

Lead me to the Cross Part 2: The Injustice of the Cross

In my first message of this series, we looked in the Scriptures in relation to the question: Why the Cross? We learned why God established the Old Testament sacrificial systems. The Scriptures showed us that “life is in the blood” (**Leviticus 17:11**) and that is why blood must be shed. We discovered why it was necessary for Jesus to die in our place, because we can’t pay for the debt of our sins.

In part two of this series, I want to look at the Injustice of the Cross. While the Cross was something that worked out well for us, it came at the highest cost possible for Jesus. Jesus took on the greatest injustice the world has ever seen or any man has ever experienced.

I showed a picture last week that really was only a “glimpse” of what Jesus went through physically for us enduring the Cross and everything that led up to it. He went through so much more. It’s very important that we don’t try to minimize it or shy away from it. We need to know everything that Jesus went through (which was *not just* physical) and WHY He went through it!

Let’s begin with his betrayal and arrest. At the Last Supper (Passover meal) with His disciples, Jesus tells them that one of them will betray Him. Judas leaves to make his arrangements with the Pharisees and the Temple guard, who ultimately will take Jesus into custody.

The rest of the Disciples proceed with Jesus to the Garden of Gethsemane. Jesus spends an agonizing time in prayer, where He sweats drops of blood (severe stress can cause this). His closest Disciples can’t even stay awake to pray with Him. Judas shows up with the Temple Guard, and betrays Jesus with a kiss. What was culturally a greeting of Shalom or peace, was used by Judas to identify Jesus and start Him on a path of unspeakable violence.

Jesus is brought before an illegal court and trial. At least 18 Mosaic laws were violated or broken during the trial of Jesus. Among those, Jesus was falsely accused and physically assaulted. He was mocked as He was struck as they said, “If you are the Messiah, Prophesy, who hit you?” During His trial, Peter denies Jesus one time at the House of Annas, and then two times at the House of Caiaphas.

Jesus is sent to Pilate and then to Herod, where He is mocked and back to Pilate. Pilate has Jesus scourged 39 times with a cat-of-nine tails, which are thick leather straps that have embedded sharp metal and bone in them and a lead ball on the end of each strap. This resulted in the flesh being cut so severely that veins, arteries, and sometimes even inner organs were exposed.

Pilate attempts several times to have Jesus released, but the Pharisees protest and incite the crowd to have Barabbas (a murderer) released instead of Jesus. The Pharisees commit blasphemy and force Pilate to have Jesus crucified. Pilate’s soldiers mock Jesus and dress Him as a “King” with a crown of thorns, a scarlet robe and a stick (a pretend scepter).

Jesus has to carry His cross down what is now known as the Via De La Rosa, the road of suffering out of the city of Jerusalem to Golgotha, the Hill of the Skull, where crucifixions are carried out by the Romans.

He doesn't have enough strength to do this, so Simon of Cyrene is forced to carry Jesus' Cross to Golgotha. Once there, Jesus is nailed to the Cross naked and again openly mocked by the soldiers, the Pharisees and the crowd. He embraced the shame of a public execution among actual criminals. He forgives them all, saying ***"Father, forgive them, they know not what they do."*** (Luke 23:34)

Jesus was on the Cross for about 6 hours til He finally died. Crucifixion was a brutal form of both torture and execution, it was a slow, agonizing death, where you constantly had to push up with your feet which both were pierced through with a large nail in order to take a breath because the positioning of your outstretched arms brought your weight down upon your chest making it very hard to expand your ribcage; not to mention Jesus' back which had just been flayed pushing up against a rough piece of wood each time He took a breath.

All of His Disciples had abandoned him, with the exception of John. Jesus even felt at one point like the Father had even abandoned Him. ***"About the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, "ELI, ELI, LAMA SABACHTHANI?" that is, "MY GOD, MY GOD, WHY HAVE YOU FORSAKEN ME?"***

He finally gives His Spirit into the Father's hands, declares "It is finished" and breathes His last.

I wanted you to see the just in the final days and hours of His life, the Injustice that Jesus embraced for you and I. The only sinless, perfect man to ever walk the face of this earth took all of that upon Himself. He was falsely accused and arrested so that we could walk free. He was sinless and innocent, we were sinners and guilty. He took on our guilt, shame and condemnation, so that we could have justification and peace. He died in our place, so that we could be forgiven.

Isaiah 53 is a Messianic prophecy that shows us what the Messiah would do. Remember, almost everyone at the time that the Messiah would come as a Warrior, a Conqueror like David or at least a deliverer like Moses, but Jesus came as the Lamb, a Suffering Servant:

[SLIDE] Who has believed our report? And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed? For He grew up before Him like a tender shoot, and like a root out of dry ground; He has no stately form or majesty that we would look at Him, nor an appearance that we would take pleasure in Him. He was despised and abandoned by men, a man of great pain and familiar with sickness; and like one from whom people hide their faces, He was despised, and we had no regard for Him. However, it was our sicknesses that He Himself bore, And our pains that He carried; Yet we ourselves assumed that He had been afflicted, Struck down by God, and humiliated. But He was pierced for our offenses, He was crushed for our wrongdoings;

The punishment for our well-being was laid upon Him, and by His wounds we are healed. All of us, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; But the LORD has caused the wrongdoing of us all to fall on Him. He was oppressed and afflicted, yet He did not open His mouth; Like a lamb that is led to slaughter, and like a sheep that is silent before its shearers, so He did not open His mouth. By oppression and judgment, He was taken away; and as for His generation, who considered that He was cut off from the land of the living For the wrongdoing of my people, to whom the blow was due?

And His grave was assigned with wicked men, yet He was with a rich man in His death, Because He had done no violence, nor was there any deceit in His mouth. But the LORD desired to crush Him, causing Him grief; If He renders Himself as a guilt offering, He will see His offspring, He will prolong His days, and the good pleasure of the LORD will prosper in His hand. As a result of the anguish of His soul, He will see it and be satisfied; By His knowledge the Righteous One, My Servant, will justify the many, for He will bear their wrongdoings. Therefore, I will allot Him a portion with the great, and He will divide the plunder with the strong, because He poured out His life unto death, and was counted with wrongdoers; Yet He Himself bore the sin of many, and interceded for the wrongdoers.

Many in the Christian world and even outside of the Church have problems with this chapter, because it seems like the Father was the One forcing Jesus the Messiah into all of this pain, sacrifice, torture and death. But that is not the case. Jesus agreed to this plan before the “foundations of the world” (**Revelation 13:8**). God is not a sadist or an abusive Father. Jesus Himself, even declared knowing the plan was to go to the Cross:

“For this reason the Father loves Me, because I lay down My life so that I may take it again. No one has taken it away from Me, but I lay it down on My own initiative. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This commandment I received from My Father.” -John 10:17, 18

Jesus willingly took our place. He was the Lamb of God, sacrificed so that we could be cleansed, forgiven, healed and set free. Jesus had His eyes on the prize, and that prize was mankind.

“...fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame...” -Hebrews 12:2

God isn't just loving, He is love; It would be unloving for the Father to force Jesus to go to the Cross. Jesus had to volunteer for it, which He did. God doesn't just bring about justice, He is just; and it would have been unjust to torture and kill an innocent man.

“Righteousness and justice are the foundation of Your throne; Lovingkindness and truth go before You.” -Psalm 89:14

Consider all that Jesus willingly went through for us. Not *just* to forgive us of our sins and give us a place in heaven when we die, ***but to show us how to live!***

A running list of some, but not all, of what Jesus went through: He was betrayed, forgotten, denied, abandoned, rejected, scoffed at, mocked on several different occasions, assaulted, falsely accused, scourged, made fun of, lied about, beaten, shamed and killed.

What is our response when any of these lighter things may happen to us? What is our response to betrayal? To feeling abandoned? To being mocked? To being falsely accused? To being lied about?

Do we respond like Jesus? Do we respond the way the Word of God commands us to?

“Father, forgive them, they know not what they do.” (Luke 23:34)

“For we know Him who said, ‘VENGEANCE IS MINE, I WILL REPAY.’ And again, ‘THE LORD WILL JUDGE HIS PEOPLE.’ -Hebrews 10:30

“If your enemy is hungry, give him food to eat; And if he is thirsty, give him water to drink; For you will heap burning coals on his head, and the LORD will reward you.” -Proverbs 25:21, 22

“Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy... Blessed are you when people insult you and persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great; for in the same way, they persecuted the prophets who were before you.” -Matthew 5:7; 11, 12

“You have heard that it was said, ‘AN EYE FOR AN EYE, AND A TOOTH FOR A TOOTH.’ But I say to you, do not resist an evil person; but whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also. If anyone wants to sue you and take your shirt, let him have your coat also. Whoever forces you to go one mile, go with him two. Give to him who asks of you, and do not turn away from him who wants to borrow from you.”

“You have heard that it was said, ‘YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR and hate your enemy.’ But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? -Matthew 5:38-46

“Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse.” -Romans 12:14

“But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High; for He Himself is kind to ungrateful and evil men. Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful. Do not judge, and you will not be judged; and do not condemn, and you will not be condemned; pardon, and you will be pardoned. -Luke 6:35-37

See to it that no one comes short of the grace of God; that no root of bitterness springing up causes trouble, and by it many be defiled...” -Hebrews 12:15

In this world, you will have tribulation, temptation, persecution, injustice... will you be like Jesus?

“For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps, WHO COMMITTED NO SIN, NOR WAS ANY DECEIT FOUND IN HIS MOUTH; and while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously; and He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed. For you were continually straying like sheep, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Guardian of your souls. -1st Peter 2:21-25

Yes, we should be extremely grateful for ALL that Jesus did for us leading to and on the Cross, but... we need to understand that God expects us to respond to all of our injustices the same way that Jesus did.

God does not look lightly upon our anger, our bitterness, our malice, our slander, our lack of grace, our unforgiveness, our judgment, our lying, our coldness, our avoidance, our disputes, our strife, our division, our jealousy, our envy, our dissensions, our manipulation, our challenging each other, our lack of mercy and our lack of love.

If you have been hurt and wounded, God wants to heal your heart; but in order to be healed, we must deal with these things, we must own our responses that have been in the flesh and not in the Spirit. We must repent. We must forgive. The altar is open this morning.