

Mark 15:25-27, 33-34, 37

The Final 24 Hours of Jesus: Three Messages from the Cross of
Jesus

April 1, 2012

Our sermon series for these past weeks has been focused on the final 24 hours in the life of Jesus. We began in the Upper Room where he washed the feet of his disciples as an example of servanthood and then he gave them bread and wine as symbols of his sacrifice for us, which we call the Lord's Supper. We then moved on to the Garden of Gethsemane where he prayed in agony while his disciples slept. Next he endured betrayal by his disciples and last week we looked at the ways he was put on trial and tortured. All of these events were part of the final 24 hours of his life. Today since we are focusing on the very final hours of the life of Jesus. We will not read the usual Palm Sunday story of his triumphant entry into Jerusalem, since that event would have already occurred. Instead we now focus on his very final hours at the scene of the cross.

Read Mark 15: 21-39

To help bring us more insight regarding that passage of scripture please watch this video piece by Pastor Adam Hamilton.

Hamilton clip: 4:51 – 7:12

I hope Pastor Hamilton's video gives a more realistic and informed understanding of what happened to Jesus in his final hours. What I was impressed with by the Pastor Hamilton's sharing is how close people were to Jesus as he hung on the cross. He said, Mary the mother of Jesus would have been able to reach up and touch the face of her son. Imagine what that moment was like for her. My goodness, I get emotional when our kids were really sick or going through the routine growing pains of life, but imagine what Mary

experienced?

So many times the artistic portraits of the crucifixion place Jesus on a much taller cross above everyone else. Other than perhaps the guards, everyone else is pictured at such a distance from him. I wonder if that distance is reflective of the way we tend to avoid the painful experiences of life.

When we try and keep as much distance as we can between ourselves and suffering, we can miss the meaning God can bring to us when we do suffer. I want to acknowledge that from the work of Pastor Hamilton, our goal this morning is to see from the scripture out of Mark, the message God gave to the world as Jesus endured his anguish on the cross for us, for those we love, for those we struggle to love, and for those we only know as strangers.

First Message: We are in need of a Savior; not religion. v.31

Mark's gospel tells us people passed by Jesus and made fun of him. I hope this description always shocks us how people could pass by anyone and make fun of the fact that a human being was going to die in such a cruel way. Verse 31 said that even the chief priest and the scribes were mocking Jesus. The chief priest and scribes were a group of leaders responsible for keeping the Jewish people faithful to God. The chief priest and scribes understood and taught the scriptures and they knew the traditions and led their people in worship of God and observance of important holy days and religious life. Yet those men were the very ones who led the movement to have Jesus crucified and then as he was dying on the cross, they mocked him. The mocking of Jesus by the chief priest and scribes demonstrated they had religion. They had a set of beliefs. They had rules. They however did not have a relationship with God.

The message from the cross reminds we need a savior; not religion. The cross on which Jesus suffered and died reminds us

that religious beliefs are no substitute for a relationship with God. God just doesn't want us to attend worship or for our church attendance to increase. He doesn't just want you to be more involved, or give of your money. He wants you to have a genuine relationship and connection with him. He wants us because we need a savior.

Pastor Hamilton points out that Jesus on the cross reminds us "how there is something in us that is not quite right." Religion alone is not answer for this problem. Because men like the chief priest and scribes had shared religious beliefs and practices, but they were a part of the evil that heaped cruelty up on Jesus. They walked by Jesus and mocked him. There is that capacity within each of us to mock God in different ways. We discount God's authority over our morals, but want the perks of all his blessings. Our best judgment can be flawed, it can be blind. The cross reminds us we need a savior.

The longer I serve as a pastor, the more concerned I become when people can talk about church membership, involvement; but they cannot describe how they experience God. I worry that **they may settle for religion; but not have Christ as savior that brings them into a relationship with really knowing God.**

Second Message: God was willing to suffer because of our freedom. v.33

Verse 33 tell us that at noon Jesus began to cry aloud. He cried what any of us cry when we're hurting. He ask why God had abandoned him. Skeptics might say, if Jesus was the Son of God he should have known God had not abandoned him. I say the Bible is being honest that Jesus suffered in all ways human even though he was God. Because Jesus cried out, I am comforted that when I wonder where God is in my suffering, I'm not alone. God understands our moments of suffering because Jesus went through

moments of suffering. But Jesus suffered because of humankind's freedom to reject God. **In a sense another message from the cross teaches us God was willing to suffer because of our freedom.**

If we accept that Jesus suffered because of human freedom, then we need to ask how our choices, our freedom is adding to the suffering in the world? What choices did we make this week that had God asking in Heaven, "what were you thinking." What decisions cause God to question whether we have been paying attention during years of Sunday School classes or to the books we read or the sermons we hear? Did we use our freedom to hurt, to manipulate, to deceive someone?

There are many things that can be said about the crucifixion of Jesus but one thing that cannot be denied is that a loving God suffered because human freedom was used to reject him and crucify him. Which means that loving God waits for each of us to freely choose him.

Third Message: The cross reveals the forgiving nature of God.
v.39

The last message of the cross reveals the forgiving nature of God. After Jesus took his last breath, one of the soldiers who helped crucify Jesus had a change of heart. He watched every move Jesus made. He saw how in spite of the extreme pain, Jesus never lashed out with hate or evil. All he could see was Jesus, the man who was as consistent in pain and dying as he was in living. As Jesus exhaled his final breath, verse 39 tells us the soldier confessed Jesus was the Son of God.

- God is known in various ways for various attributes.
- Creation demonstrates his power.
- The ways of nature demonstrate his wisdom.

- Miracles can demonstrate the breaking in of his presence with us.
- But when we want to understand how much God can love and forgive us, it is always the cross that communicates his forgiveness.

Pastor Hamilton states **the message of the cross reveals the character of God**. He is willing to forgive us no matter how low we think our lives have sunken, or what others think about us. I heard once of a young man who had lived life poorly. He entered the sanctuary of a church, then ran to the stage where a cross stood and wrapped his arms around the cross that stood on the stage as a means of claiming he was putting his trust in the character of God that forgives and offers us a new beginning.

Have you made your claim to wrap your arms around the cross of Jesus and claim his forgiveness for you?

Does your relationship with God wrap its arms around the message of the cross and cause you to be forgiving toward others?

Does your relationship to God cause you to wrap your heart around the message of the cross and know God is with you in your suffering and struggles?

Is there someone who really needs a simple explanation of why even they can be forgiven and loved by God, and all you have to do is point them to the cross?

But never forget that forgiveness comes with a price. Jesus paid the ultimate price. Godly love will always cost us some how some way. Godly love is the power that changes us but it always comes with a cost.