

The Profound Symbolism of Jesus' Crown of Thorns

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Dear congregation, when I was unconverted as a boy, there were two kinds of sermons that made some impression on me from time to time, one kind was sermons of great warning, sermons about hell and judgment, and the other kind of sermon was about the suffering of Jesus. I didn't understand those sufferings but there was something about Passion sermons that did for me the same kind of thing that hell and damnation sermons did, it made me stand in awe. I couldn't grasp the magnitude of why Jesus would suffer voluntarily such breathtaking things. Well, maybe you can identify with that, my unconverted friend. Maybe you look forward to Passion season in some way because the sermons seem to get more interesting when you hear some of the details, some of the amazing character of Jesus and there's a mystery, there's a fascination you have and yet you don't understand why he suffers the way he did.

Where the Holy Spirit begins to work, that fascination increases tenfold and as you begin to try to bring in your own righteousness before God and you begin to realize that your very best is as filthy rags, your heart is drawn out more to these sufferings. You can't explain, again, exactly why but you begin to understand that the suffering Savior is connected to salvation and that you need him. Somehow you need the suffering Savior. But when you're brought to an end of your own righteousness and you have absolutely nothing but empty hands to bring God, nothing but sin to bring him, then you can't wait to hear of the sufferings of Jesus, then your soul goes out to it, then you find rest only in his sufferings, only in his righteousness, and you encamp your soul at Calvary by the work of the Spirit and you cry out, "It is still a mystery but it is all my delight and all my desire," because then you begin to understand that these sufferings, yes, they were undergone for you as a poor sinner who comes haltingly, believingly, trustingly, falling upon the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now these sufferings take place especially in Gethsemane, Gabbatha and Golgotha. Last week we read Gethsemane together. Tonight I want to take you to Gabbatha, and then two weeks from now, God willing, we want to go to Golgotha, and it is my prayer that as we move from place to place and we see the very pith and marrow of the sufferings of Jesus, that we may loose our righteousness and by grace embrace his and find that peace that passes all understanding by renewal or for the first time.

So tonight we want to look with you at Matthew 27:29.

29 And when they had platted a crown of thorns, they put it upon his head, and a reed in his right hand: and they bowed the knee before him, and mocked him, saying, Hail, King of the Jews!

With God's help, we want to look with you at this simple and yet profound theme "A Crown of Thorns." A crown of thorns, and we will look at that in three thoughts. First, we will see this crown as a symbol of Christ's prophesied suffering; second, as a symbol of his priestly substitution; and third, as a symbol of his kingly love. A crown of thorns symbolizing prophesied suffering, priestly substitution and kingly love. The text before us tonight, congregation, is one that I've wanted to preach on for more than 20 years and have never felt free to do so I think mostly because of the profound symbolism involved in this great text, and even tonight, I don't pretend to be able to plumb its depths for you but I hope that we may stammer a little about it and lift the veil just a little that you may see the incredible value that lies in the symbolism of the actuality of the crown of thorns.

The first thing we then need to say tonight is this, that when you think of this crown of thorns, it's a symbol in your mind, isn't it? You think immediately in a kind of global way, don't you, of all the sufferings of the Lord Jesus Christ? There's something apprehensive about the symbol, a crown of thorns, but to understand why that is so in our minds, we need to take a step back, a few steps back and look at what led up to this. Jesus, you know, had already suffered a great deal at the hands of wicked Roman soldiers and some of his fellow Jews who hated him. He had been led from one judge to another, from Pilate to Herod and back to Pilate again. Herod had mocked him, had dressed him in a gorgeous, mocking, kingly robe and he returned to Pilate for another interrogation. Pilate again attempted to release him and about that time, Pilate's wife sends a very urgent message. Boys and girls, you heard me read about that to Pilate to say, "Don't harm him. I've had a dream about this man." But meanwhile the elders and the priests are stirring up the people to say, "We want Barabbas freed and not Jesus!" So Pilate hands Jesus over to the soldiers to have him scourged which in itself is a very very painful thing. The soldiers torture Jesus and then crown him with thorns.

To do that, the soldiers took him aside into a room that was adjacent to Pilate's judgment hall called the Common Hall or the Praetorium. It was the soldiers' living quarters. It was a very large room. It could house hundreds of people. And there they contacted the Roman band, the Roman cohort that was from 400-600 men, and Matthew 27 says all of them came, so there were 400-600 men that came to that large Common Hall and there they began to play, may I say it so, with sadistic pleasure with Jesus. They began to mock with him as imaginary king. Now, no doubt they didn't know who Jesus was very much. They certainly heard at least this much, that he called himself the King of the Jews, and of course, these men were tough men. They were rough and brutal and unloving and they were used to being trained to kill, and so they knew what it meant to obey orders without questioning and they thought to themselves, "Well, we'll show this pretentious king a thing or two," and they began to sport with him, began to mock him partly perhaps out of sadistic motives, perhaps partly because they hated the rebellious Jews, whatever the

cause may be, the soldiers proceed out of wicked wicked devices to torment the Lord Jesus.

They mock his kingly dignity by throwing a kingly robe over his bloodied shoulders. They mock his kingly power by putting a flimsy reed into his hand as if that's all the power he has. But above all, they mock his kingly authority. With wicked hands, they break branches from a long spiked thorn bush and they weave those branches into a crown and those spiked thorns which protrude from all sides of the center stem are very sharp indeed. We've actually experienced that firsthand in Israel when we were walking in certain places, our guide stopped us and he said, "There's a thorn bush," and perhaps I told you that before, we tried to cut a little piece off with his permission and we put them in my wife's knapsack but it kept pricking through and in the end we had to throw it away. We couldn't even keep it. It was too sharp. You just touched the end of it with your finger and you had blood. Well, this kind of a sharp thorn, lots of thorns around the center stem was woven together and formed a kind of royal diadem in mockery and it was placed and pressed actually upon the head of Jesus causing the blood to trickle down his innocent face.

Then they challenged his kingly honor, didn't they, as they watched him bleed in his face and bleed on his back and body and they saw him with his kingly demeanor, a mockery of kingly demeanor. They joked with him and they mocked him and they said, "Hail!" Which means, "Long live the king! Hail, king of the Jews! You think you're king, well, look at your kingship and your flimsy reed and your bleeding body and your bleeding head. Hail, king of the Jews!" This sarcastic taunt reopens the stinging wounds of denial and rejection of Jesus as the Messiah.

There stands Jesus, majesty in misery, is silent. Did these hundreds of men notice the resolution? The calm dignity on his suffering face? Well, they just attack him the more. They begin to slap him across the face. They hurl great insults like an innocent victim, and as if that's not enough, they spit on him in the face and give him the greatest of indignities. Then the greatest act of humiliation, they take that scepter out of his hand and they smash it on his head so that the crown of thorns sinks deeper and the blood runs faster.

He doesn't say a word. Not one word and, you see, that's the mystery. Why? What's the purpose of all this great wickedness? And if Jesus is king, why didn't he stop it? Why didn't his Father from heaven stop it? Well, because it was necessary that these things should be fulfilled. You see, the soldiers were fulfilling God's immutable word of prophesy. Jesus himself had told them as was heard also this afternoon, that he would be delivered unto the Gentiles and should be mocked and spitefully entreated and spit upon, and now it had to be fulfilled. The Apostle Peter said in his post-Pentecost sermon that it was God's plan that both Herod and Pontius Pilate with the Gentiles and the people of Israel should be gathered together against Jesus, Acts 4:27. And Peter also said in Acts 3 that God before had shown by the mouth of all his prophets how Christ should suffer. So Jesus had to suffer all these things. He fulfilled prophesy. The crown of thorns serves as a

symbol of his prophetic sufferings. Thus it is written and thus it behooved Christ to suffer, Jesus told the travelers to Emmaus.

So this cruel wickedness of these soldiers is all part of God's foreordained plan. Now it's still their responsibility, of course, they are wicked men, God is never the author of sin, but this is part of God's plan who delivered Jesus by the determinate and counsel and foreknowledge of his eternal plan, even as they are the ones who took him and with wicked hands committed these great evils.

Now what does that mean to us today? Well, all of this means that you and I if the Holy Spirit enters into our lives and shows us our sin, begin to see in these soldiers a reflection of our desperate, sinful, rebellious natures because by nature we do the same thing. We rage against the Lord's anointed. We are rebellious. Every sin is another thorn in the crown of the Lord Jesus Christ. You see, friends, we would have done no differently if we had been man #601 in that Common Hall. We would have joined in the mockery by nature. Every time we cut down a fellow human being, every time, boys and girls, you poke fun of someone in your class, maybe someone who's different, maybe someone who's not very smart, maybe someone who dresses funny, every time you pick on someone, on a very small scale you're doing the same thing, you're mocking his people. Every time we abuse someone, you see, we show the same sin. This was an aggravated form, yes, but the seed of it lies in all of our hearts.

You see, every sin is a slapping of the face of Jesus. Every sin is a rejection of the living God. Every sin, I say it with reverence, is a spitting in the face of mercy. Every sin is a rejection of Christ's divine kingship. We mock him when we disobey his law. We mock him when we make hypocritical professions of allegiance to him, when we say, "Now when I'm sick I'm going to serve him when I get better," and we get better and we go our own way. We are mockers. We, too, say, "Hail, King of the Jews," but we don't worship him. In one way we're worse than the soldiers, the soldiers had limited ignorance. They didn't know what we know about Jesus. They didn't know the whole story. They didn't know God's final word of the Gospel. We do and still we go on in our stubborn unbelief, in our stubborn rebellion without any excuse for misunderstanding the mission and the ministry and the sufferings of the Lord Jesus. Oh, my dear friends, if you are unsaved, you have to understand you're no better, you're no different than these rebel soldiers but still today God comes to you with his overtures of mercy, he comes and says, "Do not reject the King of kings. Be wise now and kiss the suffering Son."

But meanwhile, Jesus is suffering badly, not just physically. You see, the Roman soldiers probably couldn't see beyond his physical sufferings. They knew they were giving him lots of pain and lots of blood but they couldn't see the sufferings of his soul which were the soul of the sufferings, as one old divine put it, and those were much deeper. We have to understand if we're going to grasp the profound symbolism of this crown of thorns, who is the man who is wearing that crown. It is the man who takes his humanity to his divinity. It is the God-man, the Savior. It is he who is God of God, he who fellowships with God from face-to-face from all eternity, he who is the Maker of heaven and earth, he who is from eternity past to eternity future. He is the one who wears the crown of thorns.

The one who holds his people in the palms of his hands is willing to so suffer indignity and mockery and agonizing pain. The great pain of Jesus was that he came to his own and his own received him not and there in that crowd you can imagine him looking around calmly, looking at those hundreds of people and his single eye of mercy. No one saying, "We understand what you're going through, Jesus." Every one joining in the sadistic sport, everyone rejecting their only hope for salvation. Oh, what a crown this prophet was wearing, a crown of thorns that penetrates, as it were, down into his innermost soul and touches his very heart.

Yet there's much more here, friends. You have to come with me into this Common Hall. We have to see the suffering Jesus standing there crowned with thorns among his tormentors and we have to understand that as he's being crowned, he's obeying his Father perfectly. As he's being crowned, he's being the substitutionary priest who in his active obedience is not breaking one commandment. He's not striking back. He's not rendering evil for evil. But at the same time, he's also fulfilling his passive obedience, suffering on behalf of sinners. Yes, in the Common Hall is the suffering servant that Isaiah prophesies to us about but he's also there the great high priest, the great substitute who wears the crown of thorns.

How do we know that? Well, we need to go back. Turn with me, if you will, back to Genesis 3 and there we read in verses 17 and 18, "And unto Adam [God] said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field." So what's a thorn? What do you think of when you see a thorn or a thistle? Well, friends, you see the physical symbol, every thorn is the physical symbol of God's curse upon sin and upon disobedience in Adam. That's what you see.

Now that's confirmed in the New Testament, if you'll just turn one more place with me, Hebrews 6. That's confirmed there in Hebrews 6:7-8, "For the earth which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God: But that which beareth thorns and briers is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing; whose end is to be burned." So the thorn is the symbol of God's curse upon sin.

So do you understand now what's happening? When the soldiers take these branches and make this crown of thorns and press it down upon Jesus' head, something very symbolic, something very solemn is happening, something the soldiers didn't realize, never dreamed of, something that would be spoken about as long as the Gospel is preached. These soldiers are taking the symbol of fallen man's sin and they are, boys and girls, they are crowning the Savior of sinners with it, and so symbolically they are, as it were, placing the curse of God upon his only begotten Son and they crown him as if he were the chief of sinners, the chief of the cursed ones. They crown him who is holy and harmless and

undefiled and separate from sinners. They crown the spotless Lamb with a great symbol of sin.

How is that possible? How could God in heaven who cannot bypass sin allow his Son to be crowned with the very curse of sin when he was sinless? He doesn't only allow it but how could God have his hand behind it and be guiding it and doing it and sovereignly directing it? And how could Christ receive it? How could he say at this moment, "Lo, I come. In the volume of the book it is written of me. I delight to do thy will, O my God." What's happening? Well, what Jesus is doing is he's coming under the dark shadow of the divine curse willingly, the divine curse that came into God's universe through Adam's sin, and we who are the masterpiece of that creation, we formed that dark curse with our own hands by reaching out for the forbidden fruit, and by nature every time we reach out for sin, we are recommitting the Adamic sin, as it were, recommitting our allegiance to rebellion against God, and now God in unspeakable love sends his Son to come under the shadow of the mystery of iniquity, to come into the place where evil is crowned and righteousness suffers.

So Christ comes into this dreadful place, appointed by the Father to be crowned with a crown that symbolizes God's curse and God's wrath upon the thorns and thistles that sin would produce from the beginning of mankind's history. So he, the great high priest, the great substitute, comes to stand under this cross with a crown of thorns on his head. The Son of man, the Son of God takes your place, dear child of God, he's crowned with a crown of curse that you deserve. You see, this is the crown of substitution. This is the crown that you should have worn throughout all eternity. This is the crown that the damned in hell will wear through all eternity. They will be pricked forever in their conscience with the thorns of their own results of their own sin and forever they will wear a painful mangled crown. But your Jesus, dear believer, he wears that painful mangled crown for you. He carries the curse for you. He bears the thorns for you. He pays with blood for you.

And don't forget, the heart of that curse is deeper than the blood that trickled down, the heart of that curse is the forsakenness of God as Father in the heart of the Son of God. The heart of the curse is, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" And so he who is now crowned at God's right hand with glory and honor and might and dominion, was crowned at Gabbatha not just with physical wounds but crowned with his own Father's malediction. Can you imagine what that must have been for Jesus, to be crowned with his Father's own curse? To be under the wrath of his lovely Father? Oh, do you see him standing there vicariously. Yes, child of God, you hardly dare to say it because it's such a wonder but it's true, for you. He is standing there for you. He is standing there for you. He is standing there for you. He is standing there for you, even you crowned, the thorns of your sin.

Oh, my dear unconverted friend, go on as you are and one day you will be sent into the God-forsakenness of the abyss of hell and you will have the bitter fruit of this crown of thorns. Thank God a true believer never has to know what this crown of thorns is, not in its depth, because Christ has worn them for us. But to hear the Gospel, to know of

Christ's substitution and to go lost with a baptized forehead under an open Bible, hearing from week to week a proffered Savior, is to make myself ripe for a crown of thorns in hell that will be hell within hell forever and forever and forever. You see, hell is the fruit of sin and the fruit of sin is unending thorns and thistles, Genesis 3.

So now you see how profound this symbolism is. Behind the hands of the Roman soldiers, there's another hand at work, the hand of God the Father, unseen by the soldiers is the ultimate hand that lays the crown of thorns upon his only begotten Son because God loves his people so much that he gave his only begotten Son, the curse and to the wrath of God so that his people might be saved. That's the soul of his sufferings. In his soul as he's crowned, the weight of Adam's sin and of all the sins of his people from all ages pressing down on those thorns, pressing down internally within him. Oh, to be crowned with the curse of sin. I say it with reverence, to be crowned with the curse of sin is the only fitting crown for him who has to bear that sin and that's why Jesus didn't say a word. The innocent stood as the guilty and his silence was deafening. He was led as a lamb to the slaughter. He was oppressed and afflicted yet he opened not his mouth. Not one word. He could have commanded 10,000 angels to annihilate all the soldiers but not one word.

Jesus couldn't respond and Jesus wouldn't respond. He couldn't on the grounds of justice. It was what he was called to do and he went on the grounds of love because he stood here as your substitute, dear child of God, to take your place and when you receive insight into that, when the Holy Spirit shows you the profound depth of the symbolism of Jesus Christ as high priest substitute wearing your crown of thorns, you will then understand that if he came to this world only to save you, there would not be one less thorn in his crown. He did all that just to save you, the innocent for the guilty. He crowned with thorns that you one day may be crowned with a royal diadem of the jewels of God in everlasting salvation and glory.

So there he stands as the second Adam, the last Adam. Adam's sin caused thorns, the last Adam is tortured with thorns for the fallen sons of Adam. Adam's sin-bought shame and nakedness, Jesus was stripped and shamed for the sons of Adam. Adam's sin caused the earthly paradise to be hedged around with thorns so that no one could enter, but by enduring thorns, the second Adam opens the way to a better Eden, the eternal paradise of heaven. Behold the wisdom of God, the curse for the sin of the first Adam is removed by the suffering for sin of the last Adam.

Yes, Jesus was shamelessly crowned because you and I have shamelessly sinned. He was wounded for our transgressions. He was bruised for our iniquities, the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed. My sins have woven that dastardly crown. My rebellion has spit into his blessed face. Oh, the disgusting depravity of my sin and of your sin. How the crown of thorns ought to move us to hate sin with holy hatred and yet even this we cannot do without the Holy Spirit. Even this the Holy Spirit must teach us. Only when the Spirit opens our eyes to the depth of Jesus' humiliation and the substitutionary character of his suffering, only then will we react with the greatest hatred for our sin.

You see, when God brings a sinner to Christ the first time, there is a deep fear for God and there is a hatred for sin because a sinner receives some impressions of who God is, but after we have encamped at the cross and have tasted the sweet pardon of the blood of Calvary, we learn to hate sin out of the context of love. We learn, then, to enter into this common hall and see our crowned Lamb suffering silently, wearing, bearing our curse and we go out hanging our head in shame, and yet hanging our head with stupendous adoration. Did he do all this for me? Was he willing to bear such contradiction of sinners against themselves?

John Calvin put it this way, he said, "First we ought to consider what we have deserved, and next we ought to consider the satisfaction offered by Christ and that ought to awaken within us confident hope. Our filthiness deserves that God should hold us in abhorrence and that all the angels of heaven should spit upon us, but Christ in order to present us pure and unspotted in the presence of the Father, resolved rather to be spat upon and to be dishonored by every kind of reproach so that we would not be spat upon." What a Savior. What a Savior.

Oh, do you know him? Do you love him? Do you bow in humble gratitude for him who was stripped naked and shamed before hundreds and thousands, wearing a crown of thorns for you so that you may be clothed with his perfect white righteousness and be crowned with a crown of glory? Is he your substitute?

Oh, perhaps you say, "Well, I have been able to stand alone through all the trials of life. I faced difficulties in my life and made it through all of them without Jesus." My friend, can you wear this crown? You can't begin to drink the cup that Jesus has drunk for sinners, and you may make it through this life standing alone, you may, but will you make it on the day of judgment standing alone? Will you? When the crown of thorns comes upon your head and he says to you, "I have offered to take your place and you have rejected me and now you have the crown deserved. Go, sinner, into the homelessness of hell, into God-forsakenness, into the abyss of my wrath and the curse of God forever. For you would have none of me and now I will have none of you."

Oh, friend, don't do that to yourself but bend the knee and cry for mercy and bow before the Savior and show him your sin, ask for the grace of repentance, the grace to believe. Don't go on as you are. You need this crowned Savior. You will either live by the cross or you will perish by the cross. Which shall it be for you?

Well, this symbol of a crown of thorns not only is a symbol of Jesus in his prophetic sufferings and in his priestly substitution but also his kingly love. The whole chapter of Matthew 27 is filled with this. He's repeatedly mocked as a king all throughout Gabbatha. Pilate questions him, "Art thou the king of the Jews?" Herod mocks him as a king, dresses him in a royal robe. And the soldiers shout mockingly, "Hail, king of the Jews!" And the Jews say in response to Pilate, "We have no king but Caesar." And the title above the cross will soon read as they cry out for his execution, "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews."

So Jesus' kingship is at the center of all of this, the center of all the mockery, at the center of his own mission, the center of his Father's predetermined plan, but it also the center of his love and his love is such that he is, according to Philippians 2, willing to empty himself of all his kingly power in the heart of the sufferings to come and suffer and die and be emptied for sinners so that they may be made kings and priests unto God. So he's willing to abandon in this moment, he doesn't act with regal authority, he doesn't act with regal power, he doesn't act with regal persuasion. He lays it all aside. There's no kingly beauty that we should desire him to the natural eye. The soldiers don't look beyond the innocency of their victim to see his royal majesty. They can't see it. Only the eye of faith can see it, but you see, that's just the point. When the Holy Spirit works in our hearts and in our lives, we need not only a prophet to teach us and a priest to sacrifice for us and to intercede for us, we need a king to rule and guide us and we will receive an eye of faith to behold this glorious suffering King and we will see beauty in his love also at Gabbatha, his saving love, his royal love.

Oh, what love he has for you, dear child of God. What love. Paul could say he loves me and he could say that for only one reason, because he had given himself for Paul. He had given his kingship for Paul. And tonight, dear child of God, why does God love you in Jesus Christ? Well, because you can go to a place called Gabbatha and there you see him standing in your place not only as a suffering prophet and a suffering priest but also as a suffering King, and in the power of his kingship being foregone for you, being emptied for you, you see the power of his love, you see the self-sacrificial character of his love, and you see at Gabbatha, don't you, that if he's willing to give that much love for you to empty himself, to suffer this way, the King of kings suffering in this way for you, then nothing is going to stop him from earning your total salvation. He's going to go all the way. Oh, Gabbatha is the down-payment for Golgotha. You can be assured when he doesn't answer these 600 men a word, you can sure he set his face like a flint out of love to carry that substitution all the way through the bloody cross. He will not rest until he has finished the thing the Father has given him this day, to bring in your finished salvation.

So, you see, this crown of thorns is a great symbol, a great sign of his threefold office and of his stupendous love and of the magnitude of our sins and the sureness of his salvation in the midst of all that sin. The Bible says it this way, "So great salvation." Well, here you have so great a sign that symbolizes so great a salvation, and that sign of the crown of thorns is so sure, friends, that when you see that crown of thorns even in your mind's eye, as it were, you may say, "As surely as he suffered under that crown as prophet, as priest, and as king, so surely he will carry me through every adversity and every shadow and every darkness and every affliction." The crown of thorns is the love, eternal love, and because it is love, "I have loved you with an everlasting love," he says, "therefore with cords of lovingkindness have I drawn thee."

So we are drawn unto him. We are not only drawn to him as teaching prophet and as sacrificial priest, but also as loving King. We would never have asked for this King. Would you? We would have said all our lifetime, "I will not have thee to reign or to rule

over me." We are lords unto ourselves. But when this King comes, through his Spirit shows us our sin, drives us to Christ as we heard this morning, and we find our all in Christ, then we come to love him because he first loved us. We come to love our thorn-crowned prophet, priest, King because he has done everything for us who could do nothing for him, and then we are conquered and smitten by Gospel love. Then we understand experientially when Napoleon said factually when he had conquered the entire world, he said, "I have established my kingdom by force and so it must perish." But Jesus Christ has established his kingdom by love and so it will abide forever. Yes, this love, a love of a thorn-crowned Savior, many waters cannot quench.

Well, in closing tonight, let me leave behind for you several things that this thorn-crowned Savior should do to us and within us and should motivate us to do also for him. The first is this: we ought to use this thorn crown as medicine. We ought to use it as medicine for all our spiritual ailments. When we are afflicted, we ought to think of our crowned Savior and we ought to say, "None of my afflictions begin to compare to his thorns. None of my thorns are like his thorns, they are but a shadow. He's borne the substance." Then it ought to work within us a loving contentment to bear every thorn in the flesh that our sovereign God deems it fitting we are called to bear. But we also ought to use it as medicine to cure our anxiety. Why should we be anxious? Our Savior's paid too great of a price to let us go. He will keep us in his hand. And we ought to use this as medicine to cure us from worldliness. Worldliness. Will I dare to flirt with the world again and with sin again when my worldliness and my sin has crowned him with thorns? Will I insult him and shame him in that way? Shame be on me if I go back and shame my Savior again. He has no reason, he's never given me any reason to flirt with sin over the world again.

Use it as medicine but then, too, use this crown of thorns as an example for you. Christ, first of all, is our Savior but he's also our example. He says, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me." If he was silent under a crown of thorns, ought not we be silent and submissive under our thorns? Peter puts it this way, "For even hereunto were you called because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example that ye should follow in his steps who did not sin, neither was guile found in his mouth, who when he was reviled, reviled not again, when he suffered, he threatened not, but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously."

So when you are reviled, you look at his crown of thorns, you go back into the Common Hall, you stand there and you watch the soldiers with all their mockery and you hear no answer from Jesus and you say to yourself, "That's the way I have to be." And you lift up a cry, "Lord Jesus, help me not to revile again. Help me to be like thee." Because you see, if you're a Christian, you're a real Christian, the world will thorn you and the world will reject you and the world will mock with you. The world mocks against the Lord and against his anointed and you need grace to respond as Christ responded.

Then, thirdly, use this crown of thorns as a call to service. Count Zinzendorf an 18th century of a pietistic movement in Germany, once read these words in a museum, "I have suffered for you. What hast thou done for me?" And those words changed his entire life.

Oh, let us not plait a crown of allegiance upon the head of Christ and then walk away from our profession without the fruits of godliness. Let us rather seek grace to crown him with many crowns and to crown him the crown of our love and gratitude and enthrone him with our praises. Let us scepter him with our obedience and our reverent worship and by the grace of the Spirit let us proclaim him our only King by testifying of him to others. You see, someone has said, if the world crown you with thorns, you may be sure that the points of the thorns are broken off first for Christ had them on his head and he has taken away the sharpness of the thorns. That was a statement by Spurgeon. And so we are to be willing to follow him, wearing those broken thorns, following him, honoring our once despised Savior, hailing him as universal King to all eternity, serving him with our entire lives, saying with the hymnist, "Crown him with many crowns, the Lamb upon his throne. Hark, how the heavenly anthem drowns all music but it's own. Awake, my soul, and sing of him who died for thee and hail him as thy matchless King through all eternity."

Finally, fourthly, dear child of God, use this crown of thorns to rest in. To rest in. You know sometimes birds build their nests in the midst of thorn bushes. The thorn bushes protect them. No prey can get at them. And so symbolically we should build in the thorn crown of Christ. We should fly into his wounds. We should hide in the cleft of God's great rock, the thorn-crowned Savior. There is no safer place. Satan and sin cannot reach you in the thorns of Christ. But also remember that one day you will find eternal rest through these thorns for they will be the basis symbolically of your blood passport by which you will enter into heaven, a thorn-free land, and because Jesus Christ now reigns as your substitute and has borne all your curse, in that day there shall be no more curse and no more thorns. The heavenly paradise shall be reached because of the thorn-crowned Savior and that's why we read in Revelation 22, "And there shall be no more curse but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it and his servants shall serve him and they shall see his face and his name shall be in their foreheads and there shall be no night there," meaning no candle, "neither light of the sun, for the Lord God giveth them light and they shall reign with him forever and forever." Yes, your prophet, priest, King was willing to be crowned with your cursed sins, to bear them away forever, that you forever may rejoice in his fellowship.

Let me close with just a quick word to the unbelievers one more time. My friend, the only crown that the world will give to the King of kings is a mock crown. You don't want to identify with them, do you? Oh, that you would quit your crimes of unbelief against God's mercy and that you would bow before this King and that you would not rest until you could say with another hymnist, "All hail the power of Jesus' name, the angels prostrate fall, bring forth the royal diadem, and crown him, crown him, crown him, crown him Lord of all." Amen.