

Lenten Meditation – Wednesday, 17th March - Hayden Dreckow

Mark 15: 29-32

²⁹ And those who passed by derided him, wagging their heads and saying, “Aha! You who would destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, ³⁰ save yourself, and come down from the cross!” ³¹ So also the chief priests with the scribes mocked him to one another, saying, “He saved others; he cannot save himself. ³² Let the Christ, the King of Israel, come down now from the cross that we may see and believe.” Those who were crucified with him also reviled him.

A lot of media today (movies, television, Netflix) shows graphic, violent scenes.

Sometimes even more harrowing are the depictions of psychological torment. In these verses both physical and psychological torment are depicted which would rival anything that you could see on a screen. Jesus is subjected to some of the worst torture imaginable. He is subjected to some of the cruellest physical punishment and then hung naked on a cross on a public road for all to see. In these last verses tonight, the psychological pain comes to the forefront. Not only is He naked and weak in a public place, but the public show Him no mercy while He is in this state.

Instead He receives mockery. Psalm 22, parts of which Jesus would later pray from the cross, says in v 7 “All who see me mock me;” All who saw Jesus mocked Him. The priests and the scribes mocked Jesus, who they saw as their enemy – a threat to their power. They saw this wretched sight of a half dead man on a cross and thought: “good, we have won, He can’t threaten us anymore. Everything that the people have been saying about Him and His miracles – that all must be hearsay.” Those being executed alongside Jesus mocked Him. Even the everyday man or woman on the street – people like you and me - they mocked Him too.

“Aha! You who would destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, save yourself, and come down from the cross!”

“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.”

The one who everyone thought would be a hero is now half-dead; how can He save anyone if He cannot save himself? All who see Him mock Him.

Would we have been any different? It wasn't just the self-righteous priests and scribes who mocked Him. It wasn't just the immoral, antisocial criminals punished beside Him who hurled the insults. But our text says "those who passed by" were also in on the act. They were people just like any of us. From the highest in society to the lowest – **all who saw Him mocked Him**. Why was this the case? And would we be any different?

The sin that caused each one of these people to mock Jesus is not limited to a certain type of person. Not just the poor, or just the rich, or just the powerful, or criminals, or whoever else. That sin is the same sin that clings to each of us. This sin sees Jesus dying and says "this is the end." It does not believe all that He had promised. Our sin causes us not to believe that He can save us, not like that. We want to see power and strength in our leaders, not weakness. So, we look in all of the wrong places, we trust in our money, our influence, or some political leader to save us when times get tough. Our sinful flesh doesn't want to believe in a saviour who is publicly humiliated and dies on a cross. What type of saviour is that?

Let's look at those words used against Jesus again. Are they true? Although they are said in a sarcastic way Jesus' mockers are telling the truth without realising it. He did say that He would tear down the temple and raise it again in three days. That is exactly what was happening in front of them. The temple that is Jesus' body is being destroyed. They say "He saved others; He cannot save Himself." On the cross He was saving others by the very fact that He chose not to save Himself. Jesus had the power to save Himself, He had healed people with all sorts of ailments, even raised people from the dead. And once again He was putting the needs of others before His own, very real, needs.

Because His mission was to die. Through His suffering, humiliation, and death He was saving. He was dying for the pompous priests and scribes. For the criminals close by. For the masses. For all. "Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends." In His dying he was a friend even to those who mocked Him at the worst time of His life.

And He was and is a friend to us. The ones who also would have mocked. Those of us who find it hard to believe in a suffering, weak saviour. For those of us who have looked elsewhere for our help. For these and for every other sin He died. From the most well respected among us – to the least. He died for you. All of you. His love for you is far greater than His need to end the suffering and mockery, and to show righteous anger towards those who mocked Him.

He loved you then – and continues to love you so much that He endured all of that.

The priests thought that if Jesus was telling the truth about who He was He would come down from the cross. “Let us see this and believe it” they said. Let us see and believe Jesus – not by seeing Jesus come down from the cross, like the priests and scribes sarcastically suggested, but by seeing Him there dying for your sins. Let us see Him now – not just on a cross 2000 years ago. Let us see and believe by receiving His Word of forgiveness. And by tasting His body and blood in bread and wine. You can be as sure that His forgiveness is for you as that the bread gets stuck in your teeth at communion. That is how real His forgiveness is.

In His humiliation He did not save Himself, but suffered it all for you.

That is how great His love for you is.

Amen