The Darkest Day

Mark Series (Easter Weekend)

Message 50

Mark 15:20–41 (CSB)

**20**After they had mocked him, they stripped him of the purple robe and put his clothes on him.

**CRUCIFIED BETWEEN TWO CRIMINALS**

They led him out to crucify him. **21**They forced a man coming in from the country, who was passing by, to carry Jesus’s cross. He was Simon of Cyrene, the father of Alexander and Rufus.

**22**They brought Jesus to the place called *Golgotha* (which means Place of the Skull). **23**They tried to give him wine mixed with myrrh, but he did not take it.

**24**Then they crucified him and divided his clothes, casting lots for them to decide what each would get. **25**Now it was nine in the morning when they crucified him. **26**The inscription of the charge written against him was: The King of the Jews. **27**They crucified two criminals, with him, one on his right and one on his left.

**29**Those who passed by were yelling insults at him, shaking their heads, and saying, “Ha! The one who would destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, **30**save yourself by coming down from the cross!” **31**In the same way, the chief priests with the scribes were mocking him among themselves and saying, “He saved others, but he cannot save himself! **32**Let the Messiah, the King of Israel, come down now from the cross, so that we may see and believe.” Even those who were crucified with him taunted him.

**THE DEATH OF JESUS**

**33**When it was noon, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon., **34**And at three Jesus cried out with a loud voice, **“Eloi, Eloi, lemá sabachtháni?”** which is translated, “**My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?**”,

**35**When some of those standing there heard this, they said, “See, he’s calling for Elijah.”

**36**Someone ran and filled a sponge with sour wine, fixed it on a stick, offered him a drink, and said, “Let’s see if Elijah comes to take him down.”

**37**Jesus let out a loud cry and breathed his last. **38**Then the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. **39**When the centurion, who was standing opposite him, saw the way he breathed his last, he said, “Truly this man was the Son of God!”,

**40**There were also women watching from a distance. Among them were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James the younger and of Joses, and Salome. **41**In Galilee these women followed him and took care of him. Many other women had come up with him to Jerusalem.

# Intro. Never has one man’s death meant more than Jesus’.

 A. Truly, the death of Jesus is a watershed moment in the story of humanity.

1. It was on this night that the perfect, sinless Son of God died to pay the cost of humanity’s sins.

 2. On Good Friday, Jesus died to set men and women free from their sin.

3. The One who had done no wrong died so those who had done nothing right might live.

 B. Because of the gravity of tonight, this service is intentionally different.

1. For almost 2,000 years, the Church has celebrated Good Friday in a somber reflection of Jesus’ death.

 2. Tonight is not about the hope of a resurrection or eternal life.

 3. Tonight is all about the terrible cost Jesus paid for the forgiveness of sin.

 4. Tonight, we reflect and meditate upon the death of Jesus Christ.

Let us, together, examine the cost of Jesus’ death.

# 1. Jesus Death was full of Pain

 Good Friday is a time for us to reflect upon the Pain that Jesus’ bore.

A. Jesus’ crucifixion was physically painful.

1. Jesus’ back was terrible broken and marked by the cat-of-9 tails wielded in expert hands.

2. Rough, murderous hands pushed down a crown of thorns upon Jesus’ head.

3. Bloodied hands held down Jesus’ feet and wrists as Rome nailed symbols of her power and authority into the body of Jesus.

4. At every juncture, Jesus felt every moment of pain.

 a. Although Jesus was offered a bitter wine to cut the pain, He refused.

 b. The pain He felt was not collateral damage.

c. The pain in His head, his back, his feet, hands, and every other portion had a purpose.

d. In ways beyond our comprehension, Jesus’ pain satisfied the Father’s wrath against our sin.

 B. Jesus’ crucifixion was emotionally painful.

1. Imagine the pain Jesus felt as His mother and family looked upon His naked, broken body!

2. Just as Jesus wept over the sin of Jerusalem before His death, now He felt the weight of the sin of the world.

3. This must have caused the One who was there when all of the world was created emotional pain.

 C. Jesus also experienced spiritual pain.

 1. Jesus quotes the prophetic Psalm 22, which declares:

 Psalm 22:1–15 (CSB)

**1**My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?

Why are you so far from my deliverance

and from my words of groaning?

**2**My God, I cry by day, but you do not answer,

by night, yet I have no rest.

**Ps. 22:7-18**

**7**Everyone who sees me mocks me;

they sneer and shake their heads:

**8**“He relies on the Lord;

let him save him;

let the Lord rescue him,

since he takes pleasure in him.”

**11**Don’t be far from me, because distress is near

and there’s no one to help.

**12**Many bulls surround me;

strong ones of Bashan encircle me.

**13**They open their mouths against me—

lions, mauling and roaring.

**14**I am poured out like water,

and all my bones are disjointed;

my heart is like wax,

melting within me.

**15**My strength is dried up like baked clay;

my tongue sticks to the roof of my mouth.

You put me into the dust of death.

**16**For dogs have surrounded me;

a gang of evildoers has closed in on me;

they pierced my hands and my feet.

**17**I can count all my bones;

people look and stare at me.

**18**They divided my garments among themselves,

and they cast lots for my clothing.

**2.** Not only does the Psalm predict the activities surrounding Jesus’ death, but they serve as the background for the spiritual pain Jesus experienced for us.

a. At this precise moment, Jesus experienced that which He had never felt before.

 b. Separation from His Father.

 c. Elizabeth Barrett Browning calls this “The orphan’d cry” of Jesus.

3. In that moment, the weight of sin, judgment, and wrath came upon Him and overwhelmed Him.

4. The Apostle Paul described it this way in **2 Corinthians 5:21 (CSB)**

**21**He made the one who did not know sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

5. This “orphaned cry of Jesus” was the ultimate form of suffering that Jesus experienced.

 a. The physical pain He gladly bore.

 b. The emotional pain, although real, could be endured.

c. But the separation He experienced from the Father, for that brief moment, was the worst kind of agony that Jesus bore.

 d. And that agony that He bore was not for His sake, but for ours.

That leads us to point 2 for tonight, that Jesus’ death was vicarious.

# 2. Jesus’ death was vicarious. (**FIRST ROW of Lights turned off)**

 A. Vicarious means in place of someone else.

1. If you are living vicariously through your kids, it means you are reliving your childhood or putting your dreams upon your children.

2. Jesus’ death was vicarious in that He experienced the fullness of God’s wrath on our behalf.

 a. His cross should have been our cross.

 b. His pain should have been our pain.

 c. His separation from the Father should have been our separation.

 B. This is made beautifully clear in Jesus’ acceptance of the 3rd cross.

 1. The events of Jesus’ trial and crucifixion happened quickly.

 2. The Romans didn’t have time to prepare a cross specific for Jesus.

 3. That means, that The cross Jesus bore was originally built for someone else.

 C. That person was named Barabbas.

 1. Barabbas was a murderer and rebel.

 2. He deserved to die, but was set free instead and Jesus took his place.

3. Jesus died among two other criminals on a cross built someone else.

 D. The death Jesus died was not for himself but for us.

 1. Jesus died for the Roman soldier piercing his side.

 2. Jesus died for the innocent bystander, watching her first execution.

 3. Jesus died for the mother in the crowd, weeping at carnage.

 4. Jesus died for the disciple who was in hiding.

 5. Jesus died for me, for you, and for every person ever born.

 6. Jesus’ death was vicarious, in place of you and I.

# 3. Jesus’ Death was Misunderstood.

A. Many of the statements made in this passage demonstrate that those watching had no clue what they were witnessing.

 1. Twice, Jesus was offered sour wine.

2. The first time was an act of mercy, to numb the pain before the nails were driven into the wrists and ankles.

3. The second time was in mockery, attempting to prolong Jesus’ life, to give the prophet Elijah time to “help Him”.[[1]](#footnote-1)

4. This last time, John tells us in John 19:29, that they put the sponge on a piece of hyssop.

 a. Hyssop was a type of wood.

b. What they misunderstood was the hyssop was the wood used to spread the blood of the Passover lamb upon the door posts of the houses to protect themselves against the Destroying Angel. (Ex 12:22)

c. Psalm 51:7 says, “Purify me with hyssop, and I will be clean: wash me, and I will be whiter than snow.”

 5. What the world intended for mockery, Jesus intended to be the fulfillment of prophecy.

 B. The priests and crowds misunderstood that Jesus wanted to be on the cross.

 1. Jesus was on the cross as an act of obedience to the Father.

2. Yet, many taunted Jesus saying, “If you are who you say, then save yourself and get down from there.”

 3. But Jesus’ purpose on the cross wasn’t to save His life but ours.

4. Verses 29-32 make it clear that the priests and the crowds could not comprehend that death on the cross was Jesus’ purpose.

5. “They assumed that the primary objective of Jesus would be to save his own life…” (Cole, 325)

 C. I believe it bears reminder that the Cross was God’s plan.

1. We misunderstand the Cross when we attribute it to Satan or to Rome and not to God.

2. The Apostle Paul attributed the cross to the “foolishness of God” in 1 Cor 1:25.

3. For it was God’s plan to redeem the world through the death of the Perfect Son of God.

4. Satan could not have orchestrated this.

5. Only God could.

6. We must not misunderstand that God is the source of the Cross for He is the source of salvation, resurrection, and deliverance form sin.

# 4. Jesus’ Death was Certified. (SECOND ROW OF LIGHTS TURNED OFF)

A. The evidence for Christ’s death is greater than that for almost any other event in the ancient world.[[2]](#footnote-2)

1. I have read somewhere that there is more evidence for the life of Jesus than there is for Julius Caesar.

 2. Whether that is true, I’m not sure.

 3. But the testimony of Mark includes several witnesses of Jesus’ death in His text.

 **B. First, we have the witness of nature.**

 1. At the death of Jesus, an eclipse and darkness came upon the land.

2. Matthew says that at the moment of Jesus death, the sun became dark, the earth quaked, rocks split, and the tombs of the Saints were opened and they walked among the people of Jerusalem.

3. It is appropriate for nature to testify of Jesus’ death, since all of creation awaits the redemption of the world.

**Romans 8:22–23 (CSB)**

**22**For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together with labor pains until now. **23**Not only that, but we ourselves who have the Spirit as the firstfruits—we also groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for adoption, the redemption of our bodies.

 **C. Second, we have the witness of the Temple.**

 1. At the death of Jesus, the curtain or veil of the Temple were torn.

 2. There were two important curtains in the Temple.

a. The most important was the curtain that separated the world from the Holy of Holies, the place God’s Spirit dwelled.

 1. Only the High Priest could enter here.

 2. And that was only once a year on the Day of Atonement.

b. The other curtain was a large curtain that stood between the Court of Israel and the Court of Women.

 1. This curtain determined who could get close to God.

2. If you were a Gentile or a woman, you could not pass this curtain upon the pain of death.

c. More than likely, it was the curtain entering the Holy of Holies that was torn, demonstrating that Jesus’ death had made the Presence of God accessible to all people, not just the High Priest.

d. Yet, if it was the other curtain the meaning was similar: No longer was God’s presence only for a Jewish male but also for the woman and the Gentile.

e. For in the Last Days, Joel said, “God would pour out His Spirit upon ALL Flesh…”

f. Both confessions depend on the tearing in two of a veil so that something may be witnessed.[[3]](#footnote-3)

g. In the very Temple that the Priests rejected Jesus as their Messiah testified of Jesus’ death and divinity.

 D. **Third witness to Jesus’ death was a crowd of women. Vs. 55-56.**

 1. These women were disciples, for they had followed Jesus.

2. Because of the day and time, they had to keep a distance but they were fully devoted to Jesus just as the men were.

a. While all the disciples, except John, were absent from the witness of Jesus’ death, these women were there.

b. Not only were they there, their bravery was preserved as Mark includes the names of Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of Jesus, and James and John’s mother.

3. It would also be these women who were the first to testify of the resurrection.

4. But that delightful moment was still a few days away.

5. These women saw the pain and heard the cries of Jesus’ death.

 E. **The Final witness is the centurion.**

 Mark 15:39 (CSB)

**39**When the centurion, who was standing opposite him, saw the way he breathed his last, he said, “Truly this man was the Son of God!”,

Two remarkable things:

1. This Centurion knew death, intimately.

 a. He was familiar with pain and familiar with death.

 b. He knew the sounds, the twitches, the gasps preceding death.

 c. He knew death, and saw death come upon Jesus’ body.

d. Other Gospels write that he stuck a spear into Jesus’ side to confirm the death.

e. It has been said that of the thousands of people crucified by the Romans, no one is recorded having survived.

 2. The most important declaration in Mark is given to this Roman Centurion:

 a. Truly this man was the Son of God.

b. “The Son of God” is Mark’s load-bearing christological title, which until this moment has remained unconfessed by any human being. The centurion is the first person in the Gospel to confess Jesus as the Son of God, and the confession is evoked by his passion—his suffering and death on the cross.[[4]](#footnote-4)

 c. Other people had hinted around it.

 1. Peter called Jesus the Messiah.

2. John the Baptist declared Jesus to be the Lamb of God slain before the foundations of the world.

3. In Mark, the first person to declare WHO JESUS fully was a bloody, dirty, cursing, Gentile soldier who worked for the most oppressive Empire of their day.

4. On the lips of a Gentile, the reality of the Son of God is proclaimed.

# Closing: Tonight, is Good Friday. (LAST ROW OF LIGHTS TURNED OFF)

 A. It is a time of reflection upon what Jesus experienced upon the Cross of Cavalry.

B. If you are far from God tonight, I want you to take a moment to think about what Jesus has done for you.

1. Then I ask you to confess of your sin and believe in your heart that Jesus is Lord.

 2. Then you will experience salvation and eternal life.

 C. For the believers tonight, I ask you to reflect upon Jesus’ sacrifice.

1. For a couple of moments, right where you are, would you reflect upon Jesus’ death and allow His death to change you?

 2. Let the Spirit of God make real to you the death of Jesus.

 3. If Jesus’ death is not real to you, then neither will be His resurrection.

 D. After prayer, we will pray together and be dismissed.

1. Wessel, Walter W. “Mark.” In *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke*, edited by Frank E. Gaebelein. Vol. 8. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984. 783 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Norman L. Geisler, [“Christ, Death Of,”](https://ref.ly/logosres/encycchap?ref=Page.p+127&off=3021&ctx=ion%2c+Evidence+for).+~The+evidence+for+Chr) *Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics*, Baker Reference Library (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1999), 127. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. James R. Edwards, [*The Gospel according to Mark*](https://ref.ly/logosres/pntcmark?ref=Bible.Mk15.37-39&off=3238&ctx=+as+the+Son+of+God.+~Both+confessions+dep), The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Leicester, England: Eerdmans; Apollos, 2002), 478. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. James R. Edwards, [*The Gospel according to Mark*](https://ref.ly/logosres/pntcmark?ref=Bible.Mk15.39&off=690&ctx=+the+Son+of+God!%E2%80%99%C2%A0%E2%80%9D+~%E2%80%9CThe+Son+of+God%E2%80%9D+is+), The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Leicester, England: Eerdmans; Apollos, 2002), 479. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)