

"Were You There When Jesus Was Crucified?"—Luke 23:32-35

The text for this sermon, the theme of which is, "Were You There When Jesus Was Crucified?", is Luke 23:32-35 → *Two others, who were criminals, were led away to be put to death with Him. And when they came to the place that is called The Skull, there they crucified Him, and the criminals, one on His right and one on His left. And Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." And they cast lots to divide His garments. And the people stood by, watching, but the rulers scoffed at Him, saying, "He saved others; let Him save Himself, if He is the Christ of God, His Chosen One!"* This is the text.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ Jesus:

"How could someone do such a horrific thing!" Such a thought or statement is not unusual when watching the news in our day. We hear of the mass shooting of people simply going about their daily routines. We hear of people being victims of violent crimes or victims amidst the poor choices of others (e.g. killed by a drunk driver). Maybe the news could be summed up in the words of 2 Timothy 3:2-4. It describes people as *lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, heartless, unappeasable,*

slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not loving good, treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God. “How can people act in such ways! Have they no conscience? Have they no scruples?”

It is actually natural for people to react in condemnation upon those who victimize others in their behavior. It is also natural for people to believe that they'd never do something so terrible. Keep in mind, however, that the person doing such horrific things also believes he is justified in his actions because he feels victimized in some fashion. All of it is a satanic delusion within which people do not recognize the seriousness of sin in the human heart. Thus, sin continues to breed sin.

Likewise, it is easy to look at Jesus' crucifixion and focus our attention on those who were doing such horrific things to Jesus. So let's take a look at who they were. As we view the scene of Jesus on the cross we can easily see those who put Him in this situation.

- There was *Judas*, one of Jesus' own disciples, a member chosen to be amongst the inner circle of the twelve apostles, *who betrayed Him* for thirty pieces of silver. (cf. John 18:2-5)
- There was the Sanhedrin led by *the high priest* (i.e. Caiaphas) who condemned Him to death according to “their law.” Matthew 26:67-68 says *they spit in His face and struck Him. And some slapped Him,*

saying, “*Prophecy to us, You Christ! Who is it that struck You?*”

- There were *the chief priests with the scribes* who mocked Him to one another, saying, “*He saved others; He cannot save Himself. Let the Christ, the King of Israel, come down now from the cross that we may see and believe.*” (cf. Mark 15:31-32) These *chief priests with the scribes* were the religious leaders of the Jews who had been the primary force in seeing to it that Jesus was crucified. Despite their mockery looking for some “proof” so that they might see *and believe* they had no intentions of believing throughout the whole ordeal.
- There were *the soldiers* who made sport of His situation by mocking Him as the *King of the Jews*. (cf. Mark 15:16-20)
- There was the Roman governor, Pontius Pilate. Even though he could find no just cause to put Jesus to death he *delivered Him over . . . to be crucified*. (cf. John 19:16)
- There were *the robbers who were crucified with Jesus* who also *reviled him in the same way* as the religious leaders. (cf. Matthew 27:44)

The contradictory nature of perspective is this: While a person on the outside of a behavior may see things the person on the inside cannot see, the person on the inside is acting in accord with a heart and mind of which neither of them may see—behavior flowing from sin. Thus, from

your perspective you may act as if you wouldn't have treated Jesus in this way while condemning those who did so and fail to see the true judgment taking place. In John 12:31 Jesus described His crucifixion in judgment language: *Now is the judgment of this world; now will the ruler of this world be cast out.* While you sit in judgment upon those involved in Jesus' passion you were there too because Jesus did it for judgment upon your sin once and for all in defeating satan's power over you.

Jesus tells you in John 7:24 → *Do not judge by appearances, but judge with right judgment.* Judging *by appearances* happens when you react to sinful behavior with retaliation. Verse 34 of our text records Jesus responding with mercy as He prayed: *Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.* Wait! It appears like they knew exactly what they were doing. Unfortunately they too were blind to see their sin in it all and failed to make a *right judgment*.

It is also important to look at the passion of the Christ from a different perspective in order to make the proper judgment about it and those involved. It is the perspective of Jesus as He was hanging on that cross. The crucifixion can be rightly understood by us **only** when we look at it from Jesus' point of view—the view of God's forgiving love for sinners. This point of view is that through which the Holy Spirit creates faith in your heart with a humble perspective of your own sinfulness, bringing you to repentance in need for **His** forgiveness of **your** sins. No matter

what experiences, what injustices, what victimizations or anything else you could account for your behavior, faith claims responsibility for my own sinful choices and behaviors in the shadow of the cross of Jesus Christ and confesses: “Jesus, I was there when you were crucified and my sin helped put you there.”

Who did Jesus see while He was on the cross as He prayed the words for unconditional love and forgiveness?

- He saw the soldiers who didn't realize they were fulfilling Old Testament Scripture by their actions of casting lots for His garments. (cf. verse 34; Psalm 22:18) For them Jesus prayed: *Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.* (Verse 34)
- From the cross He looked upon the chief priests, elders and teachers of the law who also did not realize they were fulfilling Old Testament Scripture with their mockery. (cf. Psalm 22:7-8) For them Jesus prayed: *Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.* (Verse 34)
- Naturally He saw the criminals crucified with Him, *one on His right and one on His left* (verse 33), who also hurled their insults at Him. For them Jesus prayed: *Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.* (Verse 34) These words may have been those which moved one of them to come to Jesus' defense, causing Him to say: *Jesus, remember me when You come into Your kingdom.* Immediately

Jesus reassured him: *Truly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in paradise.* (cf. Luke 23:39-43)

Who else did Jesus see while hanging on the cross as He prayed the words for unconditional love and forgiveness?

- He also saw those who loved Him and stood by Him all the way. John 19:25-26 records Jesus speaking to one of His disciples, John, and His mother, entrusting her into his care. For them Jesus prayed: *Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.* (Verse 34) Wait! They loved Him and were saddened by this ill treatment. He prayed for them to be forgiven too? But they too were sinners for whom He was dying.
- He also saw you at the foot of His cross because you too are sinners who need His perfect sacrifice for the forgiveness of your sins. Yes, this includes your sin of self-righteous judgment. He died there to make forgiveness of your sins a reality **for you** today!

In your baptism you were connected to Jesus' death and His resurrection so that you can live a new life—**both now and eternally.** (cf. Romans 6:3-5) Your identity is redefined in Christ's crucifixion so that you die to sin and rise to new life as you hear the Gospel of your forgiveness proclaimed the preaching of the Word, in the absolution of the Church and in the receiving of His body and blood in the Lord's

Supper. 1 Corinthians 11:26 says that *as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, **you proclaim the Lord's death** until He comes. You proclaim His death **for you**. Amen.*

I have been crucified with Christ.

It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me.

And the life I now live in the flesh

I live by faith in the Son of God,

Who loved me and gave Himself for me.

(Galatians 2:20)

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