

Scripture Reading

33And when the sixth hour had come, there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour. 34And at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?" which means, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" 35And some of the bystanders hearing it said, "Behold, he is calling Elijah." 36And 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." 37And Jesus uttered a loud cry and breathed his last. 38And the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. 39And 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 15:33-39

Devotional

It is noontime. Jesus is hanging on the cross. The whole earth seems to be responding to the coming death of Jesus as darkness envelops the land. Jesus cries out, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" People run to bring Jesus something to drink, but at last, Jesus cries out and his lungs breathe their last breath. As he stands and watches Jesus take his last breath, the centurion declares, "Truly this man was the Son of God!"

It is peculiar that the centurion would declare that Jesus was the Son of God. It is peculiar not only because the centurion was a part of the group that crucified Jesus, but also because it is the first time in the Gospel of Mark that a human declares Jesus the Son of God. Jesus is referred to as the Son of God in the opening line of the Gospel of Mark which serves as the purpose for which the book was written. The only other times Jesus is referred to as the Son of God is by God during Jesus' baptism and transfiguration (Mk. 1:10; 9:7) and by demons (Mk. 3:11; 5:7). It is as if in the Gospel of Mark the only way for us to truly understand Jesus as the Son of God is in light of Jesus' death. It is through Jesus' sacrificial death on the cross that we see his true purpose and identity as the Son of God.

Son of God is not the only title given to Jesus. In Mark 6:3, the people of Nazareth, Jesus' hometown, call him the son of Mary. The people in Nazareth are astonished and offended by Jesus' teaching. How could one of our own, this son of Mary, a regular guy like us teach like Jesus? Another time, while Jesus is on his way to Jerusalem right before the triumphal entry, a blind beggar calls Jesus Son of David (Mk. 10:47, 48). Jesus heals the blind beggar, but the title the man calls Jesus implies that Jesus is the long awaited Messiah who would save Israel. As you read the story of the crucifixion and look at the cross what do you call Jesus? Is Jesus the son of Mary, just another person who had some interesting teachings, but died like everyone else? Is Jesus the Son of David, another failed Messiah who could not actually save Israel? Or is Jesus the Son of God, the one that brings the good news of salvation to the whole world?

Response

Take some time to think through these questions:

-Who do you say that Jesus is?

-What does it mean to declare that Jesus is the Son of God?

-Spend some time in prayer thanking Jesus for the gift of salvation that comes through his death.

