

Dustin Daniels | River Bible Church
Mark 15:20b-32 | The First Three Hours on the Cross
December 12, 2021

WELCOME:

- Please turn your Bibles to Mark 15:20-32
- Bibles in back—our gift to you.

REVIEW:

We continue our verse by verse study in the Gospel of Mark this morning.

We are in the middle of what is termed "*The Passion of Jesus Christ.*"

The passion marks the last 24 hours of Jesus' life.

So let's do a quick review.

Jesus was praying in the Garden of Gethsemane.

He was arrested ~~by~~ Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him.

He was tried by the Jewish leaders three times, found innocent each time, but declared guilty.

Jesus was then tried by the Roman secular authorities, declared not guilty, but sentenced to die via crucifixion anyway.

We discussed how Jesus' passion doesn't only deal with the physical brutality that He endured but includes the emotional shame of being mocked, laughed at, and spit upon.

Last Sunday, we discussed how and why there was purpose in Jesus' passion.

The Passion of Jesus Christ was to save sinners from a very real place called hell.

Reconcile
to being

God's making

And to do that, it cost Him, His his perfect life in place of our wretched life.

For

Lastly, we discussed how there is purpose in our suffering too.

God doesn't want you to waste your sour relationships with your kids.

God doesn't want you to waste your cancer. / sickness

God doesn't want you to waste any trial in your life.

Romans 8:28— We know that all things work together for the good of those who love God, who are called according to his purpose.

-All means All especially when we can't see it.

I pray that those of you saw God working in your lives last week—when it came to a God Intersection / Divine Disruption with someone who is lost and doesn't have hope for tomorrow—

Someone that God pointed out to you that was hungry and thirsty for the One True Living God—

That you engaged in that conversation and were able to plant the seed—that their broken life can have a purpose too.

It is so cool how God uses us to spread the Gospel— despite us.

INTRODUCTION:

Well, today, we're going to study the first three hours of Jesus' crucifixion.

We're also going to meet two people who get saved by this Gospel that we talk about so much.

We could say that one man had a divine disruption to his life.

The other man, hmm, we would say that he most certainly had a God Intersection.

One that he was not looking forward to—but changed the last moments of his life and certainly his eternal life.

Who are these two men, and why do you care?

Please stand for the reading and honoring of God's Word.

SCRIPTURE: Mark 15:20b-32 CSB

Mark 15:20b— After they had mocked him, they stripped him of the purple robe and put his clothes on him. They led him out to crucify him.

Mark 15:21— They forced a man coming in from the country, who was passing by, to carry Jesus's cross. He was Simon of Cyrene, the father of Alexander and Rufus.

Mark 15:22— They brought Jesus to the place called Golgotha (which means Place of the Skull).

Mark 15:23— They tried to give him wine mixed with myrrh, but he did not take it.

Mark 15:24— Then they crucified him and divided his clothes, casting lots for them to decide what each would get.

Mark 15:25— Now it was nine in the morning when they crucified him.

Mark 15:26— The inscription of the charge written against him was: The King of the Jews.

Mark 15:27— They crucified two criminals, with him, one on his right and one on his left.

Mark 15:28 NASB— [And the Scripture was fulfilled which says, "And He was numbered with transgressors."]

Mark 15:29— Those who passed by were yelling insults at him, shaking their heads, and saying, "Ha! The one who would destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days,

Mark 15:30— save yourself by coming down from the cross!"

Mark 15:31— In the same way, the chief priests with the scribes were mocking him among themselves and saying, "He saved others, but he cannot save himself!

Mark 15:32— Let the Messiah, the King of Israel, come down now from the cross, so that we may see and believe." Even those who were crucified with him taunted him.

PRAY:

Father, we're going to dive head first into the crucifixion of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ this morning. Please prepare our hearts and minds.

EXEGESIS:

Mark 15:20b—They led him out to crucify him.

The Romans generally didn't delay executing someone once they've been sentenced to death via crucifixion.

Led him out—The execution squad that we discussed last week consisted of four soldiers and a Centurion who oversees the execution.

These men are not merely leading Jesus out of Jerusalem to Golgotha—

They are leading him through the busiest roads in Jerusalem.

They want the most people possible to see what happens when you don't bow the knee to Caesar.

Obviously, this practice instilled fear into everyone—and that was the whole point.

The actual site of the crucifixion is traditionally associated with Mount Moriah.

Mount Moriah is where Abraham was commanded to sacrifice his son Isaac.

However, many years later, on that same hill, God sacrificed His own Son.

No angel came to stop it *As w/ Abraham*

Mark 15:21— *They forced a man coming in from the country, who was passing by, to carry Jesus's cross. He was Simon of Cyrene, the father of Alexander and Rufus.*

Now, this is a fascinating verse. Let's spend some time breaking it down.

Mark 15:21— *They forced a man...*

The picture that Mark is communicating here is the same picture in which slaves and animals were forced to go to their slaughter.

The Romans had the authority to tell the Jews to do anything at any time.

Mark 15:21— They forced a man coming in from the country,

This man is not from Israel.

He is one of the hundreds of thousands of people who came to celebrate Passover.

He is a pilgrim who has traveled from his own country.

Mark 15:21— who was passing by...

Who passed by— it implies that the man was chosen at random.

In other words
This passerby has no personal connection with Jesus.

Mark 15:21— They forced a man coming in from the country, who was passing by, to carry Jesus's cross.

Imagine the scene—this man who has come from his own country to celebrate Passover is on his way into the city of Jerusalem.

He accidentally runs into this mob of people, so he stops and tries to get out of the way.

As the crowd gets closer, he sees the soldiers yelling and laughing at this man on His way to be crucified.

He sees the crowd shouting at him. He sees the professional mourners crying and weeping...

And then he sees this pitiful looking flogged body that somewhat resembles a human being—

Moving incredibly slowly, carrying the horizontal piece to a Roman cross.

this man realizes it - He himself,

Before ~~he knows it~~, he's being ordered by the Centurion to help this unrecognizable person carry that cross.

Can you guess what was going through his mind? Not me!

Mark 15:21— He was Simon of Cyrene, the father of Alexander and Rufus.

This scenario may seem random to the world, but there are no coincidences in the kingdom of God.

Mark goes out of his way to give us great personal detail of this man.

First, we know his first name— Simon.

Note here that our Gospel writer, Mark, is making a point.

There are four soldiers; we don't know any of their names.

There is the Centurion—we don't know his name.

We will meet two criminals who will be crucified with Jesus—we don't know their names either.

So what's going on here?

Simon—It's a very common Jewish name.

It would be like us saying—"Hey, you know Joe, don't you.?"

Joe, who?

Same thing here—Simone of Cyrene!

Oh, that Joe.

Who is this Simon of Cyrene?

Simon was a Jew.

He lived in North Africa in what is now the country of Libya near the capital city of Tripoli.

Libya is a long way from Jerusalem, my friends.

3 hour flight - 35 hour drive

This man walked over 1200 miles to celebrate Passover.

Mark's Gospel says that Simon *just happened to be passing by*. Why?

Well, because hundreds of thousands of pilgrims traveled from all over to attend the Passover.

So with the city of Jerusalem flooded with that many people— it was impossible to house everyone within the city walls.

To house all the pilgrims and visitors, they built massive tent cities outside Jerusalem.

On the first day of Passover, when the special Passover sacrifice was offered, many Jews came into the city to watch this event.

There's a very good chance that Simon was on his way to watch this Passover event when he was forced to carry Jesus' cross.

Mark is the only Gospel writer who says that Simon was the father of Alexander and Rufus.

Rufus is an interchangeable name for Reuben—one of the tribes of Israel.

So that tells us something about Simon's character, doesn't it?

So the question becomes, “Why is Mark including this man’s name, where he’s from, and the names of his sons?”

Mark wrote his Gospel from Rome, and Mark’s original audience was to the Romans.

Mark wrote this letter between AD 50ish-60ish

So there’s been a lot of ministry going on for the past 20-25 years after Jesus’ death and resurrection.

Secondly, we also know that the Apostle Paul also wrote to the Romans around the same timeframe.

Paul just so happens to mention a man named Rufus in Romans 16:13.

Wow! What a coincidence.

Romans 16:13— Greet Rufus, chosen in the Lord; also his mother—and mine.

This particular Rufus could have been Simon’s son.

If so, this event of Simon carrying Jesus’ cross led to the salvation of Simon, his wife, and his two sons.

Rufus is now a leader at the church in Rome.
Not only that, in Acts 11:19, there’s a church in Cyrene.

Rufus’ mother is so dear to Paul that he calls her his own mother.

It gets better; this church is sending preachers to Antioch.

In Acts 13, we read of other prophets, teachers, and missionaries—specifically Lucius of Cyrene.

Lu-shi-us

Pause...is it possible that all this happened because this man named Simon from Cyrene **just happened to be passing by Jesus** during His crucifixion?

No dear friends, there are no coincidences in the Kingdom of God.

This event was scheduled on God's calendar before the foundation of the world.

This is what we call a "divine disruption" to Simon's life this day.

Is your God that big?

I wonder what it was that caused Simon to become a Believer.

I wonder about the exact moment.

Simon did witness Jesus' crucifixion first hand.

The Disciples can't say that.

He had a front-row seat to the last hours of Jesus' life—whether he liked it or not.

Simon saw that Jesus did not act like the other two men beside him as they were also dying.

Bease
People being crucified often yelled and screamed obscenities at their executioners and the people walking by.

Sometimes the vulgarities were so bad that soldiers cut out their tongues to shut them up.

As we know, Jesus did not yell, scream or curse.

In fact, he did the very opposite.

He prayed for His enemies as he was gasping for breath hanging from the cross.

Father, forgive them, because they do not know what they are doing. (Luke 23:34)

~~It's very possible that as Simon watched this horrible and dramatic scene that he might have been saved that very day.~~

Back to our text...

Mark 15:21—They forced a man coming in from the country, who was passing by, to carry Jesus's cross.

Mark doesn't tell why Jesus doesn't carry his own cross, but it is easy to guess. He is either too weak or too slow from the flogging.

BTW, we're familiar with the Scripture passages that discuss taking up your cross and following Jesus—Simon of Cyrene becomes the first person in Mark literally to fulfill that command.

Most likely, Jesus has been awake for the past 24 hours at this point.

Remember, He was arrested in the middle of the night and went through six trials that made a mockery out of justice.

He's been mocked, humiliated, flogged, and humiliated, and beaten some more.

Now he's being asked to carry the horizontal beam of a Roman cross which weighs anywhere from 80 to 100 pounds.

In the movies, we see Jesus carrying the whole cross; that's not accurate as the full cross weighs around 300 pounds.

Mark 15:22— They brought Jesus to the place called Golgotha (which means Place of the Skull).

The Aramaic name literally means **Skull**;

In Latin, it's *calvus* — where we get *Calvary*— meaning “scalp,” or “bald head.

The name itself refers to the shape of the hill because the physical location of Golgotha looked like a skull.

Based on Jewish History, tradition, and archaeological evidence, it is said that the Church of the Holy Sepulcher (Sep-ul-ker) marks the actual spots of Jesus's death and burial.

Mark 15:23— They tried to give him wine mixed with myrrh, but he did not take it.

Matthew's Gospel says that He tasted it but spit it out. (27:34).

Jesus rejected anything that would cloud his mind or deaden the pain of his suffering.

He did the very opposite of what we would do.

Once he tasted it, Jesus knew it was a narcotic.

It's a very bitter-tasting doped version of wine.

It's important to note this is not an act of kindness from the Roman soldiers.

It was provided to make their job easier. During the crucifixion

The soldiers don't want to fight people nailing them to the cross—

So they gave Jesus this concoction to better handle him physically.

But Jesus doesn't rely on a narcotic to finish what He started.

He obviously doesn't fight with the soldiers.

Jesus is going to remain perfectly obedient to the Father's will without any of the world's mind-numbing substances.

+ **Mark 15:24**— *Then they crucified him and divided his clothes, casting lots for them to decide what each would get.*

Once again, this is all we get from our Gospel writer regarding the actual crucifixion.

Mark's original readers knew exactly what verse 24 means.

In fact, it's estimated that Rome had crucified 30,000 people in Israel alone by the time of Christ.

After the fall of Jerusalem in a.d. 70, however, the Romans crucified so many Jewish rebels that they ran short on lumber to make crosses.

Let me just say a few things about the act of crucifixion.

Most paintings and movies get this wrong, so let me share some thoughts.

The nails were anywhere from five to seven inches long.

Think of ~~them~~ They resemble a railroad spike today.

These ~~nails~~ ^{spikes} were driven through the wrists—not the palms of Jesus' hands.

There's no way that his hand would support the weight of His body slumping forward.

Jesus' feet were nailed to the cross with a single spike.

Once Jesus was nailed to the cross, the cross was then slowly raised until it was vertical.


The bottom of the cross was dropped into place in a deep posthole, landing with a violent thud that sent excruciating pain jolting through Jesus' body.

Here's the thing...even though the wounds from the nails caused severe agony, they were not intended to be fatal.

The normal cause of death by crucifixion was suffocation.

The way the body was positioned on the cross made it impossible to breathe.

Jesus
His knees were bent just enough so that he could push himself up— placing all his weight on the nails to breathe and causing agonizing pain.

 **Mark 15:24**— ...divided his clothes, casting lots for them to decide what each would get.

It was customary for the execution squad to take the victim's clothing.

We see more irony here.

Remember how the woman with the hemorrhage knew that if she touched the fringe of Jesus' robe, she would be healed...and she was. (Mark 5:27; 6:56)

In the Transfiguration, Jesus' clothes became so white/pure/raidian that no human launderer could achieve that. (Mark 9:3).

Now Roman Soldiers Are Gambling for Them

Now his clothes are taken from him again and are raffled off at the foot of his cross.

Jesus is completely naked fulfilling Scripture.

Psalm 22:18—They divided my garments among themselves, and they cast lots for my clothing.

Scripture tells us what would happen before it happened.

Mark 15:25— Now it was nine in the morning when they crucified him.

The crucifixion took place on Friday, now known as Good Friday.

Mark specifically mentions the time because it is significant. ^{EXACT} Why?

At 9:00am on the first day of Passover, the priests offered up a special Passover sacrifice.

This is probably where Simon the Cyrene was heading before his divine disruption.

So Picture the scene.

As man was sacrificing this very special sacrifice at the Temple—

[It just so happens] at the same exact time—that The Lamb of God was offered up as God's sacrifice as well.

↳ what a coincidence!

Mark 15:26— The inscription of the charge written against him was: The King of the Jews.

A Roman officer would typically walk in front of the condemned carrying a wooden placard that stated his crime.

In Jesus' case, the placard read "JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS" (John 19:19).

Now you may remember that the Jewish leaders wanted the placard changed.

John 19:21—"Don't write, 'The king of the Jews,' but that he said, 'I am the king of the Jews.' "

John 19:22—" Pilate replied, "What I have written, I have written."

Pilate says, "*Tough. You knuckleheads blackmail me into doing all this, I'm not changing a thing.*"

Pilate wanted to insult the Jews one last time—and by doing so, proclaimed Jesus' true identity: *to the world.*

Mark 15:27— They crucified two criminals with ^{Jews} him, one on his right and one on his left.

Jesus had spent his entire ministry in the company of sinners.

It seems fitting that The Father would ordain Jesus to die between two sinners.

Mark 15:28 NASB— [And the Scripture was fulfilled which says, "And He was numbered with transgressors."]

The statement in verse 28 is not in the earliest manuscripts, so it was likely not part of Mark's original Gospel, causing many translations to place it in brackets or footnote it. *of Mark*

Nonetheless, it is in Isaiah 53:12. *-So it doesn't impact the authenticity or the infallibility of God's Word.*

Mark 15:29— Those who passed by were yelling insults at him, shaking their heads, and saying, "Ha! The one who would destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days,

Jesus ^{endures} suffers more mockery as he ^{suffers} slowly dying.

Golgotha was near a main road leading to Jerusalem.

The city gates were opened on Passover morning, and traffic flowed in and out.

As people walked by, they read the placard above Jesus' head.

Shaking/wagging their heads—a familiar Old Testament gesture of scorn and ridicule (2 Kings 19:21; Ps. 109:25; Lam. 2:15).

To shake the head means to say no—I won't do this or that—I won't believe.

More OT. Prophecy fulfillment.
Psalm 22:7—Everyone who sees me mocks me; they sneer and shake their heads:

I don't agree
Mark 15:30— save yourself by coming down from the cross!"

So these random people walking by in verse 30 are tempting Jesus.

This is yet another temptation for Jesus.

Satan tempted Jesus to bypass the suffering.

It's similar to the temptation in the Garden of Gethsemane—to avoid "the cup" of suffering.

KEYPOINT 1:

~~Your life must be filled with times of suffering.~~

As a Christian your life must also be filled w/ times of suffering.

Please don't believe these YouTube preachers are lying to you—saying that you are out of God's will or that God is mad at you because you're suffering. *-that's a lie.*

This is not your best life now—that life is to come.

In the crowd's minds, how is it possible that Jesus could heal so many people and cast out demons—and yet not have or not use that same power to save himself.

They falsely believe that if His power has left Him, then the source of power was not from God.

In other words, Jesus was a liar—The last three years were a big magic trick. *HOAX*

Mark 15:31—In the same way, the chief priests with the scribes were mocking him among themselves and saying, "He saved others, but he cannot save himself!"

The first taunt was by laypeople.

The second is by the religious leaders.

Picture the scene; these men are *mocking* ^{Jesus} among themselves—

They're standing around in their unholy huddles, staring at Jesus, *mocking* Him. *pointing, laughing*

In other words, "Since he cannot save himself he really never did save anyone else."

KEYPOINT 2:

It's because Jesus refused to save Himself that He is able to save others.

Jesus can't do both at this moment.

He either saves himself or saves humanity.

Jesus can't do both at the same exact time.

If Jesus is to make atonement for sins, He must use His power to sacrifice Himself and appear to be utterly helpless.

BTW, Jesus doesn't need a savior; He is the savior.

And this is the price that the Savior paid to free us from our sin.

Sacrifice is at the heart of all salvation.

For us to live, we must first die. And it all started w/ Jesus.

Mark 15:32— *Let the Messiah, the King of Israel, come down now from the cross, so that we may see and believe." Even those who were crucified with him taunted him.*

The Religious people think they are still in control—"come down NOW."

They're still telling Jesus what to do.

Religious people think they're always in control.

Religious people falsely believe that they have the inside track with God because they pick and choose what commands to follow from Scripture.

Not only that, but if you're not following their rules the right way, they'll use Scripture to beat you down— instead of lifting you up.

KEYPOINT 3:

Run away from religious people.

What do I mean? Those people who insist that you have to follow rules to earn God's favor.

That's a heavy burden—Jesus said that His burden is light. (Matthew 11:30)

Grace is light. ^{- Run to the cross} Run away from religious people! Their burden is a death sentence.

+ v. 32 - Even those crucified w/ him taunted him.
The third sets of taunts are stranger than fiction. - You can't make this up.
Mocking? See 1-

They come from Cheech and Chong, who are nearly dead on Jesus' right and left hanging from their own crosses.

Mark get's our attention by focusing on the mockery once again.

Mark shows us ~~just~~ how Jesus is entirely alone. at this moment.

Jesus has no one. He's been abandoned by everyone.

The Gospel of Luke tells the rest of the story.

+ **Luke 23:39**— Then one of the criminals hanging there began to yell insults at him: "Aren't you the Messiah? Save yourself and us!"

+ **Luke 23:40**— But the other answered, rebuking him: "Don't you even fear God, since you are undergoing the same punishment?"

+ **Luke 23:41**— We are punished justly, because we're getting back what we deserve for the things we did, but this man has done nothing wrong."

+ **Luke 23:42**— Then he said, "Jesus, remember me, when you come into your kingdom."

Pause...this man just got saved.

BTW, religious people hate that.

Religious people hate the fact that

One moment he is a blaspheming thief hurling insults at the One True Living God, and the next moment he...believes! Just like that - GRACE!

Now, he's a child of God. You're going to meet him very soon in Heaven.

No works needed. → Just belief

No baptism to get saved—no Lord's Supper—no membership class. → No sinners prayer!

He did exactly as Scripture states.

Just a confession that he is a sinner and belief that Jesus is God. (John 3:16)

Luke 23:43— And he said to him, "Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise."

Dang! Let's not forget that Jesus did the same for you. - GRACE!

Remember when James and John brought their mommy to ask them if they could be at Jesus left and right in Jesus' Kingdom.

How did Jesus respond to that request?

Mark 10:38— Jesus said to them, "You don't know what you're asking. Are you able to drink the cup I drink or to be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with?"

Cup = baptism

Those are synonyms for suffering.

Mark 10:39— "We are able," they told him.

They are able? they're not even there.

Really? If they're able, then where are they? They're MIA.

The way to the Kingdom of God is the way of the cross.

Next Sunday, we'll discuss the final three hours of Jesus' life on the cross.

the final 3 hours is when God the Father shows up.

PREACH

I want to end today's sermon on...

KEYPOINT 2:

It's because Jesus refused to save Himself that He is able to save others.

I mentioned that Jesus couldn't do both at the same time.

Jesus had to be slain as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world first.

2 Corinthians 5:21— He made the one who did not know sin to be sin (offering) for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

Do you see the order there?

A sacrifice must first be made.

I find it interesting that through our latest Bible study of Experiencing God with Henry Blackaby—

That we learned that as individuals, we also can't walk with Jesus and stay where we are at the same time.

Jesus can't save Himself and sinners at the same time.

It's the same thing corporately as the church—we can't play church and be the church at the same time either.

All that to say this—are you expecting [Simone of Cyrene] to show up in your life?

Are you ready for a divine disruption this week that will change another person's eternal destiny?

I pray that you are!

Benetto
PRAYER

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. (2 Corinthians 13:14)

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