

Foothills Christian Assembly Sermon August 8, 2021
Luke 23: 32 – 43 – “If You are the Christ, Save Yourself”

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. 47 So when the centurion saw what had happened, he glorified God, saying, "Certainly this was a righteous Man!" 48 And the whole crowd who came together to that sight, seeing what had been done, beat their breasts and returned. 49 But all His acquaintances, and the women who followed Him from Galilee, stood at a distance, watching these things.

I. Introduction

- a. Psalm 22:1-21 “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me? Why are You so far from helping Me, And from the words of My groaning? 2 O My God, I cry in the daytime, but You do not hear; And in the night season, and am not silent. 3 But You are holy, Enthroned in the praises of Israel. 4 Our fathers trusted in You; They trusted, and You delivered them. 5 They cried to You, and were delivered; They trusted in You, and were not ashamed. 6 But I am a worm, and no man; **A reproach of men, and despised by the people.** 7 **All those who see Me ridicule Me; They shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying,** 8 **"He trusted in the Lord, let Him rescue Him; Let Him deliver Him, since He delights in Him!"** 9 But

You are He who took Me out of the womb; You made Me trust while on My mother's breasts. 10 I was cast upon You from birth. From My mother's womb You have been My God. 11 Be not far from Me, For trouble is near; For there is none to help. **12 Many bulls have surrounded Me; Strong bulls of Bashan have encircled Me. 13 They gape at Me with their mouths, Like a raging and roaring lion.** 14 I am poured out like water, And all My bones are out of joint; My heart is like wax; It has melted within Me. 15 My strength is dried up like a potsherd, And My tongue clings to My jaws; You have brought Me to the dust of death. **16 For dogs have surrounded Me; The congregation of the wicked has enclosed Me. They pierced My hands and My feet;** 17 I can count all My bones. **They look and stare at Me. 18 They divide My garments among them, And for My clothing they cast lots.** 19 But You, O Lord, do not be far from Me; O My Strength, hasten to help Me! 20 Deliver Me from the sword, **My precious life from the power of the dog. 21 Save Me from the lion's mouth And from the horns of the wild oxen!** You have answered Me.”

1. Both silent watchers and vocal scorners surrounded Jesus while He suffered upon the cross. Both the strong bulls of Israel and the raging lions of Rome scorn Christ. Bock “Luke divides those observing this historic moment into two groups: watchers and mockers. The people (λαός, *laos*) stand watching. The term for watching, θεωρῶν (*theōrōn*), comes from Ps. 22:7 [21:8 LXX], ... In the psalm the same people both watch and mock. They are hostile to the sufferer. Luke’s separation of “watchers” from “mockers” suggests that the people who watch are curious ... rather than neutral or mourning ... They want to see the outcome of their demand for Jesus’ death (Luke 23:21, 23). Their actions are not as severe as the leaders, but neither are they supportive of Jesus ... But the call for repentance in Acts 2 shows that the crowd was not positive on crucifixion day, but neither did they directly rebuke Jesus. They merely observe what is taking place.”¹
- b. Today, we will ponder the sneering, the mocking, and the blaspheming experienced by Christ our Lord upon the cross. As we hear God’s Word together, let us all be pierced to consider our own sinful sneering and mocking, whether toward others or toward God. Let us all consider how our sinful flesh still influences us toward condescension, sneering, and scorning, unto repentance and deeper commitment to lives of love, especially in our attitudes and words toward God and others. How do we make scornful demands of God? How do we express sinful sneering? Did Jesus scorn His scorners? How can our words be like the repentant criminal and the bold centurion, both who praised Christ?
 1. Ephesians 4:29-32 “29 Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers. 30 And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. 31 Let all bitterness, wrath,

¹ Bock, D. L. (1996). [Luke: 9:51–24:53](#) (Vol. 2, p. 1851). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic.

anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice.
32 And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another,
just as God in Christ forgave you.”

- c. Today’s sermon: Luke 23: 32 – 43 – “If You are the Christ, Save Yourself”
 - 1. The Jewish rulers sneer v35
 - 2. The Roman soldiers also mock Jesus v36,37
 - 3. Pilate mocks the entire Jewish nation v38
 - 4. The criminal blasphemes Jesus v39
 - 5. Questions to know, love and obey God
- II. The Jewish rulers sneer v35
- a. 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."
 - b. Here we see both the watchers and the mockers mentioned by Luke. The crowd is a mix of quiet watchers and vocal scoffers. Who spoke up for Jesus? A crucified criminal (23:40) defended Christ while He still lived, and a Roman centurion spoke up for Christ after He died (23:47).
 - c. Sneer: to deride by turning up the nose, to sneer at, to scoff at. What kind of people sneer and scorn? Why do they mock and deride? These Jewish rulers in this text are amongst the scoffers, those who pridefully look down on others, those who use their tongue to mock and wound.
 - 1. Jewish leaders have done this to Jesus before. Lk 16:13,14 ““No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon." Now the Pharisees, who were lovers of money, also heard all these things, and they **derided** Him.”
 - 2. OT sinful derision, mocking
 - 1. Christ’s scorning predicted by the prophet David Ps. 22:7
 - a. “All those who see Me **ridicule Me**; They shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying”
 - 2. Israel mocked by their neighbors. Nation mocking nation. Ps 80:6
 - a. “You have made us a strife to our neighbors, And our enemies **laugh among themselves.**”
 - 3. The danger of scorning the poor – Prov 17:5
 - a. “He who mocks the poor reproaches his Maker; He who is glad at calamity will not go unpunished.”
 - 4. The danger of breaking the 5th commandment – Prov 30:17
 - a. “The eye that mocks his father, And scorns obedience to his mother, The ravens of the valley will pick it out, And the young eagles will eat it.”
 - 5. The derision of God’s prophet – Jer 20:7
 - a. “O LORD, You induced me, and I was persuaded; You are stronger than I, and have prevailed. I am in derision daily; Everyone mocks me.”

6. The blessings of avoiding the company of scoffers, and the dangers of joining them Ps 1:1,4-6
 - a. "Blessed is the man Who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, Nor stands in the path of sinners, Nor sits in the seat of the scornful ...The ungodly are not so, But are like the chaff which the wind drives away. 5 Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, Nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous. 6 For the Lord knows the way of the righteous, But the way of the ungodly shall perish."
 - i. Note the gradual progression: walking, standing, sitting.
3. The OT derision of God toward the wicked
 1. God laughs at those who scorned Jesus, and at all who set themselves against Christ the King - Ps 2:1-6
 - a. "1 Why do the nations rage, And the people plot a vain thing? 2 The kings of the earth set themselves, And the rulers take counsel together, Against the LORD and against His Anointed, [saying], 3 "Let us break Their bonds in pieces And cast away Their cords from us." 4 He who sits in the heavens shall laugh; The Lord shall hold them in derision. 5 Then He shall speak to them in His wrath, And distress them in His deep displeasure: 6 "Yet I have set My King On My holy hill of Zion.""
 - i. The Father forsakes His Son on the cross, leaving Him to the mocking of these scorners. But, the Father resurrects Christ and sets His Son as King of all, scorning the vain scorners. Whose derision terrifies more?
 2. God scorns all the wicked nations of the earth – Ps 59:8
 - a. "But You, O LORD, shall laugh at them; You shall have all the nations in derision."
 3. God's scorns those who scorn His corrections – Prov 1:22-28
 - a. "How long, you simple ones, will you love simplicity? For scorners delight in their scorning, And fools hate knowledge. 23 Turn at my rebuke; Surely I will pour out my spirit on you; I will make my words known to you. 24 Because I have called and you refused, I have stretched out my hand and no one regarded, 25 Because you disdained all my counsel, And would have none of my rebuke, 26 I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your terror comes, 27 When your terror comes like a storm, And your destruction comes like a whirlwind, When distress and anguish come upon you. 28 "Then they will

call on me, but I will not answer; They will seek me diligently, but they will not find me.”

d. The content of the mocking of the Jewish leaders

1. “He saved others; let Him save Himself if He is the Christ, the chosen of God.”
2. They are laughing at Jesus’ humiliation and suffering. By having Him crucified, they believe they have proven their point that He is not the long-promised Messiah. By exercising this power over Jesus, they believe they have displayed their own superiority to Jesus. He’s just another misled country preacher, fading to nothing, panting for breath, hung up by nails on the gibbet.
3. They imply they would believe He is the Christ if He could come down from the cross. But, this is not true, they are simply mocking His despair, powerlessness and humiliation. If they will not believe after the resurrection, no miracle can convince them. They’ve already seen Him save others from every disease, every demon and even death itself, and they still do not believe.
 1. Bock “The leaders mock Jesus’ ability to deliver others (i.e., perform miraculous works for them) and not himself. They derisively taunt him to save himself if “this one” (οὗτος, *houtos*) is the anointed of God, the elect one. ...If Jesus is God’s elect, God will certainly save him. The taunt is sarcastic: they think they have stopped Jesus, they are feeling good about having executed him. The taunt also echoes Ps. 22:8. But God will answer their taunt in a surprising way in just a few days. God’s Chosen One (cf. Luke 2:26; 9:20) will be vindicated”²
 - a. Ps 22:8 "He trusted in the Lord, let Him rescue Him; Let Him deliver Him, since He delights in Him!"
4. “If He is the Christ” – note how scorners make themselves the judges of others, and in this scenario, these pitiful, wicked men set themselves as condescending judges of Jesus Christ, the glorious One, in the very moment of His triumph. He is triumphing over them as they mock Him from the utter depths of blindness, foolishness and pride.
 1. Colossians 1:15-20 “He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. 16 For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. 17 And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist. 18 And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence. 19 For it

² Bock, D. L. (1996). [Luke: 9:51–24:53](#) (Vol. 2, pp. 1851–1852). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic.

pleased the Father that in Him all the fullness should dwell, 20 and by Him to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross.”

2. Henry “and *the rulers*, whom from their office one would take to be men of sense and men of honour, stood among the rabble, *and derided him...*; and they said, *He saved others, let him save himself*. Thus was he upbraided for the good works he had done, as if it were indeed *for these* that they *crucified* him. They triumphed over him as if they had conquered him, whereas he was himself then more than a conqueror; they challenged him to save himself from the cross, when he was saving others by the cross: *If he be the Christ, the chosen of God*, let him save himself. They knew that *the Christ was the chosen of God*, designed by him, and dear to him. “If he, as the Christ, would deliver our nation from the Romans (and they could not form any other idea than that of the Messiah), let him deliver himself from the Romans that have him now in their hands.” Thus the Jewish *rulers* jeered him as subdued by the Romans, instead of subduing them.”³

5. Save Himself: note how mockers believe power must be used first for self-protection. Mockers cannot accept that God could be of such character as to submit Himself to the derision and suffering cast upon Him by His creatures.

- e. This mockery came from those who should have been the most humbled before God, as shepherds of His people.
 - 1. Note how positions of spiritual leadership held by the carnal-minded leads to dangerous blindness, misuse of power, and terrible humiliation and mistreatment of others.

III. The Roman soldiers also mock Jesus v36,37

- a. 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."
- b. The scorning is not limited to the Jewish leaders. Likely influenced by the general attitude of disgust set forth by the crowd who had cried “Crucify Him”, not with their vocal, mocking leaders, the Roman soldiers join in the fun. Note how the Roman soldiers focused upon Christ as the supposed King of the Jews, while the Jews had focused their mockery upon Christ as the supposed Messiah foretold of old.
 - 1. Henry “*The Roman soldiers* jeered him as *the King of the Jews*: “A people good enough for such a prince, and a prince good enough for such a people.” They *mocked him* (v. 36, 37); they made sport with him,

³ Henry, M. (1994). [*Matthew Henry's commentary on the whole Bible: complete and unabridged in one volume*](#) (p. 1907). Peabody: Hendrickson.

and made a jest of his sufferings; and when they were drinking sharp sour wine themselves, such as was generally allotted them, they triumphantly asked him if he would pledge them, or drink with them. And they said, *If thou be the king of the Jews, save thyself*; for, as the Jews prosecuted him under the notion of a pretended Messiah, so the Romans under the notion of a pretended king.”⁴

- c. Yet, notice the common theme: “If you are the King of the Jews, save Yourself”
 - 1. IF = setting themselves as judge over God
 - 2. “save Yourself” = no God or King would ever lay aside power and accept suffering and mistreatment instead of exercising Divine Power for Self-deliverance.

IV. Pilate mocks the entire Jewish nation v38

- a. 38 And an inscription also was written over Him in letters of Greek, Latin, and Hebrew: THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS
- b. The theme of mocking continues with this placard placed over Jesus’ head by Pilate. In 19:19-22 “Now Pilate wrote a title and put it on the cross. And the writing was: JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS. 20 Then many of the Jews read this title, for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city; and it was written in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin. 21 Therefore the chief priests of the Jews said to Pilate, "Do not write, 'The King of the Jews,' but, 'He said, "I am the King of the Jews." ' " 22 Pilate answered, "What I have written, I have written."
 - 1. While Pilate’s aim was to mock the entire Jewish nation, such mockery extends to Christ, given that He is being crucified by the Romans. Pilate is declaring the superiority of Caesar over the Jewish King, any Jewish King. As if to say that Christ or any other such man is as little as nothing compared to the universal power and reign of Rome.
 - 2. Marshall “A climax to the mockery ...is provided by the superscription ...placed over Jesus.”⁵
- c. Note how nations with global sway scoff at Christ as King, along with every other power that would come against their global sway.
 - 1. Again, Psalm 2 “Why do the nations rage, And the people plot a vain thing? 2 The kings of the earth set themselves, And the rulers take counsel together, Against the LORD and against His Anointed”
 - 2. Fulfilled in Herod and Pilate, but also in all who act similar to Herod and Pilate
 - 1. Acts 4:24-30 “24 So when they heard that, they raised their voice to God with one accord and said: "Lord, You are God, who made heaven and earth and the sea, and all that is in them, 25 who by

⁴ Henry, M. (1994). [*Matthew Henry’s commentary on the whole Bible: complete and unabridged in one volume*](#) (p. 1907). Peabody: Hendrickson.

⁵ Marshall, I. H. (1978). [*The Gospel of Luke: a commentary on the Greek text*](#) (p. 870). Exeter: Paternoster Press.

the mouth of Your servant David have said: 'Why did the nations rage, And the people plot vain things? 26 The kings of the earth took their stand, And the rulers were gathered together Against the Lord and against His Christ.' 27 "For truly against Your holy Servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, were gathered together 28 to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose determined before to be done. 29 Now, Lord, look on their threats, and grant to Your servants that with all boldness they may speak Your word, 30 by stretching out Your hand to heal, and that signs and wonders may be done through the name of Your holy Servant Jesus."

- d. How do Christians today act the same way as Pilate? How do we treat the laws and powers of the USA as greater than the laws and powers of Christ the King?

V. The criminal blasphemes Jesus v39

- a. Then one of the criminals who were hanged blasphemed Him, saying, "If You are the Christ, save Yourself and us."

- b. Not only did Jewish leader, Roman leaders and Roman soldiers mock and scorn Christ on the cross, but also a criminal with no power over Christ mocked Him, but it appears this thief's motive is to be saved by Christ. Yet, similarly, he is putting Christ on trial ("If You are the Christ"), and he is assuming no Messiah would choose not to use His power for self-deliverance ("save Yourself). But, even more, this man misunderstands the nature of Christ's salvation for sinners. He misses the critical fact that the Christ had to suffer and die for His elect, so the very last thing any needy sinner wants is for Christ to come down from the cross and save Himself. Think of it. Suffering beside Jesus Christ, observing His meekness, yet so blinded as to attack Him and make demands of Him.

- 1. Henry "Though he was now in pain and agony, and in the valley of the shadow of death, yet this did not humble his proud spirit, nor teach him to give good language, no, not to his fellow-sufferer. *Though thou bray a fool in a mortar, yet will not his foolishness depart from him.* No troubles will of themselves work a change in a wicked heart, but sometimes they *irritate* the corruption which one would think they should *mortify*. He challenges Christ to *save both himself and them*. Note, There are some that have the impudence to rail at Christ, and yet the confidence to expect to be saved by him; nay, and to conclude that, if he do not save them, he is not to be looked upon as the Saviour."⁶

- c. Note how mockery and scorning demonstrate the terminal blindness of the lost. How concerned should we be if scorn, mockery, belittling, and scoffing are ever a part of our attitude or speech?

VI. Questions to know, love and obey God

⁶ Henry, M. (1994). [*Matthew Henry's commentary on the whole Bible: complete and unabridged in one volume*](#) (p. 1908). Peabody: Hendrickson.