

# Bearing Shame and Scoffing Rude

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[ 0 : 00 ] please return with me this morning to that passage we read from God's word in Matthew chapter 27 bearing shame and scoffing rude these verses make very grim reading it's hard to believe that human beings could be so cruel unless we saw it with our own eyes every day from genocide in Rwanda to the murder of Christians in Syria what is hard to believe is reality many people struggle with the question of why bad things happen to good people I personally struggle more with the question of why good things happen to bad people these 600 soldiers who made up the governor's battalion had breath in their lungs joy in their hearts and strength in their arms and yet they used it all in the pursuit of the most evil of crimes the mockery and torture of Jesus Christ by contrast to Jesus they are mocking and torturing had used every breath of his lungs and every word of his mouth and every touch of his hand to love his fellow man to heal the leper to restore the sanity of the maniac to raise the dead here then is the suffering of our Lord they stripped him and they struck him and they laughed at him and they spat upon him and they battered him half to death and then led him to Golgotha where they finished the job they started here in the praetorium why did Jesus who himself could have called upon 12 legions of angels to rescue him why did he allow himself to be treated with such shameful indignity why did he voluntarily choose to suffer in this way why did he allow them to strip him and to spit upon him to dress him in a crimson robe and drive a crown of thorns into his head he did it dear friend for you every drop of the blood he shed he shed it for you every tear he wept he wept for you every bruise rising on his body was rising for you bearing shame and scoffing rude in my place condemned he stood sealed my pardon with his blood hallelujah what a savior no one's ever loved you like he loves you if ever you should be tempted to doubt Christ's love for you then place yourself among these 600 soldiers that day and watch how Jesus suffered for you and never doubt again

I want us this morning to note three aspects of this grim passage each which serves to build up this picture of the Jesus who while suffering so much is suffering to save us from our sins to give us eternal life and light with him spite and sport shame and shame and suffering and salvation place yourself here among these 600 soldiers participating in the gruesome torture of an innocent man and then go look at yourself in the mirror after and tell yourself it was for me all this was for me first of all then spite and sport spite and sport why did these soldiers treat Jesus the way they did as worse than an animal the strength of that battalion gathered in the praetorium to mock and torture Jesus numbered 600 men or so why did these 600 men do what they did they don't seem to be grudgingly following the orders given to them by pilot they seem to rather enjoy mocking and torturing this man Jesus why the English Puritan Matthew Henry offers an insight into their motivation suggesting that what they did they did either out of spite or out of sport some of these soldiers would have been present earlier and would have heard the Jewish mob crying out for Jesus crucifixion perhaps some of them had joined in with the mob as they bade for the blood of this of this helpless rabbi soldiers are human beings they are entirely as likely to be swayed by the hysteria of the crowd as the next man and so they want to hurt Jesus just out of spite to cause him as much pain as they possibly could and so having flogged and scourged him to within an inch of his life they drag him before their 600 comrades in arms for special treatment just out of spite but then of course we all know what it's like when men get together and play at being boys or boys get together and play at being men the ordinary rules of human decency go out the window and new rules apply lynchings become the law and don't dare anyone step out of line or you'll be lynched after all it can be fun not just to watch someone else suffering but actually to yourself make them suffer especially when you're part of a mob getting away with getting carried away with the moment earlier this year we were all outraged and we continue to be outraged when a group of teenagers killed a police officer in England by dragging him under their car having been prosecuted and sentenced all too lightly in most of our opinions a photographer snapped a picture of these teenagers smirking at each other as they were being led away to prison because to them killing a copper is sport and for the soldiers they just want to outdo each other in their brutality toward this man Jesus now we thank God that we live in a society

where Christians are protected from such spite and such sport where we're free to practice our faith and to follow Jesus the Scottish legal system protects our rights to religious expression and freedom from persecution but those to whom Matthew was writing this gospel were not in our situation far from supporting their Christian profession the state treated them no different from how it treated Jesus Jewish Christians were mocked and murdered stripped and struck laughed at and spat upon they needed to know that what was happening to them happened first to their Lord and that Jesus once stood where they now stand now perhaps there are young Christians among us here today and you feel rather alone in your class or in your school your so-called friends make you feel stupid and foolish for following Jesus they don't include you in their activities either out of spite or out of sport and it's deeply hurtful it makes you feel really sad because you feel very alone and you feel as if no one else in this world understands what you're going through but you know

Jesus does he has been exactly where you are now he stood alone stripped and laughed at being mocked and spat upon and he stood there alone and even now perhaps though you don't realize it he stands with you when your so-called friends are laughing at you and making you feel sad he's at your right hand he is with you even as he was with those first century Christian Jews and he whispers into your ear when you're at your saddest don't give up I know how it feels I will always be with you I'm not going anywhere spite and sport second sham and shame sham and shame the details of this passage are harrowing it's hard to understand how human beings could be quite so cruel having flogged Jesus half to death they led him from the praetorium and there they stripped him of all his clothes we'll come back to that detail in a moment then they put a scarlet robe on him the kind of robe a soldier would have worn and they twisted together a crown of thorns and they drove it into his head so here he stands he is a beaten man with a borrowed robe with blood running down his face and these thorns were as sharp as nails and each one scored the skin of his head with deep gashes then they took a staff or more literally a reed and they placed it in his right hand and in a mocking parody of a king's scepter and they bowed down before him and mocked hail king of the Jews they cried out six hundred men bowing down before Jesus six hundred men laughing at Jesus six hundred men crying out hail king of the Jews when I was a very young child my next door neighbors in Galsby had a caravan and after school

I would go down and play with my next door neighbor's daughter Suzanne in her caravan we'd play at chip shops we'd use torn up luro as chips and cut out shapes as fish and I'd go in and I'd order five fish suppers and Suzanne would pretend to sell them to me and I'd take them home these torn up strips of toilet roll and these bits of paper at other times the young children in my neighborhood would put on a gymnastic display in another neighbor's garden we'd use their swing as a climbing frame and we'd charge all the adults in our drive 2p admission fee we played at being adults and here in Matthew chapter 27 these 600 grown up soldiers are playing at being adults playing at bowing down to Jesus as they would have bowed down to Herod or to Pilate or to the Roman Emperor they are playing and pretending some great sham enthronement except they're not crying out long live the king because they know that at their hands the reign of this king shall be very short indeed consider the scene with me back in Isaiah chapter 6 very important chapter in the Old Testament the prophet has a vision of the temple of the living God where Christ is seated on the throne high and lifted up and his glorious robe fills the temple and the angels thousands of them are flying like hummingbirds before the throne and they're calling out one to another holy holy holy is the Lord

[ 13 : 50 ] God Almighty heaven and earth is full of his glory that is the natural environment of King Jesus surrounded by all the holy angels of heaven worshipped as Lord and God and now here in Matthew 27 we have a sham satire with the angels replaced by soldiers the praise replaced with jeers the glorious robe replaced with a worn out robe of a normal soldier and they place a reed in his hand and they bow down to him hail king of the Jews they cry 25 years later the apostle Paul writes of Jesus who being in very nature

God did not consider equality with God something to be grasped but made himself nothing taking the very nature of a servant being made in human likeness and being found in human appearance himself he humbled here he is the Lord of glory subject to the jeers and the joking of these core soldiers the mistreatment and the violence of adults playing as children had they known who he really was would they not have bowed down for real and would they not have confessed him as Lord I want to come back to that shame Jesus endured of being stripped naked we tend to think of those as liberated days where the naked human form was exhibited in gymnasiums and in public baths certainly for the Greeks and the Romans the naked human form was a matter for some pride and exhibition but in the

Jewish culture nakedness was shame for a Jew to strip down naked was a disgrace that's one of the reasons the Jews didn't like the Gentiles the Gentiles were far too free and easy with the naked human form so for Jesus this righteous Jew to be stripped naked and forced to stand before these 600 laughing men was deeply shameful even more shameful than it would be for us today the soldiers robe they gave him would not fully have covered his dignity and so here he is the blood is running down his face from the crown of thorns the scars on his back from the whips are smarting and the bruises are rising in his face from the reed they used to strike him again and again he is covered with human spit and he stands naked before a laughing jeering crowd this is every person's nightmare the horror of it the disgrace of it the shame of it why can't they leave him alone and allow him at least some dignity in dying listen to what Matthew

Henry writes when he was delivered to be crucified that was enough they that kill the body admit there is no more they can do now listen to this but Christ's enemies do more if it's possible they will wrap up a thousand deaths in one so the enemies of Jesus wrap a thousand deaths up in one and there stands Jesus for us bearing shame and scoffing rude in my place condemned he stood it's my place he took there all this he's doing for us not only does he humble himself and become incarnate of the Virgin Mary he humbles himself further becomes subject to the mockery of the Roman soldiers the shame of human nakedness and you ask yourself but why did he do this why did the highest of the high become the lowest of the low why his body covered with bruises and spit why his face so battered bruised and bloodied and were forced to answer it was for no sin of his own but my sin my sin there may be some of us who are rather sitting on the fence when it comes to becoming a

Christian and what's bothering you is that you don't really want to stand out from the crowd you're nervous of what might happen to you as a result of following Christ becoming a Christian of the mockery you might receive the friends you might lose it's a fair point because no doubt becoming a Christian is not the path of least resistance how can you possibly sit on the fence when Jesus endured himself when Jesus allowed himself to endure such shame and disgrace for you I don't know what you may have to go through as a Christian for Jesus but it shall be as nothing compared to what Jesus went through for you don't let your suffering bother you let his suffering wake you to your need of his grace and salvation because bearing shame and scoffing rude in your place condemned he stood sham and shame and then lastly suffering and salvation suffering and salvation there's no doubt from our passage that Jesus suffering was painfully intense and intensely painful what he had already suffered would have killed many men but having placed his own clothes back on him the Roman soldiers let him out to be crucified this half dead broken man having been struck again and again on the head this bleeding exhausted man having been humiliated his face running with spittle the worst of his suffering still lay before him as they lead him out to the praetorium and out to the city to be crucified they've already wrapped a thousand deaths up into one the worst is still to come for Jesus man of sorrows what a name for the son of man who came ruined sinners to reclaim hallelujah what a savior as i was studying for this sermon as i always do i consulted many writers both modern and ancient and i came back to matthew henry who writing 300 years ago though it may have been speculative opened up an avenue in this passage which i certainly had never thought of before maybe you had in this passage of scripture you have nakedness suffering and thorns matthew henry draws our attention back to another episode in the history of the bible dominated by nakedness suffering and thorns he takes us back to genesis chapter 3 where having eaten the forbidden fruit adam and eve fell into sin and with them dragged the whole human race into misery they were ashamed of their nakedness and they tried to sew together fig leaves to cover their dignity they were cast out of the garden and were cursed to an existence of suffering for the ground would bring forth not fruit but thorns and it's almost like matthew that's the gospel writer not matthew henry wants us to use genesis 3 as the backdrop to what's happening here to jesus in matthew 27 jesus is

[ 23 : 30 ] enduring the curse of the fall the consequences of human sin the shame of nakedness the reality of suffering the sting of the thorn Jesus is replaying the events of Genesis 3 and bearing in his own body the curse of God upon mankind's sin but is that not the whole reason he came in the first place is that not why he left the glories of heaven's throne and the pleasures at his father's right hand because he saw us in our sin and in our misery he heard our cries for help and for forgiveness and because of his great love for us he willingly chose to become incarnate of the virgin Mary and suffer under Pontius Pilate to reverse the curse laid upon mankind on account of our sin to redeem his people from their misery and to win them back for God he came to be struck on the heel by the serpent struck on the head by Satan's representatives he came to endure the suffering and the thorn the punishment and the pain the shame and the nakedness yes this is what's happening in Matthew 27 the sufferer is becoming the savior the last Adam is repairing the sin of the first Adam and not just that he is bearing the sin of the first Adam and of all his sinful children you see things are not what they seem to be here the man who is suffering in the praetorium and now being led to his death on a cross is saving a vast multitude no man can number by bearing the curse of their sin the apostle will later say in Galatians 3:13 Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by himself becoming a curse for us for it is written cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree here we have him a cursed man cursed as his blood runs down his face and the spittle clings to his hair cursed as his bruised and battered body is led to the hill called

Golgotha where he will die not for his own sins but for ours don't you see it this man standing alone before these 600 Roman soldiers battered to within an inch of his life he's standing there for you he's bearing the curse of your sins he's enduring the misery of your condemnation he's suffering to save you does this mean nothing to you or does it mean enough that you shall now believe in him and trust him for and with your salvation told the story last night to some friends of ours when I was a teenager living in Cyprus I used to play golf with an old man called Tom Tom was a rather grumpy old man who wore a permanent scowl on his face and always had a quick word of rebuke if ever I should happen to break the etiquette of the game of golf so grumpy one evening

I asked my dad to explain to me why old Tom was such a sourpuss my father told me turned out that during the second world war Tom was a submariner on one occasion the submarine on which he was serving as a junior officer was torpedoed by a German U-boat a seawater filled compartment after compartment on the submarine as a junior officer Tom had the impossibly difficult job of closing the hatches of these water filled compartments so that the submarine could retain enough buoyancy not to sink and as Tom would close the hatches on these compartments he knew that he was consigning the drowning men in these compartments to certain death and sometimes he could hear them knocking on the compartment doors as he shut the valve it turns out that no matter how many compartments

Tom shut off it wasn't enough and the submarine began to sink Tom was the last man off that submarine locking the last compartment door jumping from the conning tower into a waiting lifeboat suffering and death of those men he had whose fate he had sealed by closing those compartment doors haunted Tom and changed Tom he never got over the trauma of consigning so many of his friends to death by drowning he heard their knocks and their cries for help until the day he died no wonder old Tom was really very grumpy indeed and wore a permanent scowl on his face that man lived out the suffering of his friends and shipmates until he too died died

I have no doubt that what these 600 soldiers did to Jesus that day lived with them until some of them died perhaps before that some of them had become Christians especially that squad delegated to crucify Jesus they came to realize for themselves that though they had contributed to the greatest suffering of Jesus that Jesus had suffered for them and they believed in him and trusted for salvation but the question for you this morning is this is it nothing to you that Jesus suffered as described here in Matthew 27 how will this affect you going on from here I would definitely hope it wouldn't make you grumpy with a permanent skull on your face like Tom in fact I would hope that by faith in him it would make you joyful with a permanent look of hope on your face will you by faith in

[ 30 : 46 ] Jesus Christ stand with him today will you take your place alongside him and alongside the billions of others the billions of others who profess his name as together we sing bearing shame and scoffing rude in my place condemned he stood sealed my pardon with his blood hallelujah he's my savior died there he nowhere he