

Title: How Will You respond to the Cross?

Text: Matthew 27:11-37

EASTER! What a glorious time of the year. And the month of March brings us into those days leading up to Resurrection Sunday. In a couple of weeks we shall gather together with the joyful announcement: HE IS RISEN! CHRIST IS RAISED INDEED!

Now, in preparation for resurrection Sunday, I have dealt with two subjects by asking two questions. 1<sup>st</sup>: Did Jesus really die? And 2<sup>nd</sup>: Who killed Jesus. ~~And~~ <sup>also</sup> many of us went to see the film, THE PASSION OF THE CHRIST. So, today, I would like to ask: HOW WILL YOU RESPOND TO ALL THAT WE HAVE BEEN STUDYING? HOW WILL YOU RESPOND TO THE CROSS, OR THE PASSION OF CHRIST?

Take your Bible, please, and turn with me to the Gospel of ~~Matthew~~ <sup>Matthew</sup>. The Gospel of ~~Matthew~~ <sup>Matthew</sup> chapter 27 beginning with vs. 11. Would you please stand for the reading of God's Word?

(Read ~~Mat. 27:11-37~~)

(Prayer)

I would like you to notice the response of various people to the crucifixion of Jesus. Many people try to blame a certain group for the death of Jesus. When in truth from a historical perspective everyone was involved. That includes the Jews, the Gentiles, the Roman soldiers and the religious leaders. Everyone was there and everyone was involved.

However, there were a few, not many, but a few who really believed and understood what was happening on that cross. Much like today. There are very few who really understand what Jesus was doing there on the cross. I hope you all understand. And if you haven't responded, yet, to the cross, I trust you will ~~make that decision~~ <sup>respond</sup>, today.

I would like you to notice several groups of people.

(1) First, the man Pilate. Pilate was the man according to vs 11, who said to Jesus, "ARE YOU THE KING OF THE JEWS?"

Now, let me remind you of what I shared a couple of weeks ago. According to history, Pilate was a compromiser from the word go. He was trying to use his appointed as governor of Palestine to further his political career. And he was always compromising in order to please the people. And he was always content to go along with the crowd.

Much like many people today. People who are faced with the fact that very few of their friends believe in Jesus Christ. And so they take the road of Pilate. They compromise what they believe. And they find it hard to take a stand when they know and see truth because of what the crowd or their friends might think.

Often times you find yourself, at least men do, in a barbershop. And the barbershop seems to be the one place where men talk about what they like. And I am always amused that when the name of Jesus comes up there develops a deadly silence. No one wants to talk anymore. And the individual Christian, with three or four men there in the shop, is faced with a similar decision that Pilate had. Should he speak up and do what he knows is right and possible suffer the rebuke of the crowd. Or, should he go along with the crowd and remain silent?

In Mark 15:15 we read that Pilate "willing to satisfy the people, released Barabbas unto them." Dear friends, please don't excuse Pilate simply because he went along with what the religious leaders were saying. Please don't excuse Pilate because of his willingness to satisfy the people and release Barabbas unto them, because remember this: Pilate is the one who gave the order to scourge and crucify Jesus. And he did so because he was content to go along with the people. He compromised, in other words.

Dear friends, you will not know what sins you will go into, if you comprise at the point of truth. Pilate was involved in the crucifixion. And as many have suggested, perhaps Pilate is spending eternity in Hell trying to wash his hands of the guilt of that occasion. For it was Pilate who gave the order for Jesus to be crucified. Oh, yes, it was to go along with the crowd, but ~~he~~ ~~gave the order.~~ ~~He~~ compromised the truth and gave the order.

And every compromiser from then until now, every person not willing to stand with Jesus and the truth is in many ways like Pilate when he delivered the order to scrooge Jesus and to crucify him.

(2B) But there was someone else involved. Matt. 27:27 says, “then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the common hall and gathered the whole Roman Cohort, please remember that is 600 soldiers, around him.” They striped Jesus and put on him a scarlet robe. And they took a crown of thorns and pressed it down on his head.

History tells us that the Romans hated Jesus. They hated Jesus for everything he stood for. Jesus’ life was above reproach. Not one man could cast a finger at the Son of God and say, “I saw you sin.” Jesus taught a life of purity and holiness. That he had a righteousness above anything that man had every attained. And the Romans hated Jesus. The Romans with there lust for immorality and violence. The Romans with the eat, drink, for tomorrow we die, philosophy, hated Jesus and everything he stood for. And the Bible says that they crushed this crown of thrones down upon his head. And then in vs. 30 it says that they beat him on the head.

And the though out all of this torture, the Gospel of Luke says that Jesus never cried out. For the Bible says in Luke 19:10 that the son of man came to seek and to save that which was lost. Jesus came to die for the sins of the whole world. Oh, the soldiers were there. And they responded without any compassion or love or even piety.

(3B) But, I want you to notice Vs 20. It mentions the Chief Priest, the elders, and the scribes.

The religious leaders were all there. Vs. 20 says that they persuaded the multitudes to ask for Barabbas and to put to death Jesus.

It is hard to understand, isn't it, how the religious leaders, who had the day of atonement service, who sacrificed animals for the forgiveness of sins, who had heard Jesus say that he was the Messiah, the one's who had heard John the Baptist say, "Behold the lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world, could respond in the way they did.

These religious leaders are the one's who persuaded the multitudes. WHY? Because Jesus violated through his own life everything they believed. They were external religious leaders. They were outward, all show, ritualistic. They were like many people and churches in this day and age. People going through the motions and playing church. People who have no love for Jesus. People, who do not have that heart felt devotion for the Lord. It was all external, and outward show of piety. *[Poetical Correct*

Turn over to the Gospel of Mark. The Gospel of Mark chapter 14 and please notice Vs. 53. Here we see that the Jewish High court, the Sanhedrin, examined Jesus. Notice these verses!  
(Read Vs. 53, 55-56)

Can you imagine the scene? The religious leaders had Jesus on trial and they were actually bringing people up telling lies. But, they got trapped in their own lies because the witnesses could not agree. If this ~~wasn't~~<sup>wasn't</sup> so tragic it would be funny.

*But, there was one thing they had in mind. And I want you to see that. Look at Vs. 57  
( Read Vs 57-64 )*

I want you to notice something here. A lot of people, today, seemly do not understand that Jesus claimed to be God. Dear friends, he wasn't just man. He was God in human flesh. And one of the strongest ways in which you can see that truth is through the reason for his crucifixion. There wasn't any doubt in the minds of the religious leaders of that day what Jesus said. He had blasphemed by claiming to be God. Oh, Yes! The religious leaders were involved. And they responded with hatred.

(4B) Come back to Matthew 27 and notice that the multitude was involved. You say, "Well, I wouldn't have been like Pilate." And I hope that is true. You say, "I wouldn't have responded like the soldiers, or the religious leaders." And again I hope that is true. But, dear friend, the multitude was involved.

Chapter 27 verse 22 says, "They all said, let him be crucified." Look at vs. 25" "And all the people answered and said, his blood be on us and on our children." Look at Vs. 36: And sitting down, they watch him there."

The multitudes just sat down at the cross and watch him. How, one could have sat at the foot of that cross, in a state of indifference, is beyond me. And yet, I know that we don't think much differently two thousand years on this side of the cross, then we would have if we have been there. The multitude just sat down and watch Jesus. His body beaten and bloody. The horrible pain of going through a crucifixion. And they just sat down and watched him. The multitude responded in total indifference.

And I have asked myself, just what, just what did they see? May I just share this with you? The three crosses were placed into the ground. That of Jesus in the center because He claimed to be King of the Jews. Certainly he should be king of the two thieves and so they placed him the center.

First, Jesus was stripped of all of his clothes. Then following the most alfull moment of all, he was laid down upon the means of his torture. His arms were stretch along the crossbeams.

And at the center of his open palms, the point of a huge iron nail was placed, which by the blow of a hammer was driven through the flesh into the wood..Then through either foot, separately, or, possible through both of them together, another huge nail forced its way through the flesh into the beam... Then the sufferer was tied to the cross so that the weight of his body would not pull the flesh from the nails.

And it was probably at this moment of torture in a voice of uplifted prayer, not in screams of pain, but calmly praying in divine compassion, for his brutal murders: "FATHER, FORGIVE THEM FOR THEY KNOW NOT WHAT THEY DO."

And then that tree with its living, hanging burden was left up by ropes and dropped with a thud into a hole that planted it upright for all to see....

And there Jesus was placed in view of all who would choose to strike or, spite upon him. He might hang for hours in torment by the very moving multitude who with that desire to see what was horrible, which always characterizes the hardest of hearts, had gathered to watch a sight which should have rather made them wipe tears of ~~blood~~<sup>sweat</sup>. And there in tortures that grew more maddening by the minute, the sufferer was often driven to the point of crying out for his executioners to put him to death. Thus bringing to an end his torture and pain and suffering.

You say, "Pastor, why be so descriptive"? WHY? Because I experience over and over again people who forget or take lightly what Jesus did for each of us on the cross. Jesus suffered and died for you. And as it has often been said, "if you were the only person who has lived in this world, Jesus would have died for you."....WHY?

Because he loves you and desires that no one should go to Hell. That all people might have the chance to come to repentance and faith and salvation....He wants you to be saved today...

I wonder how long people will ignore the death of Jesus Christ?  
Can you not see why God will not accept anything else than belief in Christ?  
The Bible says that God gave his only begotten Son that whosoever  
believeth on Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

You see, God doesn't have any other means of salvation. Contrary to  
popular belief, there are not many roads to heaven. Jesus is "the way, the  
truth, and the life. And no one comes to God except through Jesus Christ."

Can you not understand why? God gave His son for you and for me.  
Jesus died, willing on the cross, to pay for our sins.

SOFTLY

But, <sup>what</sup> You know, the thrilling story of the cross is this: There were two  
people who saw the purpose. One was a thief; and one was a Roman centurion.  
One was an outcast of society. And one was a respected citizen in society.  
A centurion was a commander of men. He had respect, honor, position, a  
<sup>place</sup> ~~statue~~ in society that any man could wish for. And this man saw Jesus in  
all of his pain <sup>and suffering</sup> and the Bible says that he looked on Him and said, "Truly,  
THIS WAS THE SON OF GOD."

*Dear Frank,* Here was a Roman soldier who probable had seen many crucifixions and  
yet, something within him said this man was different. He was other than  
man, himself. "TRUELY, THIS WAS THE SON OF GOD."

*Luke 23* And one other man, an outcast, a thief. A man who saw that this Jesus  
was more than what people were saying about him. And this thief looked at  
Jesus and said, "LORD!"....Man! What a great step that was...."LORD!  
REMEMBER ME WHEN YOU COME INTO YOUR KINGDOM." "REMEMBER ME!"

And Jesus with all the compassion and love of God said: "TODAY, YOU  
SHALL BE WITH ME IN PARADISE."

And I believe that the Bible is telling us that this <sup>Roman Soldier</sup> ~~Centurion~~ and  
this thief were saved...



And dear friends, that can happen to you. When you trust Jesus, you will be saved. God died for your sin on the cross in the person of his son, Jesus Christ. Oh, my friends don't put Him off. Accept him as your savior, today. Trust Him today. The Bible says that Jesus stands at the door of your life and knocks. And if you will open the door of your life, Jesus will come in and save you. And the one who comes to Jesus, the Bible says, He will never cast out. May God help you to make this decision, right now?

And my dear Christian friends, how will you respond to the cross? Oh, I know you are saved. And I know there is no condemnation to those who believe. But, can't we become a little indifferent to the cross? Can't we become complacent to the meaning and purpose of the crucifixion? You know, what happens when the cross gets a fresh whole on your life?

Indifference become compassion....

Complacency becomes action...

And compromise becomes steadfastness for the love of the Gospel.

HOW WILL YOU RESPOND?

SHALL WE CLOSE IN PRAYER