



CANYON HILLS

COMMUNITY CHURCH

Series: The Book of Mark

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The King of Glory Mocked and Crucified

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Good morning to you! This is the 11:00 service! You're alive! You're awake! You've had breakfast! Let's go!

Okay, you picked up your bulletin on the way in and you've noted that inside your bulletin, there is also an insert. That insert has four wonderful, beautiful pictures on it. Our Canyon Hills residency has launched. We now have four residents here who will be here for the next couple of years, serving, but also being served as they are trained up for full-time ministry, so we're excited about that. Maybe you can get their autographs on each of those and win a prize of some sort.

This morning, we're going to be in Mark, chapter 15. As you have opportunity, we'll pick it up in verse 16 in just a few minutes. Let me start by just saying today's passage is not an easy one to read or hear, much less study or preach as we see today the sovereign and almighty King of glory mocked and crucified by his own creation with violent hostility.

Before I read, let's get up to speed with what's happening in Jesus' life. Over the last 12 hours, following a long day of ministry, Jesus has poured out his heart in Gethsemane. He was betrayed by Judas for 30 pieces of silver, arrested by a crowd of blood-hungry soldiers, and abandoned by his disciples.

He then endures three phases of an illegal Jewish trial before Annas, Caiaphas, and the Sanhedrin, where they present false witnesses and contradictory testimony but convict him nonetheless of blasphemy for telling them that which was exactly true. He is the Messiah, the Son of God.

During these trials, Jesus was blindfolded, spat on, struck in the face with fists, slapped, and repeatedly mocked and ridiculed. At the moment daylight broke, they immediately handed him over to the Roman authorities for more of the same treatment: another trial with three additional phases before Pilate, Herod Antipas, and the crowds. This took place throughout the morning hours. The abuse, if it can be imagined, escalated with each passing moment. Jesus was treated with contempt, repeatedly beaten, and finally scourged. The scourging...

They take off his outer garments, they tie him to a pole, and they whip him dozens of times with a horrific whip that's made up of metal balls, bone shards, and metal fragments. It's designed specifically to cut through the skin and muscle and expose the bone, putting the victim in anguish and wearing them down to nothing physically, with no energy and strength left. At the conclusion of verse 15, Pilate **"...delivered him to be crucified."** If you would please now stand, we're going to read verses 16-32 of Mark 15.

"And the soldiers led him away inside the palace (that is, the governor's headquarters), and they called together the whole battalion. And they clothed him in a purple cloak, and twisting together a crown of thorns, they put it on him. And they began to salute him, 'Hail, King of the Jews!' And they were striking his head with a reed and spitting on him and kneeling down in homage to him. And when they had mocked him, they stripped him of the purple cloak and put his own clothes on him. And they led him out to crucify him.

And they compelled a passerby, Simon of Cyrene, who was coming in from the country, the father of Alexander and Rufus, to carry his cross. And they brought him to the place called Golgotha (which means Place of a Skull). And they offered him wine mixed with myrrh, but he did not take it.

And they crucified him and divided his garments among them, casting lots for them, to decide what each should take. And it was the third hour when they crucified him. And the inscription of the charge against him read, 'The King of the Jews.' And with him they crucified two robbers, one on his right and one on his left.

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, save yourself, and come down from the cross!' So also the chief priests with the scribes mocked him to one another, saying, 'He saved others; he cannot save himself. 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."

Our gracious Father, we thank you for your Word and yet we're pierced by the reality, the truth it exposes us to. So Lord, we ask you to give us eyes to see today to live in the light of your sacrifice. Lord, today, we just want to express our love for you and thank you for loving us first. We pray in Jesus' name, amen.

You see now why this is a difficult passage. After Pilate delivers Jesus over to the soldiers, this was not a time of reprieve while he awaited execution. In fact, it was quite the contrary. Roman soldiers were trained to unleash whatever additional torture and disgrace they could imagine in order to further weaken, humiliate, and even dehumanize their victim during this time.

It was no small event taking place in some discreet corner off to the side, but instead, verse 16 tells us the whole battalion came together. That's 600 soldiers who gathered together to take part in, or at least gather for the spectacle of, mocking Jesus. One Bible historian actually compares

Jesus at this point to "...a hunted creature [who], when it is caught, is flung to the dogs...and they enjoyed it as schoolboys enjoy the terror of a tortured animal."

We won't review again the mocking, beating, and wicked treatment you see in these verses specifically, but it is enough to say we ought to be horrified at every reading. When it comes to the crucifixion, we're a little surprised, actually, when we see in verse 24 the same statement that all four gospel writers have. It's very simple: "**And they crucified him...**"

This isn't their way of sterilizing the account and removing the details of what actually happened, because at that time, they were very aware. The readers read *crucifixion* and they knew exactly what was being spoken of. By the time of Jesus' crucifixion, over 30,000 other crucifixions had taken place in Israel alone.

Rome used it as both a mode of execution as well as a deterrent to threaten other would-be criminals. So much of what we know about crucifixion today is gathered from historians and archaeologists, so I'll leave many of the details there. In short, we can just simply say crucifixion was, as the term originates, absolutely excruciating.

As I was preparing for this message, I had asked friends for prayer. "Hey, pray for me this week. It's a difficult passage." They would say, "Oh, are you nervous?" No, I'm not nervous. I don't usually get nervous. The results are up to God, but I can honestly say I'm scared, because how do you handle a passage that handles you? As we read through here, we're impacted by the horrific details presented to us.

As we look at this passage today, I'm grieved over my own culpability in the suffering and death of the Lamb of God. At the same time, I hope you will also take away today the amazing glory that shines through as the Lion of Judah does exactly what he came to do as the Son of God and Lord of all.

With that in mind, rather than go word-by-word and verse-by-verse, I'd like to highlight three specific realities or themes, if you will, that we find throughout all of the Scriptures, but which are just laid before us very, very evidently most specifically in Mark 15. These three aspects are *our corruption*, *God's glory*, and *the call to respond*.

1. *Our corruption*. Let's start with the first undeniable reality, namely, that this passage is a mirror reflecting our corruption. There's really no way around it. It's useless to try to deny it. As outraged and disgusted as we might be by the details we read in this passage, it's a reflection of our own comprehensive corruption of the human heart and our own potential for evil that each of us has.

Theologians would call this *total depravity*. It's not that you're always doing the worst thing you could do at any given moment, but that sin has completely corrupted every part of your being. Your body, your mind, your will, your heart, your emotions, your conscience... Nothing is working exactly as God designed it to in the beginning.

Because of this, instead, we are spiritually blind and physically dying. That's what shines out to us. We are spiritually dead and physically dying. As God promised in Genesis 2:17, death has come through disobedience. In Adam, we did all die spiritually, meaning we have been separated from God, the one through whom all things were created and the one in whom all things hold together.

What happened in Genesis, chapter 3, the eviction from the garden of Eden, is really just a physical representation of the spiritual reality of being separated from our God by way of relationship. Our physical existence today is further testimony that we really have no ability to sustain life apart from our Creator.

Like a flower that's clipped off of the vine and placed in a glass of water, it'll live for a little while, but it's slowly fading away with each passing day. It will eventually die, and so will each one of us as long as we are separated from the author of life, Jesus Christ.

Because of this death that came through man's declaration of self-sovereignty, all history bears witness to the blossoming depravity of man. We see the ravenous growth in Genesis 3 and 4 from one sin, to guilt, to shame, to lying, to isolation, to fleeing, to jealousy, and then murder, and things have not gotten any better in these thousands of years.

So, even though we are shocked and shamed, we should not be surprised when we see humanity mock and crucify God, and not just passively, but aggressively and violently. This reflection of our corruption is clear evidence that we are spiritually dead and in need of Savior. Yet here's the problem. The further consequence of this is that we're also blind to...

2. *God's glory.* In this death, in this corruption, we are now blind to God's glory. We still see, but we don't comprehend. We cannot understand rightly; therefore, we cannot respond appropriately to that which is evident. Psalm 19 tells us, "The heavens declare the glory of God; nothing is hidden from his glory."

Romans, chapter 1, says God made it plain to everybody, but by our unrighteousness, we suppress it, willfully blinding ourselves to God's glory. Therefore, each of us is still responsible and completely culpable for rejecting God. Furthermore, because of this blindness to God's glory, our value system is all messed up. We don't see things as they are and value things as they ought to be valued.

Instead of seeing and savoring God and Jesus Christ for who he is and what he's doing, we're blind to it and we worship, serve, and exalt ourselves, marginalizing God and disregarding others unless they serve our purposes. That's what's happening here. These verses testify of that same truth, because we see here the Lord of glory being made the laughingstock of Golgotha.

Jesus is the image of the invisible God. He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature. He clearly manifested the name of God, but when he came to his own, his own did not receive him because they were blind to him. The chief priests and scribes mocked him as a demon-possessed blasphemer.

The soldiers tortured and humiliated him as a useless animal. The two thieves on either side of him reviled him as a condemned criminal, and those who passed by just shook their heads in disgust as they taunted him as a fool. All the while, the crowds continued about their business on this day, preparing for the Passover, blind to God's glory.

Yet, right in their midst, God himself was also preparing a Lamb for the Passover that would make their preparations ultimately useless, and they didn't see it. We wouldn't have seen it either, because all of us, separated from God, are blind. Yet don't lose heart, because that's exactly what's happening here. Jesus came to save sinners, to give life to those who are dead, and to rescue the wandering sheep. Through his death, salvation is secured.

So, as dark as the details of this passage are, reflecting like a mirror our corruption, God is always accomplishing something far greater for our good. Yet he's also demonstrating the greatness of his glory. You see, this passage is not only a mirror that reflects our corruption, this passage is a window revealing God's glory.

You think to yourself, "Really? In this passage, we see God's glory?" Oh, absolutely! As with all of God's Word, he's putting himself on display. He's showing himself for who he is, without error. In fact, I believe this passage is one of the primary places where we see God's glory displayed in two distinct, wonderful, precise ways. That is, his faithfulness and his love.

In the midst of great humiliation, hostile aggression, and ignorant provocation, God's plan of redemption, which he revealed beforehand through the prophets, is unfolding with a precision and a beauty that leaves us awestruck, looking back at it, now having eyes to see it. So, this is what we see as we look through the window that reveals God's glory.

We see that he is faithful to fulfill his promises. God is faithful to fulfill his promises. What he did is exactly what he planned to do. What God intended to do is exactly what happened, and incidentally, it always is.

Whether we're reading about the life of Christ or seeing the testimony of history on the page or our own life, God is always in control and accomplishing exactly what he intends to. God wasn't taking a chance. God wasn't hoping for the best. God wasn't carelessly risking anything. Instead, as Jesus told the two men on the road to Emmaus,

"O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?' And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself."

I would have loved to have been there for that. What a great opportunity before your Lord. Peter also testifies in Acts, chapter 2, when he says Jesus was **"...delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God..."** Paul also, in his letter to the Romans, this great

rollout of the gospel, declares to them that this is **"...the gospel of God, which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy Scriptures..."**

Friends, this event in Mark 15 is a window whereby we can see the glory of God shining through, so let's take a look at a few of these details that add a little color to this glory that shines. Written 1,000 years before Christ, we read in Psalm 22, what we would call a *prophetic psalm*, in verses 7 and 8,

"All who see me mock me; they make mouths at me; they wag their heads; 'He trusts in the LORD; let him deliver him; let him rescue him, for he delights in him!'" Again, later in this same psalm, it says, **"I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint; my heart is like wax; it is melted within my breast; my strength is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue sticks to my jaws; you lay me in the dust of death.**

For dogs encompass me; a company [host] of evildoers encircles me; they have pierced my hands and feet—I can count all my bones—they stare and gloat over me; they divide my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots." This sounds very familiar, doesn't it? Written 700 years before Christ, the prophet Isaiah, in chapter 53, says again,

"...he was pierced for our transgressions... He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he opened not his mouth...he had done no violence, and there was no deceit in his mouth...he poured out his soul to death and was numbered with the transgressors; yet he bore the sin of many, and makes intercession for the transgressors."

We could read more and more prophetic testimonies. Even Jesus himself, in Mark 10:34, would tell his disciples that people will mock him, spit on him, flog him, and kill him. If we were to align these verses with Mark 15, you would see, by the most conservative interpretation, at least 12 direct, explicit, precise fulfillments of prophecy. There are many more than that. This is amazing, and it's also impossible unless God is faithful to fulfill his promises.

Yet as much as those truths inform my faith, my heart is most stirred and enflamed when I consider the demonstration of his love that this passage also reveals. You see, his love is perfect because he is loving in the midst of hostility. He is loving in the midst of hostility. Few places reveal the extent of God's love as we see it before us today. These verses testify to us that God's love is patient in the midst of persecution. God's love is kind to the most violent of enemies.

You know Romans 5:8. **"...but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us."** Yet let's not forget verse 10, which says he reconciled us to himself while we were his enemies! God's love is patient. God's love is kind. God's love bears all things and endures all things. Indeed, God's love never fails.

As evidence of this, let's consider the various mockers we find in this passage. Remember the soldiers, the executioners of the Messiah? Luke records that it was at this moment, in the midst of this mocking and crucifixion, that Jesus prays, **"Father, forgive them, for they know not**

what they do." As it turns out, we read of Roman soldiers later coming to Christ, like Cornelius, in Acts, chapter 10.

How about the two thieves who were crucified on either side of Jesus, knowing they're mocking and reviling him. Yet, again, from Luke's account, we see that one of them did repent and believe. In doing so, he heard from the lips of God himself, "**...today you will be with me in paradise.**" In addition, the same people mocking amidst the crowds, with only a few weeks away from Pentecost, would become believers in Jesus Christ.

Simon of Cyrene, who was just passing by, was grabbed to carry Jesus' cross, and yet church history tells us that Simon and his sons, Rufus and Alexander, became believers in the early church. God's love is amazing as he loves us in the midst of hostility.

What about the chief priests, scribes, and Pharisees? Well, we also know some of them came to know Christ as Lord and Savior, one in particular. Paul, being a former Pharisee, writes to Timothy, in 1 Timothy, chapter 1,

"...I was a blasphemer, persecutor, and insolent opponent. But I received mercy because I had acted ignorantly in unbelief, and the grace of our Lord overflowed for me with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost."

How about you? Are you a sinner? Are you one who's in need of a Savior? I'd like to appeal to you through the words of George Whitefield. He was an eighteenth-century preacher. He says,

"O think of the love of Christ in dying for you! [...] Beg of God to give you faith; and, if the Lord gives you that, you will by it receive Christ... You need not fear the greatness or number of your sins. For are you sinners? So am I. Are you the chief of sinners? So am I. Are you backsliding sinners? So am I.

And yet the Lord...the Lord is my righteousness. Come then, O young man, who...are playing the prodigal, and wandering away afar off from your heavenly Father's house, come home, come home, and leave your swine's trough. Feed no longer on the husks of sensual delights: for Christ's sake arise, and come home! Your heavenly Father now calls you."

3. *The call to respond.* That's the third image we see here. You see, this passage is a mirror that reflects our own corruption. This passage is a window that reveals God's glory. Yet it's also a picture calling for a response, as pictures do. You see a picture and sometimes emotions are stirred up. Sometimes, it's joy, frustration, shock, appreciation, anger, or sorrow, whatever the case might be. A picture can elicit a response.

Yet some pictures also provoke us to action. They call us to do something about what we're seeing. Maybe you get your Facebook feed... It comes through, you see the picture, and you

think to yourself, "Oh, I need to call that friend. Oh, I really should start losing weight," or, "I really need to finish that project."

A picture can call to us and require or even constrain us to respond. That's exactly what's happening here as we look at the picture of what's happening in Mark 15. The reader is instructed by observation but moved to the action that's implied. Thankfully, we don't have to guess what that action is. The New Testament preserves for us by inspiration and sovereignly, so we don't need to guess how we're supposed to respond to Mark, chapter 15.

Turn in your Bibles really quick to Acts, chapter 3. I'd love for you to see this in your own Bible. In Acts, chapter 3, Peter and John are preaching. Why are they preaching? It's because they just healed a lame man who jumped up and started walking. Well, that astonished people. That gathered a crowd and they came around and got all around, and so when they had a crowd, they started to preach.

As they roll out this message, Peter details the coming, suffering, and persecutions of Jesus Christ, and then ends with this, in verses 18 and 19: **"But what God foretold by the mouth of all the prophets, that his Christ would suffer, he thus fulfilled. Repent therefore..."** What's the response to this reality? **"Repent therefore, and turn back, that your sins may be blotted out..."**

A. *Repent and believe.* The first response a person should have when reading Mark 15, this picture, this image, is to repent and believe. Every time the gospel is preached it's a mirror revealing our corruption, a window revealing God's glory, but it also calls for us to respond, so we must not be forgetful hearers, but obedient listeners. As we do this, we are rightly responding to the call of God in his Word.

B. *Follow his example.* Yet there's a second response beyond this. You can turn to 1 Peter, chapter 2 for this one. Mark 15 not only calls for sinners to repent and believe, but it calls for Christians to follow his example. We see this in 1 Peter, chapter 2. Pick it up in verse 21.

"For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps. He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly."

What a beautiful picture, but it's more than just a picture. It's a picture that calls for our response. It calls for us to respond. If we were to read the broader context here, you would note in 1 Peter, chapter 2, that the area this is applied to in following his example is, "Be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution. Do good. Live as people who are free, but honor everyone. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the emperor, etc." and on it goes.

Then, chapter 3, staying with this same theme, says, "Hey, by the way, it also applies here. Wives, husbands, community of believers..." His example should be seen throughout our lives in every context and every area.

C. *Wait patiently for his coming.* Remember that in Mark 15, verse 32, at the end of the passage, the chief priests and scribes are talking to one another and mocking Jesus. They're saying, "**Let the Christ, the King of Israel, come down now from the cross that we may see and believe.**" You know, I cringe every time I read that, every time I hear those words, because in those words, our corruption is reflected and the clear evidence of spiritual death and spiritual blindness is clearly seen.

Yet at the same time, Jesus' unwillingness to be provoked by their antagonism and do what they asked was actually an incredible demonstration of his love, because if he would have come down then from the cross, as we read in verse 32, they wouldn't have seen. They wouldn't believe, and neither would we today. There would be no good news. We would still be dead in our sins. We would still be blind.

Once again, Peter, in his second epistle, warns to those being persecuted that things have not changed. What we see in Mark 15... It's not too much different today. As Peter writes to believers, "...**scoffers will come in the last days with scoffing, following their own sinful desires. They will say, 'Where is the promise of his coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all things are continuing as they were from the beginning of creation.'**" Mocking, scoffing... Peter goes on to say,

"But do not overlook this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance."

You see it there. Instead of Jesus being provoked, responding to their requests, and trying to show them, if you will, he sticks to the plan. He fulfills his promises so more can be saved, and so it is today! Why is the Lord delaying in his return? Why is he not showing up right now at this moment? That question has been asked ever since he ascended, and yet Peter goes on to say, **"But the day of the Lord will come like a thief... But according to his promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells."** Praise the Lord!

The picture we have in Mark 15 calls us to repent and believe, to follow his example, and to wait patiently for his coming. He will come! With the evidence we have in the New Testament, as well as all of history, he has a perfect track record. He has never missed an appointment. He has satisfied every single one of his promises that were supposed to take place, and there are promises yet to come that he will, in fact, fulfill. You can trust him for this.

I'd like to appeal to you and close one more time with the words of George Whitefield. Please forgive the lengthy quote here, but when somebody says it as well as he did, then you just let them say it. George Whitefield says,

"My brethren...think of the love of Christ in dying for you! [...] Think of the greatness of the gift, as well as the giver! Show to all the world, in whom you have believed! Let all by your

fruits know, that the Lord is your righteousness, and that you are waiting for your Lord from heaven!

O study to be holy, even as he who has called you, and washed you in his own blood, is holy! [...] grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, day by day. O think of his dying love! Let that love constrain you to obedience! [...] Be always asking, "What shall I do, to express my gratitude to the Lord, for giving me his righteousness?"

"What should I do?" The Scriptures are clear. If you're here today, what you should do is repent and believe, if you don't yet know Jesus Christ. If you are here today and you do know Jesus Christ, and you have repented, and you are believing, repentance goes on (we know that), but you also live in following his example...

If you're here today and you've repented, you believe, and you're following his example, but you're discouraged in light of waiting for his return, take courage. He will return. He will fulfill his promises. We can trust him for that. I'm going to pray. When I'm done, we're going to have some counselors up front who would love to talk with you, pray with you, and walk with you down this road as you strive to live for Christ, day by day. Let's pray.

Father, we thank you for your amazing grace, your goodness and, O Lord, your overwhelming love for us. Thank you that you have given us the gift we didn't want in our blindness and depravity, and yet you so audaciously, lovingly, and beautifully accomplished on our behalf, but certainly for your glory. May we give you glory today. Again, Lord, we love you and we thank you for loving us first. We pray in Jesus' name, amen.

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be yours. God bless you.