take up the cross and walk behind him. When we do, we truly see him as he is and we know him in a way that we never could otherwise. What a great privilege it is to go out on the campus and be rejected by students, because we can know Christ. What a great privilege it is when demons are stirred as we share the gospel and people persecute us and yell at us and arrest us, because we can know Christ. What a privilege it is when we are shunned by family and friends because of Jesus, we have received great reward here and in heaven.

II. The meaning of the wounds that Jesus bore. (22-32)

Jesus finally arrived at the end of his road, at the hill called Golgotha, **“The place of the skull.”** It was a notorious place either so named, because the hill looked like a skull, or some conjecture that the skulls of the crucified could be seen sticking out of shallow graves, filling the place with a morbid terror. This hill was specifically chosen so the crucified could be seen for miles around. This was the place where only the very worst criminals were taken. They wanted Jesus killed here to absolutely destroy his good name and plant fear in the hearts of any who would dare speak it after. Deuteronomy 21:23 says, **“anyone who is hung on a pole is under God’s curse.”** The purpose of crucifixion was not simply to kill the condemned but to make an example of them, to instill maximum fear into the hearts of any who would stand against Rome and its laws. To be nailed to a cross and hung up to slowly suffocate under the weight of your body, naked and in agonizing pain, was a capital punishment so brutal and humiliating, that Roman citizens were never allowed to be crucified except in the extreme case of traitors.

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Before putting Jesus on his cross, verse 23 says, **“Then they offered him wine mixed with myrrh, but he did not take it.”** Myrrh, is mentioned numerous times in the Old Testament as a drug to intoxicate. When mixed with wine, it allowed the crucified to die faster and easier, unaware of what was going on. I would have taken it in a heartbeat. But Jesus refused this drink which would dull his pain and his mind and make him die quickly but amazingly later receives the wine vinegar (36) which was a refreshing drink that would make him suffer longer. Jesus did not just bear his suffering, he sought it out. He **wanted** to suffer to the maximum degree, taking no shortcuts. He did not only take the cup from the Father, he drank it to the last drop, by his own choice.

Let’s read verses 24-26 together. **“And they crucified him. Dividing up his clothes, they cast lots to see what each would get. It was nine in the morning when they crucified him. The written notice of the charge against him read: THE KING OF THE JEWS.”** Jesus is unique in his death. Most criminals are killed for what they do, but Jesus was killed for who he is. To Pilate the title, **“KING OF THE JEWS”** was meant to discourage rebellion but to the Jews it meant the Messiah, the promised son of David who would reign on David’s throne forever, God’s king. Isaiah says, **“of the greatness of his government and peace there will be no end”** (Isa 9:7) and Daniel says that Jesus’ kingdom would crush all other kingdoms of the earth and itself endure forever. (Dan 2:44) Revelation says that he is **“THE KING OF KINGS AND THE LORD OF LORDS.”** (Rev 19:16)

When we think of a king, maybe the first words to come to mind are might, majesty, military power, wealth. A king keeps his power through intimidation, cruelty and great conquest in battle. Who could possibly imagine the king of heaven allowing himself to be rejected and to die for his people, to become a mockery to everyone. What kind of king does this? Even Isaiah, before sharing about Jesus’ death, said “Who could believe this message?” The purpose of a king is to be the protector of his people. We imagine that God should use his power to destroy Rome, destroy Isis, fix the economy, judge government corruption, eradicate drugs and violence. Atheists love to say that Jesus is not the king because he doesn’t fix the world’s problems. We think these things are our enemy, but behind them is Satan our true enemy. So, Luke 1 (69&74-75) says, **“[God] has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David...to rescue us from the hand of our enemies, and to enable us to serve him without fear in holiness and righteousness before him all our days.”** This is why God says, **“Therefore I will give him a portion among the great, and he will divide the spoils with the strong, because he poured out his life unto death.”** (Isa 53:12)

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Because of what Jesus suffered, he is worthy to be our king. The cross is the throne of Jesus where he shines in majesty unlike anything the world has ever seen.

Then, what benefit do I receive from following Jesus as king? In other words, why was Jesus wounded for me? How could his wounding be meaningful to my life? We can say Jesus died for my sins—it's true—but that is next week's message. When a lamb was killed in place of human for their sins, you did not beat the lamb first, humiliate it, flog it, spit upon it, drag it through the streets and then kill it slowly and violently while mocking it. There is meaning in the wounds. All of us carry wounds. I carried the deep wound of being abandoned by my father and it crippled me all my life, as a man, in ways I'm still discovering. I carried the wound of failure after flunking out of college that made me believe that everything I did would fail, that I was no good, useless. I carried at various times the wounds of others harsh words that destroyed me on the inside, of doubt, fear and insecurity. Some carry the wound of death, of sickness, heartbreak, betrayal, divorce, rejection and sin. These things are crippling. For some they are so intense that they have panic attacks, uncontrollable crying or inability to move or breathe. America consumes more anti-depression drugs than the rest of the world combined and yet we can't heal our wounds. No doctor, self-help guru, counselor or friend can solve the fundamental problem. Even experts admit that these problems are never solved but that people can only learn to cope. Medications, psychiatrists and counselors have a place, obviously, and the work they do is beautiful and so necessary but there is only one place that we can go for healing. Jesus was wounded to take our wounds upon him. His wounds went much deeper than just the physical—he bore, the bullying, the mocking, the humiliation and all the temptation that we bear. Jesus took all of it and he is still taking it today. He says, **“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.”** (Mt 11:28) This is why Isaiah cries out, **“the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed.”** (Isa 53:5b)

One missionary shared with me the story of how she first accepted Christ as her personal savior. One person had hurt her in an unforgivably painful and shocking way. She was filled with poisonous anger so intense that she could not pray, and absolutely could not forgive. Then one day as she prayed, Jesus came to her in a vision. He gave her a whip and said to her “whip me, take your anger out on me.” Although she knew Jesus, she had to whip him because her anger and sorrow made her crazy, so that she couldn't think about Jesus' pain. She just whipped him and whipped him, until the blood flowed down. And then, amazingly, her anger vanished and she could forgive the person. Jesus took her wound in his own flesh and bore it for her that she may be healed. She had attended church for 15 years but it was at that moment that Jesus became her personal Savior—she saw how beautiful Jesus is who takes our wounds.

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As everyone came to Jesus the people of Jerusalem, the chief priest and teachers of the law and even the criminal on the cross (Luke 23:39), all said the same thing to Jesus, **“save yourself, Save Yourself, SAVE YOURSELF!”** (31-32) The great irony here is that they assumed if he was the king, he should save himself. Yet, if Jesus saved himself, he could not be the Messiah, the King. This was Satan’s last and greatest temptation. We know, Jesus truly struggled to go to the cross, and what is more he **could** save himself. At any moment he could come down from the cross and go up into heaven. But if Jesus saved himself, then God should stop the world from spinning right at that moment, he should obliterate the earth and everyone in it. Everyone in heaven, there on the credit of what Jesus would do to save them, should be kicked out and every human being from the dawn of time till now should be thrown down into hell. I don’t want to go to hell, but I am a sinner who can’t stop sinning, I don’t want to bear my own wounds living in pain and weakness, how terrible it is, that the only way I can be saved and healed is for my precious Lord Jesus to **stay** on the cross. Thank you Jesus that you did not save yourself because you love me more!

Today, Jesus is stretching his arms wide, saying, “Look at how much I love you.” Jesus is saying to you, ‘why are you holding on to your wound? Look at my wounds, give it to me and I will bear it for you.’ Today, may we once again or even for the first time, accept our king who took the beating and the mocking and the wounds that we deserve for our sin upon himself, that we may be healed. Amen.