

AT CALVARY PART TWO

Date: April 10, 2020

Scripture: Mark 15:22-40

Good morning! My name is Michael Olson. In our last episode, Phillip Townsend focused on the miracle of Christ's substitution through the lens of the account of Jesus's trial found in the gospel of Luke. Today we will focus on the crucifixion account found in the book of Mark.

Let's read this passage in its entirety together, starting in Mark 15, verse 22. As we do, let's pray and ask the Spirit of God to open our hearts to understand what Mark is describing.

²² And they brought him to the place called Golgotha (which means Place of a Skull). ²³ And they offered him wine mixed with myrrh, but he did not take it. ²⁴ And they crucified him and divided his garments among them, casting lots for them, to decide what each should take. ²⁵ And it was the third hour when they crucified him. ²⁶ And the inscription of the charge against him read, "The King of the Jews." ²⁷ And with him they crucified two robbers, one on his right and one on his left. ²⁹ And those who passed by derided him, wagging their heads and saying, "Aha! You who would destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, ³⁰ save yourself, and come down from the cross!" ³¹ So also the chief priests with the scribes mocked him to one another, saying, "He saved others; he cannot save himself. ³² Let the Christ, the King of Israel, come down now from the cross that we may see and believe." Those who were crucified with him also reviled him.

The Death of Jesus

³³ And when the sixth hour had come, there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour. ³⁴ And at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lema

AT CALVARY PART TWO

sabachthani?" which means, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" ³⁵ And some of the bystanders hearing it said, "Behold, he is calling Elijah." ³⁶ And someone ran and filled a sponge with sour wine, put it on a reed and gave it to him to drink, saying, "Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to take him down." ³⁷ And Jesus uttered a loud cry and breathed his last. ³⁸ And the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. ³⁹ And when the centurion, who stood facing him, saw that in this way he breathed his last, he said, "Truly this man was the Son of God!"
Mark 15:22-40

When I take a step back and think about the big picture of God's redemptive plan and how it applies to this specific moment in time, it feels impossible to process in its entirety. It's kind of like standing on the edge of the Grand Canyon, staring straight forward and feeling the limitations of your peripheral vision keeping you from taking in everything that's in front of you. The entire Biblical narrative, from Genesis to Revelation and all of history, past, present and future, pulls toward this moment like gravity.

In Jesus's crucifixion we see in full the picture that God was painting from the beginning. It was God who acted to shed blood to provide a covering for Adam and Eve after they had rebelled. It was God who prompted Abraham to take Isaac, the child of the promise, up the mountain to be sacrificed. And it was God who provided a Ram in Isaac's place. It was God who established a covenant with Moses, giving him the law. It was God who instituted the sacrificial system in the temple to temporarily atone for the breaking of that law. It was God who, by His Spirit, prompted David to write the words of Psalm 22, laying out in vivid detail the crucifixion account hundreds of years prior to the moment that Mark describes here. It was God who drew Isaiah into the prophetic knowledge that caused him to write of

AT CALVARY PART TWO

Jesus, “He was pierced for our transgressions; He was crushed for our iniquities; upon Him was the chastisement that brought us peace and with His wounds we are healed.” When John the Baptist said, “Behold, the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world” his finger was pointing at this Jesus who was to be crucified. And when John, the disciple that Jesus loved, wrote that the lamb had been slain before the foundation of the world in his prophetic vision we call “The Book of Revelation,” he was referring to this event.

Here at the cross, the mystery of God’s plan of redemption was revealed. God would pay for the sin debt of all humanity once and for all. And the way that He would do it, is through the brutal murder of His Son on a Roman cross. The writer of Hebrews tells us that, “It was fitting that he, for whom and by whom all things exist, in bringing many sons to glory, should make the founder of their salvation perfect through suffering.” Isn’t this glorious?

As we move through Mark’s depiction of the crucifixion, I notice three different reactions to God revealing the mystery of His salvation in the way that He did from three distinct groups of people.

The first is from Pontius Pilate. Mark tells us that there was an inscription posted on the cross of the charge held against Jesus. The charge read, “The King of the Jews.” Other gospel accounts tell us that this inscription was put there by Pilate, the Roman governor of the region after he had held Jesus’s trial and declared himself innocent of Jesus’s blood. The term “King of the Jews” or “King of Judea” was not uncommon to Pilate. He had used it before. But when he had, it was in reference to King Herod, whom the Romans had placed as a puppet King under Caesar’s rule to help pacify the tensions of the region of Judea.

AT CALVARY PART TWO

Pilate knew Herod. He had worked with him in the political governance of the land and he knew that Herod was maniacal over his sense of power and control. Pilate's recognition of Jesus as "The King of the Jews" in Herod's place points to the fact that he must have seen something different in Jesus. Something worth calling Him "King." Pilate's reaction to the mystery of the cross is that of an outsider who was brought into God's redemptive story and forced to a place of decision on what to do with this Jesus.

The second reaction is from the crowds who passed by and the chief priests, scribes and elders who mocked Jesus as He was being crucified. Mark's description of these people tells us that they were aware of the claims that Jesus had made. They threw them back in His face while He hung on the cross, completely unaware that God was in the middle of accomplishing His plan in Jesus through it. They knew that Jesus had claimed to be divine and it enraged them to the point of wanting to see Him dead. If Pilate was an outsider brought into God's redemptive story, then these people are the insiders who were so steeped in the pride of religion that they couldn't recognize what God was up to.

The third reaction is from the Roman centurion. Let's read Mark's words again.

³⁹ And when the centurion, who stood facing him, saw that in this way he breathed his last, he said, "Truly this man was the Son of God!"

Mark 15:39

Mark tells us that this Roman centurion, who had most likely been involved in physically nailing Jesus's body to the cross, had a moment of clarity allowing him to recognize Jesus for who He actually was. The account tells us that the centurion

AT CALVARY PART TWO

“stood facing him.” That he observed the way that he died and that it confounded him to the point that he recognized him as divine. He may not have known all the details that David, Isaiah or John the Baptist had known about the coming of Jesus, but his eyes were opened to the mystery of Christ that Paul would later describe in his letters.

As we get closer and closer to celebrating Jesus’s resurrection, let’s pause and take stock of how we react to God revealing the mystery of His salvation through the crucifixion. My prayer for you is that you would see yourself in the story. That, much like Pilate, you would recognize the kingship of Jesus and that it would bring you to a point of daily decision. That, like the crowds and religious elite, you wouldn’t be so steeped in the trappings of the pride of religion that it would keep you from recognizing the glory of God in the crucified Christ. And finally, that you would take the time to stop and stand facing the cross, much like the centurion. That you would see the suffering Jesus who was placed there as a result of your sin. And that you would marvel at the glory of God revealed through the suffering of Jesus.

Let’s pray.

Jesus, we see ourselves in Your word today. Thank You for the cross. Thank You for being so committed to the joy that was set before You, that You endured the cross and despised it’s shame. We believe that You are who You say You are. And we believe that when You died, it counted for us. In Your name. Amen.