

“The Wickedness of the Crucifixion”
Mark 15:16-25
(Preached at Trinity, July 22, 2015)

I'm supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord's Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I'll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. In these verses we find our Lord in the hands of sinful man.
Mark 15:15 - "after having Jesus scourged, he handed Him over to be crucified."
 - A. We find demonstrated here the full hatred and depravity of men. It was all of the Satanic forces unleashed upon the Son of God.
Acts 2:23 NAU - " this *Man*, delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put *Him* to death."
 - B. We also find the purposes of God being carried out. We see the terrible consequences of sin and the demands of God's divine justice
Acts 2:23 NAU - " this *Man*, delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God . . . "
2. Tonight I want us to trace our Lord's journey to the cross and as we do I want us to pay close attention to the character of those who had a part in this event.
3. We first find Barabbas, the criminal, being released while Jesus, the righteous, is taken away to suffer the death of a criminal.
 - A. It is a picture of the Lamb of God being offered as a substitute – the just for the unjust.
1 Peter 3:18 NAU - "For Christ also died for sins once for all, *the* just for *the* unjust, so that He might bring us to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit;"
 - B. The picture is of you and me standing condemned, guilty of lawlessness, worthy of death – and of Jesus taking our place.
 - C. While Jesus became the substitute for Barabbas to satisfy human justice, there is no indication that Christ became *his* substitute to satisfy Divine justice.
4. After Barabbas was released Jesus began the path that would end with His crucifixion.
First He was scourged
 - A. As I've pointed out, it may have been an effort by Pilate to satisfy the demands of the crowd.
 - B. Again we find a picture of the horrible nature of our sin. The Lamb of God was beginning to suffer its penalty. Scourging was a horrible, painful punishment The Historian Josephus described it – "Scourging was hideous torture. The flesh was at times lacerated to such an extent that deep-seated veins and arteries, and sometimes even entrails and inner organs, were exposed."
Such flogging often resulted in death.

- C. It was according to Scripture – foretold long before
Psalms 129:3 NAU - "The plowers plowed upon my back; They lengthened their furrows."
Isaiah 50:6 NAU - "I gave My back to those who strike *Me*, And My cheeks to those who pluck out the beard; I did not cover My face from humiliation and spitting."
Isaiah 53:5 NAU - "But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; The chastening for our well-being (שְׁלוֹמֵנוּ) *fell* upon Him, And by His scourging we are healed."
- D. This was just the beginning of our Lord's sorrows. His cuts and gashes were ordered by Divine Providence in the course of our healing for sin but the end demanded His sacrifice. Our peace with God could only come through the cross.
Colossians 1:19-20 NAU - " For it was the *Father's* good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him, ²⁰ and through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross; through Him, *I* say, whether things on earth or things in heaven."
5. Jesus' sacrifice was more than an instant death. He was bearing the weight of sin. He was suffering the wrath of God. He went from one cruel torment to another. On one hand we see the wrath of God poured out upon sin. On the other hand we see the savage cruelty of sinful men being demonstrated to the fullest.
- A. Hours earlier He had been beaten and spat upon during the ecclesiastical trial. It was hatred, cruel savagery
Mark 14:65 NAU - "Some began to spit at Him, and to blindfold Him, and to beat Him with their fists, and to say to Him, "Prophesy!" And the officers received Him with slaps *in the face*."
Mark 15:19 NAU - "They kept beating His head with a reed, and spitting on Him, and kneeling and bowing before Him."
- B. After His conviction under Pilate He was delivered to the cruel torments of the Roman soldiers
1. They stripped Him and put a scarlet robe on Him – **Verse 17**
 You can imagine the pain of the robe upon the gashes on His back
 2. They put a crown of thorns upon His head
 They could have used anything, they could have made a crown out of straw - but they purposely chose thorns to increase His misery
 The thorns made deep cuts on His scalp
 3. They then hit Him on the head with the reed driving the thorns deeper –
Verse 19
6. The soldiers were not commanded to abuse Jesus. Apparently they abused Jesus for their own amusement.
- A. It was a huge crowd.
Mark 15:16 NAU - " The soldiers took Him away into the palace (that is, the Praetorium), and they called together the whole Roman cohort."
 ὅλην τὴν σπεῖραν·
 ὅλος - whole, all, complete, entire
 σπεῖρα - cohort (the tenth part of a Roman legion having about 600 men)

- B. Of this huge crowd of soldiers, all were enjoying watching this righteous man suffer. No mercy was offered.
1. Isaiah rightly prophesied concerning Jesus
Isaiah 53:3 NAU - "He was despised and forsaken of men, A man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; And like one from whom men hide their face He was despised, and we did not esteem Him."
 2. The sinfulness of every human being was being demonstrated by these Roman soldiers. We deceive ourselves if we think we are more civilized
7. From this point Jesus is led away to be crucified
Isaiah 53:7 NAU - "He was oppressed and He was afflicted, Yet He did not open His mouth; Like a lamb that is led to slaughter, And like a sheep that is silent before its shearers, So He did not open His mouth."
1. Our sacrifice was led away as a sacrifice to the altar
He was marched through the streets leading to a place outside the city called Golgotha. Those condemned to die had to carry their own cross.
 2. It was customary that the charge for which the condemned was convicted was written on a board and either carried in front of the procession or hung around the neck of the condemned. Afterwards it was attached to the cross.
Jesus' charge can be seen in **Verse 26** - "THE KING OF THE JEWS"
 3. There has often been debate over whether Jesus carried the whole cross or just the crossbeam alone. Nothing in the context suggests anything other than the whole cross – and since the indictment was written above Christ's head we have to assume it was the classical Latin cross.
 4. Jesus carried the cross for a distance but due to His weakened state could go no further. He was weakened beyond the end of human endurance – yet His suffering was not complete.
 5. The Roman soldiers exercised their right of requisition:
Matthew 5:41 – "And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain."
They compelled one Simon, a Cyrenian to carry the cross.
 - a. He was probably a Jew from Cyrene, located on a plateau located 10 miles from the Mediterranean Sea. He was probably in Jerusalem for the Passover.
 - b. It is possible God used this to save him. This terrible shame of being forced to carry the cross of a criminal was turned for his great good. Mark adds to his account that Simon was the father of Rufus and Alexander – the implication is that these men were known of the church
Mark 15:21 NAU - "They pressed into service a passer-by coming from the country, Simon of Cyrene (the father of Alexander and Rufus), to bear His cross."
Paul speaks of one named Rufus
Romans 16:13 NAU - "Greet Rufus, a choice man in the Lord, also his mother and mine."

8. **Verse 24** begins, "And they crucified him"
- A. Crucifixion was a punishment used only by the Romans – it was a cruel punishment designed to make death as slow and miserable as possible.
1. It is said that some merciful rulers would order the condemned strangled first and then nailed to the cross. Apparently Julius Caesar commanded this for some condemned pirates.
 2. There was no mercy for Jesus
- B. The pain and suffering must have been beyond bearing – yet he bore our sins
Isaiah 53:4 NAU - "Surely our griefs He Himself bore, And our sorrows He carried; Yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken, Smitten of God, and afflicted."
9. In **Verse 23** we find that they gave wine.
Mark 15:23 NAU - "They tried to give Him wine mixed with myrrh; but He did not take it."
 Matthew's Gospel adds "gall"
Matthew 27:34 NAU - "they gave Him wine to drink mixed with gall; and after tasting *it*, He was unwilling to drink."
 Gall refers to that which is bitter. Some believe the gall was a form of opiate to lessen the pain. Tradition tells us it was prepared by some of the wealthy women as an act of mercy – Jesus would not accept it.
10. As Jesus was crucified his garments were divided among the Roman soldiers – **V.24**
 Matthew's Gospels tells us after they divided Jesus' garments between themselves they then they sat down to keep watch – to guard the scene.
Matthew 27:35-36 NAU - "And when they had crucified Him, they divided up His garments among themselves by casting lots. ³⁶ And sitting down, they *began* to keep watch over Him there."
11. The text also states that Jesus was crucified with two other common criminals – one on each side of His cross – **Verse 27**
 While this cries of the injustice of Jesus' crucifixion the whole scene is a testimony of the meaning of our Lord's cross. Did He not come to die for sinners?
Mark 15:28 NAU - "*And the Scripture was fulfilled which says, 'And He was numbered with transgressors.'*"
12. The next verses describe the passers by and their taunts and mockery – **Verse 29-32**
- A. Jesus was obviously well known. The passersby looked upon Him and mocked Him. They were using the glory of Christ to mock Him.
Mark 15:29-31 NAU - "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; He cannot save Himself."
1. In great blasphemy they were mocking God.
 2. They implied that it was His weakness that kept Him there. The great irony was it was because He was King that He *did not* come down from the cross.
 3. They rejected Christ – His testimony, His miracles, His teachings, His life
- B. The religious leaders with glee and sweet success mocked Him. It would be a success short lived. All success not pointed to the glory of Christ will soon be to our shame.

- C. Luke tells us the military joined the mockery
Luke 23:36-37 NAU - "The soldiers also mocked Him, coming up to Him, offering Him sour wine, ³⁷ and saying, "If You are the King of the Jews, save Yourself!"
 - D. Even the criminals mocked Jesus. Even in the condemnation of our sin, we justify ourselves.
Mark 15:32 - "Those who were crucified with Him were also insulting Him."
13. Through it all Jesus remained absolutely silent. While He suffered for the sins of others, He did not offer one word of rebuke. Peter later writes,
1 Peter 2:23 NAU - "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;"

Conclusion:

1. In these verses we've seen the depravity of man demonstrated. The sin and corruption for which Christ died was displayed in all of its vileness. The very thing that should have caused men to embrace Christ became the cause of their mocking.
2. The same continues today. Our hearts are no better. If given the opportunity today we would still crucify Him.
 - a. Men still deny His power. They still reject Him as King. They reject His reign, they reject His Law.
 - b. Men still want Jesus forever removed from their presence.
 - c. The cross will forever be seen as foolishness to those who are lost
1 Corinthians 1:18 KJV – "For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God."