

Christ on the Cross

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Date: 24 November 2024

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[0 : 0 0] up our Bibles to Mark chapter 15. So we are in Mark chapter 15. We're going to be starting at verse 16 today. We'll read here in a second. But as we go through the passage today, really we're going to be looking at Jesus on his cross is the final kind of few things that happen before he actually walks from the praetorium where he's at to the cross and then they crucify him in this passage that we're going to read today. We're going to be looking, one of the things we'll look at is there's so many illusions or fulfillments even the Bible says to passages from the Old Testament. Psalm 22 is one of them. Isaiah 53 is another. And not just here in this passage, but many of the passages in his final week find their fulfillment in Mark chapter 15 here. And we'll see Jesus' final few hours on the cross. You know, a lot can happen in just a short period of time. And so a lot does happen.

We're going to read verse 16 through 32 together just to kind of get the whole passage in our minds. And then we'll go through verse by verse looking at what the scriptures say to us. So verse 16, Mark 15, 16. Then the soldiers led him away into the hall called Praetorium. And they called together the whole garrison. And they clothed him with purple. And they twisted a crown of thorns and put it on his head and began to salute him. Hail, King of the Jews! Then they struck him on the head with a reed and spat on him. And bowing the knee, they worshipped him. And when they had mocked him, they took the purple off him, put his own clothes on him, and led him out to crucify him. Then they compelled a certain man, Simon a Cyrenian, the father of Alexander and Rufus, as he was coming out of the country and passing by to bear his cross. And they brought him to the place Golgotha, which is translated place of a skull.

Then they gave him wine, mingled with myrrh to drink, but he did not take it. And when they crucified him, they divided his garments, casting lots for them to determine what every man should take.

Now it was the third hour and they crucified him. And the inscription of his accusation was written above, the king of the Jews. With him, they also crucified two robbers, one on his right and the other on his left. So the scripture was fulfilled, which says, and he was numbered with the transgressors.

And those who passed by blasphemed him, wagging their heads and saying, Aha, you who destroy the temple and build it in three days, save yourself and come down from the cross. Likewise, the chief priests also, mocking among themselves, with the scribes said, he saved others himself he cannot save. Lest the Christ, the king of Israel, descend now from the cross that we may see and believe even those who were crucified with him reviled him. So as we had looked at last week, Jesus had just been condemned to the cross. After going through all the evidence, Pilate found nothing that would stick and yet condemned him anyway. How many times has that happened in history?

[3 : 4 1] You have a trial, you're found innocent and then condemned to death for it. So what we're reading today is what happened after he was condemned. It says that they led him away into the hall called the Praetorium. This is actually where Pilate did his adjudicating, his judgments. This was kind of the seat of power in Jerusalem. This was part of the Roman government.

And it says that the soldiers led him away. Well, led him away from where? Well, he had been taken out somewhere in some kind of public square, remember, because Pilate had presented Jesus and said, hey, would you like me to release him to the people, to the crowds? And remember, the crowds said, no, we want Barabbas, the violent murderer. We want him to be released. As for Jesus, crucify him, crucify him.

And so they led Jesus from there back into the Praetorium and they called together the whole garrison. Verse 17, and they clothed him with purple and they twisted a crown of thorns and put it on his head and began to salute him. Hail to the king of the Jews. You know, in many military settings throughout history, there's some kind of salute. You know, it looks different. Here in America, we do this thing. In fact, I think in many places in the world that comes from, if I remember correctly, that salute comes from the time of the knights, right? They would lift up their, what do you call that, visor on their helmet to show that, hey, I'm a friend, not a foe. And that ended up, that whole signal became a salute, turned into a salute in military settings.

And so we had to, I've been listening to a series about Hitler, a fascinating history about his rise to power. But if you remember the Germans, at least back then, I doubt they do this anymore.

It's got so much negativity, but they would do this thing, Heil Hitler, right? And I'm sure there are different kinds of salutes. But here, these, this garrison of soldiers are taking an opportunity, taking the time to this innocent man who has been condemned to death to mock him and ridicule him. Remember what he has been accused of. The only really accusation that really stuck was, he is the king of the Jews. And so we'll treat you as a king and we'll put some purple on you. So purple, why purple? Well, purple is like the clothes of royalty.

[6 : 17] Back then, purple dye was very difficult to make and expensive to produce. And so most, most of the people who had purple clothing were dignitaries, wealthy people.

purple. And so it was an indication, it was the kind of clothes that royalty would wear, purple. They also found some thorns, thistles, twisted them up and created a crown to put on this king.

And then they saluted him and said, hail to the king of the Jews. Speaking of the crown of thorns, it's reminiscent. There's a story that happened 2,000 years before this, interestingly enough. A story that actually took place on this very same mountain, where a man named Abraham was asked by God to take his son, his only son, to a place called Mount Moriah. It ends up being the mount on which the city of Jerusalem is built.

And he said, I want you to take your son, your only son, and I want you to offer him as a sacrifice to me. If you remember the story, Abraham dutifully does so. Now, I'm sure what Abraham is thinking, this is insane. This is the God who calls child sacrifice an abomination.

There's never a time in all of history except this one time in which God ever told anyone to sacrifice a child. In fact, God does not have, God destroys entire nations because of their child sacrifice.

[7 : 58] But this one time, God asks Abraham to do so. And if you remember the story, right at the last moment as he was going to commit that act of sacrifice, God stays his hand and says, stop. And it was a test. He said, now I know that you will serve me.

And you remember that Abraham had told his son on the way, you know what, God, because Isaac asked his dad, hey dad, we got all this wood for our sacrifice, but where is the sacrifice?

Can you imagine how Abraham must have felt? And Abraham said, you know what, Isaac, God himself, the Lord, he will provide a sacrifice. And what happened? He did. And remember, after God stayed Abraham's hand, that he found moments later a ram. Where was that ram found?

His thorns were stuck in a thicket. A thicket. There was a ram, this substitute for his son, whose head was stuck in a bush, a thorny bush full of thorns.

There are so many allusions, you know, throughout the Bible to, when it comes to the things that Jesus fulfilled, that Jesus did. Sometimes Jesus fulfills very direct kinds of prophecy.

[9 : 22] And other times, there's just these subtle allusions. God's orchestrating of history is absolutely incredible. Verse 19, then they struck him on the head with a reed and they spat on him.

It's not any different today. Spitting on somebody is a sign of disgust, hatred, mockery. And bowing the knee, they worshipped him. They hailed him, they saluted him, they bowed down and they worshipped him.

And when they had mocked him, they took the purple off him, put his own clothes on him, and led him out to crucify him. You know, I wonder how many of the people on death row that the soldiers would do this kind of thing to, to mock and ridicule. I can't imagine it was many, but Jesus was special.

Then verse 21, then they compelled a certain man, Simon Isirenian, the father of Alexander and Rufus, as he was coming out of the country and passing by to bear his cross.

So there's a certain distance from this praetorium out to the place called Golgotha, which we'll talk about in a second, to where they actually did the crucifixion. A little bit of a journey, and typically they would have these criminals carry their own cross.

[10 : 50] It's unclear whether it was the entire cross. Some say it was probably just the cross beam itself. We don't know for sure, but there was something to bear.

And why would somebody else carry the cross? Well, a lot of times, and especially for Jesus, remember that he was beaten very severely, lashed with this cat of nine tails in which much flesh was removed from his skin, and I'm sure there was plenty of blood drawn from his body already, and was in a weakened state so that he may not have been able to bear his own cross himself.

And so they looked around to find somebody who could do it for him. And so it's interesting, you know, when you see what kind of details the Bible brings out, many times people are referenced, but their name is not provided, right?

There was just a man. But here we have a man, and there's actually quite a bit of detail about him, so let's see if we can see if there's anything to that. His name was Simon, which is a Jewish name.

It mentions that he was coming out of the country and passing by. So he was passing by as all of this was happening, but he was from Cyrene. Cyrene is actually a city in North Africa.

[12 : 07] Today it would be in the country of Libya. And there were actually many Jews that lived there at the time. And it says that he was the father of Alexander and Rufus.

Now why would this be included in the Bible? Well, there are actually many commentators think, and it makes sense to me, that the reason he would bring up who he was the father of is because these were probably men.

His sons, Alexander and Rufus, were likely men known to the early believers at the time, probably Christians that were part of this early band of believers, followers of Christ.

And in fact, both of those names are referenced in the New Testament era, in the Acts period after Jesus ascended into heaven.

I'll just reference them. Acts 19, verse 33, mentions a man named Alexander, who was a key figure in a riot that happened. And then in Romans chapter 16, the last chapter of Romans, as Paul is giving some final greetings, he mentions a man named Rufus.

[13 : 25] And so it's very likely, possible anyway, that one or both of these is actually the son of this man Simon, who later became Christians and were part of the early Christian church.

And so as Mark is writing this account, he's mentioning, hey, this father of these two guys that we know that are part of our group, he was the one that carried the cross of Jesus.

Now I've seen different representations, films, movies, theater productions of this, and sometimes they represent that this man Simon volunteered.

He saw Jesus struggling with the cross, and he kind of comes in and bears the cross in his place. But the scriptures actually don't bear that out. It actually says that he was compelled.

So he was a passerby, and they grabbed him and said, hey, you're going to be doing this. And so it wasn't necessarily something that he volunteered for. We don't know whether he was voluntold, as they say, willingly or unwillingly, but he did carry his cross.

[14 : 31] Verse 22, And they brought him to the place Golgotha, which is translated place of a skull. Here it mentions the place where Jesus died, which was called Golgotha.

And Mark here tells us, well, what does that translate? What does that mean? Golgotha is an Aramaic word. Aramaic was the language the Jews spoke of that day. It's similar to Hebrew.

It's in the same family. But the name Golgotha actually means place of the skull. Why was it called the place of the skull? Well, it's not totally clear.

And we'll talk about in a second where Golgotha is today, if we know. But some think, well, it's called Golgotha because the place itself actually looks like a skull.

The other idea is, well, this is a place where people were killed, and skulls, right, are associated with death, and so maybe that was the reason it was called that. Interestingly enough, have you ever, we actually sing lots of hymns and talk about Calvary, right?

[15 : 39] Calvary. Calvary is the place where Jesus died. And we sing songs about Calvary. But the word Calvary is actually from a Latin word, and that Latin word is the translation of Golgotha.

And so if you ever wondered, well, where does that word Calvary come from that we sing about? I think Calvary probably fits better into the rhyme and rhythm of music than Golgotha. And so we use the Latin derivative instead of the Aramaic one when we talk about where Jesus died.

The location is just outside of the city walls. So Golgotha was just outside the city. It was actually against Jewish law to do executions inside the city.

You had to take the criminal outside the city walls in order to have executions done. And it was also, we know, near a public road.

In fact, we see that Simon was passing by as he was traveling. And this was actually common in that time period to have executions done in a public setting. This was a deterrence.

[16 : 45] A lot of times they were putting to death people who were rebels, in fact, like Barabbas. And maybe these other two criminals that were executed with Jesus were also rebels who had been part of some kind of insurrection.

And so you can understand the deterring effect that executing criminals in public would have on the populace as they walk by. And they see these men hanging from the cross and it shows, you know, what they did, what they're accused of.

And you make a mental note. Okay, remind me, I'm not going to do anything like that because that might be me if I decided to rebel against the Romans or commit some other crime.

In fact, it's actually a pretty good idea. The Old Testament scriptures talk about public stonings and things like that for crimes of murder and other capital crimes.

But this location was near a public road. So when it comes to archaeology, people are really interested, well, where is this place where Jesus died?

[17 : 50] And so there are really two ideas, two debated locations on where this was. The first one there today in Israel is called the Church of the Holy Sepulcher.

And it's actually been there for many, many years. And this location was built a church because it was thought that this is the place where Golgotha was, the place where Jesus was crucified.

Back in the 4th century, during the time of actually Constantine, if I remember correctly, or around that time, there was a, I forget who it was, but somebody decided that there was a bunch of writings from early church history, people who had indicated that there was this location that was the place of the death of Christ where he was crucified.

So some early church writings indicate that. And because of the location, you can kind of see where the old walls were.

And this location, the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, is right outside the walls. So that fits. And also right next to one of the old public roads into the city. The other location was brought up, this is something proposed in the 1800s by a guy named General Charles Gordon.

[19 : 19] So the location is called Gordon's Calvary. And this one is interesting because you can actually see pictures today if you just Google Golgotha, Israel, or Golgotha, Jerusalem, something like that, for pictures, you'll see a picture of it.

But there is this hill with a rocky outcropping. It's kind of like there's like a cliff and a hill up top. And on the face of the cliff, it actually looks like a skull.

And so at least today it does. Now it's unclear, right? Things change over time. Is that what it looked like 2,000 years ago?

You know, it's hard to know. But today it does look like a skull. And it's also very close to the garden tomb in which Jesus was buried, which the Bible references that it was close by.

So those are the two places people debate about which one is accurate. I don't know that we know for sure. It says in verse 23, Then they gave him wine mixed with myrrh to drink.

[20 : 29] But he did not take it. Now what is up with this? So this is before he's up on the cross. And it says they gave him wine mixed with myrrh. And myrrh, remember, what do we know about myrrh?

What do we know from the Bible with myrrh, right? It was the wise men, right? Not the three wise men, even though that's what our song says. But the wise men who came, the kings who came out from the east to offer gold, silver.

What was it? Gold? Frankincense and myrrh, right? And so myrrh is not something that tastes very good. And so why would you, in fact, it's very, very bitter.

It's nasty stuff. So why would they offer him some, there's two places where it's, one says wine and the other says vinegar. Probably both, right? Sour wine and mixed with myrrh.

And Jesus refuses it. Well, this is actually a common practice. People who were about to have their hands and feet nailed to a cross and be hung from it.

[21 : 30] Can you imagine the excruciating pain involved in that? And so this was something offered that would actually blunt your senses. It would desensitize you.

It was kind of like a quick way to get really drunk. Not necessarily drunk, but kind of like drugs today, right? We have drugs that you can take. We have anesthesia for surgeries.

And we have aspirin and ibuprofen and all these kinds of things to dull the pains of whether it be a headache or whatever it might be. And so that was the purpose of this, was they're about to suffer intensely.

And this was a way to just kind of blunt their suffering. And this was a common thing that was given to people who are about to be killed, especially through crucifixion. Isn't it interesting that Jesus refused it?

He didn't have to. But it seems that he really wanted to endure the fullness of the suffering that was set before him.

[22 : 32] He didn't want to blunt the pain. It was later on, and you might remember this from movies or films, but it's later on that Jesus was offered wine again, wine or sour wine, this time without the myrrh.

Remember, a sponge was given up to him while he was on the cross, and the Bible says that he did take that. But that was a different incident that came later.

Verse 24, And when they crucified him, they divided his garments, casting lots for them, to determine what every man should take. And so when you are one of the executioners, one of the Romans' executioners, there's some benefits to that job.

It's an ugly job, but one of the benefits is you get the spoils of the executed, I don't want to call them victims, but the criminals, the people who were being executed. In this case, Jesus was a victim, but in many cases, these were criminals, not victims.

And so they got to, they stripped him down, and they took his regular clothes. Remember, we just read that they put some purple on him, but then they took that off, and they put his regular clothes back on.

[23 : 45] And so there was typical clothes of the day, he had a tunic, and there's probably several layers of clothes. In John chapter 19, verse 23, that account, it actually mentions that his clothes, or his garments, were divided into four parts, plus his tunic.

And that there were actually, it was equally divided between four soldiers. But they cast lots to decide, well, who was going to get each piece, and then who was the tunic going to go to, because they didn't want to rip it into parts.

In fact, it was a seamless tunic, and so whoever got that lot, and casting lots, by the way, is just, think about rolling dice. It's just a game of chance, or drawing straws.

Psalms 22, I mentioned when we first started the message here. Psalm 22 is an amazing psalm. You know, it's just a song, it's a psalm of David, in which he is crying out to the Lord because of the suffering that he is experiencing.

But as you read through that, Psalm 22, there are so many allusions to what Jesus is experiencing here. And so verse 18 of Psalm 22 says this, I don't know what David was talking about when he said that, but wow, that fits in.

[25 : 11] Not only that, but so many of the other things. We'll talk about one or two more references from Psalm 22 as we go through here. So they divide up his garment, and then it says this, The third hour of the day, by the way, is about 9 o'clock.

And really, it's not necessarily exactly 9 o'clock. As we actually go through here, we'll find that there are three time references. The third hour, the sixth hour, and the ninth hour.

And so those are three hours apart, and that seems very convenient that these things would happen in three-hour segments. Three hours apart from each other. But time back then, nobody had wristwatches.

They didn't carry around, what do you call those, sundials or anything like that. So time was somewhat vague in general. But they really split up their day into four parts.

We would maybe call it early morning, late morning, early afternoon, and late afternoon. And so if you think about those four parts of the day, they actually had four parts to the night as well.

[26 : 18] I can't remember all the names. I think we talked about it a few months ago with another passage that mentioned that. I think it was the first watch, the second watch, the third watch, and then the crowing of the rooster or something was the fourth hour of the night.

And so four parts to the night and four parts to the day. Typically about 12 hours for the night, 12 hours for the day. And so there were three-hour segments, three-quarters or four-quarters in three-hour segments.

And so you have the morning, which is the first segment, the third hour, which is the second segment, the sixth hour, which is the third, and the ninth hour, which is the final segment of the day.

And so Jesus was put up on that cross in that second late morning segment of the day, somewhere between nine and noon. And then it just says, and they crucified him.

And that's all that it says. But as we know, there's quite a bit to crucifixion. Just a little bit about this practice of crucifixion. Did you know that crucifixion was something that was a method of execution that was around for 900 years?

[27 : 30] 900 years. Practiced not just by the Romans, but other groups as well. It actually ended up being abolished by Constantine.

If you remember Constantine, he was actually the first Roman emperor that made Christianity legal. And so he was known as being friendly to Christians.

There's debate whether he was a real Christian himself, but be that as it may, he outlawed crucifixion, I think, because of his friendliness towards Christians and Christianity.

There's a word that we use, in fact, I think I used it a little bit earlier, that describes intense pain. And it's the word excruciating. And what is the root of that word?

Excruciating pain. Well, the root has X, which means out of, and crux is a cross.

[28 : 33] And so that word excruciating that describes really the most intense kind of suffering comes from crucifixion.

And it comes out of crucifixion. It's the most intense kind of pain. And they would nail someone's hands and their feet to a cross and hang them there. Sometimes they would use ropes also to, you know, keep them up, maybe a stand for their feet.

But those nails would hold them to the cross. It's unclear there's debates. Were the nails in the palm of his hand or were they more on his wrist?

Some people say, oh, it must have been actually between the two bones in your forearm, which is where he was nailed. We don't know for sure.

Both, I think, are legitimate. In fact, the Greek word that we find in the Bible for Jesus' hands, saying that, remember he said he showed his hands to Thomas? That word for hand doesn't actually, isn't only limited to this part of your hand.

[29 : 42] It actually includes the full forearm. And so if somebody wanted to talk just about this part of your hand, they would actually say the end of your hand in Greek.

And so looking at languages, it could be both as well. Going back to Psalm 22, it says this, For dogs have surrounded me.

Again, this is a psalm of David. For dogs have surrounded me. The congregation of the wicked has enclosed me. They pierced my hands and my feet.

Why would David say that somebody pierced his hands and his feet? It's curious. I'm sure people singing that psalm or reading it were curious about people piercing David's hands and his feet.

Is this something that actually happened? I don't know. But so many allusions in that psalm to what happened with Jesus. Interestingly, it says, For dogs have surrounded me.

[30 : 44] David says that, and that's a reference many times in the Old Testament and among the Jews to Gentiles, people who were not Jews.

They would be called dogs, pejoratively. And who is Jesus surrounded by during his crucifixion? Well, Jews and Gentiles.

It was the Gentiles putting him to death, of course, with the mockery and approval and really demand of the Jews themselves. Verse 26, And the inscription of his accusation was written above the king of the Jews.

So this was common. They wanted to make sure that people knew what somebody was accused of. And this is good, right? We want to, you know, if you're going to execute somebody, we should declare abroad to those who might, whether it's in a courtroom, some kind of decree, or here.

In this case, a little placard right above the cross that says what the accusation was. And really, there was only one accusation that stuck for Jesus. He said he was the king of the Jews. Now, it's not here in Mark.

[31 : 49] I can't remember to see. Do I have it? Oh, yeah. I actually wrote it down. So in John chapter 19, you don't need to turn there for the sake of time, but I'll just read this to you. John 19, 20. It says, Then many of the Jews read the title, this title, for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city.

And it was written in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin in three languages. And it said, the king of the Jews. That was the accusation, the king of the Jews. But this upset them.

Therefore, the chief priests of the Jews said to Pilate, Do not write the king of the Jews, but rather write, He said, I am the king of the Jews. And what was Pilate's answer?

What I have written, I have written. The irony, isn't it? Isn't it ironic? It says, I wrote what I wrote, and I'm not changing it. And so he was accused of being the king of the Jews.

Verse 27. And with him, they also crucified two robbers, one on his right and the other on his left. So the scripture was fulfilled, which says, And he was numbered with the transgressors.

[32 : 56] Here it uses the term robbers, these two people. Robbers is actually a term that meant more than just thieves. Robbers were violent criminals. A lot of times people commit acts of violence because they want to steal things.

And so those two things are equated. But you have somebody who might swipe something from the store, swipe something from somebody's house while nobody's there. But that was not a robber. And at least in this, in the actual Greek language here.

A robber was somebody who committed acts of violence in order to take things from others. And so these two were violent criminals. And most of us have seen, right, the illustrations of Jesus on the cross.

And many times Jesus is in the middle. And then on the left, there are three crosses, right? Not just the one. Because there were two who were crucified alongside of him. But it says this, I'll read this scripture from Isaiah.

Isaiah 53, verse 12. And many of you may know that Isaiah 53 is this strange prophecy about a suffering servant. And for years, for centuries, the Jews debated, who is this suffering servant that Isaiah is talking about?

[34 : 12] Is this Israel as a whole? Is this some prophet that's going to come in the future? Some said maybe this is the Messiah. That was actually a fairly minority view. But Isaiah 53, looking back, it's a lot easier to know what it's about, right?

And Isaiah 53, verse 12 says this, Therefore I will divide him a portion with the great. This is actually the last verse, I believe, of Isaiah 53. I will divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong, because he has poured out his soul unto death.

And he was numbered with the transgressors, and he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for transgressors. Verse 29, And those who passed by blasphemed him.

So it wasn't just the soldiers, it wasn't just the Jewish leaders, but even those just passing by, they're traveling through, many people coming in for the feast that week. Most of them, I'm sure, Jewish people.

Those who passed by, they blasphemed him. Many, they were wagging their heads and saying, Ah, you who destroy the temple and build it in three days, save yourself and come down from the cross.

[35 : 25] You know, Jesus didn't actually say that he would destroy the temple. He just said that he would rebuild the temple after three days, not that he would destroy it. Likewise, the chief priests also, mocking among themselves with the scribes, said, He saved others, but himself he cannot save.

Let the Christ, remember that means Messiah, let the Messiah, the King of Israel, descend now from the cross, that we may see and believe. Save yourself, rescue yourself, you've rescued others.

You know, and little did they know, though they should have, that he could have, with the snap of his fingers, rescued himself.

We have a song, a hymn, what's the title of it? 10,000 Angels, I think. He could have called 10,000 Angels. You know, that song actually comes from something that Jesus said, we didn't read about it because this isn't in Mark, it's in one of the other Gospels, but when Jesus was arrested in the Garden of Gethsemane, and Peter pulls out his sword, and Jesus says, no, this must take place.

And he tells, and I'll read you, this from Matthew 26, verse 53, he told Peter, or do you think that I cannot pray to my Father, and he will provide me with more than 12 legions of angels?

[36 : 53] All he had to do was ask. All he had to do was ask. And God the Father would have said, I'll do it. I'll send the angels.

I'll rescue you. Rescue you from this suffering on the cross. But he chose not to. He kept silent. Through all the mockery and the ridicule.

Another verse from Psalm 22. This one is from verse 6 through 8. But I am a worm and no man, a reproach of men and despised by the people.

All those who see me ridicule me. They shoot out the lip. They shake the head, saying, He trusted in the Lord. Let him rescue him.

Let him deliver him, since he delights in him. Wow. Written over a thousand years before by the psalmist David.

[37 : 53] Then it says that even though, this is the last verse, verse 32, even those who were crucified with him reviled him.

Those who were on the cross who were suffering their own death, and I think it's strange, would take the time to even revile him while they're suffering the same fate as him.

Now there's one little, maybe bit of confusion, right? Because many of us know that one of those on the cross actually humbled himself, right?

And that's not recorded here, but it is recorded in Luke, and I'm going to read that for you just so we can compare. Luke chapter 23, verse 9, says this, Then one of the criminals who were hanged blasphemed him, saying, If you are the Christ, the Messiah, save yourself and us.

But the other, answering, rebuked him, saying, Do you not even fear God, seeing you are under the same condemnation? And we indeed justly, for we received the due reward of our deeds.

[39 : 00] But this man has done nothing wrong. Then he said to Jesus, Lord, remember me when you come into your kingdom. And Jesus said to him, Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with me in paradise.

We won't get into a lot of the details of that because we're not studying Luke, but I just wanted to point this out. What's going on? Some people have used this as an opportunity to criticize the Bible. I see contradictions in the Bible.

Really, as you read through the Bible, the amount of uniformity is just, it's miraculous. But we should take these kinds of things seriously, right, and talk through them.

You know, the passage that we just read seems to indicate that both of the thieves ridiculed Jesus, reviled him. And so I think there are two possibilities.

There are two possibilities. The first one is that when Mark records this, he's just indicating that Jesus was reviled by those who were crucified with him. Not necessarily both, but he was just referencing that those on the cross next to him, at least one of them anyway, reviled Jesus.

[40 : 15] Jesus. Didn't necessarily mean that both of them did. The other is, you know, this was something, crucifixion isn't something, this isn't something that happened in five minutes.

This was a several hour process of Jesus on the cross with these two robbers. And so it's very possible, right, that at the beginning of this, both of these thieves were reviling Jesus, ridiculing him.

But then as they, as they watch Jesus' humility in the face of suffering, one of them anyway has a change of heart and decides, you know what, I think this man really is who he said he was.

And I think, you know, and many have used this as an illustration of just the simplicity of faith and humility that is required to come to Jesus, to come to the Lord.

To find faith in him. This is a man, a violent criminal, who in the last moments of his life made his peace with God by putting his trust in Jesus Christ.

[41 : 28] I'll read it again. Therefore he said, Lord, remember me when you come into your kingdom. That's all he said. He rebuked another man saying, hey, this man's not done anything wrong.

And he says, Lord, remember me when you come into your kingdom. And Jesus said, it's granted. That's all it takes is just a little bit of faith. And even in the final hours of life, God is willing to give a chance to anyone who is willing to put even the meagerest tiny little bit of faith in Jesus.

as we prepare to do, to have our communion and I'll have the elders come up. Do we have a fourth one by the way?

Scott? Okay. So we'll have the elders come up and prepare to serve the, to serve communion this morning. But I wanted to talk about this symbol of the cross.

Just take a couple minutes to talk about the symbol of the cross. You know, if, how can you, there's a few ways that you can identify a Christian in our culture, right? And so, many religions have symbols to indicate the religion, right?

[42 : 40] And what is the symbol of Christianity? The cross, right? It's that simple symbol of a cross. Judaism has what?

The star of David that's become, it hasn't always been the symbol of Judaism, but that star of David at least today and I think for many hundreds of years has been this, the symbol of Judaism.

It's unclear. People don't, are actually not sure where that, the etymology of that. There's another religion that I thought of. Islam, right, is a religion, their symbol is the crescent moon and the star and people aren't sure where that came from either or even really what it means.

I think some people say, oh, the moon and the stars are relating to God's divine guidance. Taoism, Taoism, what's the symbol of Taoism? Does anybody know?

It's that yin and yang symbol. Have you ever seen that? It's like the circle and it's got the black and the white and kind of a little curvy line in between. And that's to indicate the, their philosophy of balance between opposing forces of joy and suffering and light and darkness and how you have to balance and keep in harmony those types of things.

[43 : 52] And then in Buddhism, Buddhism, that's another one. You typically have these statues, these Buddha statues, some of them very pious. A lot of times you see the chubby Buddha, right, in the Chinese restaurant or something like that.

That's an indication of enlightenment through meditation. But isn't it interesting that Christianity, this symbol of Christianity is the implements of an executioner, the implements of death.

In our day, I don't know what, imagine the symbol being a guillotine or a firing squad or a, you know, a rifle, an electric chair.

Wouldn't that be odd? To wear that as jewelry around your neck. Isn't that interesting, right? We wear as jewelry around our necks or whatever, this implement of death. But there's a reason for that because Christianity is not a philosophy of life.

It's not a philosophy of this is how you ought to walk through your life. Principles of wisdom like many other religions. Christians. It's not a lot about how we live our life, living our best life now, following some moral principles.

[45 : 12] Christianity is about a man whose name is Jesus Christ. And even more particular in that, it's not necessarily about his teachings, though those are important, we studied them, we learned from them. It's not about all the miracles that he did, even though those are important.

But it's about that final thing that he did that we are reading about today. It's about the death that he died. That is the core of Christianity.

Christianity is the death of Jesus. The death died one man for the sins of the whole world. Christianity is an offer. God's life, the creator of the universe, his life, for yours.

If you're but willing. And so, many people, they make a mistake and they think Christianity is about trying to, you know, follow the rules that Jesus talked about.

And that's not it. He gives you an offer. If you're willing to accept that offer, you can have eternal life to live with him forever. Just a few little bits of instruction and then we'll pass out these elements to take the Lord's suffer.

[46 : 23] I mentioned the benevolence offering. Just a few more details about that. These funds are set aside for people in need. Usually it's people that are part of our church, but sometimes it might be somebody out in the community, somebody that we are familiar with their situation and also their character.

We don't want to just be given funds out to anybody who asks for them. And when we take this benevolence offering, really we're just expecting people who are regular attenders here to give, so just keep that in mind.

We by no means expect visitors to give to this. But we'll do that at the very end as we sing together. But as far as the Lord's Supper, now every church does this a little bit differently, so I want to make sure everybody's prepared.

I know when I've visited churches sometimes I can feel a little awkward. I want to make sure I do things how everybody else is doing them. But what we'll do is we'll pass out these elements separately, the bread first and then the juice.

By the way, it's not wine, so if that's a question, it's just grape juice. And we'll take it all together. So as they pass that out, just hold on to that and I'll read through the scriptures and then we'll take it all together.

[47 : 31] Some people have questions about their kids. If you have your kids with you in the service, which is great by the way, it's totally up to parents whether they allow their kids to join with them. Remember, what we're doing here is remembering the Lord and his death.

Some people, some churches say, well, only members can do this or only if you've been baptized in this certain way or whatever and for us here, it's, you know, if you're a believer, if you trust in Jesus, that's all that's needed.

And what are we doing here, by the way? Because sometimes there's confusion here. Some people take the Lord's Supper to try to accomplish certain things. But what the Bible says is that we are doing this to remember the Lord and his death.

And then the other thing is to proclaim his death until he comes. So there's two things. We're remembering what Jesus did and then we're looking forward to what he's going to do in the future, to his coming return for us.

What this is not for, taking the Lord's Supper, this doesn't forgive any sins. If you are in Christ, all of your sins are forgiven. It doesn't make you more complete in him.

[48 : 42] It doesn't make you more acceptable to him. The Bible says that if you are in Christ, then you are already accepted and there is no more acceptance to be gained.

This doesn't impart any more grace than you have already received through the death of Christ. The Bible says we're complete in him. This also is not a time to dwell on our sins, though they may be many, whether they're from a week ago or 40 years ago.

This is the time for us to think about what he accomplished for us. And so, I'm going to go ahead and have the elders come up and keep all those things in mind as we pass these out.

And I'm going to read some scriptures as they're passing this out just to give us a little bit more context about how we should be doing this.

There's a passage in 1 Corinthians 1. and Paul is talking about some disunity in the church.

[49 : 55] People are saying, oh, I'm of this guy, this great apostle, or Apollos and Paul, and I'm of Jesus or I'm of Peter. And then people are bragging about who baptized them in water.

And here's what Paul has to say about all of these types of things. for Christ did not send me, he said, to baptize, but to preach the gospel, the good news.

Not with wisdom of words. It's not wisdom that's important. Lest the cross of Christ should be made of no effect. For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing.

But to us who are being saved, it's the power of God. This cross, a man dying on a cross, is just this foolish, bizarre idea.

But it is the power of God for us. He continues on, For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise and bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. Where is the wise?

[50 : 58] Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For since in the wisdom of God, the world through wisdom did not know God, but it pleased God through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe.

For Jews request a sign and Greeks seek after wisdom. But we preach Christ crucified to the Jews a stumbling block and to Greeks foolishness.

And we'll end there, that passage, the centrality of our faith. It's not wisdom, it's not yeah, thank you Joe.

It's not, you know, like I said before, trying to live your best life. Jesus died for our sins, he accomplished it all, and he just offers that, that is his gift, his gift to us.

And if we're willing to take it, we can have life with him forever. So I'll read this passage from 1 Corinthians 11, 23, this is Paul giving instruction as we take the Lord's Supper.

[52 : 08] For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus, on the same night in which he was betrayed, took bread. And when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, take eat, this is my body, which is broken for you.

Do this in remembrance of me. Let's do this together. All right.

And next we'll pass out the juice. There's another passage I wanted to share as we're passing out those.

In Colossians 2, verse 8, Paul warns, because there is always this tendency to try to put some kind of weight or confidence in human philosophy, in human wisdom, in good deeds.

And Paul warns about that and he says this, Colossians 2, 8, Beware, lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world and not according to Christ.

[53 : 50] The basic principles of the world is, hey, you do good things, you get good stuff. You do bad things, you get punished. And that's, those are all things, that's actually part of God's creation.

But those are the basic principles of the world and should we put our confidence in those kinds of things? And he's saying no. We need to put our confidence in Christ. For in him dwells the fullness of the Godhead bodily.

And you are complete in him. If you're in Christ, you are complete. There is nothing left to be done. Who is the head of all principality and power. And you, being dead in your trespasses and in the uncircumcision of your flesh, he is made alive together with him, having forgiven you all your trespasses, having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us, and he has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.

all those requirements were nailed to the cross so that there's only one requirement left.

Just one thing to do. To look back at what he accomplished for us and say, thank you.

[55 : 15] I receive it. And so, we'll read the same passage. And in the same manner, he also took the cup after supper, saying, this cup is the new covenant in my blood.

This do as often as you drink it in remembrance of me. For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. Let's drink together. Are you glad that Jesus went to the cross for you?

Are you glad that he's coming again for you? Amen. Let's go ahead and we'll take up this offering. As we do that, we're going to sing a song together.

Oh, how he loves you and me. If you don't know the song, it's in your hymnal number 349. But I think most of us know it. Oh, how he loves you and me. And Sophie, are you going to be able to play that for us?

Thank you. Thank you. Oh, how He loves you and me Oh, how He loves you and me He gave His life, what more could He give Oh, how He loves you

[57:13] Oh, how He loves me Oh, how He loves you and me Let's do that second verse Jesus to Calvary did go His love for sinners to show His love for sinners to show What He did there What He did there Brought hope from despair From despair Oh, how He loves you Oh, how He loves you Oh, how He loves me Oh, how He loves you and me Amen. Let's pray.

Father, we love You not as much as we ought, but we want to love You more, and we ask that You would work in us to know more about what You accomplished for us, to understand that in a deeper way, that we might love You even more than we do today.

Thank You for all that You accomplished for us. You didn't even withhold Your only Son from us. And how much more will You not give us all things, as the Scripture says.

We thank You for the great love and grace which You poured out on us. We pray these in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen.