

The Crucifixion

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[0 : 00] Mark 15, beginning in verse 16. They paid homage to him.

And when they had mocked him, they took off the purple robe and put on his own clothes on him. Then they led him out to crucify him. 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. They brought Jesus to the place called Golgotha, which means the place of the skull. Then they offered him wine mixed with myrrh, but he did not take it. And they crucified him.

Dividing up his clothes, they cast lots to see what each would get. It was the third hour when they crucified him. The written notice of the charge against him read, the king of the Jews.

They crucified two robbers with him, one on his right and one on his left. Those who passed by hurled insults at him, shaking their heads and saying, So, you who are going to destroy the temple and build it in three days, come down from the cross and save yourself.

[1 : 29] In the same way, the chief priests and the teachers of the law mocked him among themselves. He saved others, they said, but he can't save himself. Let this Christ, this king of Israel, come down from the cross that we may see and believe.

Those crucified with him also heaped insults on him. It's been two and a half months since I've been up here preaching the word to you.

I want to thank you for your prayers for me as I've been preparing 24 lectures to be preached or taught to seminarians down in Nairobi, Kenya in early March.

The Lord is helping me. I'm not done yet, but thank you for your prayers. And I also want to thank Pastors Colin and Pastor Jeremy for filling in and taking up the slack that I left behind.

Well, we are picking up this morning where we left off two and a half months ago in our study of Mark's gospel. Jesus has been tried by his own people and condemned as a blasphemer.

[2 : 39] They handed him over to the Romans and Governor Pilate condemns him to the death of crucifixion. He's flogged with the cat of nine tails that left his back in shreds.

And now he's made to carry his own rugged cross, making his way out through the city gates of Jerusalem to the place of execution.

The old spiritual asks, were you there when they crucified my Lord? Were you there when they crucified my Lord?

No, I was not there. But sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble. Because I've read the eyewitness accounts of those who were there when they crucified my Lord.

God has recorded and preserved these detailed accounts for us, not just in Mark, but in Matthew, Luke, and John as well. Why? So that you and I might know exactly what you would have seen and heard had you been there when they crucified our Lord.

[3 : 59] Why? Why has God given us these accounts? Why do we have this account of the crucifixion this morning? Well, because Christianity is not a philosophy.

Christianity is not a collection of ideas, though it has ideas. It's not a set of rules and principles to live by, though it has these as well. But Christianity at its heart is certain events that really took place in history.

Events about God's eternal Son, born of a virgin, living 33 years of a perfect life, and then dying on a cross, and rising again, and ascending to heaven, and ruling, and reigning, and coming again in history to judge the living and the dead.

And so this historic event of Christ's death is at the very heart of the Christian message. You remember Paul says to the Corinthians in 1 Corinthians 15, 5, For what I received, I passed on to you as of first importance that Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures.

So important, so central is that, that Paul determined there in Corinth to know nothing but Christ and Him crucified. The death of Jesus was as important as the life of Jesus.

[5 : 29] If He had not died for us, we would still be lost, hopeless, and hell-bound to die in our sins and to face God's wrath forever. So Mark is saying, if you'd have been there that day, this is what you would have seen and heard.

Four points. First of all, his walk to Golgotha. Secondly, his crucifixion. Third, the sign above His head. And last, you would have heard the insults that He bore, bearing shame and scoffing rude, as in our place He stood.

So let's begin with his walk to Golgotha, verses 21 and 22. 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.

They brought Jesus to the place called Golgotha, which means the place of the skull. Now here is a specific detail that shows the authentic record of Mark's words before us.

It was not a nameless man just made up for the story. We know his name, Simon. We know where he's from, Cyrene. We know the direction he was going.

[6 : 45] He was coming into Jerusalem while Jesus was going out. We even know the names of his sons, Alexander and Rufus. And evidently, many of Mark's readers also knew Alexander and Rufus because he does not need to explain them at all.

In fact, the original readers could have gone and asked Simon, was it really true? Did it happen this way? Even asking Alexander and Rufus, what did your father tell you happened on that day? Such detail is a mark of its historicity as readers could check and verify the story. Well, it was this Simon that they forced to carry the cross.

Now, a man condemned to crucifixion had to carry his own cross to the place of execution. And Jesus started out carrying his cross.

John tells us that in his gospel. But he was so weak that he either fell beneath its load or it could go no further. And the soldiers realized, we're never going to make it to Golgotha this way.

[7 : 56] And so they forced Simon, who was passing by, to carry the cross. Now, the Roman soldiers had the right to compel people to carry burdens.

That's why Jesus says in the Sermon on the Mount, in Matthew 5, verse 41, if someone forces you to go one mile, you are to go what? The second mile.

That's what they did. They forced Simon to carry the cross. Luke tells us, they took the cross from Jesus and they put it onto Simon and made him carry it behind our Lord.

Now, what we're seeing here is the true humanity of Jesus Christ. As Pastor Colin said, he is God. God of very God of very God.

He has all the attributes that God his Father has. He's eternal. He's infinite. He's omniscient. He's all-powerful. And yet here he stumbles or stops beneath a load too heavy for him to carry any further.

[9 : 08] True God, yes, but true man. And that's what we're seeing. And remember what he's been through as he's making his way to Golgotha this Friday morning, somewhere between 8 and 9 o'clock.

He's been up all night. Now that alone would do me in. All night, up. And he was there in the upper room that previous evening. And what an emotional drain that was upon our Lord as troubled in spirit.

He said to the 12, one of you will betray me. And then they made their way from Jerusalem across the Kidron Valley up to Gethsemane on the Mount of Olives.

And there we find Jesus saying that my soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death. He's nearly killed with grief in Gethsemane as he pleads with his Father three times in prayer.

Such intensity that he sweat as it were great drops of blood. In fact, he was so drained of strength that an angel had to be sent from heaven to strengthen him, to go on.

[10 : 24] Or he never would have made it to the cross. Then the betrayal. Then the arrest. Then all of his disciple friends forsaking him and fleeing.

Back into Jerusalem he's taken. The trials before the Sanhedrin. Then dragging him over before Pilate. And Pilate sending him to Herod.

And Herod sending him back to Pilate. Having his friend Peter deny him three times. Making eye contact with the denier.

Hearing the crowd chanting for his crucifixion. No one coming to his aid. Condemned to the torturous death of crucifixion. And then the scourging of the cat of nine tails which sometimes killed a man itself.

Soldiers beating his head with a staff. Pounding the crown of thorns into his head. And then loading his cross onto his blood streaked back to carry outside the city to Golgotha.

[11:27] No wonder he buckled under the load of his cross. Do you see him there? That's what we're meant to do. That's why this account is here. That we, though we weren't there, might see him there in our own mind's eye.

Your Savior crushed under this load. But you must know this that there was a load far heavier upon his human soul. The heavy burden of your sins and of mine.

The whole mountain of my sins. The whole mountain of your sins. The collective mountain of sins of all of his people of all time placed upon him.

For he bore our sins in his body on the tree. He bore our griefs. He carried our sorrows. That was the mother load that the Father laid upon him.

The iniquities of us all. The crushing load of our sins. And so Paul says in 2 Corinthians 13, 5, to be sure, he was crucified in weakness.

[12:37] In weakness. Think of it. The omnipotent one crucified in weakness. The one who upholds all things by his powerful word. Crucified in weakness.

He was real man. Real man had sinned. So man must suffer and die. And so he suffers as a real man feeling every bit as much as we would had we been the one crucified.

Emotionally. Physically. Weakness. Pain. For in our place condemned he stood. You know, Jesus didn't use his divine power. The power of his divine nature.

He didn't use it for personal ends. Feeding 5,000? Oh, he'll do that. But not turning stones into bread when he's being tempted. No, he will trust his heavenly father to feed him like you and I must do.

He's being tempted for us. And so he is being tempted as a man and does not rely on his divine power. And so even now as he goes to the cross, he's crucified in weakness.

[13:49] So at last, verse 22 says, they brought Jesus to the place called Golgotha, which means the place of the skull. The Aramaic Golgotha in Latin Calvary.

And if ever there was a drum roll in the Bible, it should be right here at Golgotha. This was the destination that brought Jesus out of heaven.

This is why he set his face toward Jerusalem. It was to come to this knob of the hill and here to die for our sins, for our salvation.

Golgotha, the place of the skull, might have been the knob of a hill on which no green grass or plants grew, so it would look like a man's skull, a ghastly place, blood-stained earth, perhaps even the stench of death.

But there's something ironic about the place of the skull. For there, our skull-crushing Savior would crush the head of the serpent even as his own heel is bruised in the crushing.

[15:03] And so one of the oldest promises in the Bible is to be fulfilled here at the place of the skull. Genesis 3.15, this is the seed of the woman who has come.

And though the father would crush his own son, it would please the Lord to crush him, yet in his being crushed, he would crush the head of the serpent.

His walk to Golgotha. Secondly, we see his crucifixion. Verses 23 to 25, then they offered him wine mixed with myrrh, but he did not take it, and they crucified him.

Dividing up his clothes, they cast lots to see what each would get. It was the third hour when they crucified him. Now, here was a bit of mercy. Before pounding those big spikes through his hands and feet, he's offered a drink, but he did not drink it.

Why not? Matthew says, after tasting it, he refused it. In tasting it, he realized that the wine was mixed.

[16:16] It was mixed with myrrh, which would have had something of an anesthetic effect, a sedative, just to dull the pain a bit as they pounded the nails through his hands and feet.

He was willing to drink the cup of God's wrath. Earlier that night, he settled that in Gethsemane, but not the cup of sedatives because there are no sedatives in hell to dull the pain, the punishment for sin.

He would suffer the full punishment for our sins and feel it physically, emotionally, in every way as we would have. The Father spared not his Son, but delivered him up for us all.

And Jesus would not spare himself anything involved in the way of punishment for our sins. As he stands in our place, the punishment that brought us peace was on him, full force, unmitigated by any sedative.

And he also wanted to be in full control of his mental powers, fully alive mentally. He had some important words to say from the cross, didn't he?

[17 : 34] Seven precious things he spoke. And he wanted to be clear-headed as he speaks those words. And then we read just four words.

Only three in the Greek. We read, and they crucified him. Kind of like Genesis 1. He made the stars also. But what is packed? The horrific suffering packed into those three words, and they crucified him.

Big spikes. Well, first he's stripped. He's laid naked onto this cross, and then these big spikes are driven through his hands and feet.

And then the cross is hoisted into the air and dropped into the hole, secured so it would stay upright and not fall over. And then the hours of cruel torture began.

And he would be hanging there. And the weight of his body would pull on the nails in his hands until it would be so painful and constricting his chest so he cannot get air like he needs.

[18 : 47] He would push up on the nails through his feet. And that would relieve him from the pain in his hands until the pain in his feet was so bad that down he would go and hang again from the nails in his hands and then push up again and that back is rubbing against that old rugged cross every time as he's tortured in the worst punishment that the Romans reserved for the worst of criminals.

for six long hours he suffers. It's said that those who were crucified died a thousand deaths throbbing headache burning thirst but what eternal blessings flow from his sufferings flow from the middle cross saving us from eternally being thirsting thirsting and not having a drop to quench our thirst but rather bringing to us the fullness of joy at God's right hand from this torturous scene flows life to every believer and while such a momentous event is happening what are the soldiers doing? Oh that's not overlooked either eyewitnesses saw what they were doing they were casting lots for each piece of clothing to see what each would get this was bonus pay for those who were on crucifixion watch and it was all prophesied by David a thousand years earlier in Psalm 22 verse 18 they divided my garments among them and cast lots for my clothing so much that happened here in the death of Jesus was foretold seven hundred a thousand years before he even died never was so much predicted and fulfilled about a man's death but then this was not just any man's death this is the death of the son of God in the flesh saving his people from their sins we're even told in verse 25 the very time of day in which he was crucified it was the third hour when they crucified him that's nine o'clock in the morning and even that detail you see is not missed by Mark's credible account so the way to Golgotha the crucifixion and now the sign above his head we're told in verse 26 the written notice of the charge against him read the king of the Jews and this is not just any king this is the king of kings the lord of lords the promised messiah king of David of whom the scripture said the government shall be on his shoulders and he will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom forever but though the king came to his own we're seeing that his own received him not he was not the messiah king that the people wanted we will not have this man to rule over us was their conclusion and so they cried away with him away with him crucify him as we read this and think of the rebellion of the Jews against their king we need to remember this was this rebellion was not just a Jewish thing we also would not have him to rule over us the bible is very clear that we all like sheep have gone astray each one of us has turned to his own way

I went my way you went your way and both of those ways was against Jesus way we didn't want him we didn't want his laws we didn't want his gospel we wanted our way and yet he was made king however I have installed my holy king upon my holy hill of Zion says the father he's ruling now he's ruling over all and has been given authority to judge all men and angels and so there the sign above his head said king of the Jews now this was Pilate's revenge upon the leaders of the Jews who had won a victory over him remember how they had pressured him to crucify Jesus against his own better knowledge and will he knew he was an innocent man he said over and over I find no fault in this man and when Pilate sought to release him they cried if you release him you're not

Caesar's friend whoever makes himself a king opposes Caesar and they just cried all the louder crucify him away with him Pilate says shall I crucify your king we have no king but Caesar crucify him and Pilate caved under the pressure of the Jewish leaders and he handed him over to be crucified John tells us now the Jews objected to the sign saying it should not say they went to Pilate and said change the sign it shouldn't say king of the Jews it should say he claimed to be king of the Jews but Pilate now digs in his heels and says what I have written I have written take that he's reminding them that he's calling the shots not them though they had just pushed him all around like a child on the playground and yet behind all this political maneuvering it stands written king of the Jews almighty God is vindicating his own beloved son what I have written about him [24 : 45] I have written he is king king of the Jews that has been prophesied he's making a statement written in three languages for those Passover pilgrims that were passing by that they all might understand this Jesus is king and all those who have eyes of faith opened by grace bow before him own him as their king have you bowed before this king have you acknowledged you are king and I will serve you I will trust in you I will submit to your law and submit to your gospel so we see him hanging there despised rejected bleeding and dying and there was no kingly crown on his head nothing that would have suggested him to be a king other than that sign only a crown of thorns but don't we love him most on the cross don't you love Jesus most as you see him there despised and rejected and know that he is your king and he's doing that for you sometimes it causes me to tremble the shepherd king dying for sheep that loved to wander will we come lastly fourthly to the insults and shame that he bore verse 27 they crucified two robbers with him one on his right and one on his left now this in itself was shameful insult because those who passed by those who saw him there that

Friday morning saw three criminals hanging there and that's the only ones that hang on the cross criminals so you got this robber you got this bad guy and you got this other robber they're all bad guys they're all getting what they had coming and 700 years earlier Isaiah writes about Christ's suffering saying he was numbered with the transgressors Isaiah 53 12 he was numbered with them there's three transgressors one two three it was shame and guilt by association that's where he belongs right there between those other two criminals and Isaiah puts himself into the crowd that day and tells us what the crowd was thinking Isaiah 53 we considered him stricken by God smitten by him and afflicted after all doesn't the law say cursed is he who is hanged on a tree cursed by God that's what we thought was happening God is cursing this man because he blasphemed and claimed to be the son of God claimed to be the Messiah king what humiliation the holy sinless king of kings on a torture act between two robbers as if he is guilty of high crimes but this is not the only shame that he bore there was the constant assault of mocking insults thrown throwing salt into his wounds and everybody got in on the act piling on insult after insult adding to his torment we see it in the playground don't we in politics in the media even in the chicken coop the weakest chicken gets pecked by all the others and this is Jesus dying in weakness and everybody is pecking at him and insulting and scoffing and mocking him what

I want you to see from the three groups mentioned by Mark is the one thing they're mocking they all mock his claim to be savior well that's what his name means you'll give him the name Jesus the Lord saves Yahweh saves and why should he have that name because he will save his people from their sins and he claimed to be that savior he said the son of man has come to seek and to save that which is lost he said I say these things to you that you may be saved he said I am the door if anyone enters by me he will be saved he claimed to be the savior and that now becomes the point of mockery on the cross by each of the three groups and they think that the falsity of his claim is proved by the fact that he can't even save himself how can he be a savior when he can't save himself notice it first of all the first group those who pass by evidently as they're just going along the road there he is there are the three guys hanging up there and they can't keep it to themselves but they start wagging their heads and shaking their heads and saying ha so you who are going to destroy the temple and build it in three days come down verse 31 to 33 in the same way the chief priests and the teachers of the law mocked him among themselves he saved others he can't even save himself let this

Christ this king of Israel come down now from the cross that we may see and believe then verse 33 ends those crucified with him also heaped insults on him and Luke records one of them is saying aren't you the Christ save yourself and us you see if you are the Christ the Messiah king the savior you claim to be proven by saving yourself and will believe you it seemed like a foolproof argument if

he can't save himself he can't save us he he's no savior at all but they couldn't have been more wrong because it was precisely by not saving himself that he would save us by not coming down from the cross but by enduring the full punishment in the place of sinners in that way alone could he and would he save his people from their sins everyone who repents and trust in him alone to save them by his substitutionary life and death believe on the

[31 : 32] Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved and saved because he did not save himself dear believer do you see your saviors saviorhood being mocked on the cross I mean you talk about temptation to come down from the cross and to show them he can save himself I'd want to show them a thing or two but not our savior not our savior you know what was happening here here was the last temptation of Satan to keep him from the cross remember after his baptism it says Jesus was led by the spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil one of the temptations of the devil was to show to him all the kingdoms kingdoms belong to kings all the kingdoms of the world and he says if you'll just bow down and worship me

I'll give you all the kingdoms well the father had promised from eternity past to give all the kingdoms of the world to his son as a reward for his suffering and dying for his people and here was an offer to avoid the painful and shameful cross and Jesus refused it outright but then just four weeks before his crucifixion Jesus told his disciples that he must now go up to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders chief priests and teachers of the law that he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life and Peter grabs him aside and rebukes him Lord never this will never happen to you and Jesus notices he identifies the devil again now coming to him the same one who attempted him some three years earlier in the wilderness now coming to him through the mouthpiece of his friend Peter and he turns and gives the hardest rebuke he's ever given to a believer get behind me

Satan get out of my way I'm going to Calvary and he rejects that temptation to avoid the cross in the strongest of terms under the physical and emotional strain of the torture of the cross comes the old temptation now at him from all directions come down from the cross and save yourself the fiends of hell were set loose upon him and were stirring up the crowd stirring up the robber stirring up the chief priest stirring up the passers by you're the savior are you you can't even save yourself come down from the cross and prove it and we'll believe you the hymn writer has it correct when he writes he could have called ten thousand angels to destroy this world and set him free but he didn't why not why didn't he come down from the cross

I'm afraid that I live most of my life half awake to this glorious reality that when the choice was given to Jesus on the cross to save himself or to save us he chose us believer he chose you he chose to save you instead of himself and to stay on the cross to be consumed by God's wrath in order that he might save you don't you love him for that don't you want to thank him for that I mean would every day be too much sometimes I'm embarrassed to thank him because it's a reminder of how many days have gone by since the last I thanked him for not saving himself but saving me by staying on the cross you know J.C.

Ryle said that one of the things that will surprise us most in heaven is that we didn't love Jesus more than we did while we were let's run the rest of our race whatever you got a year 50 years whatever you got let's run the rest of our race looking unto Jesus fixing our eyes on Jesus the author and perfecter of our faith who for the joy of our salvation endured the cross and scorned the shame that means he despised that he treated it as a nothing oh but it wasn't a nothing it cut to his very heart and yet he despised it what a savior keep looking to the cross what mocking shame it was that he bore when to stay on the cross for you meant that all the world thought it proved that he's no savior at all so what held in there according to

[36 : 44] Hebrews 12 2 it was the joy! set before him wasn't joyful to hang on the cross we see that but it was a joy that was coming a future joy the joy of bringing many sons and daughters to glory this future joy of standing with you one day and presenting you without fault before the father saying here I am father and the children you have given me not one of them is missing that joy that joy held him to the cross that joy kept him from calling 10,000 angels so dear believer think of this the Lord Jesus had you on his mind and the future joy of saving you there on the cross that's pretty awesome and that ought to warm our hearts toward the savior as he hangs there suffering physical emotional pain we'll see next week the very wrath of

God he had you on his mind you were an ingredient of his joy for which he endured the cross and scorned the shame that he might bring you to glory that he might save you and for that he was

willing to not save himself the old preacher said he would die on the cross all over again for you today he still loves you that much that he would die all over again today of course he doesn't need to for he died for sins once for all time the righteous for the unrighteous to bring us to God were you there when they crucified my Lord no you weren't there and I wasn't there but others were and this morning we've read the accounts

God wants us to know that it really happened Jesus really was crucified the crucifixion of Jesus is real that's what he wants us to learn this morning and secondly that so is our sin real that made it necessary for Jesus to be crucified there's not a one of us but that we underestimate our sin we underestimate the evil of our sin that your sins and mine are so offensive to the holy God that only this that we've seen this morning the son of God hanging on the cross being punished in our place only that could remove the offense of your sin and mine against this God and so we have the hymn that says you who think of sin but lightly nor suppose the evil great here here at Golgotha may view sin's nature rightly here its guilt may estimate mark the sacrifice appointed see who bears the awful loath tis the word the

Lord's anointed son of God son of man and son of God our sin debt was too great for ordinary man to pay and that's why hell is everlasting because man can never make the last payment it's infinite we sinned against an infinite God we have an infinite guilt before this infinite God it is an infinity of suffering to pay for sin and that's why God came and paid the debt God became flesh and suffered and died for us he has infinite worth infinite merit to save a billion worlds if that were the cause the need this is what we see at the cross the infinite wickedness of sin the infinite justice of God that he cannot forgive sin without it being paid for sometimes it ought to make us tremble the cost to Christ for saving us and paying our debt I'd ask you sinner friend outside of Christ you've never submitted your life to him never trusted in him alone to save you never turned from going your way and bowed yourself and said I receive you as king and savior does it never cause you to tremble Calvary I mean if God's own son hanging there on the cross is not being spared by his father when he's bearing the sins not of himself but of his people if God wouldn't spare him do you think for a moment sinner he's going to spare you no no no does it not cause you to tremble well trembling won't save you but

[42 : 12] Jesus will he's willing he's able doubt no more the crucifixion is real the sin that made it necessary to be saved is real and the free offer of Christ is real just as real whoever believes in him shall not perish but have everlasting life come to him he says come to me come come repenting come receiving come believing receive me he says and having me you will have eternal life full pardon for all your sins what a savior let's pray father what can we say but thank you for not sparing your son but giving him up for us or Jesus what can we say to you thank you for being so willing to not save yourself from endless woe and wrath piled on you from the father that we deserved in saving us instead of saving you please melt our hearts with fresh love and affection for you make us hate our sin more and love you more we thank you that you are the king and that this sacrifice is enough to satisfy the very justice of

God that stood against us and that none will ever be confounded none will ever be confused and disappointed in the day of judgment that we trusted in one who was no savior but that we have trusted in the one and only savior and so we are saved eternally thank you then Lord Jesus thank you Holy Spirit for opening our eyes to the wonders of Christ send us on our way rejoicing in him and bring more to out