

Copyright © Two Journeys Ministry

Andrew M. Davis

Sermon Notes

www.twojourneys.org

Please use in accordance with the copyright policy found at twojourneys.org

The Shame of the Cross Produces the Glories of Heaven

Mark 15:16-32

This morning, we come at last to the account of the crucifixion of Jesus Christ, our Savior, in the most shameful, degrading, and excruciating way imaginable.

Though Christ's physical sufferings were immense, they were no different than those suffered by thousands of others whom the Romans crucified in that era... even two others who died the same way that very day.

The Gospel writers do not give any great details about the mechanics and physical horror of crucifixion. At the critical moment in our narrative today, Mark simply writes, "And they crucified him." That's all. Look at it on the page... verse 24. Simple. Nothing more.

And we know that infinitely greater than Jesus' physical sufferings were his spiritual ones, bearing the wrath of God... and the passage we will study next week has the central evidence of that in Mark's Gospel when Jesus cries out, "Eloi, eloi, lama sabachthani," which means "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" God willing, we will plumb the depths of that reality next week, for that makes Jesus' suffering literally immeasurable and far greater than that ever suffered by any human being in all the epochs of time.

But this morning, in addition to simply walking through the account to establish in our minds again the FACTS of the cross, I want to discuss the human shame, degradation, humiliation, mockery that Jesus endured for us. And how his blood

transforms all of that into eternal glory. From shame to glory, that is the story of this sermon today. My focus is on the HEARTS of PEOPLE... their appraisal of Jesus, and the way they treated him, spoke of him or to him.

The Gospel writers linger much more on the shameful degradation of Jesus Christ by sinners than they do the physical details of his crucifixion. And I want to unfold that degradation and speak of how in the hearts of those he came to save, there was an infinite movement from degradation to eternal glory... praise, worship, and honor to the crucified Lord!

The key witness in that will be ONE of the thieves on the cross, a trophy of Christ's victory over sin and death. A man who is one of the most remarkable conversions in the entire Bible and who is presently in Paradise with Jesus, praising his glory!

I. Christ Mocked by the Soldiers

A. The Cross the Center of Christianity

1. Everywhere, around the world, the cross is the symbol of the Christian religion
2. But the cross itself is a machine of torture and death
3. Because it is so disgusting and degrading, the cross becomes a fork in the road for a sinner being saved
4. To be able to see in that implement of death a display of glory is the ultimate test of transforming faith
5. Faith is the eyesight of the soul... and to be able to see in a bloody, dead Jewish man the greatest display of love, power, wisdom, justice and glory there has ever been can only happen when the Holy Spirit works spiritual sight in you

B. So, the Cross Must Ever Be Central

1 Corinthians 15:3 For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures

1 Corinthians 2:2 For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified.

The theology of the cross is clearly laid out in the New Testament in many places. It is by the cross that the law's demands against us were met and we were reconciled to a Holy God

Colossians 1:19-22 For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in [Christ], ²⁰ and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross. ²¹ Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior. ²² But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation

Colossians 2:13-14 [God] forgave us all our sins, ¹⁴ having canceled the written code, with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us; he took it away, nailing it to the cross.

For this reason, Paul said the message of the cross was Paul boast, Paul's glory, Paul's story:

Galatians 6:14 May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.

C. BUT the History of the Cross Must Precede the Theology of the Cross

1. What actually happened? What are the historical facts?
2. And that's what the Gospel of Mark is for... to lay out the history of Jesus' crucifixion as the basis of our faith
3. Mark's account: Jesus' trials are now concluded
 - a. First, the religious phase, in which the High Priest and the whole Sanhedrin agreed unanimously to condemn him to death
 - b. Second, the civil phase, in which the Roman governor, Pontius Pilate, buckled to the will of the Jewish leaders and crowd and delivered over a man he knew was innocent to be crucified

Mark 15:15 Wanting to satisfy the crowd, Pilate released Barabbas to them. He had Jesus flogged, and handed him over to be crucified.

D. The Soldiers' Mockery

Mark 15:16-20 The soldiers led Jesus away into the palace (that is, the Praetorium) and called together the whole company of soldiers. ¹⁷ They put a purple robe on him, then twisted together a crown of thorns and set it on him. ¹⁸ And they began to call out to him, "Hail, king of the Jews!" ¹⁹ Again and again they struck him on the head with a staff and spit on him. Falling on their knees, they paid homage to him. ²⁰ And when they had mocked him, they took off the purple robe and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him out to crucify him.

1. The "palace" which Mark calls "Praetorium" was the headquarters of the Roman soldiers there in Jerusalem, in the Fortress Antonia
2. The scourging had already happened, part of the trial before Pilate
3. This scourging was hideous, and could have been lethal in itself... so Jesus had already lost a good amount of blood
4. The soldiers took him into their headquarters and started to play games with him... absolutely no mercy at all
5. The "Mocking of the King"
 - a. Roman soldiers frequently played games in which they would take a peasant or an insane person and dress him up like the Emperor and mock him; they did that to Jesus
 - b. The soldiers may have known about Jesus' miracles; but they definitely knew the charge against him that he was "King of the Jews"... so they ran with that
 - c. Jesus' back was already flowing with blood, his face bruised and swollen from the blows the Jewish guards had given him; but they had no mercy
 - d. They called together the Roman cohort, a large number of Roman soldiers surrounding him and mocking him

- e. To give him the appearance of a King for their mocking game, they found an old scarlet robe and draped it across him
- f. For a crown, they twisted together a bunch of long, sharp thorns, imitating the golden laurel wreath worn by Caesar himself
- g. These thorns were no accident, however... for it brings to mind the curse on the earth as a result of Adam's sin

Genesis 3:17-18 [God said to Adam] "Cursed is the ground because of you.... It will produce thorns and thistles for you"

So also Christ in his death WORE the curse on his head...

Galatians 3:13 Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us

- h. To make matters worse, the soldiers bashed this crown of long thorns with a rod, driving the thorns into his scalp and forehead and making more blood to flow
- i. They gave Jesus a flimsy reed as a mock scepter, and fell on their knees before him, saying with a mocking tone

Mark 15:18 "Hail, King of the Jews."

- j. They also spat in his face... complete degradation and mockery
- k. After the mockery, they dressed him, led him out to crucify him

E. Christ Cannot Be Mocked

1. I must pause now to highlight how remarkable this scene is

Galatians 6:7 Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked.

2. Jesus actually is the King of the Jews... more than that, the King of the Universe
3. When he comes in glory, he will be robed in glory, and, surrounded by all the angels of heaven, he will sit on a throne in heavenly glory to judge all the earth

4. At that point, these same soldiers will in fact be falling on their knees in terror before him, with hearts filled with awe at his majesty and his power

II. Christ Humbled by Crucifixion

Mark 15:20-27 *And when they had mocked him, they took off the purple robe and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him out to crucify him. ²¹ 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. ²² They brought Jesus to the place called Golgotha (which means The Place of the Skull). ²³ Then they offered him wine mixed with myrrh, but he did not take it. ²⁴ And they crucified him. Dividing up his clothes, they cast lots to see what each would get. ²⁵ It was the third hour when they crucified him. ²⁶ The written notice of the charge against him read: THE KING OF THE JEWS. ²⁷ They crucified two robbers with him, one on his right and one on his left.*

A. Humbled by the procession

Mark 15:20 *Then they led him out to crucify him.*

Isaiah 53:7 *... he was led like a lamb to the slaughter*

1. The way out of the city was crowded with people, because by now it was 9 am... Luke 23:27 says a huge crowd of people was following him
2. It was humiliating to have everyone staring at him
3. Public humiliation is one of the greatest fears and pains of any human being's life... Jesus was the focal point of many shocked stares and savage comments that dreadful morning

B. Humbled by his weakness

1. He had to carry his own cross himself
2. Most likely, this was the heavy cross-beam, not the whole cross
3. Because of his loss of blood, he needed help

4. A man named Simon was pressed into helping him carry the cross
 - a. He was from Cyrene, a port city on the southern Mediterranean coast, modern-day Libya
 - b. He was probably a Jewish man in Jerusalem for the feast
 - c. Mark also tells us that he was the father of Alexander and Rufus
 - d. Many scholars say that Mark included those names because they would have been familiar to his readers... and they lived in Rome
 - e. It so happens that in Romans 16:13, Paul greets Rufus and his mother, “who has been a mother to me too”
 - f. So Simon, his wife, and their two sons were all converted... probably beginning with this fateful moment when he helped Jesus carry the cross by which he would redeem the world
5. Concerning Jesus’ weakness, it is amazing that the angel came to the Garden of Gethsemane and strengthened him... but not with a supernatural level of strength... just enough to get up and go die like any ordinary man

C. Humbled by the location

1. Outside the city gate

Hebrews 13:11-13 The high priest carries the blood of animals into the Most Holy Place as a sin offering, but the bodies are burned outside the camp. ¹² And so Jesus also suffered outside the city gate to make the people holy through his own blood. ¹³ Let us, then, go to him outside the camp, bearing the disgrace he bore.

The bodies carried outside the camp implies defilement, abhorrence... as though Jesus was like toxic waste

Hebrews urges us to stand with him, under Jesus’ cross and suffer disgrace and social rejection for the sake of the gospel

2. Golgotha (Calvary)

The place where Jesus was crucified was called in Aramaic, Golgotha... meaning “The place of the skull”; scholars think it was called that because it was shaped like a skull. Ominous and deadly.

BTW: the Latin word for skull is Calvaria; the Latin translation of the Bible, Vulgate, was the basic Bible for centuries in Europe; so when the scholars translated the King James Version, they ODDLY kept the word “Calvary” in Luke 23:33, though it is not in any direct way connected to the New Testament text – either by Aramaic, Hebrew or Greek. Whenever you see the word “Calvary” in a hymn or song or church name, that its origin

3. Very public place

Again, this place where Jesus was absolutely stripped of his dignity and reduced to the most visibly repulsive level of his existence was a very public place, near a major road where people could pass by and stare and make comments, as they did

D. Humbled by the sedative, which he refused

1. To help him, they offered him wine mixed with myrrh, a sedative, to drug him and help numb the pain
2. He refused it, wanted to feel the full measure of the pain God ordained for the atonement of the world
3. “Shall I not drink the cup the Father has given me to drink?”

E. Humbled by crucifixion itself

1. Crucifixion is one of the most vicious, cruel, and diabolical forms of death ever devised
2. It was invented by the Persians, but later used by Alexander the Great and adopted by the Romans
3. What makes crucifixion so horrible is that it is both hideously painful and not directly fatal... some victims can last for more than a day because there is nothing directly killing them

4. Their bodies are laid out on the cross, their hands fixed to the cross by long spikes driven through each wrist (not the hand, because it would not be able to support the weight); then the feet are put one on top of the other and a single spike driven through both feet
5. The cross is then lifted and dropped down with a jolting thud into the hole dug for it, sending spasms of pain throughout the body
6. The victim sags down, then to breathe, he has to push up on the nailed feet, fill his lungs with air, then sink back down
7. This of course is exhausting, and eventually the victim cannot make the effort any more... death is usually by asphyxiation
8. Death is often hastened by breaking the leg bones of the victim, making it impossible to push up and breathe
9. This is exactly what did happen to the two thieves but not to Jesus; he had already died so not a single bone of his would be broken

F. Humbled by them gambling for his clothes

1. The next humiliation was the soldiers gambling for Jesus' clothes
2. A powerful symbol of the fact that his physical life on earth is over; he wouldn't be needing his possessions any more
3. They are like vultures circling overhead
4. It was also a direct fulfillment of Psalm 22, as we shall see

G. Humbled by the inscription

1. Pilate ordered a sign placed over his head, "The King of the Jews", written in Aramaic, Hebrew, and Greek so everyone could read it
2. Pilate did it specifically to mock and rankle the Jewish leaders... as if saying to the whole Jewish nation, "Behold, your king."
3. What's humbling for Jesus is that they specifically had rejected him as their king... "We do not want this man to rule over us." "We have no king but Caesar!"

4. HOWEVER... the text of this sign may well have been instrumental in the salvation of the thief on the cross
- H. Humbled by being killed with common thieves
1. Probably highway robbers, a threat to everyone on the road
 2. Jesus killed with others like he was just another criminal
 3. But it is also a perfect picture of the incarnation and the atonement... he became one of us to save us
 4. And it was a direct fulfillment of scripture

III. Christ Mocked by the Citizens, the Priests, and the Thieves

A. The Passers-by Mocked

Mark 15:29-30 Those who passed by hurled insults at him, shaking their heads and saying, "So! You who are going to destroy the temple and build it in three days, ³⁰ come down from the cross and save yourself!"

B. The Priests Mocked

Mark 15:31-32 In the same way the chief priests and the teachers of the law mocked him among themselves. "He saved others," they said, "but he can't save himself! ³² Let this Christ, this King of Israel, come down now from the cross, that we may see and believe."

C. Even the Thieves Mocked (Initially!!)

Mark 15:32 Those crucified with him also heaped insults on him.

IV. But Christ Despised the Shame, Winning Trophies for Glory

A. Fulfilled scripture glorified Christ

1. Based on some manuscripts, KJV added verse 28

Mark 15:28 And the scripture was fulfilled, which saith, And he was numbered with the transgressors.

This is Isaiah 53:12... and though it probably wasn't in the original manuscript that Mark wrote, it is still true

And it opens up the whole topic of the astonishing fulfillments of prophecy in the crucifixion

2. Crucifixion itself was a fulfillment of prophecy
3. The gambling for his clothing
4. The actual comments of the mockers
5. The statement "Numbered with the transgressors"
6. Two key passages: Psalm 22, Isaiah 53

Psalm 22:12-18 Many bulls surround me; strong bulls of Bashan encircle me. ¹³ Roaring lions tearing their prey open their mouths wide against me. ¹⁴ I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint. My heart has turned to wax; it has melted away within me. ¹⁵ My strength is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue sticks to the roof of my mouth; you lay me in the dust of death. ¹⁶ Dogs have surrounded me; a band of evil men has encircled me, they have pierced my hands and my feet. ¹⁷ I can count all my bones; people stare and gloat over me. ¹⁸ They divide my garments among them and cast lots for my clothing.

Isaiah 53:4-9 Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted. ⁵ But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed. ⁶ We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all. ⁷ He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth. ⁸ By oppression and judgment he was taken away. And who can speak of his descendants? For he was cut off from the land of the living; for the transgression of my people he was stricken. ⁹ He was assigned a grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death, though he had done no violence, nor was any deceit in his mouth.

B. A Trophy Stunningly Won for Glory

1. One of the thieves began his time on the cross reviling Jesus
2. But in the hours in which he was suffering, he began to have second thoughts
3. Even more significantly, God the Father revealed to this man the true identity of the man dying on the cross next to him
4. No one is saved apart from that direct revelation by God of Christ to the heart by the Holy Spirit

Matthew 16:15-17 "But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?"¹⁶ Simon Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."¹⁷ Jesus replied, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in heaven.

5. What did God reveal to the thief on the cross?
 - a. The true identity of Jesus
 - b. His future coming kingdom... so Jesus' resurrection from the dead... THINK ABOUT THAT
 - c. His own sinfulness and complete lack of worthiness
 - d. YET the boldness to ask to go to heaven completely apart from any personal merit at all
 - e. All of this at the last possible moment
 - f. Listen to the stunning account

Luke 23:39-43 One of the criminals who hung there hurled insults at him: "Aren't you the Christ? Save yourself and us!"⁴⁰ But the other criminal rebuked him. "Don't you fear God," he said, "since you are under the same sentence?"⁴¹ We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong."⁴² Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom."⁴³ Jesus answered him, "I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise."

6. This man did not one single good work except the few things he said right before dying... yet by faith alone he is in Paradise forever with Jesus
7. So this man is in heaven as a clear trophy of grace, and it is specifically because Jesus was paying his penalty at that moment
8. And this man is a timeless example of why we never ever give up on anyone... because of the thief on the cross, we always think someone could repent at the last possible moment
9. How many Christian people have visited dying unsaved relatives in the hospital with this account in their minds, filling them with hope?

C. Many Trophies of Glory

1. The thief on the cross was just the clearest
2. But when Jesus died, the Roman Centurion in charge of the crucifixion said

Mark 15:39 "Surely this man was the Son of God!"

3. After Pentecost, a huge crowd of people whom Peter charges specifically with Jesus' death were won to Christ

Acts 2:36-38 Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ." ³⁷ When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?" ³⁸ Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins.

4. Even some of the priests were later converted

Acts 6:7 So the word of God spread. The number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly, and a large number of priests became obedient to the faith.

5. Christ patiently won over his mocking enemies

Romans 5:8 But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Romans 5:10 For if, when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life!

V. Lessons and Applications

A. Created for Worship... Not Mocking

1. We have seen the terrible account of sinful mocking of Jesus
2. But we were created by God to praise and worship him
3. That means to appraise his worth and value and speak forth words of passionate praise for his glory

B. The Cross is the Center of Heavenly Worship

1. Despite the fact that the cross itself is intrinsically dripping with horror and shame, God brilliantly designed it to be the focus, the absolute center of heavenly worship
2. Revelation 5 is the key text
 - a. John sees heaven, with the throne of God, and all the heavenly beings surrounding the throne
 - b. God has a scroll in his right hand, sealed with seven seals, and a mighty angel calls out, "Who is worthy to take the scroll?" But no one is found in heaven or earth or under the earth worthy.
 - c. John weeps and weeps because no one is found
 - d. But one of the twenty-four elders tells him not to weep...

Revelation 5:5-7 Behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has triumphed. He is able to open the scroll and its seven seals."

⁶ Then I saw a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain, standing in the center of the throne, encircled by the four living creatures and the elders. He had seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of

God sent out into all the earth. ⁷ He came and took the scroll from the right hand of him who sat on the throne.

The Lion is Jesus... mighty, powerful, dominant... but he looks to John like a Lamb that had been slain. The greatest achievement of Jesus' ministry was won by his death on the cross.

This leads to cascading worship, rolling down forever on Jesus:

Revelation 5:9-12 they sang a new song: "You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation. ¹⁰ You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth." ¹¹ Then I looked and heard the voice of many angels, numbering thousands upon thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousand. They encircled the throne and the living creatures and the elders. ¹² In a loud voice they sang: "Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise!"

So what Satan and sinful people designed for Christ's SHAME ends up infinitely for his glory. And not just his glory, but the eternal blessedness of his redeemed

Therefore, Christ thought that the temporary shame was a small price to pay for our eternal salvation!

C. From Shame to Glory!! Not Just Jesus... But US

1. Jesus bore our shame in our place as our substitute
2. There is a definite shame for sin... that's why the mocking and shame is such a major theme of his atoning death
3. But by doing that, he takes away our shame forever

Romans 9:33 "Behold, I lay in Zion a stone that causes men to stumble and a rock that makes them fall, and the one who trusts in him will never be put to shame."

When we stand before God on judgment day, despite the fact that we have sinned more than we can possibly remember, in the end we will be clothed in white robes covering our shame forever

Revelation 3:18 I counsel you to buy from me ... white clothes to wear, so you can cover your shameful nakedness

D. What About You, Dear Listener?