

Sermons on Matthew

To Golgotha

Matthew 27:27-34

A Sermon for Children

With Study Questions

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Matthew 27:27-34

Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the Praetorium and gathered the whole garrison around Him. ²⁸ And they stripped Him and put a scarlet robe on Him. ²⁹ When they had twisted a crown of thorns, they put *it* on His head, and a reed in His right hand. And they bowed the knee before Him and mocked Him, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!" ³⁰ Then they spat on Him, and took the reed and struck Him on the head. ³¹ And when they had mocked Him, they took the robe off Him, put His *own* clothes on Him, and led Him away to be crucified.

³² Now as they came out, they found a man of Cyrene, Simon by name. Him they compelled to bear His cross. ³³ And when they had come to a place called Golgotha, that is to say, Place of a Skull, ³⁴ they gave Him sour wine mingled with gall to drink. But when He had tasted *it*, He would not drink (Matthew 27:27-34).

Introduction

His friends had abandoned, denied and betrayed Him. The religious leaders lied about Him to the governor. The governor knowingly condemned an innocent man and had Jesus whipped before sending Him to the cross.

The Jewish law allowed only thirty-nine stripes when a person was whipped. The Romans were not limited to the number of times they could whip Jesus. The Psalmist compared the back of Jesus to a field that had been plowed.

The plowers plowed on my back; they made their furrows long (Psalm 129:3).

They plucked out His beard (Isaiah 50:6). Jesus was so tortured that you would have been able to count all of His bones (Psalm 22:17). The prophet Isaiah uses these events to express how God saves us when he wrote, "**And by His Stripes we are healed**" (Isaiah 53:5). Isaiah goes on to

explain in the next verse what he meant by that, writing “**And the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all**” (Isaiah 53:6).

In other words, the healing Isaiah talks about is the eternal healing that comes when our sins are forgiven and we receive eternal life because of what Jesus endured for us. So allow me to ask a couple of trick questions here in order for us to better understand what Jesus did in order to save us:

#1. Are Christians actually saved by the stripes of Jesus? No. If Jesus was scourged and then set free, the scourging would not have saved us.

#2. Are we saved by the cross of Christ? No. The cross was a wooden structure.

#3. Are we saved by the blood of Christ? No. If Jesus were to cut Himself for us—and even pour out most of His blood, that wouldn’t save us.

The Bible often uses these things (His stripes, His cross, His blood) to express in one statement all that Jesus did for us. To save us, Jesus was born, lived, died and rose again.

But there is little doubt that the events leading up to the cross, on the cross and after the cross are the heart of what was needed for sinners to be saved. And it can easily be argued that the suffering of Jesus on the cross (where the Apostle’s Creed says He descended into hell) is beyond human understanding.

The Apostle Paul wrote that Jesus became sin (literally He was “made sin” (*hamartian epoiesen*)—2 Corinthians 5:21). The Apostle Peter wrote that Jesus “**carried our sins in His body on the cross**” (1 Peter 2:24). Because of our sins, we deserved to go to hell but Jesus was punished in our place.

Think about the love the Father and the Son has for you and me; the love of Jesus giving His life for us (the Bible says there is no greater love—John 15:13) and the love of the Father who sent His Son to do this and then let it—ordained it—to take place.

I think God created families in order for us to understand Him better. It would be very difficult for me to give my life for another person; but the idea of giving up the life of one of my children for another person or

people – there is just nobody I love that much that I could do that. But this is how God expresses His love for us.

For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. ¹⁷ For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved (John 3:16).

What we have in the passage before us, are not events which actually saved us, even though (as we have shown) are used to bring out attention to Christ's suffering resulting in our salvation. This passage records the brief period between the time when Jesus was condemned and crucified – a period of time when He was at the mercy of Roman soldiers.

Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the Praetorium and gathered the whole garrison around Him (Matthew 27:27).

The Praetorium

The Praetorium was a large area (maybe attached the residence of Pilate) where an entire garrison (one-tenth of a legion – probably about 600 soldiers) gathered around Jesus.

These soldiers ignorantly and viciously, in their mockery of Jesus, fulfill what the Bible said evil men would do and unwittingly provide illustrations for His majesty and sacrifice.

And they stripped Him and put a scarlet robe on Him. ²⁹ When they had twisted a crown of thorns, they put *it* on His head, and a reed in His right hand. And they bowed the knee before Him and mocked Him, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!" ³⁰ Then they spat on Him, and took the reed and struck Him on the head. ³¹ And when they had mocked Him, they took the robe off Him, put His *own* clothes on Him, and led Him away to be crucified (Matthew 27:28-31).

Naked

We first read that they stripped Jesus. This brings us all the way back to the Garden of Eden. After disobediently eating of the fruit, the very first experience of Adam and Eve was that **“they knew that they were naked”** (Genesis 3:7) and sought to hide their shame by covering themselves with fig leaves.

Sometimes people have dreams of being naked in public places. The shameful discomfort should serve to remind us of the shame we would all have in standing before God apart from being clothed in Christ. To be clothed in Christ means to believe in Him – to trust in Him as Savior and Master.

A Scarlet Robe

They put a scarlet robe on Him (perhaps the one received from Herod – Luke 23:11) in order to aid in making fun of Him. These men who were soldiers in the most powerful army in the history of the world had no idea how small their nation was and how insignificant their king was in comparison to the Man they mocked.

Jesus would be adorned with a scarlet robe, we are told. It would be dipped in His own blood giving Him the power to save and the authority to judge.

Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him *was* called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war. ¹² His eyes *were* like a flame of fire, and on His head *were* many crowns. He had a name written that no one knew except Himself. ¹³ He *was* clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God. ¹⁴ And the armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, followed Him on white horses. ¹⁵ Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations. And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron. He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. ¹⁶ And He has on *His* robe and on His thigh a name written:

KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS (Revelation 19:11-16).

People believe they can mock Jesus and never suffer the consequences. The Bible indicates that Jesus will be either your Savior or your Judge.

Thorns and a Reed

They twisted a crown of thorns and placed it on the head of Jesus, unwittingly reminding us of the curse of the fall of man.

Cursed is the ground for your sake; in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life.¹⁸ Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you, and you shall eat the herb of the field (Genesis 3:17, 18).

How God is like a master chessman who governs every move of His opponent. Those who oppose Him are then shocked to find not merely how weak and foolish it is to oppose Him who alone is wise, but how they themselves became mere pieces in His holy and righteous governing of all things.

So too with the reed – a plant they would stick in His hand (as a scepter) to aid in making light of His being called a king. Then they **“bowed the knee before Him and mocked Him, saying, “Hail, King of the Jews!”** How many times had these soldiers bowed before Caesar! His scepter, if it can be found, is a meaningless relic in a museum. Not so of Christ:

Your throne, O God, is forever and ever; a scepter of righteousness is the scepter of Your kingdom (Psalm 45:6).

They then spat on Him and took the reed and hit Him on the head. These are very personal and intimate insults. You must get very close to someone to spit on him, close enough to look him in the eye. John Calvin wrote:

Our filthiness deserves that God should hold it in abhorrence (disgust), and that all the angels should *spit* upon us; but Christ, in order to present us pure and unspotted in presence of the Father, resolved to be *spat upon*.¹

Now as they came out, they found a man of Cyrene, Simon by name. Him they compelled to bear His cross.³³ And when they had come to a place called Golgotha, that is to say, Place of a Skull,³⁴ they gave Him sour wine mingled with gall to drink. But when He had tasted *it*, He would not drink (Matthew 27:32-34).

Simon of Cyrene

We don't know much about this man named Simon. Cyrene was a city in North Africa populated with many Jews. Some speculate that Simon became a follower of Jesus.

We do know this, however – that all Christians are called to take their cross and follow Jesus.

And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me.³⁹ He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for My sake will find it (Matthew 10:38-39).

Taking up one's cross means you're willing to follow Jesus to His execution. And it is not merely giving up one's life, but one's *self*, since the word "life" here can be translated "soul" or "self." Rather than the popular headlong pursuit of finding oneself, Jesus teaches that we ought to lose or destroy (*ἀπολεῖ*) our own selves for His sake. And in doing so, true life is found.

Golgotha

Jesus was then brought to a place called Golgotha or Place of the Skull. Some believe it was so called because it had been a cemetery, others because it was shaped like a skull. The important thing for us to know is

¹Calvin, J. (1998). *Calvin's Commentaries: The Harmony of the Gospels : Calvin's Commentary on Matthew, Mark, and Luke* (electronic ed.). Logos Library System;Calvin's Commentaries. Albany, OR: Ages Software.

that Golgotha was outside the gates of the city. And why was this important?

For the bodies of those animals, whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin, are burned outside the camp. ¹² Therefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered outside the gate (Hebrews 13:11, 12).

The animals they sacrificed in the Old Testament were burned outside the camp of the city. Jesus was truly the reality to which all those sacrificed pointed. The body of Christ was crucified outside the gate, 'outside the camp,' indicating that it became unclean as it bore the people's sins.

To sanctify (*hagiase*) means to be made holy, to be set apart, to be picked up and placed somewhere else. But from what is it that we are set apart? By the grace of God we are set apart from sin, death and condemnation. We are set apart from everything that Jesus endured. Have you been sanctified by the blood and suffering of Christ? Have you, by the grace of God, been removed from sin, death and condemnation and delivered to righteousness, life and glory?

Blessed *are* those who do His commandments, that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter through the gates into the city. ¹⁵ But outside *are* dogs and sorcerers and sexually immoral and murderers and idolaters, and whoever loves and practices a lie (Revelation 22:14, 15).

Friends, we either trust in the Christ who suffered for us outside the gates of Jerusalem, or we are consigned to suffer outside the gates of God's eternal city – forever.

Questions for Study

1. Are Christians saved by the “stripes, cross or blood” of Jesus? Explain your answer (pages 2, 3)?
2. What did Jesus become for to save sinners (page 3)?
3. What did Jesus carry for us? Discuss what this means (pages 3, 4).
4. How do the above things express God’s love for us (page 4)?
5. What does the nakedness of Christ teach us (page 5)?
6. Discuss the different things a scarlet robe might represent (pages 5, 6).
7. What did the thorns and reed represent (pages 6, 7)?
8. What does it mean to take up your cross and follow Jesus (page 7)?
9. Why is Golgotha significant (pages 7, 8)?