

Eyes of the Cross

Jn 19:17-18

INTRODUCTION

- A. “They borrowed a bed to lay His head/When Christ the Lord came down;/They borrowed the ass in the mountain pass/For him to ride to town; But the Crown that He wore/And the Cross that He bore/Were His own—The Cross was His own. He borrowed the bread when the crowd he fed/On the grassy mountain side;/He borrowed the dish of broken fish/With which He satisfied; But the Crown that He wore/And the Cross that He bore/Were His own—The Cross was His own. He borrowed the ship in which to sit/To teach the multitude;/He borrowed a nest in which to rest,/He had never a home so crude; But the Crown that He wore/And the Cross that He bore/Were His own—The Cross was His own. He borrowed a room on His way to the tomb,/The Passover Lamb to eat;/They borrowed a cave for Him a grave;/They borrowed a winding sheet; But the Crown that He wore/And the Cross that He bore/Were His own—The Cross was His own.”
- B. Jesus was crucified: “Carrying his own cross, he went out to the place of the Skull (which in Aramaic is called Golgotha. Here they crucified him, and with him two others—one on each side and Jesus in the middle” (Jn. 19:17-18).
- C. When you close your eyes and think of the cross of Jesus, just what do you see in your mind?
1. Do your eyes focus on the crown of thorns and the sweat mingled with blood running down his brow?
 2. Do you see those hands which once performed great miracles nailed to the cross because of anger and jealousy?
 3. Do you see the feet which once walked on the water nailed in such a way that Jesus cannot breathe?
 4. Do you hear him ask for water? Do you hear the crowd as they throw taunt after taunt upon the perfect Son of God?
- C. If you are allowing your mind to run through and to picture the cross this evening, STOP!
1. I don't want you to see the cross of Jesus one little bit tonight—not at all!
 2. Instead, I want us to place ourselves in the place of Jesus and to see what he saw from the cross.
 3. As we look through the eyes of Jesus tonight, we will see THE MOCKERY, THE MULTITUDE, & THE MISSION.

THE MOCKERY

- A. Imagine tonight that the police show up at your home and wrongly accuse you of some terrible crime, some crime so heinous that word quickly spreads of your arrest.
1. The police take you into custody and take you downtown for questioning and booking.
 2. Before you get out of the back of that squad car, there's Tim Irr and a cameraman from WSAZ broadcasting live all about your arrest.
 3. As you step out of the car, you notice that hundreds and hundreds of people have descended upon Charleston to make mock you—these people begin to chant obscenities at you, they spit on you, they slap you, and they just flat out make fun of you.
 4. Just how are you going to feel, being innocent of the charges against you, but facing such torture in the court of public opinion?
 5. For Jesus, such a scenario was far from fiction, but it was the reality of what he endured.
- B. The mockery Jesus endured began long before he was placed on the cross.
1. Mt 27:37-31.
 2. Notice carefully what Jesus' eyes witnessed:
 - a. He saw the whole garrison or company of soldiers.

- 1) If all the soldiers of the company were present, some six hundred soldiers took Jesus and mocked him. It's likely that the expression "whole garrison" or "whole company" in this text refers to all those from that regiment who were present.
 - 2) Even though it's likely that some soldiers were away from their company for leave or special assignments or some other purpose, we're likely talking about easily 500 or more men.
 - 3) We're not talking about a handful of men who had gathered around Jesus to make fun of him, but we're talking about a whole crowd of folks.
- b. You notice that in front of this crowd of strangers, you are stripped of your clothing and a scarlet robe is placed on you, a robe to mock your claims of being the King of the Jews.
 - c. Then you look up, and you notice that the soldiers are bringing a crown for you to wear.
 - 1) But, it's not just any crown; it's a crown of thorns.
 - 2) You see the soldiers go up to you and place it on your head, but then it gets difficult to see, for the blood running down your face obscures your sight.
 - d. Now, you strain to see what is in your hand.
 - 1) You notice that it is a reed, an imitation of the scepter carried by kings.
 - 2) Then, you strain and are able to see further down to the floor where the soldiers are kneeling down and saying, "Hail, King of the Jews."
 - e. As the blood continues to get into your eyes, you don't have to strain to see anymore, for you can feel the mockery.
 - 1) You feel the soldier's saliva as it splatters on your face and body.
 - 2) You feel the crown of thorns go deeper and deeper into your skull as the soldiers beat your head with the reed.
 - f. Jesus went through that to save us from sin, and he's not even to the cross yet.
- C. Mockery at the cross.
1. Mt 27:38-44.
 2. Did you ever stop to think, "Why were there three crosses? Why didn't they just crucify Jesus instead of placing him between two thieves?" The simple answer is mockery.
 - a. Pilate didn't live in Jerusalem, but he would come there occasionally to pass judgment on criminals whom the locals had already condemned.
 - b. The purpose was to mock Jesus and make it seem as though he were a companion of such criminals.
 - c. That fulfilled the prophecy of Is 53:12: "He was numbered with the transgressors."
 3. Look through the eyes of Jesus on the cross and notice the mockery he witnessed.
 - a. As you are hanging there, you see people walking by declaring, "Save yourself!" They go on:
 - 1) "You're the one who was going to destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days. Ha! Ha! Look at you now!"
 - 2) "Come on, you saved others. Let's see you save yourself now."
 - b. You also see the chief priests, scribes, and elders.
 - 1) Here is this group that has tormented Jesus throughout his entire ministry and they don't even have the dignity to allow him to die in peace.
 - 2) You look down, and there they stand shouting, "Come down from the cross."
 - a) They had no idea what they are asking, did they?
 - b) Oh, Jesus had the power and even the right to come down from the cross, but he stayed there to save the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders!
 - c. Even those who were crucified with Jesus are mocking him.
 - 1) True, one of them later did repent, and Jesus promised him salvation.
 - 2) Yet, think of the pain and the agony they had to be in there—having been beaten and nailed to a cross and dying of suffocation—yet, in their last breaths, they are intent on mocking the very Son of God!

THE MULTITUDE

- A. How many people do you suppose that Jesus saw on the day he died?
 - 1. Open your eyes and look at the people Jesus beheld on that terrible day.
 - 2. Lk 23:26-28.
- B. After the soldiers had mocked Jesus, they led him out.
 - 1. The Lord is able to look up and focus his eyes on Simon of Cyrene, whom the soldiers compelled to carry Jesus' cross.
 - 2. A great multitude followed this procession throughout Jerusalem.
 - a. Throughout the gospel accounts of Jesus' Passion, the crowds in Jerusalem turn from supporters to condemners.
 - 1) When we are first introduced to the crowds that week, they are cheering Jesus as he enters the city on a donkey.
 - 2) That would have been Sunday and by Thursday; they are now shouting for Jesus to be crucified.
 - 3) I don't believe the Gospels intend to portray both crowds as precisely the same set of people, but the narratives are illustrating just how quickly Jesus went from being popular to the Jewish aristocracy getting their wish to have him killed.
 - b. Can you imagine the glee that must have been on the faces of this multitude as you looked out at them?
 - c. Surely, there are others with their fists raised high in the air in self-congratulations.
 - 3. Women are following Jesus mourning for him.
 - a. The term for "wail" literally means to beat oneself. Beating one's chest was an ancient token of deep, deep grief.
 - b. Jesus is able to see the women mourning for him.
 - 1) Women are the only ones recorded who mourned for Jesus.
 - 2) Women were the ones who discovered the tomb empty, because they had gone there to anoint Jesus' body.
 - 3) The first human being to proclaim that Jesus had, in fact, been raised from the dead according to his prophecies, was a woman, as Mary Magdalene went to tell the disciples.
 - c. Jesus not only see these women with his eyes, but with his heart.
 - 1) In kindness he tells them of the destruction of Jerusalem to be accomplished in about 40 years, and that they should be weeping for others and not for him.
 - 2) Jesus always put others first. ALWAYS.
 - d. As they journey to Golgotha, he sees the common criminals who are going to be crucified with him.
 - e. He sees the streets absolutely filled with multitudes, most of whom are probably enjoying the festivities and shouting insults.
 - f. He sees the faces of those who literally nail him to the cross. The cross had to be one of the most inhuman ways man has devised to put others to death, and Jesus looks into the eyes of the ones who nail him there.
 - g. Imagine what it must have been like to look out from the cross.
 - 1) You see all those shouting, laughing, spitting, insulting people.
 - 2) You look out and observe the lowest of the human race, those who put the Son of God on the cross.
 - 3) Can you imagine how you'd want to scream at the top of your lungs, "This isn't fair! Get me down from here!"
 - 4) But, you must remember that you are looking through the eyes of Jesus.
 - h. As you look out at the vast multitude, you see her and your heart grows weary.
 - 1) Jn 19:25-27.

- 2) Again, Jesus isn't concerned about himself, but he's concerned about his mother and who will provide for her now that his earthly ministry is nearly complete.
 - i. Jesus sees the soldiers casting lots for his clothing, he sees them over him sour wine, and he even sees a soldier and nail a sign above him: THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS.
- C. Those are some of the things Jesus saw as he was hanging on the cross, but I believe he saw much more.
 1. I'm sure he saw Justin Imel. He knew I was going to sin and that he was going to have to die for my sins.
 2. Don't you believe that he saw you? Aren't we as responsible for nailing Jesus to that cross as were the Roman soldiers with their hammers and nails?
 3. Is it not because our sins and shortcomings that Jesus hung on the cross at Golgotha?
 - a. Rom 5:8-11.
 - b. How can we not look at from the cross and see the multitudes and not be thankful for what Jesus has done?

THE MISSION

- A. Right before Jesus died, he declared, "It is finished" (Jn. 19:30)-His mission had been accomplished.
 1. This declaration from the cross is important, for it sums up all that Jesus came to do; the redemption of mankind is about to be accomplished.
 2. These words are significant through Jesus' eyes.
 - a. He looks and he sees death right at the door.
 - b. Yet, as he sees the door of death opening, he sees glory, not the shame and reproach his enemies intended.
- B. In Lk 23:46, Jesus declares, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit."
 1. Matthew, Mark, & Luke all record that this was uttered with aloud cry.
 2. That's significant, for this was a cry of victory, not defeat, for Jesus' mission had been accomplished.
- C. Notice that in Jn 19:30b, the beloved Apostle records that Jesus "gave up his spirit."
 1. Even in death, Jesus controlled his life, and he gave it up voluntarily. You recall what Jesus said earlier: "The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life—only to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again. This command I received from my Father" (Jn 10:17-18).
 2. No one forced Jesus to lay down his life, but he did it because his mission had been accomplished.
- D. Paul sums up Jesus' mission in these words: "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners—of whom I am the worst" (1 Tm 1:15).
 1. Jesus hung on the cross at Golgotha to save me from my sins.
 2. How can one reject what Jesus did for him at that cross when they view the event through Jesus' own eyes. Do you need to come tonight and accept the cross by obeying the Lord of the cross?