

Title: Humiliation
Text: Matthew 27.27-31
Theme: The passive obedience of Christ
Series: Matthew #126
Prop Stmt: Christ bore our punishment that we might be forgiven

Read Text:

How do people respond when they are unjustly accused or tortured to the breaking point? We expect protests of innocence, cries of panic, looks of defiance, and even hateful stares threatening revenge. What we do not expect is passive resignation. 700 years before Christ was born, Isaiah predicted this scene when he wrote, "*He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he opened not his mouth.*" Back in Matthew 20.17-19, Jesus told his disciples that they were going to go to Jerusalem where he would be delivered over to the chief priests and scribes who would condemn him to death and would deliver him over to the Gentiles to be mocked, flogged and crucified. Exactly as he predicted, it is happening.

(map) The trial and condemnation of Christ took place over several hours. Christ was arrested in the Garden of Gethsemane and was taken to the palace of the high priest. Interestingly enough, Christ was never recorded to being in an earthly palace until this event, when he is shuttled between three different ones. He is tried in a kangaroo court by the Sanhedrin, taken to Pilate's headquarters which was most likely the former palace of Herod the Great who had rebuilt the Temple. From there Christ went to the Palace of Herod Antipas who sent him back to Pilate. This is where we were last week when Pilate had Christ scourged in an unsuccessful effort to appease the vengeful lust of the chief priests and the people. When that did not work, he turned Christ over to be crucified and then tried to wash his hands of the entire matter.

It was common for officials there to start their days very early and be done by 11am. Pilate, having passed judgment on Christ, was done with the matter, so he thought. But, it was not time yet for the crucifixion. There were a couple of other guys who were going to be killed that day, and perhaps they were waiting to coordinate everything at once. Christ is now in the hand of Pilate's soldiers. How do you treat someone who has no standing, no defense, and seemingly, no hope? How do you treat someone who is completely at your mercy and you are where the world is not watching?

Matthew's description of this is detailed and deliberate. Look at his use of the word "they" followed by a verb. They gathered, they stripped, (they) put, they twisted, they put, they put, they kneeled, they mocked, they said, they spit, they took a reed, they struck him on the head, they stripped him, they put his own clothes on him, they led him away to crucify him. They are the ones who are doing all of the action and Christ is the one who is on the receiving end of everything. They are the ones who are doing all of the yelling while Christ is silent. The suffering of Christ in this scene is not primarily physical, although there is an element of that. Here, Christ is suffering humiliation. In

fact, Matthew summarizes this scene in v.31 when he says, “And when they had mocked him...” When you compare the four gospel accounts, Matthew is the only one who writes with such deliberateness about this. In fact, what I find interesting is that Matthew says very little about the details of the actual crucifixion process. He simply says (v.35) “*And when they had crucified him...*” But, here instead of just saying “*when they had mocked him*” he goes into a lot of detail about it and explains all of the things that they did to mock him. It is as if he does not want us to miss this. In fact, I think that Matthew is helping us see something here. The physical brutality of the crucifixion is overwhelming and would cause most of us to recoil in horror if we ever saw one. But as bad as that is, I think that Matthew is pointing out that there is something that is even worse than Christ’s physical suffering and that would be Christ’s personal suffering.

So, here is how I am approaching this text. First of all, I am addressing this emphasis that Matthew places on the mockery of Christ. But, there is something else that must be addressed, and that is the humility of Christ. While Christ is being mocked, he is not retaliating. In fact, he is not even responding. The humility of Christ, predicted by Isaiah and referenced by Paul are two divine witnesses that call us to see what God wants us to see in this text. I will seek to make that obvious.

I. **The Mocking of Christ reveals the heart of man.** (27-31)

Pilate’s soldiers have some time to kill. They are entrusted with this prisoner whom they have to guard until it is time for him to die. They take him back inside the governor’s headquarters known as the praetorium. They toy with him. They take off his clothes and put a scarlet robe on him. This reddish-purplish robe was the color of royalty. A king needs a robe and a crown, so someone twists some thorns together in the form of a crown and puts it on his head. Then someone says that he needs a scepter, so they get a reed plant or a rod of some sort and put it in his hand. They give him back all of the symbols of power that he laid aside when he left his glory in heaven, but not to honor him, but to mock him. Now, the fun really begins as they bow before him and say “Hail, King of the Jews!” But even their mocking is not enough and soon they spit on him. The chief priests spat on him earlier, now the Roman soldiers do the same. Then they take his scepter and begin to hit him with it. They take his symbol of power and beat him with it. We do not grasp the symbolisms as much as others would since we do not live in a monarchy. But all these actions are very revealing. He is completely at their mercy. Here is a man who is completely at their mercy. Here is a man who is going to die, so it doesn’t matter what happens to him, right? Here is a man who has no defenders, no means to get even, no hope of escape, no opportunity to retaliate and no rights. They can do with him, whatever they want without any fear of reprisal. So, how do they treat him? And why?

At least to the chief priests we could see why they hated Christ so much since he kept exposing their hypocrisy and called them out on it. But, what is the deal with these guys? Why the hatred? What had Christ done to them? Why do they go through all of the trouble to mock the guy with a robe, crown and scepter? He never said a word to them or threatened them. Do you see the point? The mocking of Christ reveals the heart of man. These guys were not defending themselves. They were not getting even. He had not hurt

them or sinned against them. This was not their chance to get even because they had been treated unfairly by him. Their hatred was gushing forth from the fountain of their heart.

A. It reveals our hatred of those who are over us.

One of the most wretched consequences of our sinful nature is our inherent distrust and hatred of those who are placed in authority over us. Do you see yourself in these soldiers? What are they doing? They are expressing what is in their heart because they believe that they have the freedom to do so. Ever since Genesis 3, our unredeemed natures are at enmity with God. We have a built in animosity toward God and we express that against almost every person in authority in our world who might in some way remind us of God. Now, I grant you that there are plenty of people who get into positions of authority who are jerks and hypocrites. And while I am not disappointed when they are removed from their positions, I have to guard my own heart from relishing their demise. Is it not true that we wait for the falling of those who are in charge so that we can feel better about our sin? Do we not have a tendency to look for the failures of leaders so that we can justify the sins in our own lives? But what do you do when you are faced with a leader who is perfect? What do you do when there is someone in your life that you cannot find fault with? Does that not evoke jealousy, frustration, and irritation?

These men believe that they are free to do whatever it is they want to do with Jesus. They do not believe there will be any repercussions. They think that they can do whatever they want and they will not be caught. What you do or what you say when you believe that you will never be caught or found out reveals your heart. These men are treating Christ how they would like to treat every king, if they could get away with it. But there is more.

B. It reveals our hatred of those who are under us.

The mockery of these men reveals what they think about the Jews. These soldiers are in authority over the Jews. Now they get a chance to do with one of them whatever they want. We are so tempted to think that we can pick and choose whom we will be kind and considerate to. If there is someone that we believe that we will never need, who will never be in a position to add any value to our lives, we are tempted to dismiss them even disdain them.

Between the chief priests and Pilates soldiers, (Jews and Gentiles) the entire world is represented in condemning, despising and executing Christ. The sad truth is this. Apart from God's grace in our lives, if we had the chance to do to God, whatever we wanted without fear of getting caught, we would do the same thing. The irony is that one day these men will fall before Christ. And he will have a robe, a crown and perhaps a scepter. Ironically, John describes his robe as being dipped in blood. These same men will confess that Jesus is Lord. It will not be in mockery; it will be in fear. It will not be in ridicule; it will be in respect. It will not be in freedom, it will be in submission. God will not be mocked.

Through it all, Christ is silent. He does not need to defend himself, nor does he try. There is a sense in which his silence condemns them. He knows that they will not have the final word, he will. He knows that their judgment is temporary, but his is final. He knows that one day their deeds will be exposed, not only in the Bible for billions of people to read but because their actions in private are known by God in heaven. There is no such thing as any action or word that is not known or that will not be revealed.

II. **The Humility of Christ reveals the heart of God.**

These men used their freedom and authority to express whatever it was that was in their heart. And what was in their heart revealed that they were not truly free, were they? They were bound by their sin. At the same time Christ, who is truly free, who possesses all authority, laid aside his royalty for the clothes of a common man, only to be given a pretend robe for ridicule. Just a few hours before this when Christ was in the upper room with his disciples he laid aside his robe and dressed only as a servant he washed the feet of his disciples. That scene in John 13 was a picture of his mission. He laid aside his royal robe, left heaven's throne to come and not only be one of us, but to be our servant. And here is how low he goes as a servant. He is not only treated as a servant, he is mocked. The King is mocked as a king because everyone knows that he is worthless, right? These men use their authority to reveal what is really in their heart. How does Christ respond? How does Christ use the authority that he has? What is the attitude of your heart when your rights have been violated? How do you respond when you believe that you have been disrespected? Here is the ultimate disrespect, but look at how Christ responded and what it accomplished.

A. **The humility of Christ bought our forgiveness.**

There is a hymn of the church called, Rock of Ages. The first verse is as follows:

Rock of Ages, cleft for me,
let me hide myself in thee;
let the water and the blood,
from thy wounded side which flowed,
be of sin the double cure;
save from wrath and make me pure.

The writer of that song, Augustus Toplady understood that when it comes to our standing before God that we have a two-fold problem. 1) We owe a debt that we cannot pay and 2) We need righteousness that we do not have. Let's say that you want to buy a house for \$250,000, but you don't have \$250,000. In fact, you are in debt \$250,000. In order to get the home, you have a two-fold challenge. You have to get rid of your debt and you have to get money for the house. Our problem is that we owe an infinite debt to God because of our sin. But, even if we somehow were able to be forgiven of our sin, it would only get us up to even. Even is not good enough for God. We need righteousness in order to be accepted in his presence.

You often hear me say that Christ came to this earth in order to live the life that we could not live and die the death that we could not die. Let me explain the significance of that a bit more. The life that Christ lived was a life of perfect obedience. He obeyed perfectly. He did everything that he was supposed to do in a manner perfectly fulfilled God's standard of perfection for a human being. His life perfectly satisfied his Father. We call that, the active obedience of Christ.

But, Christ did more than live for us; Christ suffered and died for us. His suffering was not something that he did, but it was done to him. He suffered in our place. Just as he did what we could not do, he was the recipient of the suffering that we deserved to pay. When Christ suffered physical abuse and mockery and ridicule, he was offering himself as the payment for our sin. He willingly accepted the mockery of these soldiers because he was accepting in our place. His humility was seen in his passive obedience that paid the debt of our sin. His perfect life made him the perfect sacrifice and provided infinite righteousness. His perfect suffering and death provided the infinite payment. Christ is the two-fold answer (double-cure) to our two-fold problem. His suffering and death provides the payment that settles the debt of our sin and his perfect life provides the righteousness that is credited to our account.

Christ was able to accept this humiliation because he knew that it was accomplishing something so much greater. Look at 1 Peter 2.18-25.

Did you read the book or see the movie *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* by C.S. Lewis. You may remember that the central figure is a lion named Aslan who represents Christ. One of the children, Edmond, believed the lies of the witch, the Queen of Narnia and accepted her gifts of Turkish delights in exchange for betraying Aslan. Edmond's betrayal meant death. Edmond had broken the law and now he had to pay the penalty. The wicked queen knew that Aslan was merciful and that he would most likely offer his life in exchange for Edmond's. In fact, that was her scheme all along. She wanted to kill Aslan and remove him as a threat and since Aslan's weakness was his love, she thought she could get to Aslan through his love for Edmond, and she was right. Aslan, the powerful lion submitted himself and in humiliation was bound to the table of stone that represented the law and was killed.

Lucy and Susan, Edmond's sister who loved Aslan were devastated by his death and had no hope until Aslan re-appeared alive, triumphant over death. The girls were overjoyed that he was alive but they wondered how. How could it be? What does this mean?

"It means, said Aslan, "that though the Witch knew the Deep Magic, there is a magic deeper still which she did not know. Her knowledge only goes back to the dawn of Time. But if she could have looked a little further back, into the stillness and the darkness before Time dawned, she would have read there a different incantation. She would have known that when a willing victim who had committed no treachery was killed in a traitor's stead, the Table would crack and Death itself would start working backwards."

B. The humility of Christ brought his exaltation.

Man thinks that the way to glory is through self-promotion. If you don't stand up for yourself, no one else will. You need to make a name for yourself. You need to make people take notice of you. You need to be seen. Not only did Christ not promote himself, he humbled himself, and what happened? He suffered and died. But in his death he conquered the world because through his death, death itself died for everyone who believes in him.

Napoleon Bonaparte at one time ruled as much of Europe as the Roman Empire. At the height of his conquest he governed over 70 million people. He was finally defeated at the Battle of Waterloo and was exiled to an island where he died at the age of 51. Napoleon's military victories are legendary. He was an amazing commander in part because of his skill as an orator. But exiled on a prison island with no armies to lead, no lands to conquer and no crowds to give speeches to, gives one a little different perspective. In a conversation with Count Montholon (presumed by some historians to be person who poisoned Napoleon) Bonaparte asked, "Can you tell me who Jesus Christ was?" When the count did not answer, Napoleon responded to his own question and said,

"Well then, I will tell you. Alexander, Caesar, Charlemagne and I myself have founded great empires; but upon what did these creations of our genius depend? Upon force. Jesus alone founded His empire upon love, and to this very day millions will die for Him...."

Napoleon understood something about Christ that Pilate and these soldiers did not. He and his kingdom were not of this world. Every empire in this world came into power and stayed in power through armies, force and fear. Christ never marshaled an army. He rules not through force or fear. He rules, not by taking over territories, but by taking over hearts and lives. He did not fight according to our rules because he is a king unlike all other kings. He did not defend himself. He did not revile when he was reviled. Instead, he humbled himself and was obedient unto death, even death on a cross. The soldiers who acted as if they were so powerful over this insignificant man were nothing more than minions in the hand of Satan who thought he was carrying out the demise of his archenemy, only to find out that the death of Christ fulfilled the promise of God in garden and crushed his head. These mockers were making a mockery of their own ignorance. In his humiliation, he suffered. But his suffering and his death not only purchased my salvation, his humiliation, suffering and death put the mercy and grace of God on display like no other. What do we call it when God's character is put on display? We call that God getting glory. Christ glorified God so perfectly, that the Father exalted Christ to the side of the Father and gave him a name that is above every name, so that one day, every knee will bow, and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father. The humility of the Son accomplished the glory of the Father. No wonder Jesus started his first sermon by saying, "blessed are the poor in spirit."

What do I want you to take with you?

Love, worship, respect, awe, and trust of Christ. Behold your King! Bow with your whole being before him.

A fresh guard in your heart in how you see others no matter how “insignificant” in the eye of the world. How you treat others is not a reflection on them, but a revelation of your heart.

Husbands, love your wives as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her. Yea, but she is so cold and distant. How did Christ love the church? Yea, but she is impossible to please? What did Christ endure for us? But she does not respect me or support me. What did Christ go through in order to purchase our redemption?