

**First Baptist Church Merritt Island**

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**The Crucifixion of Jesus**

**Mark 15:21-47**

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The opening scenes of the Bible take us to the dawn of creation when God made the heavens and the earth. By speaking powerful words, God caused everything in this universe to be. And everything God made was good. The ultimate act of God's creative power occurred when He came to this earth and made a unique creation – a man and his wife. Mankind was unique, not only because God created Adam and Eve with His own hands out of things He had already made, but because they were made as a reflection of God Himself. In that way, they were able to relate uniquely to God. They walked with Him in perfect fellowship. Nothing stood between them and God. It was a glorious beginning.

The Bible doesn't tell us how long Adam and Eve lived in that state. But the Bible does tell us that everything changed. The enemy of God entered the Garden of Eden and tempted Eve with the forbidden fruit. Eve willfully chose to disobey God. In turn, she offered the fruit to Adam. He willfully chose to disobey God. Sin entered this universe. And everything changed. A dark veil descended over the world. Sin brought shame and suffering and separation. Not only between people but, most significantly, between God and mankind. Because people had turned their backs on God, it fundamentally altered their ability to relate to God. They were separated from His presence and the life He had created them to enjoy.

But, deep in the heart of God, there was a plan. In love, He determined to undo the curse of sin, to remove the veil that separated mankind from their Creator. Once again, God would come to this world, not to make a man but to become a man so that He could re-create mankind. Jesus came as God's solution to the problem of sin and the Savior of every person who would trust in Him. He came to enter into the consequences of our sin on our behalf so that He could change everything, again.

And that's what the next text in our study of Mark is all about. Through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Mark transports us to the scene of Christ's crucifixion. And, as we see Jesus dying, we see God's plan to redeem and restore mankind, it's the moment when everything changed for good.

**Mark 15:21–39**

***And they compelled a passerby, Simon of Cyrene, who was coming in from the country, the father of Alexander and Rufus, to carry his cross. 22 And they brought him to the place called Golgotha (which means Place of a Skull). 23 And they offered him wine mixed with myrrh, but he did not take it. 24 And they crucified him and divided his garments among them, casting lots for them, to decide what each should take. 25 And it was the third hour when they crucified him. 26 And the inscription of the charge against him read, "The King of the Jews." 27 And with him they crucified two robbers, one on his right and one on his left. 29 And those who passed by derided him, wagging their heads and saying, "Aha! You who would destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, 30 save yourself, and come down from the cross!" 31 So also the chief priests with the scribes mocked him to one another, saying, "He saved others; he cannot save himself. 32 Let the Christ, the King of Israel, come down now from the cross that we may see and believe." Those who were crucified with him also reviled him. 33 And when the sixth hour had come, there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour. 34 And at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?" which means, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" 35 And some of the bystanders hearing it said, "Behold, he is calling Elijah." 36 And someone ran and filled a sponge with***

***sour wine, put it on a reed and gave it to him to drink, saying, "Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to take him down." 37 And Jesus uttered a loud cry and breathed his last. 38 And the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. 39 And when the centurion, who stood facing him, saw that in this way he breathed his last, he said, "Truly this man was the Son of God!"***

Our text begins with Jesus being led to His crucifixion. The Gospel of John tells us that, initially, Jesus was forced to carry the cross toward Golgotha. But, having been beaten to the point of near death, He was unable to carry the cross the whole way. So, the Roman soldiers forced a man named Simon of Cyrene to carry it for Him. Mark includes the detail that Simon was the father of Alexander and Rufus. It seems likely that the Christians in Rome to whom Mark was writing this Gospel account must have known them, indicating that they may have become followers of Jesus.

After making their way out of the city, the soldiers led Jesus to a place known as Golgotha, which means "place of the skull." We often call this place "Calvary," which is a word taken from the Latin equivalent of Golgotha.

Verse 23 says they offered Him a wine mixture that He refused. It's likely this drink would dull the pain along with His senses, and Jesus was determined to not only endure the pain of the cross but to be clear in mind as He did.

Verse 25 says it was the third hour when they crucified Him. That's 9 AM. For the first three hours, Jesus hangs on the cross between two criminals in agony, being mocked and rejected by men.

Then, Mark says that darkness descended over the whole land from noon until 3 o'clock. Of the seven statements of Jesus on the cross, the only one Mark includes is His cry, "My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?" Then, Jesus dies.

The last two things Mark describes in this text are an event that happened at the Temple and an event that occurred at the foot of the cross. In the Temple, the curtain was torn in two, from top to bottom. At the foot of the cross, a centurion acknowledges Jesus to be who He truly is - the Son of God.

And, as I was praying and thinking through this text all week, here's the Big Idea that I see for this morning...

**Big Idea: At the Cross, Jesus was forsaken for us so that we could be welcomed through Him.**

What we are witnessing at Calvary is Jesus entering the suffering and separation that are the result of our sin. He is being forsaken in our place so that we can stand in His place and be welcomed once again in the presence of God.

So, as we prepare our hearts for the Lord's Supper, let's spend some time thinking through our big idea.

1. Jesus was Forsaken by Man.

***24 And they crucified him and divided his garments among them, casting lots for them, to decide what each should take.***

***29 And those who passed by derided him, wagging their heads and saying, "Aha! You who would destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, 30 save yourself, and come down from***

***the cross!” 31 So also the chief priests with the scribes mocked him to one another, saying, “He saved others; he cannot save himself. 32 Let the Christ, the King of Israel, come down now from the cross that we may see and believe.” Those who were crucified with him also reviled him.***

As Jesus is lifted up on the cross, the Roman soldiers steal His clothes. The Jewish leaders mock Him. The crowds of people who are passing by the cross as they come and go from the city are ridiculing Him. Even the criminals reviled Him.

This is a fulfillment of a prophecy about the Messiah in Psalm 22, written nearly 1000 years before the crucifixion of Jesus.

*Psalm 22:7–8*

*All who see me mock me; they make mouths at me; they wag their heads; 8 “He trusts in the LORD; let him deliver him; let him rescue him, for he delights in him!”*

*Psalm 22:17-18...*

*they have pierced my hands and feet — 17 I can count all my bones—they stare and gloat over me; 18 they divide my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots.*

The accuracy of Bible prophecy is amazing. In the eternal plan of God, Jesus knew that He would be rejected and forsaken by men. He came with that in mind.

And one of the reasons He did that was so that He could enter into the consequence of sin on our behalf. Think back to the Garden of Eden. When Adam and Eve sinned, their sin not only separated them from God, but in a very real way, it separated them from one another. And ever since, that has been one of the consequences of sin. Sin separates people from God and one another. And Jesus came to enter that brokenness.

*Hebrews 4:14–15*

*Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. 15 For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.*

Jesus didn't just come to be a sacrifice for sin, He came to be our high priest. He came to live among our weaknesses and limitations so that He could sympathize with us as our perfect priest.

That means when Jesus is being forsaken by men at the cross, He is being forsaken as our representative priest and is able to sympathize with us and show us the mercy and grace we need as we are forsaken by men.

The reason I felt led to emphasize this truth is because I know that some of you come to Mother's Day with apprehensive hearts. You appreciate that so many mothers and children have wonderful relationships, but that's not your story. Perhaps your greatest pain came through the choices of your own mother. Or, perhaps your greatest pain as a mother is a child who has turned their back on you. Some single moms are reminded that the person who was supposed to be your partner in life abandoned you. For you, Mother's Day is a day that reminds you of how you've been forsaken.

Listen, as hard as this is to understand, Jesus knows how you feel. He sympathizes with you. He entered into that kind of rejection so that He could redeem you in it and see you through it. You have a Great High Priest who can sympathize. You aren't alone today. You may be forsaken by everyone in your life, but you are not forsaken by Jesus. We'll come back to this in just a minute.

But the rejection of men was nothing compared to the primary way Jesus was forsaken at the cross.

## 2. Jesus was Forsaken by God.

**33 And when the sixth hour had come, there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour. 34 And at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, “Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?” which means, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”**

This is a quote from Psalm 22, the same Psalm that prophesied about Christ’s rejection by men.

*Psalm 22:1 My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?*

I don’t believe we can fully understand the depths of what was taking place here. But one thing that is abundantly clear is that Jesus experiencing the judgment of God over sin.

Throughout the Bible (i.e., Isaiah 13:9-10; Zeph. 1:14-15), darkness is associated with the judgment of God. Romans 3:25 says that God was demonstrating His justice by punishing Jesus for sin. God doesn’t just sweep sin under the rug. He punishes it all.

But whose sin is He punishing? We just read in Hebrews 4 that Jesus never committed any sin. So, whose sin is being punished at the cross?

*1 John 2:2 - He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.*

The word “propitiation” means “an appeasing sacrifice.” In other words, the death of Jesus was a sacrifice that appeased, or satisfied, the wrath of God for sin. It fully paid the penalty for sin. And it was sufficient to pay for the sins of the whole world.

Now, we know that the atonement is only effective for those who trust in Jesus. It’s by grace that we are saved through faith in Jesus. Without faith, it’s impossible to be pleasing to God. So, the sacrifice of Jesus is only effective for those who trust in Him. But the death of Jesus is sufficient payment for the sins of the entire world. That means, no matter who you are or what you’ve done, no matter how great or severe your sin is, the death of Jesus is sufficient to completely and fully atone for all your sins.

Think of that for a moment. If you are trusting in Jesus, all your sin has been punished completely and fully in Christ. Every lie. Every betrayal. Every act of sinful anger and impatience. Adultery. Abortion. Greed. Gossip. Lust. Stealing. Hypocrisy. Jealousy. Cruelty. Selfishness. Hatred. All of it. Every last sin placed on Jesus.

And all of God’s wrath, His holy judgment against sin, it’s all poured out. There’s no outstanding payment to be made. Jesus was forsaken by God, so that any and all who trust in Him would never be forsaken by God.

And that brings us to the third thing we see in our text.

## 3. We are Welcomed by God through Jesus.

**37 And Jesus uttered a loud cry and breathed his last. 38 And the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom.**

In the Temple of God, there was a room called the Holy of Holies, or the Most Holy Place. It was the one place on earth where God manifest His glorious presence. The thing about that Most Holy Place was that no one was allowed to enter, no one but the High Priest of Israel. Once a year, the high priest would enter before the presence of God to present the blood of a sacrifice on behalf of His sin and the sin of the people.

Covering the entrance to the Holy of Holies was a massive curtain. That curtain was a vivid reminder that, since the fall of mankind in the Garden of Eden, men were no longer able to be in the presence of God. Our sin separated us from Him.

And, when Jesus offered Himself as THE once for all, atoning sacrifice for the sins of the world the penalty of sin was forever paid. So, God Himself ripped that curtain in two. He was showing the world that, through Christ the curse of sin had been broken and those who trust in Christ would not only never be forsaken by God but would forever be welcomed by God.

*Hebrews 4:14–16 Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.*

Have you ever been in a building that had a door marked, “Authorized Personnel Only?”

When I first began in ministry, my mentor was Bob Bateman. Brother Bob was a retired pastor who had forgotten more about ministry than I knew. Every week or so, he would stop by my office and tell me I was going to drive him to the hospital. I knew better than to argue with him, so off we would go.

Once, we were visiting someone who was in very serious condition. I didn’t know exactly where the room was, but I followed Brother Bob. After going down a long hallway, we came to a section that I don’t think I had been to before. It was marked “Authorized Personnel Only.”

When I saw the sign, I stopped. As far as I knew that hospital hadn’t authorized me to do anything, let alone enter that door. Brother Bob kept on walking. I assumed he hadn’t seen the sign. I said, “Brother Bob, it says ‘authorized personnel only.’”

I’ll never forget the look in his eye. He said, “Son, we are called by God to be ministers of the gospel. If we aren’t authorized to see a dying man, then no one is...plus, when you’re as old as me, you can just about get away with anything...you’re authorized.” Then, he opened the door and motioned me through. I thought, “I’m with Brother Bob...I’m going where He goes...I think he just authorized me.”

I still don’t know the legality of that, but I love the picture.

There is a room in heaven. It’s the throne room where God Himself rules the universe. He governs the laws of nature. The planets hang in space because He tells them to. The stars hold their course through the sky because He tells them to. From that throne, He sets up kings and kingdoms on the earth and casts others down. He decrees what will be done and by His word it happens. Around that throne the angels worship Him forever. He is so glorious and holy that those perfect angels cover their face in reverence to His holiness.

And if there’s a door to that throne room, it’s marked “Authorized Personnel Only.” And Jesus has opened the door wide. If you are trusting Him, if you are following Him, He’s authorized you. That’s

our Father on the throne. Your Father rules the universe and you belong in His presence. He wants you there. And when you enter, do you know what you find flowing from the throne of God? Mercy and grace to help you in your time of need.

Do you have any God-sized needs in your life? Do you need mercy and grace to help you in your trials today? Then claim the blessing that comes flowing from the cross of Jesus. At the cross, Jesus was forsaken by God so that we could be welcomed by God as our gracious and merciful Heavenly Father!

And that brings us to the Lord's Supper. Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper as a perpetual reminder of His work at Calvary. We take this as an expression of faith. It's an outward display that we are trusting in the work of Jesus on our behalf. It's a way of remembering what Jesus has done for us and what Jesus has given to us...atonement for our sins and access to the very presence of God.

We take the bread and the cup into us to be reminded that the Christ of Calvary now lives in us. He went where we deserved to go so that we can go where He deserves to be, the Holy presence of Almighty God.

So, let's take the Lord's Supper together in celebration of the work of Jesus at the cross and in our lives.