

They Watched Him There

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Preacher: Pastor Bart Leger

[0 : 00] Well, good morning again. As we are ready to get into God's Word, we're going to be in Matthew chapter 27 and verse number 36.

We will go back a few verses and read about what transpired or what was taking place during the crucifixion. And we're going to be continuing with our series on the cross that we're going to complete on Easter Sunday morning, on the morning that we celebrate the resurrection.

And as we're moving toward that final hour up to the resurrection that morning, and as we move toward the cross, there was the Passover, there was the Lord's table, there was the betrayal, the mock trial.

We also have Pilate's behold the man and the account of the crucifixion. We see that in Matthew 27, verses 27 through verse 36.

Then the soldiers, verse 27 says, of the governor, took Jesus into the praetorium and gathered the whole garrison around him. And they stripped him and put a scarlet robe on him.

[1 : 15] When they had twisted a crown of thorns, they put it on his head and a reed in his right hand. And they bowed the knee before him and mocked him, saying, Hail, King of the Jews.

Then they spat on him and took the reed and struck him on the head. And when they had mocked him, they took the robe off him, put his own clothes on him and led him away to be crucified.

Now, as they came out, they found a man of Cyrene, Simon by name. Him they compelled to bear the cross. And when they had come to a place called Golgotha, that is to say, a place or place of a skull, they gave him sour wine mingled with gall to drink.

But when he had tasted it, he would not drink. Then they crucified him and divided his garments, casting lots that it might be fulfilled, which was spoken by the prophet.

They divided my garments among them. And for my clothing, they cast lots. And so this morning, we're going to be spending our time looking at the soldiers who were there beneath the cross.

[2 : 26] And they watched him there. They watched Jesus upon the cross. We see in verse 36, sitting down, they kept watch over him there.

So we're going to look at Jesus, sitting down, at Jesus as he's on the cross, and the soldiers as they are watching our Lord and our Savior Jesus Christ, him who knew no sin, the most important hour for mankind.

And they simply watched him there. We see, first of all, they watched complacently in the hours of the crucifixion. They were sitting there.

They were probably talking. They were probably telling stories, war stories from their last major conquest. And they were just, they were ignorant of what was going on at the time.

Now, these soldiers had witnessed many crucifixions. This probably was not their first rodeo. They had been there watching guard over crucifixions probably for some time.

[3 : 32] And crucifixion was something that was not unusual in this day and time. As a matter of fact, Darius crucified 200 when he conquered Babylon.

Alexander crucified 2,000 when he conquered Tyre. It was a common means of capital punishment during that day. So to them, it was just another execution.

This also may be the reason why it means so little to many today. It was just something else that was going on. And as Jesus Christ, in his last few hours before he went to the cross, they mutilated the master.

The Old Testament says that they marred his visage. They beat him about the face, pulled out his beard. And I'm sure because of all this facial trauma, his face had swelled to the point and was bloodied and beaten to the point where you could not even recognize who it was.

They doubted his virgin birth. They rejected his deity. Many didn't accept his miracles. They thought he was just another man.

[4 : 46] So the question is, who died that day? Well, the one of whom the prophets had spoken. First of all, Isaiah chapter 50 and verse number 6, where speaking of the coming Messiah, the suffering Messiah, he says, I gave my back to those who struck me and my cheeks to those who plucked out the beard.

I did not hide my face from shame and spitting. We also see in Isaiah 53, that famous chapter in Isaiah about the suffering Savior that was to come.

And many rejected that. Many Jews rejected that. As a matter of fact, in the Jewish Old Testament, many don't even pay attention to Isaiah 53 because for them it does not fit with their timeline.

It does not fit with what would happen to the Messiah. Verse 3, we begin, He is despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.

And we hid, as it were, our faces from him. He was despised and we did not esteem him. Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows.

[6 : 07] Yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions. He was bruised for our iniquities.

The chastisement for our peace was upon him. And by his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray.

We have turned everyone to his own way. And the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

He was the one who was miraculously born. Another prophecy from the Old Testament prophesied how Jesus would be born. Verse 14 of Isaiah chapter number 7.

Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son and shall call his name Emmanuel.

[7 : 06] The one who could open blind eyes and raise the dead. And as we see the one who is dying there, we will never forget it.

As a matter of fact, Gypsy Smith, a British evangelist from the 1800s, says this. He says, I have never lost the wonder of it all. One who has been preaching God's word for so many years.

And for someone, for many of us who have been Christians for many years. Have we lost the wonder of it all? The wonder of who Jesus is? And what he accomplished for us on the cross of Calvary?

Oh, that we would have the same excitement that those who first come to know Jesus Christ have. To know that the God of the universe loves them beyond measure. To know that Jesus loves them so much that he would die on the cross in their place.

To be so excited and filled with awe that their sins can be forgiven. And they can have a home prepared for them in heaven. If only we could have that same wonder.

[8 : 11] And if only we could keep that wonder. And as Gypsy Smith said, I have never lost the wonder of it all. They watched there complacently as the master of the universe.

As the savior of the whole world hung there on the cross of Calvary. They watched him there.

Secondly, they watched him calmly in the hour of the world's greatest crisis.

This was the hour of the ages. Yet they weren't moved. This was the period of time that punctuated history. And the greatest thing that ever happened, apart from when God created, apart from creation, they sat there calmly and weren't moved.

And when the darkness came and shook the whole earth, their leader finally would say, truly, this was the Son of God.

They had been sitting there calmly. They had been playing games. They had been talking about who knows what. And ultimately, eventually, when the darkness finally came and the earth shook, and Jesus said his final words, one of the soldiers, it finally dawned on him, truly, this man was the Son of God.

[9 : 44] See, they were just observers of the scene that was unfolding before them. There were the priests who taunted Jesus. There were the thieves who taunted Jesus as well.

And then we also know that there were the wandering disciples who were far off, who were afraid to even be close. So they had distanced themselves from Jesus, afraid that they too would be arrested, and they too would be tried and crucified like their Savior.

And then there was a little band of faithful who hung near Jesus and who were there beneath the cross. The forces of heaven and earth stand poised.

And here is Jesus on the cross of Calvary, dying for the sins of the world, and the earth hovering between destruction and deliverance.

And Jesus Christ, when he breathed his final breath, would redeem mankind in that single act. And when he rose again from the dead, it would prove that God was satisfied with the payment for the penalty of sin.

[10:57] So this is an hour of crisis, and so many were unmoved. If they had realized who Jesus was, do you think they would have been a little bit more concerned about what was going on?

That this is God. And why are we crucifying God? Why are we crucifying the Savior of the world? Why are we putting to death the Messiah? But they didn't recognize him as the Messiah.

So they were unmoved. They watched calmly in the hour of the world's greatest crisis. And there they stand, or there they sit, underneath the cross.

And I'm wondering, how many people today, as we're marching toward those final weeks and days, where we think about Jesus who died on the cross, and some will think about that Friday where we, many will think about that's the time that Jesus was crucified, but for many that's all it is.

Jesus, just another religious day, just another religious holiday. And as we march toward those final hours, and on that first day of the week, as the women make their way to the tomb, and they find that the tomb is empty, how many in the world today are living their lives without even giving a second thought?

[12:28] to what is going on, and what has been done for them, and the significance of that empty tomb. For many, it might be another reason to get the family together, boil some eggs, dye some eggs, do an Easter egg hunt.

I don't have a problem with that. That's fine. If people want to do that, it's fun. But that's not what it's all about. It's ultimately about the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

That is what happened on that first day of the week. Not the Easter bunny, but Jesus, the Messiah, rose from the dead.

And the whole and many on the earth today are living their lives calmly and going on like nothing had ever happened, not realizing that they're marching toward destruction.

So here Jesus hangs upon the cross and they watched calmly in the hour of the world's greatest crisis. And then thirdly, they watched carelessly in the hour of God's greatest example of caring.

[13:45] The greatest example of God's love, God demonstrated His love toward us in that we were still sinners. We were yet sinners. Christ died for us.

It's easy for us to say that we love someone. It is quite different when we show that love. And for those that have cared for a loved one who is ill, know what it's like.

And for others who see, that's when their greatest love was demonstrated. Not when they paid, may have paid thousands of dollars for an engagement ring. Not when they bought maybe expensive jewelry for anniversaries.

Oh, that might say, I love you. And the jewelry stores in their commercials say nothing says I love you like a diamond from Jared's, I believe the place is.

But you know what? Nothing says love like I'm willing to sacrifice myself for you. And for those who put their lives on hold when they take care of a loved one.

[14:51] That's the true demonstration of love. Or when someone puts their own needs or their own desires on hold or on the back burner for someone else.

That's love. And they watch carelessly in the hour of God's greatest example of caring. What were they doing? What were they doing there beneath the cross?

They were gambling. They were playing dice for his clothes. Now there are those who would take this and say, there are those who were the health, wealth, and prosperity crowd will say that Jesus actually would have worn a Rolex in his day if there was such a thing.

The Rolex, maybe a watch sundial. Or that Jesus would have driven a Mercedes or a BMW and they would say that Jesus was wealthy.

Where did they get that? I have no clue, but there are people who say that. And what they say is that the clothes Jesus was wearing was expensive clothing.

[15:59] Now this was a robe that was given unto him. It was probably a robe that would have symbolized royalty because they placed it upon him, but then they took it off and put his own clothes back on.

And so what they were doing was they were gambling for the robe, for the garment that was taken off of him. It was a diversion. It was a pastime while they waited for death where their shift would be over and they could go back home.

They were playing a game of dice for the clothes of our Savior. How careless in the world's greatest hour and the greatest example of God's caring.

And I am sure they heard the words from the cross. Remember those seven sayings that Jesus said from the cross of Calvary. First of all, he says, Father, forgive them for they don't even know what they're doing.

In Luke 23, verse 34. And when he turned to the thief on his side who had said, Lord, remember me when you come into your kingdom, Jesus said in Luke 23, today you will be with me in paradise.

[17:14] In the Gospel of John, there was John the Beloved and Mary the mother of Jesus below the cross. And Jesus looks down and says, Woman, behold your son.

And behold your mother. In other words, he said, take care of my mom. Take care of my earthly mother.

We also heard Jesus say in Matthew 27, My God, my God. These words were words of passion. These words were words of agony. Why do you forsake me, Father? We also heard John 19, I thirst. John 19, 30.

Jesus said, It is finished. One word in the Greek, Tetelestai. It is finished. Thy work that I came to do on planet Earth has finally come to an end.

[18:21] It is finished. And then Luke 23, verse 46. Into your hand, I commend my spirit. They saw it all. They knew all the facts of what was going on, yet they still did not respond.

I'm wondering how many today hear about Jesus and don't respond. Oh, I have time. Or, that might be good for you, but, I don't need that.

I don't really, I'm not really into that. I'm not really into religion. People will say, Oh, that's good for you. You know, if it makes you feel good, then go right ahead.

I'm not going to, I'm not going to put you down for it, but, you know, that's just not for me. They saw it all, but they did not respond. And I'm wondering how many are doing that today.

Maybe those who are listening to this message today, this may be the day when the time has come for someone to respond to Jesus as their Savior.

[19:26] So the questions this morning as we come to a close is, what does the death of Christ mean to you? What does the death of Christ mean to you?

Is it just another religious figure? Who was put to death? Another martyr for their faith? Was it a big misunderstanding?

Was it an accident? Was it whatever? What does the death of Jesus Christ mean to you? And then secondly, how does the death of Jesus Christ affect your life?

How is your life different today because Jesus died on the cross for you? Has it had an effect on you?

And then lastly, have you trusted Christ as your Savior? And if you have, it ought to be making a profound difference every day that we live.

[20:36] So as we're marching toward the resurrection in these last few weeks before the day that we celebrate the resurrection of Jesus Christ, let's be thinking about what Jesus Christ has done for us.

During this period, there are people who are to some degree or another thinking they need to sacrifice something for Jesus.

Well, the reality is Jesus has already provided the sacrifice. The question is, during this period of time, and I don't have a problem, so to speak, with this period of time.

You know, people call Lent, we're marching toward the cross, but rather than spending time sacrificing, why don't we take this time to remember and to live for Jesus?

A living sacrifice. Not giving something up, so to speak, but giving ourselves up continually, day by day, and living for Jesus Christ and showing to the lost and the dying world that God lives, that we have new life in Christ, and that rather than sacrifice things, rather than sacrifice food, rather than sacrifice something, just as the ascetics would in the early New Testament, so they were putting their body down so they could live more like Christ.

[22:12] No, rather than that, let's think about how we can live for Jesus. Let's think about what we can do for others and see others through the eyes of Christ, and how can we live for Him, just as

Romans says, living sacrifices, because it's the least that we can do, but not just this period of time as we're marching toward the resurrection.

How about every day of our life, let it be daily sacrifice, living, a daily living sacrifice for our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Will we trust the one who died for us? Let's pray. Lord God, this morning as we have looked into what the soldiers were doing beneath the cross, most of them not even paying any attention to who was there, potentially for them it was just another criminal, just another religious zealot, just someone else, and it was their duty, their duty, it was their shift, it was their turn to guard the area of the crucifixion so that no one would interfere.

But Lord, unlike these uncaring soldiers, these oblivious soldiers, I pray that you'd help us to realize each and every day who it is that died on that cross nearly 2,000 or over 2,000 years ago.

So Father, I pray that you would help us to be living sacrifices, living for you each and every day, dying to ourself so that we may live for our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

[24 : 06] And if there's anyone who's listening to these words today, Father, may you draw them, may you help them to realize that there's nothing that can separate them from the love of Jesus Christ and that you love them, you sent your Son, Jesus Christ, to die on the cross in their place, and they are truly worth it all.

Souls that you love and that you will provide forgiveness of sin, will provide a brand new nature and a new life, a life in Christ, and a hope that is secure, the hope of glory, spending eternity with you.

Father, we have to look forward to a reunion one day with our loved ones who've gone before, who've known Christ as their Savior as well. Lord, help us prepare for that grand reunion day by living a life for which we will not be ashamed when Jesus comes.

Father, I thank you and I praise you. For it's in Jesus' name that we pray. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.