

Foothills Christian Assembly Sermon July 18, 2021

Luke 23: 26 – 31 “In The Dry Wood”

24 So Pilate gave sentence that it should be as they requested. 25 And he released to them the one they requested, who for rebellion and murder had been thrown into prison; but he delivered Jesus to their will. 26 Now as they led Him away, they laid hold of a certain man, Simon a Cyrenian, who was coming from the country, and on him they laid the cross that he might bear it after Jesus. 27 And a great multitude of the people followed Him, and women who also mourned and lamented Him. 28 But Jesus, turning to them, said, "Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for Me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. 29 For indeed the days are coming in which they will say, 'Blessed are the barren, wombs that never bore, and breasts which never nursed!' 30 Then they will begin 'to say to the mountains, "Fall on us!" and to the hills, "Cover us!" ' 31 For if they do these things in the green wood, what will be done in the dry?" 32 There were also two others, criminals, led with Him to be put to death. 33 And when they had come to the place called Calvary, there they crucified Him, and the criminals, one on the right hand and the other on the left. 34 Then Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do." And they divided His garments and cast lots. 35 And the people stood looking on. But even the rulers with them sneered, saying, "He saved others; let Him save Himself if He is the Christ, the chosen of God." 36 The soldiers also mocked Him, coming and offering Him sour wine 37 and saying, "If You are the King of the Jews, save Yourself." 38 And an inscription also was written over Him in letters of Greek, Latin, and Hebrew: THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS 39 Then one of the criminals who were hanged blasphemed Him, saying, "If You are the Christ, save Yourself and us." 40 But the other, answering, rebuked him, saying, "Do you not even fear God, seeing you are under the same condemnation? 41 And we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds; but this Man has done nothing wrong." 42 Then he said to Jesus, "Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom." 43 And Jesus said to him, "Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise." 44 Now it was about the sixth hour, and there was darkness over all the earth until the ninth hour. 45 Then the sun was darkened, and the veil of the temple was torn in two. 46 And when Jesus had cried out with a loud voice, He said, "Father, 'into Your hands I commit My spirit.' " Having said this, He breathed His last.

I. Introduction

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II. Setting: on the way to the cross v26

a. 26 Now as they led Him away,

- b. On the way to the cross, Luke tells us about 1) the Romans compelling Simon the Cyrenian to carry Christ's cross, 2) the great multitude, 3) the mourning women, 4). Christ's reply to the mourning women, and 5). the two criminals led with Him to be put to death.
- c. So, Christ, with the two robbers, the soldiers and the people, would have left from the place of Christ's trial, the Praetorium (the residence of the provincial governor), and walked through city streets, to a gate to exit the city, and then on open road until arriving at the place of His crucifixion. Jesus was crucified during the 3rd hour (Jewish time), so between 8-9 a.m. (Mark 15:25- Mark used Jewish time, counting from 6am) Christ's trial before Pilate had begun between 5-6 a.m., the 6th hour according to Roman time. (Jn 19:14- John used Roman time, counting from midnight) So, during this timeframe, Jesus goes before Pilate, is sent to Herod, comes back to Pilate, and after public tumult and debate between Pilate and the raving people, Pilate gives sentence for Jesus to die.
- d. Henry "We have here the blessed Jesus, the Lamb of God, led as *a lamb to the slaughter*, to the sacrifice. It is strange with what expedition they went through his trial; how they could do so much work in such a little time, though they had so many great men to deal with, attendance on whom is usually a work of time. He was brought before the chief priests at break of day (**ch.** 22:66), after that to Pilate, then to Herod, then to Pilate again; and there seems to have been a long struggle between Pilate and the people about him. He was scourged, and crowned with thorns and contumeliously used, and all this was done in four or five hours' time, or six at most, for he was crucified between nine o'clock and twelve. Christ's persecutors resolve to lose no time... Never any one was so *chased out of the world* as Christ was, but so he himself said, *Yet a little while and ye shall not see me*; a very little while indeed"¹

III. Simon a Cyrenian v26

- a. "they laid hold of a certain man, Simon a Cyrenian, who was coming from the country, and on him they laid the cross that he might bear it after Jesus."
- b. Both Matthew and Mark also mention Simon. John speaks of Jesus bearing His own cross, with no mention of Simon.
- c. Bock "Jesus goes to his death, carrying his own crossbeam...The cross would have been draped across the nape of the neck, like carrying a sack on one's back. The crossbeam becomes too heavy for a tired Jesus to carry, and so those leading him conscript Simon of Cyrene to carry it (only Luke notes that he carried it behind [ὄπισθεν, *opisthen*; BDR §215.1] Jesus). In a stylistic variation, Luke uses ἐπιλαβόμενοι (*epilabomenoi*; BDF §170.2) to indicate that the soldiers "seized" Simon, while Matthew and Mark use forms of the more legally technical ἀγγαρεύω (*angareuō*, to commandeer; Nolland 1993b: 1136). ...All the Synoptics mention Simon of Cyrene (Matt. 27:32 = Mark 15:21), but only Mark adds that he is the father of Rufus and Alexander, which might suggest that the sons were

¹ Henry, M. (1994). [*Matthew Henry's commentary on the whole Bible: complete and unabridged in one volume*](#) (p. 1906). Peabody: Hendrickson.

well-known believers (perhaps the same Rufus mentioned in Rom. 16:13?). The region of Cyrene, in what is now Tripoli, is mentioned in Acts 6:9, 11:20, and 13:1”²

- i. So, Simon, a man with family roots in northern Africa (modern day Lybia), finds himself in the midst of this cosmos-changing event. He has two sons who are both named by Mark: Rufus and Alexander. We don’t know why he was there at that time, but reasonable speculation would be that he is present as a part of the Passover celebration, either as a worshiper, or as a merchant trading with the crowds of Jewish worshipers.
 - d. Simon, a Cyrenian, is suddenly brought onto the stage of history. He carries Christ’s cross, likely because Christ needed help. (John reports Jesus initially bore His cross Himself.)
 - e. Note God’s sovereignty in Simon’s life, to bless him as the man who would help Jesus with His cross.
 - f. Note Christ’s humanity, His humility, in His physical weakness.
 - g. Calvin “This circumstance points out the extreme cruelty both of the Jewish nation and of the soldiers. There is no reason to doubt that it was then the custom for malefactors to carry their own crosses to the place of punishment, but as the only persons who were crucified were robbers, who were men of great bodily strength, they were able to bear such a burden. It was otherwise with Christ, so that the very weakness of his body plainly showed that it was a lamb that was sacrificed. Perhaps, too, in consequence of having been mangled by scourging, and broken down by many acts of outrage, he bent under the weight of the cross. Now the Evangelists relate that the soldiers *constrained* a man who was a peasant, and of mean rank, *to carry the cross*; because that punishment was reckoned so detestable, that every person thought himself polluted, if he only happened to put his hand to it. But God ennoble by his heralds the man who was taken from the lowest dregs of the people to perform a mean and infamous office; for it is not a superfluous matter, that the Evangelists not only mention his name, but inform us also about his country and his children. Nor can there be any doubt that God intended, by this preparation, to remind us that we are of no rank or estimation in ourselves, and that it is only from the cross of his Son that we derive eminence and renown.”³
- IV. A Great Multitude followed Him v27
- a. 27 And a great multitude of the people followed Him,
 - b. Here we see a fuller description of the setting. This great multitude is following Jesus, watching Him on His way to death, most of them silent witnesses to this great injustice.
 - c. Bock “The trail of people behind Simon consists of two groups. It is not clear why the first group, the multitude of people (πολὸ πλῆθος τοῦ λαοῦ, *poly plēthos tou*

² Bock, D. L. (1996). [Luke: 9:51–24:53](#) (Vol. 2, p. 1842). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic.

³ Calvin, J., & Pringle, W. (2010). [Commentary on a Harmony of the Evangelists Matthew, Mark, and Luke](#) (Vol. 3, pp. 291–292). Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software.

laou), follows Jesus. Most likely consisting of both Jerusalemites and pilgrims, they are naturally curious to see what becomes of him”⁴

- d. So, all of Jerusalem would know of Christ’s crucifixion. This large multitude would quickly spread the word of His death throughout the region.
- V. Women mourned and lamented Him v27
- a. and women who also mourned and lamented Him.
 - b. Within the multitude, a group stands out. Women are mourning and lamenting Christ’s suffering.
 - i. Bock “The second group consists of women publicly beating their breasts and lamenting. *Κόπτομαι (koptomai)* refers to beating the breast in grief (BAGD 444 §2; BAA 902 §2; elsewhere in the Gospels with this sense at Matt. 11:17; 24:30; Luke 8:52; cf. Zech. 7:5). *Θρηνέω (thrēneō)* refers to verbal mourning or dirge singing (BAGD 363 §2; BAA 738 §2; elsewhere in the Gospels at Matt. 11:17; Luke 7:32; John 16:20; cf. Mic. 1:8; Josephus, *Jewish War* 3.9.5 §§435–36). Both terms occur together in Josephus for the mourning associated with Saul’s death (*Antiquities* 6.14.8 §377).”⁵
 - c. Apparently, these women are very sad about what is happening to Jesus, and they are expressing it in a way that is perceptible by the surrounding crowd, and by Christ Himself.
 - i. Bock “Nowhere in the Synoptics are women hostile to Jesus (Plummer 1896: 528). This tendency and the nature of Jesus’ address to the women suggests that they are not full sympathizers, that their mourning is not merely customary, and that they are not mere literary symbols. What we may have here are women who regret that the circumstances unfortunately led to a painful execution..., which suggests that not all opposition to Jesus is hard opposition. Some of the people are not as hostile as the leadership is against Jesus.”⁶
- VI. Jesus turns and speaks to the Daughters of Jerusalem v28-31
- a. 28 But Jesus, turning to them, said, "Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for Me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. 29 For indeed the days are coming in which they will say, 'Blessed are the barren, wombs that never bore, and breasts which never nursed!' 30 Then they will begin 'to say to the mountains, "Fall on us!" and to the hills, "Cover us!" ' 31 For if they do these things in the green wood, what will be done in the dry?"
 - b. Daughters of Jerusalem
 - i. Christ’s response is directed toward the “daughters of Jerusalem”. What does Jesus mean by this?
 1. Bock “Freed from carrying the crossbeam, Jesus turns to gently address those following him: *θυγατέρες Ἰερουσαλήμ (thygateres*

⁴ Bock, D. L. (1996). [Luke: 9:51–24:53](#) (Vol. 2, p. 1844). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic.

⁵ Bock, D. L. (1996). [Luke: 9:51–24:53](#) (Vol. 2, p. 1844). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic.

⁶ Bock, D. L. (1996). [Luke: 9:51–24:53](#) (Vol. 2, p. 1845). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic.

Ierousalēm, daughters of Jerusalem). These women of the capital of Israel represent the nation.”⁷

2. So, Jesus responds to these mourning women, but His response extends out to all the women of Isreal.
- c. Weep for yourselves and for your children v28
 - i. do not weep for Me, but weep for yourselves and for your children.
 - ii. Our Lord teaches these women that they have yet to understand His message. They have yet to perceive their own danger. His multiple warnings during His public ministry have yet to register. These women and their children are facing terrible terrors and sufferings in their own future. Their mourning and lamentation for Jesus is commendable, but more importantly, they need to see the coming destruction of Israel.
 - iii. Calvin “Some have thought that the *women* are reproved, because foolishly and inconsiderately they poured out *tears* to no purpose. On the contrary, Christ does not simply reprove them, as if it were improperly and without a cause that they were *weeping*, but warns them that there will be far greater reason for *weeping* on account of the dreadful judgment of God which hangs over them; as if he had said, that his death was not the end, but the beginning, of evils to Jerusalem and to the whole nation; and in this way he intimates, that he was not abandoned to the wickedness of man in such a manner as not to be the object of Divine care.”⁸
- d. Because desolate days are coming v29,30
 - i. When they will say blessed are the barren:
 1. 29 For indeed the days are coming in which they will say, 'Blessed are the barren, wombs that never bore, and breasts which never nursed!'
 - a. Their coming suffering will be so severe that they will wish they had never given birth to any children. The suffering will be multiplied by their lack of hope in the midst of the suffering.
 - ii. When they will flee, hiding, in panic
 1. 30 Then they will begin 'to say to the mountains, "Fall on us!" and to the hills, "Cover us!" '
 - a. They will have no reliable protectors when the flood of destruction arrives. In their future terror, they will be desperate, hoping to be under falling mountains and covering hills.
 - iii. It will be worse then than now

⁷ Bock, D. L. (1996). [Luke: 9:51–24:53](#) (Vol. 2, p. 1845). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic.

⁸ Calvin, J., & Pringle, W. (2010). [Commentary on a Harmony of the Evangelists Matthew, Mark, and Luke](#) (Vol. 3, pp. 292–293). Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software.

1. 31 For if they do these things in the green wood, what will be done in the dry?"
 - a. If beastly Rome and apostate Israel are willing to do this evil to Jesus now, then how bad will it be when things worsen in the future?
- e. Let's read (together) aloud Luke 21:5-36 "Then, as some spoke of the temple, how it was adorned with beautiful stones and donations, He said, 6 "These things which you see--the days will come in which not one stone shall be left upon another that shall not be thrown down." 7 So they asked Him, saying, "Teacher, but when will these things be? And what sign will there be when these things are about to take place?" 8 And He said: "Take heed that you not be deceived. For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am He,' and, 'The time has drawn near.' Therefore do not go after them. 9 But when you hear of wars and commotions, do not be terrified; for these things must come to pass first, but the end will not come immediately." 10 Then He said to them, "Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. 11 And there will be great earthquakes in various places, and famines and pestilences; and there will be fearful sights and great signs from heaven. 12 But before all these things, they will lay their hands on you and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues and prisons. You will be brought before kings and rulers for My name's sake. 13 But it will turn out for you as an occasion for testimony. 14 Therefore settle it in your hearts not to meditate beforehand on what you will answer; 15 for I will give you a mouth and wisdom which all your adversaries will not be able to contradict or resist. 16 You will be betrayed even by parents and brothers, relatives and friends; and they will put some of you to death. 17 And you will be hated by all for My name's sake. 18 But not a hair of your head shall be lost. 19 By your patience possess your souls. 20 "But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation is near. 21 Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, let those who are in the midst of her depart, and let not those who are in the country enter her. 22 For these are the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled. 23 But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days! For there will be great distress in the land and wrath upon this people. 24 And they will fall by the edge of the sword, and be led away captive into all nations. And Jerusalem will be trampled by Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled. 25 "And there will be signs in the sun, in the moon, and in the stars; and on the earth distress of nations, with perplexity, the sea and the waves roaring; 26 men's hearts failing them from fear and the expectation of those things which are coming on the earth, for the powers of heaven will be shaken. 27 Then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. 28 Now when these things begin to happen, look up and lift up your heads, because your redemption draws near." 29 Then He spoke to them a parable: "Look at the fig tree, and all the trees. 30 When they are already budding, you see and know for yourselves that summer is now near. 31 So you also, when you see these things

happening, know that the kingdom of God is near. 32 Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all things take place. 33 Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away. 34 "But take heed to yourselves, lest your hearts be weighed down with carousing, drunkenness, and cares of this life, and that Day come on you unexpectedly. 35 For it will come as a snare on all those who dwell on the face of the whole earth. 36 Watch therefore, and pray always that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man."

- i. Bock "Jesus is suggesting that the nation is headed for difficult times, an allusion to the events of a.d. 70 (Ellis 1974: 266; Grundmann 1963: 429; Luke 11:49–51; 13:1–9, 34–35; 19:41–44; 20:16; 21:20–21; Acts 6:14; cf. Seneca, *Agamemnon* 659–63). Families will suffer great pain. The thought of the nation's pain has not left him. As he dies, Jesus thinks of the fate of others. Jesus' woe is like that in Jer. 9:17–20 [9:16–19 MT] (R. Brown 1994: 921). The nation is accountable for its rejection. Other Lucan texts show that all groups in the nation experience the pain of this judgment (Luke 11:49–50; 13:34–35; 19:41–44; 21:20–24). Jesus tells the women to weep for Israel, as he had (19:41)."⁹

VII. In the Dry Wood

- a. 31 For if they do these things in the green wood, what will be done in the dry?"
 - i. They: Rome and apostate Israel
 - ii. Wood:
 1. Wood, that which is made of wood
 2. as a beam from which any one is suspended, a gibbet, a cross
 3. a log or timber with holes in which the feet, hands, neck of prisoners were inserted and fastened with thongs
 4. a fetter, or shackle for the feet
 5. a cudgel, stick, staff
 6. a tree
 - a. So, with Simon and the two robbers bearing the gibbet on their necks, in the midst of the walk to His great suffering on the tree, Jesus turns and speaks to the mourning women of this cross, this tree, this gibbet, in response to their wailing.
 - iii. Green Wood:
 1. Green: damp, moist, wet, full of sap, green
 2. The beautiful and shocking idea here is that Christ's cross is filled with life. On that morning in Jerusalem, in the valley of the shadow of death, Jesus points to His cross of death, His coming unfathomable suffering as moist, wet, sap-filled, green, bursting with life. While He would be dried out completely by the Fire of

⁹ Bock, D. L. (1996). [Luke: 9:51–24:53](#) (Vol. 2, pp. 1845–1846). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic.

God, His cross is life. The outpouring of the Holy Spirit, moist with Life Eternal from the River of Life, comes through His cross. This is suffering in the River of Redemption, never with despair.

iv. In the Dry Wood:

1. Dry, of members of the body deprived of their natural juices, shrunk, wasted, withered
2. For the nation of Israel, and for all who reject Christ, a dryness of suffering awaits. A suffering with no personal redemption, with no hope, with only despair, wishing to have never been born, wishing to vanish under the falling mountains, but yet with no deliverance.

VIII. Questions to know, love and obey God