

How do you face Jesus?

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 31 August 2025

Preacher: Asher Griffin

[0 : 00] Matthew 27, starting at verse 27. After I read this passage, I'll say the word of God for the people of God, and we respond thanks be to God.

Matthew 27, 27. 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 and 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 his cross. And when they had come to a place called Golgotha, that is to say the 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.

[1 : 31] They divided my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots. Sitting down, they kept watch over him there, and they put over his head the accusation written against him, This is Jesus, the King of the Jews.

Then two robbers were crucified with him, one on the right and another on the left. And those who passed by blasphemed him, wagging their heads and saying, You who destroy the temple and build it in three days, save yourself.

If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross. Likewise, the chief priests, also mocking with the scribes and elders, said, He saved others.

Himself he cannot save. If he is the King of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him. He trusted in God.

Let him deliver him now, if you will save him. For he said, I am the Son of God. Even the robbers who were crucified with him reviled him with the same thing.

[2 : 44] The word of God for the people of God. Thanks be to God. Please be seated. Well, hey, it's great to be here. I'm certainly thankful for Jason for the invitation to be with you all again.

Again, my name is Asher Griffin, the lead pastor, and one of the elders at Crosspoint Church in Enid, Oklahoma. My wife and I are thankful to be with you all this morning. I don't know if I'm in a stage of joy and ecstasy or in a state of PTSD, because my mom was a gym teacher for 45 years. So I grew up in a room like this. Carpet, courts, crash pads. If I see scooters, I may run away as far as you can see. But it's great to be here. And I love whoever, Jason says, one of you guys made the pulpit.

Love how you made the pulpit in this way to where I can hold the word. A phrase that I borrow from a friend. And he says the word is between you and me because it mediates God's word between you and me and us and him.

And so it's a great picture. It's not just there for formality or for me to have a quick look at it. But it actually serves as a great picture of what we're doing here in this moment. Now, if you think about whether you grew up in church, whether you're new to Christianity, whether you're here today and you're thinking about it, or maybe you're in a state of doubt, I wonder how you think, how you normally respond to Jesus Christ.

[4 : 02] So how do you normally respond to Jesus? You remember the parable of the four soils? I'd imagine some of you have read that in some of the Gospels, the parable of the four soils, where Jesus described four kinds of people, not by their background or by their behavior, but by their response in receiving the word that was planted.

Some hearts are hardened where the word never sinks in. You remember that illustration. Some are shallow where they spring up really quickly. But then they wither away. Others are crowded out. They're choked out by distraction or worldliness. It's presented there in the parable as rocks really choking them out. Or then there's the fourth group where it's the good soil, where the word takes

root.

It bears fruit and it endures to the end. Now, here in our passage, Matthew 27, if you don't know the Bible, the parable of the four soils is previously in the book of Matthew.

But in Matthew 27, the word of God is no longer just heard, but amazingly seen. Where God in Christ is the word himself and he's being seen. Where the word has become flesh.

[5 : 10] But in our passage, the word that's become flesh has been beaten. He's been stripped. He's been mocked. He's been nailed to a tree. He's been lifted up for the world to behold in a state of mockery and despair.

And the world, we're going to see in this passage, the world actually responds to him in a couple of different ways. And I'd imagine you read the parable of the soils and you would see yourself, hopefully, as the fourth soil.

The one who receives the word, grows in faith, endures to the end. None of you would ever look at yourself and go, yeah, I'm probably the first. Or the second. You always go, the first kind of reminds me of that guy from college.

Or the third one, my aunt. Or the second one, totally mother-in-law. You know, those kind of, you always look at and think of other people. But how do you respond to Christ revealed to you in person in this passage?

Our passage gives us a scene thick with humanity. There's soldiers, rulers, passerbys, all there, all responding to Jesus, even the religious there. I mean, this is a VBS play or a Christmas play that is perfectly aligned for us to behold.

[6 : 16] But amazingly, in this passage, none of those characters, none of those characters have faith. None of them are the parable, in the parable of the soils, the fourth soil. It's as if the soils have come to life with their hard hearts and shallow hearts and crowded hearts.

And the good soil in this passage is painfully absent. And they all saw Jesus, though. Everyone at the cross has a reaction to Jesus. And what you see in verses 27 to 44 is not just a historical account of something that really did happen.

But it serves us as a mirror of our own lives. Don't just look through it like a window and see what's there. Certainly do. You know, pick it apart, look at it, unravel it.

But also let it serve you like a mirror where it's actually examining your own heart, showing you what's truly there. Jesus wants us to see that these people are not just part of an ancient scene, but they actually represent the same kinds of people we find in every culture, in every congregation, and possibly even for some of you, even in your own hearts.

Now, I'm approaching this text in one of two ways. So I think there's a right way to interpret every text of Scripture, but hopefully I'm not wrong. But when I did this passage in my church a couple of months ago, I came at it twice.

[7 : 36] So I preached the same passage twice, not because I wanted less to do on the second week and more time to play golf. But I want you to see this as like an arena where I'm preaching to you from the perspective of the spectators in the arena.

And if I were here next week, like I was in the second week of my own church, we would actually then focus at the character on the field. So I'm going to try to unravel this by looking at the characters there. There's certainly a lot for you to look at in what is actually being done to Christ himself.

But we're going to see what's being done to him through the lens of the people who are actually there. And Matthew's concern is not just a response to Christ, but it's also to show the sheer wickedness of those who do respond to Christ.

And this passage actually reaches, I think, the apex of human depravity, where the sin that had been growing ever since Eden, I think now comes to full maturity as the Son of God is truly and actually crucified.

Where wickedness doesn't just kill Jesus, it mocks him. It torments him. It spits on him. It sneers at him all while he's suffering unto his death. Where wickedness doesn't just want to silence Jesus, it wants to humiliate him.

[8 : 45] So here at the cross, wickedness has finally matured. And it appears like a monster. This is the fulfillment of all that began in the wickedness of the garden.

The worst act in human history is committed. The murder of the sinless Son of God. And I think Matthew wants you to see the cruelty in the blindness of humanity, where he shows us the

magnitude of Christ's suffering.

Not just the physical agony, it's the weight of temptation. It's the weight of rejection. It's a demonic attack. It's divine wrath and the sorrow of bearing our own sin.

You've heard it said in Isaiah, where this man was to be a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief and never was as truer than here. So what you're going to find at the cross this morning is nothing that is neutral.

Nobody that is indifferent. You have to choose something. You have to respond in some way. And here you're going to see a couple of responses. We find blasphemy, mockery, rage, and a suffering Savior silently enduring it all.

[9 : 51] To where the question is, how do you respond to Jesus? How do you respond to the Christ? So I want this passage to press in close to your soul.

Let it shred away at your own illusions. And as we see these verses, we're not merely analyzing others. Examine yourself. What is your reaction to Christ, to his cross, his suffering, his kingship, actually reveal about the soil of your own heart?

Now, I don't know if you have an outline. I think I gave it to you like last night or something like that. But I'm going to make it very obvious. Oh, they do have an outline. Okay, I'm going to make it very obvious in case you didn't pick an outline up. I've got four points here because I think there are four groups in this passage that are responding to Christ.

And the first one, this first category of group I want you to see is the empty-minded people. The empty-minded people. Those who are mocking without meaning. And I think you see that in verses 27 to 31, where this first group gathered around the crucifixion of Jesus.

They could be described as being ignorant and wicked. Men who mocked Jesus, but they mocked him without understanding who he was or what he was doing. They were empty-minded, shallow, and careless.

[11 : 00] Now, to put this really lightly, it would be like me. So I'm thinking of me, not you. It'd be like me watching professional soccer and mocking some of the players playing professional soccer. When in reality, you would be right to look at me and go, you actually don't know what you're talking about.

And that's totally true. I don't know why the count of the clock happens in a certain way. Why is the field so big? Why are people walking half the time? Why is everyone so good at kicking a ball and they can throw it as well?

And I might mock them and you go, you don't know what you're talking about. That's the light version. The kind of mockery that these people were doing was a crucifixion. Yet it's almost like they don't know what they're doing in the midst of it.

They were mocking, but without even meaning. Where he introduces you to this in verse 27. Look there with your eyes. It says, Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the governor's headquarters and they gathered the whole battalion before him.

So they were Roman legionnaires. And by that, I mean they were trained killers. It's amazing. The wedding that I'm going to do tonight down in Colorado Springs. All the people there are air force.

[12 : 01] And air force people, I'm sure, are good at a lot of things. Hopefully, especially flying airplanes. But some of the air force guys at the end of the wedding are going to have raised swords that the bride and the groom are going to go out of.

And I just think that's really cool. Except it was amazing to watch these guys practice yesterday. These guys are not trained killers with swords. It's just part of their uniform. Now you go to someone like an army ranger or a navy seal.

That's the kind of people who we're talking about in this passage. They were really good at doing what they were called to do, which in many ways was to crucify someone and kill someone. They were stationed in Jerusalem.

And to them, Jesus was just another rebel, another convict. He was another body to brutalize. He just would have had, in a figurative way, just another number on his chest next to other people with a number on his chest.

It was his turn to die in the rotation of this. So to them, Jesus was just another guy. But even in their ignorance, their mockery was actually grotesque. Look at how they dress him up.

[13 : 02] This is a pure parody of a king. There's a scarlet robe. This is all in 28 and 29. There's a scarlet robe. That's intentional. A twisted crown of thorns.

A reed for a scepter. Then they kneel before him, laughing. Hail, king of the Jews. They spit on him, where you can imagine spit running down his face.

You could see blood pouring out from his brow. The reed once placed in his hand is snatched away and then used to beat the thorns deeper into his skull. They give him a reed. Then they take it away.

They beat him with it. And then they punch him. And they slap him. And they laugh. And to them, he's a clown, a fool, a pathetic, would-be loser king. But they have no idea, I think, that they are beating the actual son of God.

No clue that the only one they humiliate now will one day return to judge them and all the living and the dead. They think they are playing a game, but their game is damnable.

[14:05] Their mocking is not harmless. It actually is sin. And sin, even when it's ignorant, it actually damns the soul. So these men are not violent because they're informed. They're actually cruel because they're indifferent.

And you think about the tension within that. And their indifference, they represent a large swath of humanity today. You can see this in modern parallels all around. You can think of the nominal Christian who shows up to church but remains spiritually disengaged.

Physically present but actually heartlessly indifferent. Or you can think of the cultural Christian. So the nominal Christian, the cultural Christian. Cultural Christian is one who wears the name of Jesus. But they're more shaped by politics or the culture around them or even a family tradition than the actual gospel. They look like Christians but without the heart.

Whereas the other one, they act like Christians but without the heart. Or you can think of churches that try to make their whole gathering a form of entertainment.

[15:08] Where they replace reverence with spectacle and treat Jesus more like a mascot than a lord. Or skeptics and scoffers who laugh at Christianity without ever taking the time to thoroughly consider who Jesus is.

If you know what a meme is, then follow along. If you don't, come back in one minute. I love this meme where it talks about this atheist who goes to a Christian and says, I've read all the Bible and I think it's all baloney and it's all made up.

And the Christian responds, I guarantee you haven't read the entire Bible. And that's often what scoffers and skeptics tend to do. They want to tear something down without fully knowing it.

So if you're here today and you're not a Christian, you need to know that Christians don't think you're dumb. We don't think that you don't have a mind. We just think that you haven't truly looked at Christ for who he is.

We want you to look more at him. We want to read the Bible with you. We want to talk about Jesus with you. Because we think if you can taste and see that the Lord is good, you'll respond not like this first category of people.

[16:16] Now these people may not seem hostile, all those groups that I kind of mentioned. But they are indifferent. And that indifference is actually deadly. Like soldiers, they mock without meaning. But make no mistake, mocking the king, even in ignorance, is still a treasonous, rebellious act.

And what does Jesus do in the face of this? I mean, look there. What does he do? He's completely silent. He doesn't lash out.

He doesn't return mockery for mockery. But rather he endures. Because even for mockers, the cross is God's mercy on display. It's like this moment of patience where he's allowing them to see what they're doing so that they may fully understand it on the other side.

Where even the most shallow scoffer can be saved if they repent. And so you've got to ask yourself, are you more moved by the wounds of Christ? Or are you more unmoved by the wounds of Christ? Do you laugh at? Do you scoff at? Or do you simply shrug at Jesus? Where the world is full of those who reject Jesus out of thoughtlessness. But thoughtlessness, rejection is still rejection.

[17:28] And hell will not be filled only with violently hostile people. It will also be filled with casually indifferent people. Those who knew enough yet did so much more.

They're the people in your pew. In your family. Friend, maybe even you in the mirror. Where they scoff at Jesus but barely consider. But then the second group here, you see in the text in verses 38 and 44.

They know who he is. They know who he is and then they reject him anyway. Look at the second group. Those who have hardened hearts. They are guilty but still unrepentant. Hardened hearts. Guilty but still unrepentant. Where the first group mocked without meaning. Soldiers indifferent to the man they tortured. The second group is actually worse. These men know something of Jesus but still reject him.

Where their hearts are not ignorant. They're hardened. Their rebellion is deliberate. Look at verse 38. Then two robbers were crucified with him. One on the right and one on the left.

[18:28] This was no accident. It was actually an intentional act of dishonor. By placing Jesus between two violent criminals. The authorities aim to shame him.

To mock him. As the worst of the three. Isaiah 53 says that he was numbered with the transgressors. But not just numbered with them. He was placed in the very middle.

If you were to think of the two worst people in world history. You know what would those answers be? And what this group did at that time. Is they say okay we'll take bad guy number one.

And bad guy number two. And we're going to put Jesus in the middle of it. Not to ward those people off from one another. But to say he's the worst. The Greek word for robbers here.

If you see that in your text. If your text says robbers. The Greek word for robbers here. Is not a word that means a petty thief. But actually a dangerous bandit. These were hardened criminals.

[19:26] Likely violent insurrectionists. Perhaps even associates of Barabbas. They weren't stealing bread. They were killing for gain. And as they hung beside Jesus.

They joined the chorus of mockery. Look at verse 44. Kind of skipped over a couple verses. Verse 44. And the robbers who were crucified with him. Those on the right and the left. Reviled him in the same way.

Where they echoed the insults of the Jewish leaders. You who destroy the temple. If you are the son of God. Come down from the cross. And then it says. And the robbers reviled him in the same way.

And this is. I think this is staggering and astonishing. These men are dying. They're dying on their own. They're bloodied. They're gasping for breath. They're going to die by suffocation. Seconds from eternity.

And even then at that moment. What do they do? They mock the guy on their right. Or the guy on their left. Isn't that incredible? The depravity of their own heart.

[20:25] They're dying. And they still hate him. And revile him. They know who he is. Not in full. But enough. Enough to know what he claimed. Enough to know his name.

His miracles. His reputation. They likely heard him preach. They would have seen his power. And still they reject him. You see that in verse 44. The robbers also who were crucified with him.

The King James Version says that they cast the same in his teeth. And they actually. The text says. They heaped insults at him. They heaped the same insults at him.

The same insults that they were hearing from Jewish leaders. Who were saying. If you're the king of Israel. Come down. If you trust in God. Let him deliver you. You said you were the son of God.

So on and so forth. They knew some of the claims of Jesus. And this is what hardened hearts do. It sins against knowledge. Hardened hearts sin against knowledge. The rejection of Jesus as a savior isn't.

[21:21] Isn't an intellectual rejection. You know. I just saw on Twitter. A couple of months ago. That apparently. The smartest man in the world. The man with the highest IQ.

Has become a Christian. And embraced Christ. Christ. And you need to know. That's not because. He has the highest IQ. How do you even measure that? But. Is there like a school that you go to? And I don't know.

But it's not because he was a genius. It's also not because. You're a genius. That you would reject Christ. But rejection of Jesus. Is one out of morality. It's one out of morality.

Of seeing the world. As it's rightly created. It was rightly created good. And then it just disassembled from there. Because of man's sin. To where we have these hardened hearts. And this is what hardened hearts do.

They have enough light to repent. But instead they curse it. They hate Jesus. Not just out of confusion. But actually out of conviction. Where the presence of righteousness. Exposes the darkness to them.

[22 : 18] And they hate the light for it. You see how these. The second group is different than the first group. And you can see how this sounds familiar. Even today. These men are not ancient exceptions.

They're the people who are raised in church. Who now attack it. Because of previous pain. They're former believers. Who once confessed Christ. But now use their deconstruction.

As a platform for mockery. These are now called people like. Post evangelicals. Who claim to reject. What they view as legalism. But have instead. Actually rejected the Lord.

These are now online influencers. All over the algorithms. Who spend their lives. Tearing down the very gospel. They once claimed to believe.

And because so many people watch them. They actually make money from it. These are not passive doubters. They're guilty. And they're unrepentant. Their rejection flows. Not from misunderstanding. But from a love of sin.

[23 : 15] And a bitterness of the soul. And yet. Hear this. There's a glimmer here. Even in our account. Not just in our account. But in others. There's a glimmer here. Even hardened hearts. Are not beyond hope.

You think of these two people at the cross. Where if you go over to Luke's gospel. So just imagine reading all of the gospel of Matthew. And going man. That got really intense at the end.

And then you read a different account. Of the same events that happen. In the book of Luke. In Luke's gospel. And Luke's gospel tells us. That one of these two criminals. At the 11th hour.

Actually had a change of heart.

As the hours passed. Something broke open. Post his mocking of the Lord Jesus Christ. Where he actually rebuked the other thief. He confessed his guilt.

And he turned to Jesus. And said. Remember me when you come into your kingdom. Now these are guys. Who had just been mocking Jesus. In this other account in Luke. And what did Jesus do then?

[24 : 13] So to the first group. He was silent. But to the second group. When this person did repent. How did Jesus respond there? In Luke 23. Truly I say to you today. You'll be with me in paradise.

Friend. Friend. If you hate the Lord. And you hate Jesus. And it's not just out of apathy. But it's out of intent. You need to know. That you can turn to him right now.

And he will absolutely accept you. You can see. You can see. A son or a daughter. Finally going home. To a bad dad.

And the bad dad. Finally got enough guts. Courage or redemption. To say. I'm really sorry. Will you forgive me? And you see the beautiful. Hallmark movie.

Where the child says. Absolutely. Friend. You're not far off. Even though you think. You're really deep in the mud. So if that's you. If you carry wounds.

[25 : 09] Or guilt. Or anger towards God. Know this. Your story. It doesn't have to end that way. You don't have to spend. The rest of your life. Being so mad at him. You may be moments away.

From eternity. But even now. Jesus. Saves those who turn to him. What it looks like. Is something that is called. Repentance. In a helpful way. That the reformers.

500 so years ago. Kind of helped us. Understand. What does. What does true. Biblical repentance. Look like. What is. What is faith in Jesus. Looks like. It looks like. Knowing him. It looks like.

Going to him. Or they would say. Ascend to him. So. K. Ascend. A. And then finally. Trusting him. So T. It's the wrong way. To spell cat. But it's very helpful. To think through.

What does it mean. To have faith in Christ. What does it mean. To truly repent. Of your sins. It means to know the Lord. To go to him. And to trust him. With all of your heart. Friend. If you're the angry guy. In this passage.

[26 : 04] Turn to the Lord. And trust him. With your whole heart. Where you see this group.

Reviling Jesus. From a place of guilt and pride. But then you see. This third group. I'm going to call them.

Jaded mockers. Jaded mockers. Those who are disillusioned. And those who are dismissive. You see this in 39 through 40. In some ways. This. This is not.

More intense. But it is. A little bit more tragic. Where these aren't soldiers. Or thieves. They aren't hardened criminals. They're just ordinary people. Isn't that what we all want to be?

Just a normal guy. You want to walk into a room. Filled with normal people. And you want to fit in. And they're just passerbys. They're religious pilgrims. On their way. To keep the Passover. That's the context of.

Of why they're passing by this event. They're on their way. To keep the Passover. In verse 39. It says. And those who passed by. Derided him. Wagging their heads. You can imagine them being jaded.

[27 : 01] People who once had some form of interest in Jesus. They're doing the religious thing. But now they're disappointed. And delusioned. They turn on him in mockery.

This road. Just outside Jerusalem. The city gate. Would have been crowded that day. Where the Passover. Had swelled the city with travelers. And they passed by Golgotha. And they don't ignore the scene. They actually engage it.

Like going by a crash. On the highway. They all look. But in this case. They don't look in horror. They look with pity. Or not with pity. They look with scorn. Where they wag their heads. It says. A physical expression. Of disgust. And contempt. We've all had this from mom. Haven't we? Where you come home. And she looks at you in a certain way. And she's not going.

Oh man. Next time kid. But she goes. You knew better. What are you doing? Matthew uses.

Something that's called the imperfect tense. In this verb.

[27 : 55] A way to show. That as they were wagging their head. It means they were continually wagging their head. They didn't stop. They just couldn't stop wagging their head. But listen to the words of verse 40. You who would destroy the temple.

And rebuild it. In three days. Save yourself. If you're the son of God. Come down from the cross. That's what they were saying. Now you have to ask yourself.

Where did they get that? That phrase. Is that just something. That they were all naturally born with. To say. To someone who was dying on the cross. You who would destroy the temple. And rebuild it in three days. Save yourself.

If you're the son of God. Come down from the cross. It's as if they had heard the charges before. They had heard the claims. Maybe even they had once shouted at the gates.

Hosanna. The son of David. They'd lined the roads with palm branches. They had hoped. That Jesus was the one who would deliver them. From Roman oppression. But Jesus. Had disappointed them.

[28 : 52] He didn't attack. Their Roman foes. He attacked the temple instead. He didn't overthrow their enemies. But instead he kept walking around. And preaching against their own sin.

And now he was hanging. Bloodied. Powerless. This wasn't the kind of Messiah that they wanted. So they turned on him. Their expectations had died. And so their reverence of him did too.

And this is a tragedy of shallow belief. Where they liked Jesus for a while. As long as he did what they wanted him to do. But when he didn't meet their expectations. They then just began to dismiss him.

And the same thing happens today. These are people who once sang in church. Maybe they were baptized. Maybe they prayed for healing. They hoped for a blessing.

But then the suffering came. They were told about a promise. They were told about their purpose. And then the suffering came. A prayer went unanswered.

[29 : 49] Or even disappointment with other Christians. Suddenly seeped to the top. And by that point the Messiah was no longer useful to them. If you were told that if you just come and do certain things.

Then you'll receive certain things on this side of life. And then those things don't happen. Why would you ever keep coming? These are the church hoppers. Always searching for a fresh emotional high.

But unwilling to endure hardship. These are prosperity Christians. Who walk away when health and wealth don't come. These are progressive Christians. Who once believed but now mock the church that they used to love.

These are called deconstructors. Who use personal pain to justify theological rebellion. They may seem thoughtful. But they are no different than this crowd.

Wagging their heads. Quoting half-truths. Scorning the suffering Savior who failed to be what they wanted. But hear this clearly. Their Jesus failed because their Jesus wasn't real.

[30 : 50] They never knew the Christ of the cross. They followed a version of Jesus shaped by convenience and comfort. Not the crucified risen Lord of the scriptures.

Now I think pastorally this group needs more than arguments. To counter whatever they might toss on the table. What they really need is they really need to meet Jesus. And encounter him spiritually. They need to be reintroduced to the suffering servant.

Who was pierced for our transgressions. And was crushed for our iniquities. And many of us know them. They're your adult children. Your former students.

Your once faithful friend. Where they walked with Jesus for a time. But now walk away wagging their heads. Which brings us to the fourth group. Perhaps the most chilling of them all.

Where these aren't careless or jaded. But they're actually religious people. They would know the scriptures. And they would be in a position of leading people. But they are blind.

[31 : 48] So I want you to see the blinded leaders. And their religious but resistant people. In verses 41 to 43. The final I think and most sobering group. You encounter at the cross.

Is not made up of criminals or crowds. They're not soldiers or skeptics. But they are religious leaders. The chief priests. The scribes. The elders of Israel. And the ones who claim to know God best.

Yet they're the most blind of all. Look at 41. So also chief priests with the scribes and elders mocked him. Saying these were the most respected and most learned. The most publicly righteous men of Israel.

Where together they made up what is called the Sanhedrin. The highest religious authority in the land. Where if anyone would have to recognize the Messiah. It should have been them. But instead of worship. They offer mockery.

But notice. Notice how they talk. Here. Look at the language there. How they talk. They didn't speak to Jesus. But they spoke about him. As if he's not even worthy.

[32 : 45] The dignity of a direct address. Their contempt runs so deep. Look at 42. They attack his power. They're not talking to him. They're talking to others. He saved others. He cannot even save himself.

They admit he worked miracles. But they don't deny his healing ministry. As they twist it. He helped others. But now look at him. He's helpless. They see his suffering.

Not as a sacrifice. But as a proof that he's actually a fraud. And they continue. He's the king of Israel. Let him come down now from the cross. And we'll believe in him. But they wouldn't.

They wouldn't believe in him. These men had seen more signs than anyone. They had more evidence of who he was than anyone there. They'd watch Lazarus be raised from the dead. They debated Jesus' authority firsthand.

Their issue wasn't a lack of evidence. It was actually hardened pride. And then in 43. They go for the deepest cut. He trusts in God. Let God deliver him now if he desires. For he said, I am the son of God.

[33 : 45] Where there they scorn his identity. His trust in the father. His claim to divine sonship. They quote almost word for word the mockery predicted in Psalm 22.

Unknowingly fulfilling prophecy. Even as they ridicule him. This is the most dangerous form of rejection. Where it's religion without repentance. Where these men had scripture status. Spiritual vocabulary. But they hated him. They were polished. But they were poisoned with pride. And this still exists today. You can see mainline churches.

Mocking the gospel. By having crosses on their wall. But no gospel in their pulpit. You can see moralistic sermons. About values and virtue.

But nothing about sin. Or atonement. Or repentance. You can see highly involved churchgoers. Hear this. Highly involved churchgoers. Who know the system.

[34 : 47] They know the way it works in this church. They run the committees. They quote scripture. But inwardly they resist Jesus as their Lord. Pastors who build platforms and ministries.

But have no cross in their message. No Christ in their hearts. Or even parents. Parents who are so pumped about what their kids do. And their kids involvement.

But to them. Church is just a place to drop their kid off. It's great that the kid does that. It's great they run the camera. It's great they work the sound. It's great they work as a greeter at the door. But man what an indictment to that Christian parent. Were they the first one. At least emotionally. Out the door. Religious unbelief is the hardest to reach. Because it feels so holy.

They're there. They're doing it. They're quoted it. They know it. They're fifth generation. These leaders didn't think they needed saving though. They were too respectable. They were too established.

[35 : 46] They were too blind to see their guilt. But even here among the Sanhedrin. The gospel's reach is not powerless. It would be Nicodemus who came by night. It would be Joseph of Arimathea who asked for Jesus' body.

Where God is able to break through even the hardest hearts. So you've seen them all. Soldiers mocking. Criminals guilty. Passers by dismissive. Leaders who are religious but resistant. Where each group is there at the cross. Each group still here is here with us today. But the good news is that Jesus was crucified in the middle of all of them. That's the good news. That in the midst of this arena of poor saints. It was Jesus who was crucified in the middle of it. He was pierced for soldiers. For thieves. For wanderers. For hypocrites. And he still calls each of them to himself today.

Where the heart is often seen as too far off. But we have to realize that not even these kinds of people are too far away. Some mocked without meaning. Some rejected him with a hardened heart. [36 : 51] Some walked away jaded and delusion. Some resisted him under the banner of religion. But none of those responses are new. And none of them are beyond the reach of God's grace. The mockers and the murderers at the cross weren't just historical characters.

They actually represent the people still among us. And amazingly the staggering truth of the gospel is this. Jesus died among them. He was crucified not above them. Not removed from them. But right in the middle of them. Where he turns that mockery around. The ignorant. The hostile. The disillusioned. The self-righteous. They're all gathered at his feet. And still he did not come down. Not because he couldn't. But because he wouldn't. He stayed out of love. He stayed to save. And remarkably. Some of these people at this encounter. In this context of this passage. Some of them were saved. So don't just jump ahead to 2025. Just think about a couple of days later. One of the hardened thieves.

[37 : 49] Moments earlier. Full of blasphemy. Cried out. Lord remember me. And Jesus said today you'll be with me in paradise. That man didn't bring a clean record. He brought repentance.

That's all Jesus asked for. Is not perfection. But absolute surrender. And one of the Roman soldiers. Blood still on his hands. Looked up and said. You see this at the end of Mark. Truly. This was the son of God. And he glorified God there. A Gentile executioner. Became a worshiper. Right there at the cross. Or in Acts 2. Peter preached to a crowd in Jerusalem. The very same people who had shouted. Crucify him. They were cut to the heart. By the word going out. To where they cried out to Peter. They said. What must we do? And Peter said repent. And what happened? 3,000 people of them did. Even the priests. The very leaders who had sneered.

[38 : 46] At the foot of the cross. Would later be counted. Among the church. Where in Acts chapter 6. It says. A great many of the priests. Became obedient to the faith. That's the grace of God. Where he is still. The friend of sinners.

Even those who once mocked him. And that means. No matter where you are today. In your seat. Whether you're ignorant. Hardened. Jaded. Or religious. The Savior still calls for you. In blood. He still pleads. In mercy. Is open wide. His arms to gather you in. But make no mistake. Friend. There is no neutral ground.

At the cross. Hebrews chapter 6. Says that to reject Christ. Is to crucify him. Again. And to hold him up. To public shame. Where you either stand.

With the one crucified. Or you stand among those. Who crucified him. So the question. Is not. What did they do back then? But the question. For you and I today. Is what do you do.

[39 : 43] With Jesus now? Let's pray. Our gracious. And heavenly father. We thank you. For what your word says. About you. And makes true. About who you are. And what you've done.

And who your son. Did it for. We praise you. For the grace. And the mercy. Of bringing clarity. Amongst these people. In your text.

To where we can evaluate. Who we are. Before your throne. God. May you have us. Keep our eyes. Continually on you. Worshiping you. We know you will.

But we pray. That you would. Make this. Not a burden. But a joy. Where we cling to your cross. Obey your son. And enjoy the fruit. Of his labor. Pray this in Jesus name.

Amen. Amen.