

Choices

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Date: 25 March 2016

Preacher: Rev Alan Montgomery

- [0 : 00] Our reading this evening is Isaiah 53, verses 3 to 9. He was despised and rejected by others, a man of suffering and familiar with pain.
- Like one from whom people hide their faces, he was despised, and we held him in low esteem.
- Surely he took up our pain and bore our suffering. Yet we considered him punished by God, stricken by him and afflicted.
- But he was pierced for our transgressions. He was crushed for our iniquities. The punishment that brought us peace was on him.
- And by his wounds we are healed. We are all like sheep have gone astray. Each of us has turned to his own way.
- [1 : 15] And the Lord has laid on him the iniquities of us all. He was oppressed, afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth.
- He was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth.
- By oppression and judgment, he was taken away. Yet who of his generation protested?
- For he was cut off from the land of the living for the transgression of many people. He was punished.
- He was assigned a grave with the wicked and with the rich in his death. Though he had done no violence, nor was any deceit in his mouth.
- [2 : 21] Amen. Verse 17. Carrying his own cross, he went out to the place of the skull, which in Aramaic is called Golgotham.
- Here they crucified him, and with him two others, one on each side, and Jesus in the middle.
- Pilate had a notice prepared and fastened to the cross. It read, Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews. Many of the Jews read this sign, for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city.
- And the sign was written in Aramaic, Latin, and Greek. The chief priests of the Jews protested to Pilate. Do not write the King of the Jews.
- But does this man claim to be the King of the Jews? Pilate answered, What I have written, I have written. When the soldiers crucified Jesus, they took his clothes, divided them into four shares, one for each of them, with the undergarment remaining.
- [3 : 49] This garment was seamless, woven in one piece from top to bottom. Amen.
- We all make them, don't we? Almost from, well, even before we can speak, we make choices. We don't know making them, but make them.
- Some of them good. Some of them not so good. This afternoon, some of us, a few of his enemies were down at the plaza, giving out good newspapers, try praying booklets, Easter eggs.

Didn't see any there. Didn't see any of you there. You missed out on Easter eggs. But the people who came, they had a choice to make. They could either take it and read it, or they could say, no, thank you.

Some of them did make that choice by taking the paper or the booklet and hopefully reading it.

[5 : 01] Others were not interested. But quite a lot of them took Easter eggs. The choice was there for them to make.

and some of them accepted and some of them rejected. And as I said, we all make choices.

From the earliest to the latest. We have a choice to make. I wonder if you can remember your school report card. But do you remember what the teacher wrote on it?

You're late. Yes. Could do better. That's one of the things that were written in my mind. Could do better. Or some improvement is shown.

Or he has the potential. doesn't pay attention. Continually daydreaming. And you may have some other things on your report card different from those that I said this morning.

[6 : 24] And you may have said, once you've gone through school, I wish I had paid more attention at my maths and my English. I could have got a better job.

But the choice was made. And the choice that we make have lasting effect and consequences on our lives. Undoubtedly so.

And you can think of some of those choices in your own life that you've made. or the lives of your children or your husband or your wife.

The choices they have made. And the consequences you've had to pay for their bad choices. The last days of Jesus was no different.

people made some choices. Peter's claim never to fall away or to leave Christ.

[7 : 38] He was hit by a hammer blow when he denied him. Even if I have to die with you, I will never disown you.

the servant said to him, you also were with Jesus of Galilee. But he denied it before them all.

Have we ever been in that situation? When someone has said something about Jesus and we've failed to speak up or say something in his defense?

Judas, the one who betrayed Jesus for 30 pieces of silver. Those words that we have in Matthew chapter 26, what are you willing to give me if I hand him over to you?

So they counted out for him 30 silver coins. The betrayer had arranged a signal with him.

[8 : 45] The one I kiss is the man. When Judas saw that Jesus was condemned, he was filled with remorse and returned the 30 silver coins and said, I have sinned where I have betrayed innocent blood.

Too little, too late. Pilate, who couldn't make a decision whether it was Barabbas or Jesus and washed his hands of the holy effect.

When Pilate saw he was getting nowhere but instead an uproar was starting, he took water and washed his hands in front of the crowd he thought he was getting away with it but he had made his choice.

He had made his decision. The crowd who were asked to choose between Jesus and Barabbas, which of the two do you want me to release to you?

Barabbas the answer and it would appear appear that although the disciples followed Jesus, there is little or no mention that they stuck by him through all of this, leaving us to presume that they were shaking in their boots and decided to flee the scene.

[10 : 27] if only their decision, if only those people that I mentioned, their decision was different or was it God's plan that that is what should be the case?

You remember just before Jesus was crucified in John chapter 15, 17, we see that Jesus, that wonderful chapter which speaks about the prayer life of Jesus, where he prayed for himself, he prayed for his disciples, and the third section in that, he prayed for all who would believe in him through their witness.

Have you ever thought that that was Jesus praying for you? He knew and he knows who would follow him.

and he prayed for you. And that is very reassuring and comforting for me to know that Jesus prayed for me all those years ago. He prayed for you in those days leading up to his crucifixion when other things undoubtedly would have been on his mind.

But his love for you was so great, so magnanimous, that he took time to pray for all who would follow him through witness of those disciples and the disciples that would come after them.

[12 : 13] A recluse lived high in the mountains of Colorado.

When he died, as often is the case, his relatives came to see what they could get. And on arrival, they saw an old shack with an outhouse beside it.

Inside, next to the rock fireplace, was an old cooker, a cooking pot, and mining equipment, a cracked table with a carousel lamp on top, and to the side of the room, a dilapidated bed, with a threadbare blanket on top.

The relatives who gathered picked up what they could find of value and took them away. And as they were driving from his shack, an old friend of the recluse flagged them down and asked if they wouldn't mind if he took what was left in the cabin.

Go right ahead, they said. After all, they thought, isn't it worth taking because we've got it all here? The old friend entered the cabin and went straight for the table.

[13 : 55] Reaching underneath, lifted some of the floorboards and proceeded to take all the gold his friend had amassed over the 53 years, enough to build a palace.

The recluse died without his family knowing his true worth. death. And as his friend looked out of the window and watched the cloud of dust behind the relative's car disappear, he said, they should have got to know him better.

And I reflect on Good Friday and remember the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who suffered and died almost 2,000 years ago.

Will we leave the service this evening knowing him better or empty-handed? Will we claim him afresh this evening as our Lord and Savior?

Will we humble ourselves? Will we give all that we have to him who has given all that he has for us?

[15 : 26] Do we recognize the true worth of Jesus' sacrifice? Or is he simply some relic of history who lived somewhere in some town in the Middle East long time ago?

We can either leave empty-handed or with the most precious gift available, a living relationship with Jesus Christ, the one who wants to be Savior, friend, and Lord.

What will you do with Jesus? Neutral? You cannot be. One day your soul will be asking, what will he do with me?

The choice is yours. what will he do with me? The most precious gift we have worshipped this evening that anyone has ever given.

He offers each of us and a reminder of this eternal life and we can leave with those words ringing in our minds or we can leave empty-handed but the choice is yours.

[17 : 16] before we take communion we're going to sing two verses of the hymn Come and See.
Come and See.