

## Three Roads *Road to Calvary*

Matthew 20:17-19; 26:36-46

March 24, 2024

HDBC

Roads played a key part in the life and ministry of Jesus. Once he started His ministry it seems that He was always on the move, always on some road.

The most important roads Jesus traveled were the roads directly connected with His work of redemption. Those were the roads associated with His death, burial and resurrection. Next week we celebrate Easter. It may be the most important day of the year for churches. In order to soak up as much as we can, we are celebrating Easter for three Sundays. **To do so**, I want us to consider **three specific roads** that Jesus walked that are **intimately related His resurrection and the events just before and after it.**

### **One would take Him . . .**

**Jerusalem** – It led Him to betrayal and arrest,

**Calvary** – It led to suffering and death,

**Emmaus** – It led to revelation and discovery.

Last week we looked at the ***Road to Jerusalem***. It was in Jerusalem that His betrayal would be finalized. It was in Jerusalem that He would be arrested and questioned by Jewish and Roman officials. It was in Jerusalem that He would hear the cries, ***crucify him*** coming from an angry crowd. It was in Jerusalem that He would walk another road, ***the Road to Calvary***. It was a road of suffering and death. As with all the other roads He walked, He knew what was waiting for Him along that road. But He did not flinch or hesitate. He walked it for you and me.

**I want** to show you that Jesus knew what awaited Him in Jerusalem. Not only did He know it, He revealed it to His disciples. **Read Matthew 20:17-19** Jesus could not have made it any plainer. He was traveling a road that would lead to his death at Calvary. ***Calvary*** is the Latin form of the Greek word ***Golgotha***, which means *the place of the skull*. It was a place just outside the walls of Jerusalem where crucifixions took place it is where Jesus died.

**Jesus** walked the road that led Him into Jerusalem, knowing that He was entering into the hornet's nest, where His enemies were plotting a His death. Once inside the city He spent considerable time teaching His disciples. He was preparing them for the next road He would walk. It would be ***The road to Calvary***. The walk down that road began in a garden. Let me show it to you in **Matthew 26:32-42**.

**Did** you catch the words of Jesus in verse 46? ***Get up, let us be going . . .*** There was a road that He needed to walk and the time had come.

**Jesus** voluntarily walked the road to Calvary, knowing what He would experience along the way. And what are the things He experienced along the way? BTW, Calvary was simply the place of the crucifixion. When Christians talk about Calvary they are talking about the place where Jesus died. **So, as we** observe Jesus walking the road to Calvary what things do we see? I've listed 12 things that are grouped into four sets of three each. Not so much physical stations along the way, but things that happened to Jesus and to those around Him.

### **1. Betrayal, Desertion and Denial**

The first thing to note along the road to Calvary is that Jesus experienced **betrayal, desertion, and denial**. It started at the Garden of Gethsemane. One might be tempted to call it the ***garden of decision***.

**As** they left that garden it seems like everyone was about to be forced to make a decision. Jesus had set His face toward the cross and was determined to walk that road no matter what He encountered. Judas would consummate his own plans to betray Jesus, sealing His fate not only as the Benedict Arnold among the disciples but as a lost man sealing his eternal fate. The other disciples would soon abandon Jesus and run for the cover of safety. Though he thought he was too big to fail, Peter was on the verge of denying Jesus, not once, but multiple times.

**Though** Jesus knew all along that these things would happen, He now experienced them first-hand. To know you are going to be betrayed is one thing, to feel it is another. To know that your friends will leave you and even deny you is one thing, but to see it happening is quite another.

**Have ever** been betrayed, deserted, denied? Of course, you have, and it hurts, doesn't it. What you felt when your friends did not invite you to the party, or the coach cut you from the team, or your spouse slept with someone else, is what Jesus felt, only magnified a thousand-fold.

The prophet, Isaiah, said it well. ***He was despised and forsaken of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; and like one from whom men hide their face He was despised and we did not esteem Him.***

Jesus had said, ***kill the shepherd and the sheep will scatter.*** And so, they did, not after His death, but along the road to Calvary. The first things Jesus experienced along the road to Calvary were ***betrayal, desertion and denial.***

## **2. Interrogation, Manipulation and Condemnation**

Next, He experienced ***interrogation, manipulation and condemnation.*** He was arrested and ultimately taken before Roman and Jewish leaders who questioned and ultimately condemned Him. These trials were illegal and unethical, but they were successful.

**He was** questioned by religious leaders, Jewish political leaders, and the only one who had the authority to condemn Him to death, the Roman governor, Pilate. Interestingly, Pilate was the only one who found Him innocent. And He said so. However, because of the manipulation of the religious leaders, Pilate yielded to their demands and condemned Jesus to die on a cross. Multiple times Pilate declared the innocence of Jesus and multiple times he tried to find an acceptable way to placate the crown and still release Jesus. He was unsuccessful.

In one of the great acts of cowardice in human history He condemned Jesus to death, all while expressing his belief in the innocence of Jesus. ***Imagine being the defendant in a court of law and hearing the announcement by the foreman of the jury making this declaration. We absolutely know this person is not guilty. However, if we declare you not guilty it will make the community unhappy. So, our verdict is guilty.*** Wow! You would be beside yourself. Not Jesus. He accepted it with grace and dignity, knowing it was the will of His Father. This road meant ***interrogation, manipulation & condemnation.***

### 3. Suffering, Humiliation and Death

The road to Calvary led Jesus to *suffering, humiliation and death*.

In a failed attempt to elicit pity from the crowd for Jesus, Pilate had him scourged. This involved Jesus being stripped of His robes and tied to a post. Then a soldier would use a leather whip that often had rocks or pieces of broken pottery woven into it, to beat his body again and again. This would have ripped the skin open again and again. Some prisoners died from it. Not Jesus. He survived it and was taken back into the prison.

While there, waiting upon Pilate's final decision, He was abused and humiliated by the Roman guards. The Bible indicates that they played games with Him. Blindfolded, they would take turns slapping Him and asking Him to identify who hit Him. He could easily have done so, but He remained silent. They placed a crown of thorns upon His head and a purple robe on his carved up back. They mocked him by calling him a king.

**When all** attempts to get Jesus released had failed, Pilate attempted to absolve himself of any guilt by ceremonially washing his hands, while condemning Jesus to death on a cross. Jesus would die. And that involved the last leg of this road to Calvary. He would carry His cross to the designated place, where His hands and feet would be nailed to it. He would be suspended from the ground and left there to hang until He died. And that is exactly what happened. He went the distance. He made it to Calvary and there He died, the just for the unjust. John the Baptist had declared Him to be the ***lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world***.

All through the city of Jerusalem little lambs were being slain as part of the annual Passover celebration. What most did not realize was that the man dying on the middle cross at Calvary was the true lamb of God who alone can take away their sins. What the Passover lambs only pictured, became a reality at Calvary. And it happened because Jesus was willing to walk that road.

**Along the road to Calvary, Jesus had experienced . . .**

Betrayal, desertion and denial

Interrogation, manipulation and condemnation

Suffering, humiliation and death

He did that for us. But as He walked that road, He revealed some wonderful things to us, that could easily be missed. Along the road to Calvary we see

#### 4. Compassion, Forgiveness and Salvation

There was compassion expressed by Jesus to some of the women who followed Him along that road and wept for Him. He encouraged them not to weep for Him, but for themselves. He knew what the future held for them and for their city. On the cross, while bearing the sins of the world, He felt compassion for His mother. He took time to provide for her future needs.

But along the way, we also see forgiveness. As Jesus experienced the pain from evil and wicked men, He prayed for their forgiveness, pointing out to the Father that they really did not know what they were doing. While feeling the cutting of the scourge on His body, while feeling the nails pierce his hands and feet, and while listening to the arrogant teasing by the crowds below Him, He was thinking of their forgiveness. It reminds me of what He said early in His ministry. *For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him.*

Jesus never lost sight of His mission. Even along the road to Calvary, He was focused on the mission of forgiving sins.

**Notice one** more thing. Along the road to Calvary, we not only see compassion and forgiveness, but we see **salvation**. One of the criminals who died that day with Jesus was graciously and wonderfully saved. What an awesome declaration of what Calvary was truly all about. Jesus walked that road to save that sinner. He walked that road to save you and to save me.

Salvation was found along the road to Calvary. It still is. In fact, it is the only place you can find salvation. Salvation can only be secured by trusting in the one who died in that place for you. Your faith must be in the finished work of Jesus on the cross.

John Ortberg shared the following true account in one of his books.

Father Damien was a priest who became famous for his willingness to serve lepers. He moved to Kalawao—a village on the island of Molokai, in Hawaii, that

had been quarantined to serve as a leper colony. For 16 years, he lived in their midst. He learned to speak their language. He bandaged their wounds, embraced the bodies no one else would touch, preached to hearts that would otherwise have been left alone. He organized schools, bands, and choirs. He built homes so that the lepers could have shelter. He built 2,000 coffins by hand so that, when they died, they could be buried with dignity. Slowly, it was said, Kalawao became a place to live rather than a place to die, for Father Damien offered hope.

Father Damien was not careful about keeping his distance. He did nothing to separate himself from his people. He dipped his fingers in the *poi* bowl along with the patients. He shared his pipe. He did not always wash his hands after bandaging open sores. He got close. For this, the people loved him.

Then one day he stood up and began his sermon with two words: "We lepers...." Now he wasn't just helping them. Now he was one of them. From this day forward, he wasn't just on their island; he was in their skin. First, he had chosen to live as they lived; now he would die as they died. Now they were in it together. One day God came to Earth and began his message: "We lepers...." Now he wasn't just helping us. Now he was one of us. Now he was in our skin. Now we were in it together.