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May 31, 2026

OUR SAVIOR: MATTHEW 27:27-31,45-54

Introductory Activity (Adapted from ETB LG, 135)

“Read: Enlist a volunteer to read the opening paragraph on page 122 of the PSG [or relay the information in the paragraph to the group].

[Biographers will spend hundreds of pages describing the life of their subjects, but generally limit the pages about their death to just a few. For example, the three-volume biography of Winston Churchill, *The Last Lion*, by William Manchester and Paul Reid devotes 2,622 pages to Churchill’s life and only three to his death. This is not the case with the Gospel of Matthew’s account of Jesus. Jesus’s death was central, and Matthew devoted seven chapters out of twenty-eight to chronicle the events surrounding the crucifixion of Jesus.]

Ask: *What does the amount of space devoted to Jesus’s death tell you about its importance?”*

Summarize and Transition: The death and resurrection of Christ are central to the gospel of Matthew. Without them, the gospel would simply tell the story of a failed religious teacher. Today’s passage, along with the passage we studied back at Easter, concludes Matthew’s gospel and rounds out the account of Jesus earthly ministry. We will pick up our lesson on the Friday morning of Holy Week. Last week, ended with Jesus and His disciples leaving the upper room after the institution of the Lord’s Supper. They made their way to the Mount of Olives, where Jesus spent time in prayer. While there, they were approached by a mob that came to arrest Jesus on behalf of the Jewish religious authorities. Jesus then endured a nighttime trial by the Sanhedrin (the Jewish governing body) and was convicted of blasphemy. Since the trial was illegal (nighttime trials were not allowed under Jewish law), He was tried again by the Sanhedrin in the early morning hours. The Jews did not have the authority to execute Jesus, so He was then taken to the Roman authorities to seek the death penalty for treason, claiming to be king. During the early morning, Jesus was shuttled back and forth between two Roman authorities, Pilate and Herod. Finally, Pilate washed his hands of the ordeal and sentenced Jesus to death. With the sentencing of Jesus, the Roman soldiers take over. That brings us to Matthew 27:27.

1. MOCKED (MATT. 22:27-31)

Read (or have someone read) Matthew 27:27-31.

Explain: After a night and morning of trials, Jesus was handed over to the brutality of a crowd of soldiers. He had spent much of His ministry surrounded by crowds. We remember the crowds on the mountainside listening to the great sermon in Matthew 5-7. We remember the crowded house as Jesus taught, which caused men friends to let a friend down through the roof for healing. We remember the crowds on the other hillsides where they were fed through a miraculous distribution of just a

Notes:

This Lesson was created using:

- *Explore the Bible Leader Guide* (ETB LG)
- *Explore the Bible Personal Study Guide* (ETB PSG)
- *Explore the Bible Commentary* (ETBC)
- *Preaching the Word: Matthew* (Preaching)
- *New American Commentary: Matthew* (NAC)
- *Exalting Christ in Matthew* (Exalting)
- *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture: Matthew 14-28* (ACCS)
- *The King Has Come* (Spurgeon)

few fish and loaves of bread. We remember the crowds that celebrated Jesus as He entered the city triumphally. We remember the crowds in the temple who were shocked and then removed from there by Jesus. Now Jesus stands surrounded by another crowd. This was not a crowd of adoring followers or curious observers. Instead, it was a crowd of ruthless men who cared nothing for Jesus or the God of Israel. In the prelude to the crucifixion, the men set about mocking Jesus.

In their actions, we can be reminded that Christ is King and that He deserves our honor.

Christ is King

The first thing the soldiers did was humiliate Jesus by stripping Him of His earthly clothes. In their place, the soldiers robed Him in a royal robe (Matthew says Scarlet and John purple). The robe was possibly one worn by the guards themselves or a discarded robe from the wardrobe of Pilate. It was **a rubbish robe applied to a regal King**. They then crown around Him with a makeshift crown of torture. It was **a cruel crown applied to the King of Creation**. Lastly, they supplied Him with a pretend scepter. It was **a silly scepter given to the sovereign King of Glory**. The soldiers then mocked Jesus further by kneeling before Him. It was **a keenly appropriate act for the soon coming King**. Lastly, they hailed Him as the King of the Jews. It was **a horrid understanding of the King of the whole world**.

What these soldiers meant as mockery was a sad imitation of who Christ really is. In our world today, people might not mock Jesus in this fashion, but people still mock Him or make a mockery of Him. There are those who genuinely mock Christ in an evil manner. There are those who make a mockery of Him by declaring Him a simple teacher and not the initiator of Truth. Some claim Him to be a moralist, not the Most High. Others who do claim Him as Savior make a mockery of Christ by the way they live. They claim allegiance to the holy and righteous one, yet live in open rebellion to Him.

We Should Honor the King

Jesus endured the mockery of the crowd for our benefit. He underwent the torture of the guards for our healing. Christ is the king of creation that deserve our honor, worship, and praise. We worship Him for what He endured, but we also worship Him because of who He is. The great hymn of Christ recorded in Colossians 1 expresses the praise we should have for the King.

Read Colossians 1:15-20 (See Notes Box). Ask the group to listen closely as you read or read along with you, and make note of the description of Jesus that most elicits their personal praise. (After reading the passage, allow time for discussion.)

Notes:

Colossians 1:15-20

¹⁵ He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation.

¹⁶ For everything was created by him, in heaven and on earth, the visible and the invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created through him and for him.

¹⁷ He is before all things, and by him all things hold together. ¹⁸ He is also the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that he might come to have first place in everything. ¹⁹ For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, ²⁰ and through him to reconcile everything to himself, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.

Summarize Transition: What these soldiers meant as mockery was evil and a pale imitation of the adoration that should be given to Christ. Moreover, it is a foreshadowing of what will happen. The world will one day kneel before the Christ and declare Him King. As followers of Jesus, we should daily live in a way that declares the kingship of Christ. We do so by the things we refrain from doing, but possibly more importantly, by the things we choose to do.

2. FORESAKEN (MATT. 27:45-49)

Read (or have someone read) Matthew **27:45-49**.

Explain: We passed over a few verses. After the mockery of Jesus by the soldiers, Jesus was led to the site of his crucifixion. During the journey, He, like all condemned to death by crucifixion, was to carry the horizontal beam of the cross. He was unable to do so because of the beating He had endured. The soldiers forced another man to carry it for Him. They arrived at the site for execution outside the city walls, and Jesus was hung on the cross at about nine in the morning. Our passage picks up three hours later at about noon. In this passage, Matthew presents one supernatural response to Christ's suffering and one of Jesus' statements from the cross. It was "**a dark cry for a dark hour.**" (Preaching, 873)

Verse 47 tells us that "from noon until three in the afternoon, darkness came over the whole land." This was a supernatural event. A few years ago, the United States experienced a full solar eclipse. Many traveled hours to be in the "path of totality." The freeways were backed up, and parking lots filled with out-of-towners who came to experience it. They drove hours to experience just a few minutes as the moon passed before the sun. Eclipse traffic jams might last hours, but eclipses do not. Matthew tells us that the sun went dark for three hours. This was a supernatural event. The darkening of the sun was a "mix of God's judgement...and God's mourning over the great evil of his Son's suffering." (Preaching, 872)

The darkness experienced by those observing Christ's execution was akin to the darkness experienced by the residents of Egypt during the series of plagues sent on the land prior to Israel's exodus from the land.

Read Exodus 10:21-23 (See Notes Box).

We see here that the darkness in Egypt was a judgment on the Egyptians for not obeying God's command to release Israel. Israel did not experience the darkness because there was no call for judgment of them. The darkness at the crucifixion was a symbolic judgment of the earth. It was also a fulfillment of prophecy.

Read Amos 8:9-10 (See Notes Box)

Ask: That is a dual prophecy given by the prophet Amos about the judgment of Israel by foreign powers and the day of Christ's crucifixion. The darkness was also a symbol of God's mourning over what was taking place. While the results of Christ's death and resurrection are to be celebrated as part of

Notes:

Exodus 10:21-23

²¹Then the Lord said to Moses, "Stretch out your hand toward heaven, and there will be darkness over the land of Egypt, a darkness that can be felt." ²²So Moses stretched out his hand toward heaven, and there was thick darkness throughout the land of Egypt for three days. ²³One person could not see another, and for three days they did not move from where they were. Yet all the Israelites had light where they lived.

Amos 8:9-10

⁹And in that day—this is the declaration of the Lord God—I will make the sun go down at noon; I will darken the land in the daytime. ¹⁰I will turn your feasts into mourning and all your songs into lamentation; I will cause everyone to wear sackcloth and every head to be shaved. I will make that grief like mourning for an only son and its outcome like a bitter day.

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God's plan for humanity, His death was, nevertheless, a dark day because He who knew no sin became sin (see 2 Cor 5:18-21). The sun put "on its widow's garb, the mood of this most decisive moment in world history is painted black." (Preaching, 872) Jesus words reflect the darkness of this moment.

Reread Matthew 27:46 (See Notes Box.)

Explain: After three hours of darkness, Jesus cries out. He does so in Aramaic because that is the language He spoke. Matthew wrote his gospel in Greek, but here he gives us Jesus' word as they came from His mouth. He wants us to feel the deeply human pain of God on the cross. In these words, Jesus is quoting from Psalm 22:1. In many of our Bibles, the Psalm is titled "From Suffering to Praise." Jesus will not get to the praise for three days. At this moment, He is only suffering. We should not skip past the suffering too quickly in our desire to get to the praise. Jesus utters what Bruner calls that "awful verb." (Preaching, 874)

Direct and Discuss: Direct the group to page 127 of their Personal Study Guide and ask the question at the top of the page: "How does Jesus's cry on the cross point to the greatness of our sin?" Allow time for discussion.

After six hours on the cross, Jesus cries out. In His cry, we can see why the night before He had prayed so powerfully to the Father. We can see why He felt so fervently that drops of blood fell from His brow. In His words, we can understand why it was necessary for Moses and Elijah to come to Him on the Mount of Transfiguration in preparation for this moment. He cries out because the Holy One of God was now the Sin-Bearer of Man. It is the mystery of the cross that somehow the fellowship of the Trinity was broken here. That mystery goes deeper into our understanding of the Incarnation. In eternity past, our Triune God determined to send the Son as a human to face the trials of temptation, yet withstand them as the Son of Man. As the Anointed One of God, it was determined that God the Son would bear our sins, *and* it was determined that God the Father would suffer this momentary separation. It is a mystery of the cross that we cannot understand. Just as it is a mystery of the cross that God the Son *could even become sin* to begin with.

Summarize and Transition: After six hours on the cross, Jesus cries out in physical and spiritual pain as He suffers the death pangs that should be ours and experiences the weight of our sin. While doing so, Jesus is surrounded by another crowd. And they continue the mocking that began with the soldiers that morning. They heap scorn on the King do Glory as He dies for them. But the day is not done. Let's continue with the next passage.

3. SON OF GOD (MATT. 27:50-54)

Read (or have someone read) Matthew 27:50-54.

Notes:

"Sin was laid on Christ, so God must turn away his face from the Sin-Bearer." (Spurgeon, 406)

Matthew 27:46

⁴⁶ About three in the afternoon Jesus cried out with a loud voice, "Eli, Eli, lemá sabachtháni?" that is, "My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?"

"Charles Cranfield said, that Jesus experienced 'not merely a felt, but a real abandonment by this Father,' and 'the paradox [is] that, while this God-forsakenness was utterly real, the unity of the Blessed Trinity was even then unbroken.'" (Preaching, 874)

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Explain: In this passage, we see (1) Jesus' final cry from the cross, (2) three more supernatural responses, (3) A Gentile admission of the unavoidable reality.

Jesus Final Cry

Matthew tells us that Jesus cried out again. John tells us that His words were "It is Finished." (John 19:30) The suffering was done. The reign of sin and death was done. The work to make reconciliation possible was done. With that work complete, Jesus "gave up His spirit." Jesus died, but as the Son of God, He died willingly and at the time of His choosing. We should remember that while we often say Jesus was killed by the Jewish leaders and the Roman overlords, they never did anything Jesus did not allow. He allowed them to arrest Him. He allowed them to beat Him. He allowed them to drive nails through His hands and feet. He willingly remained on the cross until His mortal body was ready for death, and then He willingly "gave up His spirit." It was a cry of anguish and a cry of victory. As O'Donnell says, "God dies like a man" on that cross. (Preaching, 876)

Three More Supernatural Responses

At the moment of Christ's death, two things happen. First, "the curtain of the sanctuary was torn in two from top to bottom." Our translation said it happened "Suddenly." The ESV says, "And behold, the curtain..." It's like at the moment of Christ's death, God was saying, "Take a look at this. It is finished." The curtain in the temple represented the separation of holy God from sinful man. With the death of Christ, the separation is removed or at least removable. Through the atoning work of Christ on the cross, man now has access to God. The writer of Hebrews puts it best.

Read Hebrews 10:19-20 (See Notes Box).

No longer does mankind need a priest to make way to God. No longer does mankind need to offer sacrifices to appease the wrath of God. Christ's work on the cross put an end to all of that. Not only did God rend the temple curtain from top to bottom, but the earth shook in response to the death of Christ. "The earth is telling earthlings that something *seismic* is happening...a new earth era has dawned in the death of Christ." (Preaching, 878) We should marvel at the elemental and cosmic reaction to Christ's death. The sun and the earth can't help but respond when the Creator and Sustainer of all things radically reshapes the relationship between God and man.

Discuss: How can the response of the sun and the earth inform our response when thinking about the death of Christ? (You might get blank stares at this one, but use the information below to draw out a discussion.)

Explain: Far too often we can become blasé about the death of Christ. We talk about it so much and study it all the time. But we should not forget how radical this event was. The term radical relates to the "root" or source of something. Jesus' death is the source of our salvation. The term is also

Notes:

It was "an earthshaking, tomb-breaking, curtain-tearing ceremony of to celebrate." (Preaching, 876)

Hebrews 10:19-20
"19 Therefore, brothers and sisters, since we have boldness to enter the sanctuary through the blood of Jesus—20 he has inaugurated for us a new and living way through the curtain (that is, through his flesh)—"

associated with an event, person, or object that affects the fundamental nature of something. The death of Christ “radically affects” our relationship to God and can change our fundamental nature. Radical also relates to something that is far-reaching. The death of Christ in a specific geographical location on a specific date has far-reaching effects. It reaches across generations. It reaches deep into the heart of man. It reaches into eternity. We should react to the death of Christ in the same cosmic and elemental way as the sun and earth did on the day of His death.

There is another supernatural response to Christ’s death. Actually, it is a response to His resurrection that Matthew can’t wait to tell us. Here, while we gaze on the death of Christ, Matthew flashes forward three days. He tells us that the earthquake at Christ’s death broke open tombs, and bodies were exposed. Those bodies would have lain there for three days because the Jewish sabbath would have prohibited the faithful from work to retrieve and rebury them. Matthew says that on the third day, there was another earthquake marking the resurrection of Jesus. At that moment, these dead bodies came alive and entered the city and appeared to many. That is one of the craziest things ever to have happened in human history, *and God does not explain it or give us details*. We do not know who these people were, what they looked like, what they said, what happened to them, or even why they came alive. We don’t know that because that is not the point of relaying the information to us. The point of telling us is to point us back to Jesus. The resurrection of Jesus rippled through the temporal world and the spiritual world. The awakening of the dead was a wake-up call to the people of Jerusalem.

Let’s just take one moment to consider the events of this day and the following ones from the perspective of the people in Jerusalem and, particularly, the religious leaders. The day began with hurrying and scurrying to convict and execute Jesus. As they stood watching Him die, there was suddenly darkness for three hours. That is not normal. Then there is an earthquake that, while normal, might be ominous following the darkness. Then there is a report that the temple curtain has been torn from top to bottom. All of this is happening in conjunction with Christ’s death. Then, three days later, while hearing reports of His resurrection, they also hear reports that dead bodies are coming alive out in the graveyards. Only a truly hardened heart could not respond with openness after all of that. The religious leaders were dead in their trespasses and sin. But one man, and possibly a group of men, did have eyes to see.

A Gentile Admission of the Unavoidable Reality

Reread Matthew 27:54 (See Notes Box).

Matthew tells us that the Centurion and the men with him were more spiritually aware than the Jewish religious leaders. These men were tasked with the execution of Jesus. It was their job to hang Him on the cross and make sure He died there. They were a rough group who mocked Him and

Notes:

Matthew 27:54

⁵⁴ When the centurion and those with him, who were keeping watch over Jesus, saw the earthquake and the things that had happened, they were terrified and said, “Truly this man was the Son of God!”

gambled for His clothes. Yet the Centurion may have set the mood. Maybe he began to think about the situation. He had possibly put many men on the cross and watched them die. He had probably witnessed the conspiring political factions at work before. But never before had the sun gone out for three hours when a man was dying on the cross. Never before had there been an earthquake while a man was dying on the cross. Never before had a temple suffered desecration while a man who claimed to be God died on the cross. Something was happening, and he and his men realized that this was not some ordinary man. This man was the Son of God. I do not know if these men truly understood their words, and I do not know if they came to faith in Christ. But, I have to wonder if later, while the apostles preached in the city they guarded, if they came to faith in the one they nailed to the cross.

CONCLUDE

As we conclude our study of the book of Matthew, let's remember that the whole point of the gospel and the whole aim of Christ's life was this moment, followed by the resurrection three days later. Jesus did not come to only teach man how to be moral. Jesus did not come only to provide an example of how we should live. Jesus did not come only to enable us to live an abundant life. Jesus came to die on a cross to deliver us from sin and save us from hell.

That Truth should cause us to respond in a dramatic manner.

It should cause us to respond by repenting from sin and turning to Him as Lord.

It should cause us to respond by living in such a way that we do not bring mockery on His name.

It should cause us to respond by telling others about Him

It should cause us to respond by joining others in Kingdom work through the body of believers.

How will you respond to the radical event of Good Friday?