

Mocking the Messiah

(Mark 15:16-32)

(preached 1/31/16; Sunday AM)

Introduction

Take your Bibles and turn with me to the gospel of Mark...

Mark 15:16-32...

Let's read this together this morning.....

*16 The soldiers took Him away into the [d]palace (that is, the Praetorium), and they *called together the whole Roman [e]cohort. 17 They *dressed Him up in purple, and after twisting a crown of thorns, they put it on Him; 18 and they began to acclaim Him, "Hail, King of the Jews!" 19 They kept beating His head with a [f]reed, and spitting on Him, and kneeling and bowing before Him. 20 After they had mocked Him, they took the purple robe off Him and put His own garments on Him. And they *led Him out to crucify Him. 21 They *pressed into service a passer-by coming from the country, Simon of Cyrene (the father of Alexander and Rufus), to bear His cross.*

*22 Then they *brought Him to the place Golgotha, which is translated, Place of a Skull. 23 They tried to give Him wine mixed with myrrh; but He did*

*not take it. 24 And they *crucified Him, and *divided up His garments among themselves, casting [g]lots for them to decide [h]what each man should take. 25 It was the [i]third hour [j]when they crucified Him. 26 The inscription of the charge against Him [k]read, "THE KING OF THE JEWS."*

*27 They *crucified two robbers with Him, one on His right and one on His left. 28 [l]And the Scripture was fulfilled which says, "And He was numbered with transgressors."] 29 Those passing by were [m]hurling abuse at Him, wagging their heads, and saying, "Ha! You who are going to destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, 30 save Yourself, and come down from the cross!" 31 In the same way the chief priests also, along with the scribes, were mocking Him among themselves and saying, "He saved others; [n]He cannot save Himself. 32 Let this Christ, the King of Israel, now come down from the cross, so that we may see and believe!" Those who were crucified with Him were also insulting Him.*

Let us pray.

For the next two weeks, we will be focusing on the central event of all of human history...

It is not the invention of the wheel...

It is not the fall of the Roman Empire.

It is not the Revolutionary War.

It is not the Civil War, World War I, the bombing of Pearl Harbor or the terrorist attacks of Sept 11, 2001.

It is not the invention of the internet or of the iPhone 6...

The central event in all of human history is the death of Jesus Christ on a cross on the outskirts of Jerusalem...

On that Friday morning at 9 am when Jesus was hung on that cross to his death at 3 pm that afternoon, we find the best and worst even the world has ever known.

The shame of our area of the world is that the story of Jesus on a cross is old news to so many...

Many sleep through these verses, thinking that they heard it all before..

Jesus is arrested and crucified and then rose again...

Woop tee doo, let me get back to sleep.

Nothing really to see here.

But for those who truly love Jesus Christ, the Bible's account of the crucifixion of Christ holds their attention even though they have heard it dozens of times...

For many, the story of the events of the cross are central to who they are as believers in Christ..

And rightly so.

We may be 1000s of years from the events of the cross, but it is never far from the minds and hearts of those who truly love Jesus Christ...

In fact, the cross is the foundation of my preaching ministry...

I am to preach Christ crucified...

Now, as we think of the cross, much emphasis has been put on the physical pain of the cross..

People and pastors have done in depth studies on how the Romans crucified people.

You may have heard sermons and even watched movies that focus on the physical torture of the cross...

A bloody and beaten Jesus with a crown of thorns on his head hanging on a cross is the normal picture

that pops in to people's minds when the subject of the crucifixion comes up...

But if you actually read the verses that describe the cross, you find that God simply inspired the men who wrote about the crucifixion to just simply write "they crucified him."

In fact, if you look back at what we just read, you will see that is all Mark wrote in verse 24..

"And they crucified Him."

That is really all that is described about the actual crucifixion in all the gospels...

Now to be clear, this method of execution was painful and tortuous...

People who were crucified died of asphyxiation...

They literally choked themselves to death by becoming too tired to hold themselves up to take a breath..

But when you read the Bible, you don't find a lot of the description of the physical pain of the cross...

Obviously, Jesus was beaten before the cross and hit and we read about that...

Obviously, he was in pain and bloodied and exhausted and tortured..

But, most of that is left to the imagination of the reader as they read about the cross...

And people have helped fill our minds with how bad it must have looked and how bad it must have felt for Jesus..

We have no shortage of that when you hear sermons about the cross...

And that is fine to focus on that...

Sin's penalty was paid in blood and pain, but if you look closely at the verses that we just read about the events of the cross, you will notice that the physical pain of the cross is not what Mark focuses on...

Rather, Mark and the other gospel writers often focus on the mental torture that came to Jesus in the moments before the cross...

And even while he was hanging on the cross...

Pilate mocked Jesus.

The Roman soldiers mocked Jesus.

The Jewish religious leaders mocked Jesus.

Even the criminals who hung beside Jesus mocked him...

Now what do I mean by mocked?

Well, they made fun of him.

They treated him with disrespect.

They verbally assaulted him.

They laughed at him.

And they called him all sorts of names...

For most people who laid eyes on Jesus in and around the time of the crucifixion...

Jesus was simply a joke.

He was simply someone who they could pick on and torture to make themselves feel better.

Why was he mocked?

And why do Mark focus more on the mental torture than the physical torture of Jesus?

And what lessons can we learn from the mocking of Jesus that apply to us today?

Well, let's take a closer look at the mocking that goes on in Mark 15:16-32....

Beginning with....

I. The Scoffing Soldiers (16-21)

As we get to mark 15:16, it is early on Friday morning...

Jesus has been on trial from 2 am - 6 am on later...

The Jewish leaders have found him guilty of blasphemy, which came with a death penalty.

But they couldn't kill anyone without the Romans' permission...

So, they send Jesus to the Roman governor Pilate, who finds that Jesus is innocent, but decides to order him crucified in order to please the crowd.

So, it is early in the morning, 7-8 am as Jesus is lead away from Pilate to the Praetorium...

The Praetorium was simply where the Roman governor lived while he was in Jerusalem..

It was Pilate's residence while he was in Jerusalem...

From what we can tell, it was attached to the temple complex, which makes sense...

As the Roman governor would want to keep a close eye on what the Jews would be doing at the temple...

So, Jesus is lead into the courtyard of this building along with the Roman cohort, which would be a large group of Roman soldiers.

Most likely 600 men, so this is a large courtyard...

And then the mocking begins in verse 17...

The put purple on Him which was the color of kings...

They twist a crown of thorns on his head.

They jokingly saluted and addressed him as king of the Jews.

Then they took a staff made of reeds and began beating his head with it...

While spitting on Him and bowing down to him as way of ridiculing him...

This is mockery at its highest level.

This is scorn and ridicule and brutality and bullying at its highest level..

Look, the Romans crucified people all the time...

In fact, historical records indicate that the Romans crucified over 30,000 people during the time of their empire...

IT wasn't unusual for these soldiers to guard a man before his crucifixion, but it was highly unusual to make fun of Him at this level...

This is blasphemy of God.

Then in verse 20, they take off his royal garments, and put his clothes back on him and lead him away to be crucified...

As a side note, Mark tells us that Jesus was helped on his way to the cross by a man named Simon of Cyrene...

I don't have time to get into all we know about Simon, but along the way as Simon was carrying Jesus cross for him, something incredible happened..

Simon came to faith in Christ, and he went back to Cyrene and preached the gospel and his children got

saved because Mark includes the names of his children, Alexander and Rufus...

Which suggests that they were known to the readers of Marks' gospel and were faithful believers themselves..

But what do we see in the scorn of these soldiers?

What do we see in the brutality of these soldiers?

What do we see in their mocking?

We see what we often see in the Bible...

The incredible depravity and evilness of man.

Far too often, a news story comes across the TV of a group of students who torture and even beat a kid with Down's Syndrome....

Or we see stories of how people will go and spit on homeless people and make fun of them and rob them and even kill them...

Stories like that make our blood boil...

But they reveal what we already know about ourselves and everyone in the world..

We are wretched folks who are capable of the worst evil imaginable...

The soldiers in these verses simply represent the evil that resides in all of us...

People mock others to make themselves feel better about their own pitiful life...

And people harm others because they don't value the lives of others...

These soldiers are examples of the wretched condition of people, but so are every one of us in this church building today.

Let's move from the the Scoffing Soldiers in verses 16-21 to the....

II. The Sneering Sign (22-26)

As Simon carried Jesus' cross, the soldiers led Jesus to a place called Golgotha...

The Latin translation of that word is Calvary...

But the picture of that place is a place of skulls...

It was a place that the Romans most likely used for crucifixions....

As Jews would try to riot and overthrow Rome, the rebels would be captured and executed by crucifixion..

And the Romans loved to do it publicly for all to see as a deterrent of anyone getting an idea to fight against Rome...

Interestingly, the Bible never describes this place as being located on a hill...

I am not saying it wasn't..

It may have made sense to have an execution on a hill so more people could witness it, but the Bible never actually says that...

So, Jesus is led to Golgotha or Calvary, and before the crucifixion begins, he is offered wine mixed with myrrh...

This would be some time of primitive pain killer to dull the senses...

It most likely wasn't given out of pity, but to prevent prisoners from fighting back as the crucifixion was initiated.

Jesus refused to drink it....

And then verse 24 simply says...

“They crucified Him.”

You can read how this would have happened, the prisoner would have been attached to a wooden cross and then the cross would be lifted into an upright position...

And it would have been a very slow death...

So according to verse 25 it was the third hour or 9 am when the crucifixion began...

And this note is added by Mark...

Above his head was a sign that detailed the charge against Jesus...

The Jews found Jesus guilty of blasphemy by claiming to be their God and their King...

And so he was mocked in his death by a sneering sign...

What can we learn from this mockery of Jesus where a sign is placed over his head hailing him as the king of the Jews?

Simply this....

Sometimes the truth is too hard to handle, so we make fun of it in order to dismiss it...

Let me give you an example...

In all honesty, I could stand to lose some weight...

I am heavier now than I have ever been in my life..

It's got to be the good cooking...

But how do I react to that truth?

Well, I make fun of myself and I joke about my weight as a way to distract myself from considering the truth...

And the truth is that I need to lose weight...

The sign above Jesus was put there to mock Him
and make fun of him...

But the sign was completely true...

He was and is the King of the Jews and He was and
is and forever will be the King of all of creation...

Sometimes, our mocking is a way to hide behind
our refusal to accept the truth...

Let me tell you something...

Jesus is the King, and He is Lord and Master of it
all...

And you can make fun of your lack of commitment
to Him....

And you can make fun of your lack of commitment
to his church...

And you can mock those who serve him with their
whole hearts...

But you better make sure that your mockery of
yourself or others is not simply a way to hide
behind your refusal to bow your knee to Christ...

You better make sure that your mockery is not the result of you trying to hide your refusal to serve Jesus Christ as you know you should.

There is still a big sign today that proclaims Jesus as the King of the Jews and King of the Gentiles....

It is called the Bible...

And when you see that sign today when we look at the Scriptures, don't mock the person of Christ because your refuse to believe in Him....

Love the name of Christ because you see Him as the King of the Jews and as the King of you.

Let's move from the sneering sign to the next section of this passage in verses 27-32...

We will end with the...

III. The Cruel Crowd (27-32)

As Jesus hangs on the cross, he hangs in between two men..

One on his right and one on his left according to verse 27...

These were most likely men that had joined Barabbas in his rebellion against Rome...

Barabbas was supposed to be hanging with them, but Pilate had released Barabbas and sent Jesus to the cross in his place.

Yet, that was God's plan...

Jesus was to be killed just like a convicted criminal...

Verse 28 says that he was numbered with the transgressors..

And then we see the crowd joining in the mocking of Jesus in verses 29-30...

Verse 29 says that people were wagging their heads at him and taunting Jesus by challenging him to come down from the cross...

Verse 31 says that the Jewish religious leaders were all around the cross mocking Jesus as well...

Saying that he showed his ability to save others, but the truth was that he couldn't even save himself...

Even claiming that they would believe in Him if he came down from the cross in verses 32...

What a big lie that was...

They wouldn't believe in Him if he had come down from the cross...

Because He does something more miraculous on Sunday...

Jesus rises from the dead, and guess what the religious leaders do?

They still refuse to believe...

I hear people say stuff all the time like...

I'd believe in Jesus if I ever found a good church to go to...

Or I'd believe in Jesus if I could understand the Bible..

Or I'd believe in Jesus if he would just give me a sign..

Here's the bottom line...

These Jewish leaders aren't going to believe in Christ no matter what he does...

And some people aren't going to believe in Christ no matter what he does...

They just like to blow out hot air every once in a while to try and justify their rejection of the Savior of the world...

People don't believe in Jesus Christ because they don't want to believe in Him...

God doesn't need to do anything else to convince you of the need to believe in Jesus....

The evidence is there; people just simply refuse to believe...

And when that happens, the insults of Jesus begin to be hurled at him...

And then we see that the criminals on either side of Jesus joining in with the mocking as well...

I find this rather interesting....

Here are two men only moments away from death..

Hurling insults and mocking Jesus as well...

Now, we tend to focus on the thief who gets saved,
and that is certainly true of what happened...

But before God changes his heart, he was mocking
Jesus along with the thief on the other side of him..

So many people think that hearts soften as death
approaches...

So many people think that they will call upon Christ
at the end of their life...

But if you look at these two men, both of their
hearts were softened to Jesus at the end of their
life...

Both are joining in the ridicule of Jesus even at the
very end of their life....

Even the fact that they are only hours from death
hasn't changed their view of Jesus at all...

Even the fact that they will breathe their last breath
on that very day hasn't made them soften their
hearts to Christ.

And you shouldn't assume that you will wait on your death bed and then call upon the Lord.

The pattern in life is for hearts to get harder against the Lord, not softer...

The pattern of life is for your unbelief in Jesus to grow, not shrink...

Today is the day to call upon the Lord.

Today is the day to stop hardening your heart.

Today is the day to look upon the man on the cross as the savior of your soul...

Tomorrow is too late, and tomorrow may never come..

Conclusion

So, here we are at the end of Jesus' life....

He is on the cross...

The one who preached the truth is not put in between two thieves..

The one who healed the sick is now hung out to die...

The one who calmed the wind and the waves is now being crucified for the world to see...

The Lord of all is now the laughing stock of the people...

How does this change us?

How does this affect us?

What do we need to learn from this?

Let me offer a few words of application to this incredible picture...

#1 - Jesus suffered mentally and physically in his death..

I think it is worth noting that Mark and the gospel writers put a lot of focus on the mocking of Jesus when they describe his death..

I think it is clear that Jesus certainly suffered physical pain in his death, but he was also mentally tortured as well through insults and humiliation and scoffing remarks...

Like all kids, I certainly misbehaved as a child.

I deserved a lot of spanking because I often broke my dad's rules...

But every once in a while, my dad would punish me unfairly...

I would actually be innocent of what I was accused of doing..

And I remember those times because they were so unfair...

And it was so frustrating trying to proclaim my innocence when it was assumed I was guilty...

That is what Jesus is experiencing here...

Not guilty of any sin, much less any crime..

Yet being treated as a guilty criminal in front of all the people..

And being mocked for his lack of power to save himself even when he could have called on legions of angels to remove him from the cross if he desired.

And being made fun of as a king, when he actually was a king...

I cannot imagine the frustration and mental torture of enduring all that.

It is one thing to be mocked for something that is deserved...

If you mock me for being a bad singer, that doesn't bother me.

It is simply true.

But when I am mocked for something that God had gifted me to do, it is hard to endure...

Jesus endured it all...

Both the physical and the mental and the spiritual as he hung on the cross to pay the penalty for sin...

#2 - Jesus serves as our example of suffering well.

People forward me emails weekly about the unfair treatment of Christians in parts of the world...

Fox News even has a reporter who only covers stories that point out how unfairly Christians are treated in this world...

As I hear Christians talk, I hear complaints about how they are treated in the world...

And how this isn't fair or that isn't fair when it comes to how the world treats Christians...

My response to all of those complaints is this?

Do you expect the world to treat you better than they treated your Lord?

Jesus told us....

“If they hate me, they will hate you.”

Persecution and unfair treatment of Christians and injustice toward Christians should be what we expect...

Yet it seems to come as a shock to so many Christians, and it seems to make their blood boil and their tongues complain...

If the people of the world killed our Lord, why in the world do we expect them to roll out the red carpet for us?

Why are we shocked when our rights are taken away or trampled on?

A lot of it stems from the fact that we see ourselves as good people who live right and obey the law, so we have a high view of ourselves and we demand and expect fair treatment...

Dear brothers and sisters, it isn't going to happen..

If they hated Jesus, they will hate his followers...

If they mocked Jesus, they will mock you..

If they treated Jesus unfairly, they will treat you unfairly...

What makes you think that you deserve better treatment than Jesus got?

If Jesus suffered, you are going to suffer if you truly follow him...

Listen to what Peter writes in 1 Peter 2:21b-24...

“...since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps, 22 who

committed no sin, nor was any deceit found in His mouth; 23 [w]and while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously; 24 and He Himself [x]bore our sins in His body on the [y]cross, so that we might die to [z]sin and live to righteousness; for by His [aa]wounds you were healed.”

Christ is our example is how to suffer persecution and injustice and mocking because of our faith...

He didn't return insult for insult...

He didn't answer answer their injustice with injustice of his own..

So, why in the world are so many Christians waiting so much time complaining and protesting about how they are treated by the world?

Why are they wasting so much money trying to get the world to honor their rights and treat them fairly?

Being a Christian and being treated unfairly go together like peas and carrots...

Being insulted and mocked for your faith are the uniforms that are given to those who sign up to play on Jesus Christ's team..

And Jesus is our example of how to respond to it..

Endure it with silence and patience...

I hear Christians say this all the time...

“I’m gonna speak up. Ain’t nobody gonna treat me like that.”

Christians who say that are following the words of the world, and not the words of Christ...

Jesus endured the mockery, the insult and the unfair treatment with silence as an example for all of us...

Final thing to point out from this passage..

#3 - Jesus stayed on the cross to make a way for the mockers and the murderers.

The religious leaders were challenging Jesus to come down from the cross to prove His power.

What they didn’t know is this...

It may have showed the great power of Jesus to get off the cross...

But it showed even greater love for Jesus to stay up there...

John 15:13

"Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends.

What those mocker also didn't know is this...

If Jesus had freed himself from that cross, no one would ever be able to be free from the penalty of sin.

Jesus had to stay on the cross so that we wouldn't have to bear the penalty of sin ourselves...

The mockers on that day were clueless as to what was happening before their eyes...

They needed a sinless Savior to die for their sinful lifestyles...

But they were ignorant of that...

We look at their insults and mockery of Jesus and our blood boils, but the truth is that Jesus died to forgive the worst kinds of sins...

He stayed on that cross and endured the physical, mental and spiritual pain to save the ones who were mocking him for hanging there...

We look at these Roman soldiers, and these Jewish leaders and these thieves and we get angry....

But the truth of the picture of the cross is that Jesus hung there to offer forgiveness to the worst of sinners...

He died for the sin of blasphemy...

He died for the sin of murder...

It is a good picture to see Jesus hanging beside two thieves...

That is not an insult to Jesus to put in between two criminals...

That is a perfect picture of who Jesus came to save...

He came to the sinner and the criminal and the outcast of society...

He came to die for the thief and the murderer and the mocker...

His blood flows to the lowest valley, right?

His blood saves the lowest of the low...

His blood reaches into prisons of men convicted of some of the worst crimes imaginable....

That is the incredible forgiveness of Jesus Christ...

The Roman soldiers who spit on him also hang him on a cross that can provide forgiveness for their sins.

The Jews who mock him from below the cross are looking up to someone who can provide forgiveness for their sin of blasphemy...

Gary Ridgeway was a man who was convicted in 1983 of killing at least 49 people in the state of Washington..

At his sentencing, the families of the victims were allowed to speak.

Most of them talked of their hatred of the killer and the wish that he would suffer the rest of his life..

Then a man named Robert Rule stood to speak.

His 16 year old daughter had been one of Ridgeway's victims..

When he stood to speak, he told Ridgeway that he forgave him for his actions against his daughter...

After the sentencing people asked Mr. Rule about his incredible act of forgiveness toward the serial killer...

His reply was short but brilliant...

“I haven’t killed a soul in my entire life, but I once lived a life filled with sin against my Lord. When I got saved, all of that sin was wiped clean and I was forgiven. Many people just think that Jesus died to forgive those few not so bad sins we commit, but the truth is that he died for the worst sins and sinners imaginable. Gary Ridgeway can have 48 murders forgiven by the blood that Jesus shed at the cross. And if the cross has the power to provide that kind of forgiveness, who am I not to forgive him myself? So, I forgave him. My prayer is that he will seek the forgiveness of God that comes through faith in Christ. That’s really the only forgiveness that truly counts.”

The truth of the cross is that Jesus could have set himself free from it, but he stayed there in love so that we can be set free from sin....

The people may have been challenging Jesus to get down, but I am forever grateful that He stayed up there for me....

Let us pray.