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The Crucifixion of Christ; Matt 27:27-44
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Introduction – When you come to texts like the one before us this morning, it almost feels like you should remove your shoes. This is holy ground. The crucifixion of Christ is the centerpiece of Scripture, history, and the gospel. Without the crucifixion of Christ, Scripture loses its thrust and becomes just another religious book. Salvation loses its anchor of atonement. Christianity loses its unique message of grace and devolves into a works-based message just like every other religion. Everything powerful and unique and promising and hopeful and certain and joyful about the gospel is lost without the crucifixion of Christ! It all comes down to the cross. If we don't have a sufficient substitute, we don't have salvation.

The passion, or suffering, of Jesus reaches its zenith at the cross. As we've observed in earlier texts, Jesus suffered before He was handed over to the Romans. He suffered opposition, rejection, betrayal, denial, and false accusation. He suffered in wrestling with facing the darkness of bearing sin. But as He is condemned, His physical pain comes into focus. Crucifixion was by no means meant to be humane. The purpose of crucifixion was to display such brutality and therefore serve as a deterrent. The purpose was to inflict as much pain as possible before death would finally bring it to an end.

- I. Preceded by Torture
 - a. Crucifixion itself is torture enough. Spikes would be driven through the hands and feet of Jesus and He would be hoisted up so that He literally hung on the cross. It was a painful, slow death. Loss of blood would result in dehydration and as one slowly lost the ability to pull yourself up and catch a breath, suffocation would result.
 - b. But Christ not only endured the cross, He endured the preceding torture. We learned last week that He was scourged, lashed with leather straps pieced with bone and metal, literally ripping at His flesh.
 - c. Then there was the crown of thorns placed on His head and struck with a reed. As we stated last week, this violent pre-crucifixion

- torture in itself was enough to be fatal. If you were executed by Rome, your death was meant to be as excruciating as possible.
- d. How do we respond? “O Sacred Head, Now Wounded”

II. Accompanied with Mockery

- a. Not only did the Romans and the religious leaders seek to inflict as much pain as possible upon Christ, they sought to shame and humiliate and scorn.
- b. The soldiers stripped Him and tossed the scarlet robe around Him, pressed the crown of thorns upon Him, and placed a reed in His hand – making mockery that He was a king at all. They spit upon Him that He might know how much they despised Him. They offered Him wine mixed with gall, which would have been horribly bitter, to taunt His thirst. And when they had crucified Him, they stripped Him of His clothes once again and gambled for who would take home the souvenirs.
- i. Interesting isn't it that what they saw as mockery in calling Him King of the Jews and writing the charge on His cross as King of the Jews, their intended mockery was actually true.
 - ii. When the King returns, they won't say King of the Jews in mockery, they will proclaim Him King and Lord with bended knee. They'll not sit down at His cross, they will bow down at His feet.
- c. It wasn't only the soldiers though was it? It was the crowds. Wagging their heads in disapproving insult. Calling on him to save Himself if He was so powerful. Taunting Him that if He was the Son of God, to come down from the cross.
- i. Satan no doubt is working his best behind the scenes for they sound just like he did in the wilderness – if you are the Son of God.
 - ii. Christ didn't come down from the cross, not because He was powerless to do so but because He was determined not to do so. He didn't come to earth to come down from the cross but to take the cross upon Himself. He wasn't there to save Himself; He was there to save sinners.
 - iii. They missed the gospel entirely!

- d. And then there was the religious leaders. We will believe if He comes down. If God is His Father, surely He will deliver His Son. Notice the crowd spoke their mockery to Jesus. The religious elites spoke about Jesus, just close enough for Him to hear their derision.
 - i. But they missed it too didn't they? After all the miracles of Jesus, they were not going to believe if He came down. They were just sure enough that He wouldn't. Their certainty was misplaced though. It wasn't because Jesus was not the Son of God that He hung on the cross. It was actually because He was the Son of God that he hung on the cross!
 - ii. The cross was God's rescue plan for sinners from the beginning!
- e. The soldiers mocked Him. The crowds mocked Him. The religious leaders mocked Him. Even the two robbers crucified with Him mocked Him. The cross was a lonely place. Here Jesus was dying for the world, and the world heaped scorn upon Him. John 1:10-11. It looks like defeat. It appears that His mission has failed.
- f. But Jesus knew what they didn't know. The cross was not a place of defeat but rather the place of victory. Jesus was losing; He was winning!
 - i. Heb 12:2 – looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.
 - ii. You see it was through the cross that Christ would return to glory and bring many sons and daughters with Him!
 - iii. He didn't lose when He died. He won!
 - iv. The cross is not how the mission to save sinners failed but how it was accomplished!

III. Left an Unforgettable Image

- a. There is the Son of God. Dying. Gasping for breath. Bleeding. Body mangled. Unrecognizable. Heaped with scorn. Rejected, despised, alone. By the time we reach v44 we are left with a gruesome, horrifying, unforgettable image of Jesus on the cross.
- b. What does that unforgettable image tell us? What does it convey? What we see on the cross is what it took to pay for your sin and my

sin and set us free. The words of Here I Am to Worship say I'll never know how much it cost to see my sin upon the cross. The text before us gives us a glimpse.

c. "The Power of the Cross"

Conclusion – What about Simon? Simon, like Barabbas, is an unintentional portrayal of the gospel. Unlike Barabbas, Simon was probably a decent man, truly seeking the Lord, there in Jerusalem for Passover. But he is compelled to pick up the cross and carry it to the place of death.

You see Barabbas pictures us in salvation – Christ takes our cross. Simon pictures us with salvation – we take up our cross. Jesus said, "If anyone would come after Me, he must deny himself, pick up his cross, and follow Me." Where do you take crosses? To places of death. When we come to Christ, we die to this world, we die to sin, we die to self. And through all that death – we find true life and life eternal.