



WEEKLY SERMON

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Message Palm Sunday - 2024

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Text: Luke 2:10-11

In Matthew 16:21-28 we read,

“From that time forth began Jesus to shew unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day. (22) Then Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee. (23) But he turned, and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men. (24) Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. (25) For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it. (26) For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? (27) For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works. (28) Verily I say unto you, There be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom.”

Suppose someone told you of two un-likely events that would happen in the future - one in a few days, the other at an undetermined time in the future. In spite of the details he gave about each event, you found it hard to believe that he could predict the future with that kind of accuracy. Within a few days you learn that the first predicted event took place exactly as the man said. How would that change your thinking about the likelihood of the second event?

It would probably change your thinking radically. Strangely enough, even though Jesus Christ predicted His own death and resurrection three days hence - both of which were fulfilled in detail - many people don't take seriously His promise to return to earth. On the same occasion in which Jesus told His disciples of His impending death and resurrection, He said in Matthew 16:27,

"For the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will reward each according to his works."

It would be unwise to look back at Christ's death and resurrection in belief, and not look forward to His Second Coming with expectation. Jesus points this out to His disciples, and also with us in mind, in John 14:1-6,

“Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. (2) In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. (3) And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also. (4) And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know. (5) Thomas saith unto him, Lord, we know not whither thou goest; and how can we know the way? (6) Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.”

May God's blessing be upon you this week as you prepare your heart leading up to Passion Week, remembering the Crucifixion, Burial and Resurrection of our Lord Here are the words to the third verse of Fanny Crosby's hymn "**Tell Me the Story of Jesus.**"

**Tell of the cross where they nailed Him,
Writhing in anguish and pain.
Tell of the grave where they laid Him.
Tell how He liveth again.
Love in that story so tender;
Clearer than ever I see.
Stay let me weep while you whisper;
Love paid the ransom for me.**

In ***His*** Amazing Grace
Pastor David Miklas

- 1. We must never cease to PRAY for our children until they cease to breathe. No case is hopeless while Jesus lives. Charles Spurgeon**
- 2. "We must allow the Word of God to CORRECT us the same way we allow it to ENCOURAGE us."**

“The Man Who Missed the Cross”

Introduction: In the Gospel of Matthew, chapter 27, the scene is at Calvary where we read in verses 33-44,

“And when they were come unto a place called Golgotha, that is to say, a place of a skull, They gave him vinegar to drink mingled with gall: and when he had tasted thereof, he would not drink. And they crucified him, and parted his garments, casting lots: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, They parted my garments among them, and upon my vesture did they cast lots. And sitting down they watched him there; And set up over his head his accusation written, THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS. Then were there two thieves crucified with him, one on the right hand, and another on the left. And they that passed by reviled him, wagging their heads, And saying, Thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, save thyself. If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross. Likewise also the chief priests mocking him, with the scribes and elders, said, He saved others; himself he cannot save. If he be the King of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him. He trusted in God; let him deliver him now, if he will have him: for he said, I am the Son of God. The thieves also, which were crucified with him, cast the same in his teeth.”

Would you again take notice of verse 36, “**And sitting down they watched Him (that is Jesus) there.**” This short statement has a far greater scope than appears on the surface. An entire volume could be written about “**they**” who watched as the Son of God died on the cross. Who were “**they**”?

First: THERE were those who stood near the cross, one being His mother and His beloved disciple John. In John 19:26-27 when Jesus saw them He said to His mother, “**Woman behold thy son,**” and to the beloved disciple John, “**Son behold thy mother.**”

Second: THERE were others as you read in Matthew 27:55 who stood afar off, “**And many women were there beholding afar off, which followed Jesus from Galilee, ministering unto Him: Among which was Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James and Jose, and the mother of Zebedee's children.**” On the other hand, except for John and perhaps Peter, the rest of the disciples were a bunch of quitters who “**forsook Him and fled**” when they were with Him in the garden.

Third: THERE were those who appeared to be just passing by. Hear their mocking comments, “**...You who would destroy the Temple and build it in three days, save thyself.**” “**If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross.**”

Fourth: THERE were the religious rulers who came by and scorned Him saying, “**He saved others, Himself He cannot save! Let Him save Himself, if He is the Christ, the Chosen of God.**”

Fifth: THERE were the Roman soldiers on guard.

The first soldier won the lottery of His coat. He was more interested in material gain than in the one who was being crucified. He won a coat but lost the opportunity of winning a robe of righteousness.

The second soldier came by and seeing that Jesus was dead already, took his spear and thrust it into His side from which came blood and water. This soldier stained his spear with the blood that could have washed away all his sin.

The third soldier was the Roman centurion who having seen the events and heard Jesus say, “**Father into Thy hands, I commend My Spirit**” said, “**Truly this man was the Son of God.**” Hallelujah for this Roman centurion, who that day found His faith in the Christ of Calvary.

Sixth: THERE were the **two thieves** on the other crosses, who deserved to be there. In Luke 23:39-43 we read that one railed at Jesus and said “**If you be the son of God save thyself and us too.**” The other said “**Lord remember me when you come into Thy kingdom.**” Jesus

replied, **"Today shalt thou be with me in Paradise."**

What a picture of contrast, the one thief died in His sins - eternally lost. The other thief died with His sins forgiven and lives eternally in Heaven with Jesus.

Seventh: This may surprise you, but each and every one of us was **THERE** some 2000 years ago.

In John 3:16 we read, **"For God so loved the world (the world of mankind which includes you and I) that He gave His only begotten Son."**

In I John 2:2 we read, **"And He (Jesus) is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the WHOLE WORLD."**

In Hebrews 2:4 the Bible says that **"Christ tasted death for every man."** That means Jesus died for us as individuals.

In I Peter 2:24 we read, **"Who (speaking of Jesus) his own self bore our sins in his own body on the tree that we (you and I) being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness..."**

God loved the whole world collectively. Jesus died for the whole world collectively.

Jesus on the cross tasted death for you, so you were there.

Jesus on the cross tasted death for me, so I was there.

Jesus on the cross tasted death for every single lost sinner.

Jesus died on the cross for the sins of the whole world, yet the blessed truth is that He died on the cross for all of us individually. The cross of Christ was the measure of man's sin, but it was also the measure of God's love because in Romans 5:8 Jesus **"...commendeth His LOVE toward us in that while we were yet SINNERS, Christ died for us."**

Now our text in Matthew 27:36 tells us, **"And sitting down they watched Him (Jesus) there."** Can you imagine the group of people that were there for those 6 hours?

There were believers who no doubt wept as they watched in horror.

There were hardened, callous sinners watching in mockery and scorn.

But I believe there was one man watching the Crucifixion, on Golgotha's hill that day, of whom we speak very little, yet more than any other was an example of the purpose of the cross of Christ.

In Romans 5:8 we read, **"But God commendeth His LOVE toward us in that while we were yet SINNERS, Christ died for us."** Would you take note of the last four words, **"Christ died for us."** The word **"for"** is the Greek word **"huper"** which means **"in my place, or in my stead."** The man I am referring to, who was perhaps there, was **"the man who missed His cross."** Because Jesus literally exchanged places with this individual. Jesus took his place on his cross.

To whom I am referring, you should know by now, is Barabbas, the prisoner who was released when the crowd cried **"give us Barabbas , crucify Christ."**

Although he never appears on center stage, Barabbas plays a role in the eternal drama of the cross. All four of the gospel writers, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John state or imply that Barabbas was imprisoned or bound by the Romans and released in place of Jesus.

In Matthew 27:16 you read of him, **"And they had then a notable prisoner, called Barabbas."**

In Mark 15:7 you read of him, **"And there was one named Barabbas, who lay bound with them that had made insurrection with him, who had committed murder..."**

In Luke 23:18-19 you read of him, **"And they cried...saying, Away with this man (speaking of Jesus), and release unto us Barabbas, Who, for a certain sedition made in the city, and for murder, was cast into prison."**

In John 19:40 you read of him, "**Then cried they...saying, Not this man (speaking of Jesus) but Barabbas. Now Barabbas was a robber.**"

If any man on this earth knew what it meant to have Jesus literally bear his cross and die in his place, it was Barabbas. And, strange as it may seem, if there is one person with whom each one of us can identify, it is Barabbas.

This portion of the Biblical story was written in a tract back in the early 1930's. One of those tracts was given out by a well-known religious book publisher to a burdened, spiritually-agnostic young man in the city of Baltimore. Later, I'll tell you the rest of the story about this young man.

But for now, let's return to Barabbas. If asked to describe Barabbas, all of us could do it in one sentence: "**He was the man released in place of Jesus.**" But there is more to the story than that...much more.

To appreciate the story, we need to understand a bit about the culture and tradition of Jesus' day. According to the account of Matthew and Mark, normally during Passover the governor would release any prisoner the people wanted. Though no one seems to be able to explain how the custom began, it was clearly in place at the time of Jesus' trials.

Matthew 27:15, "**Now at the feast the governor was wont to release unto the people a prisoner, whom they would.**"

Mark 15:6-8, "**Now at that feast he released unto them one prisoner, whomsoever they desired. And there was one named Barabbas, which lay bound with them that had made insurrection with him, who had committed murder in the insurrection.**"

Most of the time, no doubt, that custom was a thorn in the flesh to Pilate, the anti-Semitic, brutal governor of Judea. But this time he welcomed the custom with a sigh of relief. Why? Suffice it to say that he was a man living out his career on the horns of a dilemma.

First of all he was scared. He knew that the Jewish leaders had trumped-up the charge against Jesus. But Pilate also knew that if he did not cooperate with them, they would riot, and that would not have set well with Rome. Pilate feared the loss of his position as governor.

Second he never believed that Jesus was guilty. Of all the judges that Jesus stood before in those final hours of trial, Pilate was the only one who gave Him a chance to declare His innocence.

But the question remains:

Why, of all the prisoners that were sitting in Roman cells, did Pilate select Barabbas?

Why not one of the two thieves scheduled to be crucified that day, the two later crucified alongside Jesus?

Why would Pilate offer to free a man with the kind of notorious criminal record that Barabbas had?

The record from Mark's gospel states, "**Barabbas had been imprisoned with the insurrectionists who had committed murder.**" This statement verifies that the two men who were later crucified with Jesus were fellow insurrectionists with Barabbas.

Barabbas was no petty "sneak thief," he was a "political revolutionary." He was in our terms marked as "public enemy number one." Palestine, you see, then as it is now, was filled with rebellious terrorists. It was an inflammable land.

In particular, history tells us, there was one group of Jews call the "**Sicarri,**" which means **dagger-bearers**. They were violent, fanatical zealots. They were pledged to murder and assassinate by any means. Barabbas, the criminal whom Governor Pilate offered to the Jews in his prisoner-release program, would be classified as a "**terrorist.**" So why release this man?

Perhaps part of that answer can be found in his name. Notice that he is called **“Bar-abbas.”** That is an Aramaic name. There were a number of languages spoken in that day by the Lord and his disciples - Latin, Greek, Aramaic, and Hebrew just for starters.

Barabbas name is divided into two parts: **“Bar”** and **“abbas.”** When Jesus addressed Peter on one occasion, you will recall, He called him **“Simon Barjona.”** Simon was his given name, and Barjona was his received name. Our last name is our received name. My children have given names as their first names, but their last name is Miklas, the same as mine. Miklas is their received name. In Biblical days, children also received their father’s name. **“Bar”** means **“son,”** so Simon Barjona means, **“Simon, son of John.”**

We are not told Barabbas’s given name. We are told only his received name: Bar-abbas, meaning **“son of abbas.”** And here’s the intriguing part of it: **“Abbas, or “abba” means “father.”** So Bar-abbas would mean **“son of the Father.”** But that doesn’t make sense. Obviously the man is a son of a father. However, this name may be the compound of **“Bar-Rabban,”** which would mean **“son of the Rabbi.”** Thus, this could mean that Barabbas was the son of a well-known Rabbi.

But let’s go on. In Matthew 27:17 we read, **“...Pilate said unto them, Whom will ye that I release unto you? Barabbas, or Jesus which is called Christ?”** It seems as if he is distinguishing Him from another Jesus. Indeed, that is very possible.

According to some of the most ancient manuscripts of Matthew, two of them in particular, the gospel writer notes that Barabbas’s first or given name was **“Yeshua” (Jesus),** which explains why Pilate would say, **“Whom shall I release? Yeshua Barabbas or Yeshua Christ?”**

The name Jesus was a common name in first century Judea, much like James or John would be today. It is quite possible that Barabbas bore this name. If so, this makes Pilate’s choice of Barabbas logical. His thinking probably went something like this:

“Here is a man with a given name identical to that of Jesus of Nazareth. Surely they will not want the murderer released. Surely they’d rather have the Jesus who claims to be their Messiah.”

Unfortunately, Pilate’s plan backfired, which brings me back to the point of our message. Barabbas, more than any other individual in the dark drama of Calvary, knew that he had a substitute on that center cross.

Someone wrote, **“There between the two robbers and on the very cross on which Barabbas, the leader of the robber band, was to have been crucified, his substitute died. Barabbas was supposed to die that very day. He was sentenced and imprisoned, awaiting death by crucifixion. Yet suddenly he was told, “You’re Free.”**

Barabbas missed his cross because another man literally took his place. How keenly his life models the doctrine of the substitutionary atonement. But let’s not forget Jesus was **OUR** substitute, too.

He bore our sins and died the death that we deserved, just as He died the death that Barabbas deserved. He hung on the cross intended for Barabbas, just as He hung on the cross in our place. Like Barabbas, we were condemned to die until Jesus took our place. Like Barabbas, we have been set free, and it is freedom for eternity.

Remember, I said this story was written in a gospel tract. Well, one of those tracts was handed to a young man in the city of Baltimore in the early 1930’s by a well-known religious publisher of his day, Mr. A. S. Loizeaux, founder of the Loizeaux Brothers

Publishing House. This young man was very troubled spiritually, even to the point of becoming a religious agnostic.

As the story goes, after several meetings with Mr. Loizeaux, this tract was given to the young man, but was deposited in his jacket pocket and forgotten. Months later, upon returning from work one evening, he reached into his pocket, found that little tract and began to read the story of the crucifixion of Jesus Christ.

The key portion of that tract was the section where Barabbas, upon gazing at Christ on the cross, says to Christ, **“I don’t know who You are, but one thing I know, You are hanging there in my place.”** In this young man’s testimonial, he goes on to say that when he realized that, he immediately and instinctively reacted. He knew that what was true of Barabbas was true **“for me.”** That evening he believed that Jesus Christ was the Son of God. He received Him into his life and knew with absolute assurance that the Holy Spirit had used that incident to bring him **“home” to his “Heavenly Father.”**

That young man who read that tract and received Jesus as his Savior over 93 years ago was my father, John Miklas, Jr. Issac Watts wrote:

**When I survey the wondrous cross
On which the Prince of Glory died,
My richest gain I count but loss,
And pour contempt on all my pride.
See from His head, His hands, His feet,
Sorrow and love flow mingled down
Did e'er such love and sorrow meet,
Or thorns compose so rich a crown?**

As you think about the decision perhaps Barabbas made that day 2000 years ago, and the decision my father made over 93 years ago, as they looked at the Savior who exchanged places with them, read carefully the words to the hymn **"Beneath the Cross of Jesus"**:

**Beneath the cross of Jesus
I fain would take my stand
The shadow of a mighty Rock
Within a weary land
A home within the wilderness
A rest upon the way
From the burning of the noontide heat
And the burden of the day**

**Upon that cross of Jesus
Mine eye at times can see
The very dying form of One
Who suffered there for me
And from my smitten heart, with tears
Two wonders I confess
The wonders of His glorious love
And my own worthlessness**

**I take, O cross, thy shadow
For my abiding place
I ask no other sunshine than
The sunshine of His face
Content to let the world go by
To know no gain nor loss
My sinful self my only shame
My glory all the cross**

If God has spoken to your heart, after reading the sermon **“The Man Who Missed the Cross”** right now talk to God about what He has spoken to you then right now talk to God about what He has spoken to you. Do you have the assurance that one day you will go to heaven? If you have no assurance that you know Jesus Christ, then I trust you will decide to accept Him as your personal Savior. The Bible tells us in

Acts 16:31, **“...Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved...”**

Romans 10:13, **“For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.”**

This prayer is here for those who need to ask Jesus to be their personal Savior: **“I do want to go to Heaven. I know I am a sinner, and I do believe Jesus Christ died for me. I realize I cannot buy this great salvation, nor can I earn it. Knowing Jesus died on the cross and arose from the grave to pay my sin debt and to purchase my salvation, I do now trust Him as my Savior, and from this moment on I am completely depending on Him for my salvation.”**

If you made the decision to accept Jesus Christ as your personal Savior let me know? Please send an e-mail to, pdmikBBM@aol.com and I will send you some literature that will help you in your Christian life.

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