

Jesus' Death on the Cross

Mt. 27:45-54

Out of the 16 Jesus 3D sermons, this is arguably the toughest one to preach - Jesus' death, not something fun to think about.

- Removed from death, don't like thinking about it
- Don't understand death - Gideon story
- W/O it, we would have no reason to gather - central to our faith
 - John Stott (Anglican pastor/theologian) "There is no Christianity without the cross"

Last week - road to the cross

Today - God dies as a man - by crucifixion

Crucifixion - invented by Persians ~500BC - perfected by Romans

- Outlawed by 1st Christian Emperor (Constantine) in ~300AD
- Most painful mode of execution reserved for the most despised people (i.e. slaves, poor, Romans guilty of worst high treason)
- Josephus (Jewish historian) - The most wretched of deaths
- So horrendous, word invented to explain it - excruciating "from the cross"
- Roman philosopher Cicero - decent Roman citizens shouldn't speak of the cross because it was too disgraceful for decent people
 - Wear it in jewelry, artwork, plastered in our houses
 - When Jesus hung on the cross, it was an offensive symbol
 - Drug needle, used condom
- Pain is due to agonizing death by asphyxiation
 - Hang for days, passing in and out of consciousness struggling to breathe
- Public place - like a mall entrance today
- Common/not unusual - 10's of thousands crucified - mostly men
 - Women faced the cross because even a barbaric culture couldn't stand to see women endure that much pain and embarrassment

Mt. 27:45 - 6th hour = high noon (sun should be at highest)

Vs. 46-47 - 3pm

- Completely raw cry - why such a dark cry at such a dark hour? - fits
- In hanging on the cross, though sinless, Jesus experiences the sins of the humanity - first time
 - Separation from God - had never known
 - Paul 2 Cor 5:21 "For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God."

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- In becoming sin, the Father had to turn judicially from His Son
- That's what sin does - separates from God

Vs. 48-50

- Sponge with Sour wine - possibly combination toilet paper and disinfectant in public restrooms
 - last taste as Jesus died
 - became filth of our sin
 - tasted filth of our bodies
- Jesus, who had been so silent throughout this chapter, speaks twice
 - Cries of agony - separation from God and exhaustion
 - Luke 23:46 "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit!"
 - Despite all the suffering, despite the separation, Jesus was still committed to God
 - How many of us would have that answer?
 - Many of us, when we experience hardship, disappointment, tough situations, we tend to turn our backs on God - wander
 - John 19:30 - "It is finished" - the final sacrifice for sins
- Died

Vs. 51-53 - People witnessed 2 incredible events

- Jesus gives up his spirit, the Spirit of God goes to work on the world
 - Heaven showers down its signs of vindication and victory. The justification of God outshouts the voice of scorn and confusion. The Father has not abandoned his rights suffering son, and he gives an earthshaking, tomb-breaking, curtain-tearing ceremony to celebrate
 - Shows Jesus' sacrifice was accepted
- Temple veil tore from top to bottom
 - Separate holy place, from most holy place - high priest would enter once per year to atone for sins
 - Hand-woven tapestries
 - 2. Salvation - it's all open
 - Irony - through Jesus' separation, the people have been brought back to God
- Before Jesus dies, the earth turns black. After Jesus dies, the earth shakes. - earth telling people something seismic is happening.
 - New era has dawned on earth in the death of Christ
 - focus is not earthquake, but tombs open and real resurrected humans walk about Jerusalem - not like Walking Dead

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Puritan John Owen - "The Death of Death in the Death of Christ"

Augustine - "His death...Killed death."

- Jesus' death strong enough to tear veil and cancel sin
- Strong enough to cancel death

Sin and death are humanity's two greatest problems and Jesus' death conquers both!

Vs. 54-55 - the momentous events of the day struck fear in the the soldier's hearts

- Never experienced anything like it in any other crucifixion

Jesus' crucifixion was unlike any other in history - unlike any other sacrifice

- only his could satisfy God's wrath against sin
- only his could pay the penalty we deserve
- only his could conquer sin
- only his could conquer death

Took this horrific death for the incredible blessing

We are prone to skip from death to resurrection so quickly

- death not fun to think about, especially crucifixion
- Our sin that killed him
 - Don't like to think about sin - in doing so, we often lack a proper understanding of it
 - Focus on symptoms - lying, stealing, gossip, adultery...Issue of heart
 - Jeremiah 17:9 The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?
 - Reject God
 - Reject Jesus' work - I can do it...try harder...
 - Rely on Jesus
 - Rely on power of HS
 - Accept help of others - Gospel Communities
- Good news: When we become Christians, we obtain a new heart
 - 2 Cor. 5:17 - Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation
 - Possible because of Jesus' death
 - Paul refers to Christians as saints
 - Martin Luther - Justus et predator - at the same time sinner and saint

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Good Friday services - no communion (day of mourning) before resurrection

- No communion today
- Chocolate - darkness of Jesus' Death (our sin)
- Skittles - brightness of what it accomplished

Next week - celebrate his resurrection - most glorious day in history