

Matthew 27C

- This morning's lesson covers important material though some of it may be a little difficult
 - In just 40 verses, Matthew tells the story of Jesus' crucifixion from start to finish following Pilate's sentence of death
 - We will cover it in a few weeks, focusing on details that are often missed or misunderstood
 - Last week we concluded our study at the moment Pilate washed his hands of the decision to crucify Jesus
 - Today we pick up there again in the scene, and as we do, we will focus on a few key aspects of this account as Matthew tells it
 - First, we want to understand at least to some degree what Jesus experienced, though obviously we can't fully appreciate the full horror
 - I intend to explain the circumstances in detail but without dwelling on the gore any more than is necessary
 - Our goal is to understand what happened sufficient to appreciate why it needed to happen this way
 - Secondly, we will return to the question of why did Jesus need to suffer at all on the His way to death?
 - You may remember in an earlier week I raised this question and we began to answer it from the text
 - I asked why couldn't the Father allow Jesus to die for our sins without the added suffering beforehand?
 - At that earlier time, I gave you the first of two reasons why Jesus needed to suffer and today we will look at the second reason
 - Finally, we want to understand the timeline of Jesus' death and allow the Scripture to reset some of our established ideas about these events
 - The Church has adopted a number of traditions in how we remember Jesus' death, some of which are simply wrong
 - So let's take time as we go to note time and place references to help us understand these events correctly

- Speaking of our timeline, let's start there this morning by remembering where we are in the events of this week in Jerusalem

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- Let's return to an overview chart for the Passover week in the year Jesus died and add the events of Matthew 27
 - For the first four days of the week, Jesus taught in the Temple during the day and slept in the evenings in Bethany
 - While in the temple, the Jewish religious leaders "inspected" Jesus trying to discredit Him, but they failed
 - That fulfilled Scripture's demand that a Passover lamb be inspected for 4 days to see it was spotless before being sacrificed

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- Then it came to the day of Passover, which began at sundown on Wednesday night according to the Jewish way of reckoning days
 - We learned that on the day before Passover on Wednesday afternoon Jews took their lambs to the temple to be sacrificed
 - Then each family ate their lamb that night to celebrate the Passover meal after sundown

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- On that same night, Jesus and His disciples celebrate their Passover meal in the Upper Room in Jerusalem, which we call the Last Supper
 - Then Jesus and His disciples left the city to go to the Mt. of Olives and wait for His arrest by the Roman cohort
 - After His arrest, Jesus then endures His overnight trial before the high priests of Israel
- Then at 6AM, at sunrise, Jesus is taken to Pilate for His Roman trial, where He is found guilty despite being innocent of all charges
 - That's where we pick up now, early on a Thursday morning, and the events that follow can be divided into three parts
 - According to the Gospels, we will have three key time markers to use in timing the events of this day: 9AM, 12PM and 3PM
- We are now approaching the first of these time markers, 9AM, because Mark tells us that Jesus was placed on the cross at that exact hour
 - That's where we pick up today, with Jesus being prepared to carry His cross and to be crucified at 9AM...

[Matt. 27:26](#) Then he released Barabbas for them; but after having Jesus scourged, he handed Him over to be crucified.

[Matt. 27:27](#) Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the Praetorium and gathered the whole Roman cohort around Him.

[Matt. 27:28](#) They stripped Him and put a scarlet robe on Him.

[Matt. 27:29](#) And after twisting together a crown of thorns, they put it on His head, and a reed in His right hand; and they knelt down before Him and mocked Him, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!"

[Matt. 27:30](#) They spat on Him, and took the reed and began to beat Him on the head.

[Matt. 27:31](#) After they had mocked Him, they took the scarlet robe off Him and put His own garments back on Him, and led Him away to crucify Him.

- After failing to convince the crowd that Jesus should be freed, Pilate reluctantly agrees to release the career criminal, Barabbas
 - Last week we learned how Barabbas' true name was Yeshua, son of the father, which is also Jesus' name and title
 - So Barabbas represented one side of humanity, the guilty among all who descend from Adam who are dead in their sins
 - While Jesus represented those who are born again children of God, righteous by faith in Jesus
 - The world faces the same choice that the crowd did on that day: choose rebellion to God or the righteousness of Christ
 - And then one Man, Jesus, was condemned to receive a punishment He did not deserve to set free the guilty man, Barabbas
 - As Matthew says, Pilate hands Jesus over to be crucified
 - Which creates another picture of Jesus' sacrificial death in the place of the guilty so that we may go free by the grace of God
 - Notice Matthew says that Pilate ordered that Jesus be scourged on the way to the cross, but this is not the actual order of events
 - Matthew and Mark report the scourging of Jesus took place as part of the process of crucifixion, but that was not the case
 - John tells us specifically that Pilate had Jesus scourged at a point in the middle of the proceedings with Barabbas

- After trying unsuccessfully to convince the crowd to release Jesus, Pilate had Jesus scourged to satisfy the crowd
- Luke doesn't mention scourging specifically but confirms that Pilate had Jesus "punished" hoping it would be enough
- But after the scourging, Pilate brought Jesus back before the crowds bloodied and torn to pieces and they showed no pity for Jesus
 - The religious leaders had prepared the crowd to demand Jesus' death no matter what Pilate said or did
 - So from John we learn that the events recorded in vs.27-31 actually happened before Pilate sent Jesus to the cross in v.26
- So Jesus had already been scourged before He was convicted to die, and scourging was nothing short of devastating
 - It was a form of whipping, but the Roman style of scourging was far worse than most
 - Romans scourged prisoners using a short whip consisting of multiple strands of leather each about 2-3 feet long
 - And at the end of each strand were tied either small metal balls or sharp pieces of sheep bone to inflict severe lacerations
 - The person was stripped naked, tied upright to a post with their backside exposed
 - Then two soldiers on either side struck the man's back either left-to-right or right-to-left dozens of times
 - The metal balls and sharp bone shredded the layers of the skin tearing it away and exposing muscle and even bone
 - Besides the intense pain, there was also blood loss and the prisoner was often left unconscious or in shock
 - Some even died from the scourging alone, and that was largely the point...to bring a man to the brink of death
 - Scourging was used by Romans to hasten the death process of crucifixion
 - An otherwise healthy man could remain alive for days nailed to a cross, which forced Roman guards to remain nearby throughout

- But following a Roman scourging, a prisoner was so debilitated that death happened in a few hours or a day at most
- So Jesus was scourged and then returned to Pilate, and though Hollywood has made efforts to show the horror of scourging, they still can't do it justice
 - Some scholars who have researched Roman scourging report that the whips would reach around to catch the sides of the prisoner's face
 - The person's cheeks would be torn to shreds by the whips, leaving the face horribly disfigured and unrecognizable
 - Scripture says this very thing happened to Jesus
 - Isaiah tells us that the just the sight of Jesus was appalling more than observers could take in

**Is. 52:14 Just as many were astonished at you, My people,
So His appearance was marred more than any man
And His form more than the sons of men.**

**Is. 53:3 He was despised and forsaken of men,
A man of sorrows and acquainted with grief;
And like one from whom men hide their face
He was despised, and we did not esteem Him.**

- Isaiah foretold that people would be astonished to look upon the Messiah as He was abused and killed
 - The word for astonished literally means to be appalled or horrified at Jesus' appearance
 - Because His appearance was marred more than any man, and the Hebrew word for marred is literally disfigured
- Jesus wasn't just bloodied...His body was torn to shreds, disfigured like something from a horror movie until He didn't even look human
 - Isaiah says people hid their face from Him rather than look upon His body
 - They had to wonder how Jesus was even still alive

- Yet in this condition, Jesus was still made to stand before the crowd and in vs.27-30 Matthew says the Roman soldiers added insult to injury
 - Despite His debilitated condition they tormented Jesus with further beatings, a crown of thorns and mocking
 - None of these punishments were especially harsh by themselves, but consider how they would have felt following a scourging
 - The pain must have been unbearable, and it must have taken all of Jesus' strength to remain standing to endure it
- Remember, every detail in this process was ordained by God to serve a purpose in His plan of redemption
 - For example, even Jesus wearing a crown of thorns serves a purpose
 - Genesis tells us that after Adam fell into sin, the Lord pronounced a series of curses on the condition of the world
 - The primary curse God pronounced was physical death for all humanity and animals
 - So all humanity exists under a curse of death, but the Bible also says that Jesus took the penalty of God's curses on our behalf

Gal. 3:13 Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us – for it is written, “CURSED IS EVERYONE WHO HANGS ON A TREE” –

Gal. 3:14 in order that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we would receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.

- And another curse God spoke in the Garden said this:

Gen. 3:17 Then to Adam He said, “Because you have listened to the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree about which I commanded you, saying, ‘You shall not eat from it’;

Cursed is the ground because of you;

In toil you will eat of it

All the days of your life.

Gen. 3:18 “Both thorns and thistles it shall grow for you;

And you will eat the plants of the field;

- God made it harder for humanity to work the field by promising we would now fight against thorns and thistles in the field
- So when we see Christ wearing a crown of thorns, it symbolizes Jesus taking the curses of Creation upon Himself for our sake
- But seeing Jesus suffering so much drives us back to that question I posed earlier: couldn't Jesus have died for our sins without suffering in the process?
 - What did Jesus' suffering accomplish for us in the plan of redemption?
 - The first time I raised this question, I told you there are two answers given in Scripture
 - The first answer came from Peter who explained that Jesus suffered on the way to the cross to set an example for us
 - All who desire to live a godly life will be persecuted, and when that happens, we remember how Jesus handled suffering
 - And from His example we learn that the Lord wants His people to accept the mistreatment without striking back
 - And now we reach the second answer, which comes from Paul's letter to the Romans

[Rom. 3:24](#) being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus;

[Rom. 3:25](#) whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith. This was to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed;

[Rom. 3:26](#) for the demonstration, I say, of His righteousness at the present time, so that He would be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

- Paul says we are justified – declared not guilty of our sins – because Christ redeemed us
- To redeem means to pay the price that is required to set free someone under bondage or penalty
- We were under the penalty of the curse and in bondage to sin, but Jesus paid the price we should have paid
- And that price was His blood, referring to Jesus' sacrificial death in our place, and the application of His blood on the mercy seat in Heaven

- Now that could have happened without suffering, without us even seeing a drop of His blood spilled
- In fact, Jesus could have died in His sleep, and His blood would have still sufficed as a payment for sin
- But in Romans 3:25 Paul goes on to clarify that Jesus needed to be displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood
 - The word propitiation means to appease or satisfy anger
 - For example, let's say your mother gets angry at you because you forgot her birthday
 - So to appease her anger, you send her an extra large bouquet of flowers and an apology card
 - Those gifts are a propitiation to satisfy your mother's anger, because she is willing to accept that gesture
 - Likewise, God has wrath against all sin, and the only thing that will appease the wrath of God is the blood of Christ
 - The Bible says Jesus is our propitiation, because the Father is willing to accept His Son's death in our place

1John 4:10 In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

- But Jesus' death needed to be public so that God could demonstrate His righteousness in having overlooked sin
- Back in Romans 3 Paul says God passed over sins previously committed so that He could demonstrate His righteousness in punishing Jesus
 - God cannot turn a blind eye to sin...sin deserves God's wrath and Jesus took that wrath for us
 - We are forgiven because Christ took our place, but God needed us to understand what it took to bring us His mercy
- So Paul says God made Jesus suffer greatly and publicly to demonstrate that God is just in overlooking our sin
 - Jesus suffered on His way to death to make it clear what sin deserves and what we have avoided

- We didn't just avoid a painful death but we avoided an eternity of suffering because of Jesus' blood
- And Jesus' extreme suffering on the way to the cross serves as a disturbing reminder of how God sees our sin
 - We may not like to hear how much our Lord suffered as He made His way to death, but God doesn't want you to forget it
 - Because our sin made that treatment necessary, and not just the sin you did yesterday, but the sin you will do today
 - Allow your appreciation of Christ's suffering to cause you to pause the next time you contemplate a moment of sin
 - The writer of Hebrews cautions us this way:

[Heb. 12:1](#) ...let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, [Heb. 12:2](#) fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

[Heb. 12:3](#) For consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.

[Heb. 12:4](#) You have not yet resisted to the point of shedding blood in your striving against sin;

- Jesus endured hostility and fought hard against the temptation to avoid the suffering and shame that He experienced
- And why? The writer says He did that so that we would not grow weary and lose heart and become entangled in sin
- And if you think you've done enough to resist sin, the writer says you haven't resisted to the point of having your face shredded
 - You haven't suffered to avoid sin as Jesus did, but that's exactly what Jesus was doing...avoiding sin by going to the cross
 - The good news is that we can fail but it doesn't change where we're headed – that is the definition of grace
 - The point is, knowing what was done for us, should change how we live now

- The power to stop sin in our life comes from the Holy Spirit working in us, but it is our job to stop and yield
 - Jesus' suffering and disfigurement was God's demonstration of what wrath for sin looks like
 - Knowing that wrath has been poured out on Him and not us, should give us cause to live differently...
 - ...for the sake of our testimony or the very least out of a thankful heart
- Back in v.31 Matthew, we're told Jesus is led away to the cross, and at this point, I want to return to our timeline to clear up another misconception
 - Commonly, you will hear people say Jesus died on a Friday, but the Bible never names the specific day Jesus died
 - The view that Jesus died on Friday comes from references to the Jewish Sabbath and a tradition called a "day of preparation"
 - All the Gospels report that the evening on the day Jesus died was the beginning of a Sabbath
 - And the day before a Sabbath was called a "day of preparation" because Jews used that day to prepare for the Sabbath
 - Since no work could be done on the Sabbath day, Jews used the day before to accomplish the work needed
 - So all the work to be done like gathering firewood or making bread, etc. was prepared the day before the Sabbath
 - So when the Gospel writers say Jesus died on a day of preparation, many have assumed it was Friday, the day before the Sabbath
 - But we find out this isn't what the Gospel writers meant when we look more closely at the Gospel accounts
 - And it begins with understanding how Jews celebrated Passover
 - Passover is a single day feast held every year on the 14th of the Jewish month of Nisan, roughly March/April
 - Passover begins in the evening, like every Jewish day, and that night Jesus had the Last Supper followed by His death the next day

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- Passover is always followed immediately by a second feast called Unleavened Bread which lasts seven days
- And in the Law, the Lord told Israel that the first day and the last day of Unleavened Bread would always be a Sabbath
- The first and last days are Sabbaths no matter what day of the week they fall
- These special Sabbaths are called High Days, and they are observed in addition to the regular weekly Sabbath
 - So Passover is always followed by a Sabbath called a High Day Sabbath, which means every Passover is a day of preparation
 - So Jesus was crucified on a day of preparation because He was crucified on Passover, and the next day was a High Day Sabbath
 - In John's account we get confirmation that this was the case in that year

[John 19:31](#) Then the Jews, because it was the day of preparation, so that the bodies would not remain on the cross on the Sabbath (for that Sabbath was a high day), asked Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away.

- John says Jesus died on the day of preparation before a High Day Sabbath, not a regular weekly Sabbath day
 - So that means Jesus could have died on any day, and in fact, we know He didn't die on a Friday
 - If He had died on a Friday, then the next day would have been a regular Sabbath, not a High Day Sabbath as John says
- As we will learn when we get to Chapter 28, the day after Jesus died was Friday, which means Jesus died on a Thursday
 - Which also means that in the particular week that Jesus died, there were two Sabbaths in a row
 - The day after He died was a High Day Sabbath, and the next day was a Saturday, which is the normal weekly Sabbath
 - And then the third day was Sunday, the first day of the week, and that day is a third feast, the Feast of First Fruits

- This may surprise you, and many in the Church today follow a tradition of observing “good Friday” before Easter to remember the day of Jesus’ death
 - But now you see that this tradition is entirely inaccurate...we’ve been remembering the wrong day picked because of a misunderstanding
 - This may be the single greatest misconception within the church regarding the account of Jesus’ death
 - If you asked 100 Christians what day of the week did Jesus die, how many do you suppose would answer “Friday”?
 - 95? 99? 100?
 - And yet that answer is wrong, and the fact that this is the wrong answer has been staring us in the face in the Bible since the first century
 - How did this misconception get started? It’s simple really... someone said that Jesus died on a Friday and we believed it
 - And when someone established “Good Friday” the idea was cemented in church culture
 - You may wonder why I make so much of this little issue, and for the most part, I agree the mistake itself is insignificant and mostly harmless
 - But it’s an example of a much bigger and more serious issue that does impact every Christian
 - And that issue is trusting tradition or even our teachers rather than studying Scripture for ourselves
 - If we become comfortable depending on Church tradition rather than learning Scripture, we are in trouble
 - At first we may only be susceptible to small errors like thinking Jesus died on a Friday
 - But just as assuredly we will be taken in by bigger errors too because we won’t be able to tell the difference
 - And I’ve encountered Christians everywhere I go who are suffering the consequences of wrong beliefs or practices that brought them harm
 - They have been misled, disappointed, discouraged and hurt, but not by God or the Bible...by false teachers and false traditions

- That's the danger of not doing our homework, of not going to the source of truth for what we know
- Let me suggest that we all carry around bad assumptions, bad traditions, and bad teaching that we've collected over the years
 - Don't think that because you grew up in the church or you went to "Bible churches" you are immune
 - Did you believe that Jesus died on a Friday? Ask yourself why you believed that...where did you find that written in the Bible?
 - And for that matter, are you going to double-check what I've taught you from Scripture today?
 - The only way we move beyond such things is to remain teachable and to study the Bible carefully
 - And you need both to move ahead in spiritual maturity
 - If you are teachable yet don't turn to Scripture, then eventually you may be taught by the wrong people or the wrong traditions
 - And if you study Scripture without a teachable heart, you will reject out of hand anything you find that doesn't agree with you
 - The Bible itself tells us that we would do well to pay attention to what's written in this book

[2Pet. 1:19](#) So we have the prophetic word made more sure, to which you do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star arises in your hearts.

[2Pet. 1:20](#) But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation,

[2Pet. 1:21](#) for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.

- Peter says we do well to pay attention to the word of God in the same way we pay attention to a lamp shining in a dark place
 - Think about that analogy for a moment...when you enter a pitch black dark space with a flashlight, where does your gaze fall?
 - You focus your attention where the light is shining naturally

- And if you want to see something in the corner of the room or in the closet...
- You move the light to that place first and then look in the light
- That's what Peter is saying we should do with the word of God, because it is the light of knowledge of God
 - When you want to see something, to know the truth, you look at the word of God for your answers
 - It's like a person staring at a flashlight beam to see into the dark
- And when we need to investigate something that lies in the dark, you don't leave your flashlight behind and go searching the dark do you?
 - No, first you move the flashlight to the new place and then you follow the light
 - Similarly, when you have questions about life or God or the world or what comes next, you don't go searching in the dark
 - You don't go to the unbelieving world, to Barnes and Noble, to Trinity Broadcasting Network (TBN), to the internet...that's searching in the dark
- No, first you move the light...that is you move to the place in the word of God where you might expect to find that answer
 - And then you let the light lead you through the darkness
 - That's the analogy Peter is using to explain the value in resting in the word of God for your answer in everything
- And Peter gives us confidence in this pursuit by reminding us that nothing in the Bible was written merely by the thoughts of human beings
 - These words came from God Himself and He will show us what they mean in the course of time...if we come to it with a teachable heart
 - That's why this church and ministry exists, it's why I stand behind this pulpit each week
 - If I didn't believe in what I'm telling you, if I hadn't seen it work in my own life, I wouldn't waste my time telling you about it
 - There is still a lot to cover as we head toward the end of Matthew's Gospel, and there is still many misconceptions to address

- But this pursuit isn't just about righting misunderstandings...this is about rethinking where we go for our answers
- And ultimately, it's about changing our hearts because of what we learn
- As I like to say, when you teach the Bible, good things happen