

Because He Loves You

The Crucifixion of Jesus

Mark 15:15-25 (Read Mark 15:1-15)

Today is Palm Sunday. We call it Palm Sunday because 2,000 years ago the people of Israel spread palm branches on the road as Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a donkey (see Matt. 21:8 and John 12:13).

As Jesus approached the city, the large crowd welcomed him and cried out, “Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is

he who comes in the name of the Lord!”
(see Matt. 21:9). Five days later, on what
we call Good Friday, the same crowd
rejected Jesus and cried out “Crucify
him!” (see Mark 15:12-14). What a
difference a few days can make.

The crowd wanted to crucify Jesus.
Wanting to satisfy the crowd, Pontius
Pilate (the Roman governor of Judea) had
Jesus flogged and handed him over to be
crucified (see Mark 15:15).

This morning we're going to walk with Jesus as he travels the road to Golgatha (The Place of the Skull), the site of his crucifixion. But before we do this, I'd like to talk briefly about Pilate's decision to crucify Jesus.

Clearly Pilate believed that Jesus was innocent. Twice (see Luke 23:4,14) Pilate stated that he found no basis for the charges against Jesus. Matthew 27:19 tells us that Pilate's wife also believed Jesus was innocent and sent Pilate a

message, asking him to have no part in condemning Jesus. Pilate believed Jesus was innocent and Pilate made an effort to spare Jesus.

First, Pilate suggested that Jesus should be punished and then released (see Luke 23:16). Then, hoping the crowd would choose Jesus, Pilate said he would release one prisoner because of the Jewish Passover (see Matt. 27:15,17). Yes, Pilate believed Jesus was innocent AND made an effort to spare Jesus. But to get the

approval of the crowd, Pilate ordered that Jesus be crucified.

[Pilate insisted that the blood of Jesus would be not on his hands, but on the hands of the crowd (see Matt. 27:24).

Nevertheless, it was Pilate's decision that sent Jesus to the cross.]

To a certain extent all of us can relate to what happened to Pilate. From time to time, we find ourselves in situations where we know what we believe – we know what God wants us to do – but

there's a crowd nearby, shouting something different. How do we respond? Do we go along with the crowd? Or do we take a stand for Jesus?

As followers of Jesus, there are times when we must choose between being popular and being faithful. One choice will win the approval of the crowd; the other will bring honor and glory to Jesus.

I want to encourage you to choose the way of Jesus – it's always the better choice.

Choosing the way of Christ can be costly. But the price we pay is nothing compared to the price Jesus paid for us. Jesus gave HIS life to give US life! Jesus died for us! Let's live for him!

As I stated earlier Pilate had Jesus flogged and then handed him over to be crucified. Let's talk, for a moment, about this flogging.

In most cases a prisoner who was going to be crucified was first flogged (whipped). The whip used to flog the

prisoner had a wooden handle and long strips of leather. Small pieces of metal or bone were attached to the leather strips.

As the prisoner was beaten, the whip would cut and tear his flesh.

Allow me to read a portion of an article written by a medical doctor describing the flogging of Jesus.

“The heavy whip is brought down with full force again and again across Jesus’ shoulders, back, and legs. At first the heavy thongs cut through the skin only.

Then, as the blows continue, they cut deeper into the subcutaneous tissues, producing first an oozing of blood from capillaries and veins of the skin, and finally spurting arterial bleeding from vessels in underlying muscles. The small balls of lead first produce large, deep bruises which are broken open by subsequent blows. Finally, the skin of the back is hanging in long ribbons and the entire area is an unrecognizable mass of torn bleeding tissue. When it is

determined by the centurion in charge that the prisoner is near death, the beating is finally stopped.”

It’s not a pretty picture, is it? At any time Jesus could have put a stop to this flogging. He could have called twelve legions of angels (72,000) to come to his aid (see Matt. 26:53). But he chose instead to suffer and continue his journey to the cross for you and for me.

After untying Jesus, we’re told in Mark 15:16 that “the soldiers led Jesus

away to the palace (that is, the Praetorium) [the Praetorium was Herod's huge palace; Roman governors stayed in this palace when they came to Jerusalem] and called together the whole company of soldiers [a company of soldiers was 600 men, one-tenth of a 6,000 soldier legion]."

This company of soldiers began to mock Jesus.

In Mark 15:17,18 we read, "They put a purple robe on him, then wove a crown of thorns and set it on him. And they

began to call out to him, ‘Hail, King of the Jews!’”

Jesus claimed to be a king. So the soldiers, in a sarcastic way, treated him like royalty. First, a robe (perhaps a faded military cloak) is placed on Christ’s bleeding shoulders. Then, a crown of thorns (probably made of palm spines, one-and-a-half to two inches long) is forced on Christ’s head. As these long thorns pierce his scalp, blood flows freely into his tangled hair.

We're told in Mark 15:19 that as the soldiers cried out, "Hail, King of the Jews!" they struck Jesus on the head with a staff and spit on him again and again. And then, they fell on their knees and scorned him with bogus worship.

In time, the soldiers become bored with their mockery. So they tear the robe (already stuck to the wounds) from Christ's back, dress him, and send him on his way to Golgotha (see Mark 15:20).

Why would anyone subject himself to such ridicule and pain? Jesus put himself through this terrible ordeal and continued his journey to cross for you and for me.

According to Roman law a condemned man had to carry his own cross to the place of crucifixion. Actually, only the horizontal section of the cross – called the “patibulum” – was carried to the place of crucifixion. With this patibulum on his

bleeding shoulders, Jesus begins his 650 yard journey to Golgotha.

In time, Jesus stumbles and falls. He tries to get up, but he can't. The ordeal through which he has passed has taken its toll.

Mark 15:21 tells us that “a certain man from Cyrene, Simon, the father of Alexander and Rufus, was passing by on his way in from the country, and they forced him to carry the cross.”

Mark 15:22 says, “They brought Jesus to the place called Golgotha (which means The Place of the Skull).” [The word “Golgotha” is a transliteration of an Aramaic word meaning “the place of the skull.” The word “Calvary” comes from the Latin word “calvaria” a variation of the word “calva” which means “skull.”]

Carol and I visited “the place of the skull” during our trip to Israel in 1993.

At the site of the crucifixion (Gordon’s Calvary) there’s a large image on the side

of hill that looks like a human skull. No one knows how it got there. Perhaps this skull was carved out of the side of this hill to indicate that this was a place of death.

Before the soldiers crucify Jesus, Mark 15:23 tells us that they offer him wine mixed with myrrh (an anesthetic used to decrease pain). Jesus, however, refuses to take it.

At this point the actual crucifixion begins. Mark 15:25 tells us that it was the

**third hour (9:00 a.m. our time) when
Jesus was crucified.**

**To help us understand what it was like
the day Christ was crucified, I'm going to
read a portion of another article by a
medical doctor. This article is titled "A
Physician Looks at the Suffering of
Christ." Listen closely as I read.**

READ THE ARTICLE

Why would anyone choose to go through such pain and suffering? A man named Bill Shurkey answers that question in his short story titled “I Dreamed I Was at Calvary.” Listen as I read it to you.

READ THE SHORT STORY

The crucifixion of Jesus is an indisputable historical fact. But it's more than that. Jesus Christ, motivated by love, suffered and died so that you and I could have eternal life.

John 3:16 says it so well. 'For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.'

Do you believe in Jesus? Have you accepted him as Savior and Lord? If you haven't I urge you to accept him today.