

THE REAL JESUS
A Series on the Book of Mark
“The Death of Jesus”
Mark 15:21-41
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New City Church of LA
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I. Introduction

Welcome to New City!

The death of Jesus is at the heart of what we believe.

How many people wear a cross? There’s nothing wrong with wearing a cross, but it would be amazing if I came wearing a miniature electric chair around my neck. I actually did a Google search as well as an eBay search for jewelry that has an electric chair and I can tell you that I don’t think it exists.

The cross is a form of execution. In fact, it is one of the cruelest forms of execution ever invented by humans. **But, the cross is a symbol of Christianity.**

Half of the Gospel of Mark is about the death of Jesus. Much of the rest of the New Testament is about explaining why Jesus died.

Communion, one of the central parts of a Christian worship service, focuses on the broken body of Christ and the shed blood of Christ on the cross.

Virtually every church has a cross in a very prominent place.

The cross is the centerpiece of Christianity.

Why is the cross so important to Christianity?

When Paul went to Corinth, he said, **“I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified”** (1 Corinth 2:2).

Why?

Read Mark 15:21-41 (the second book of the NT)

This passage tells us about (1) Our Darkness; (2) Darkness that Jesus experienced; and (3) how the Light came in.

II. First, Our Darkness

When you read the whole story, you can’t help but to notice the darkness that covered the earth at the 6th hour (noon) until the 9th hour (3pm). In the middle of the day,

darkness covered the land. The sun stopped shining. It's couldn't just be a solar eclipse or something because it lasted for three hours. It was a miracle. It was a sign of something. Physical darkness in the OT is a metaphor for spiritual darkness.

What is spiritual darkness?

God is often referred to as the light. Darkness is being separated from God. God created us to have a relationship with him, to rejoice in his glory, to have life and live it to the full. He wants us to join the dance of the Triune God. He wanted us to get life from Him. To get our worth and value as a person from his love. To get our meaning for existence from Him, the creator. To get our identity from Him as a loved son or a daughter. He wanted us to live in the beauty of a relationship with him, delighting in his glory!

Because he wanted us to have a love relationship with him, he gave us the choice to have that relationship with him or walk away. He gave us freedom because all real love relationships require freedom.

But, we decided to abuse our freedom. We decided to walk away from God. We decided to say, I am going to my own thing—leave me alone! All of us. We've all decided to walk away from God and seek something else for life. We decided to seek something else for worth and value as a person. We decided to seek something else to give us ultimate meaning in life. We decided to seek something else to give us ultimate pleasure in life.

The problem was that these things didn't give us life that we needed.

You see, a lot of the stuff that we sought after look like good things, but when we made them THE THING that will give us life, we allowed it to destroy our lives.

We sought after money, but when we started to think that getting rich or winning the lottery or getting a job that pay a certain amount of money is going to solve all our problems, we became deeply disappointed.

We sought after success, but when we started to think that that's what's going to give us worth and value as a person, that's what going to give us life, we start to ignore our families, we start to get tempted to cheat, take short-cuts.

We sought after people and relationships for life, but when your spouse became the source of your ultimate happiness, a little argument became big arguments, and big

arguments became an earthquake in your life. How do you handle disapproval and failure from the person who gave you the meaning of life?

You see, what happened was that it resulted in a broken life.

It gave us loneliness. There is a deep brokenness in the way we relate to our family. There is a deep brokenness in the way we relate to people. There is depression. There is this sense of alienation between you and others. It's almost impossible to find someone who cares deeply for you that you care deeply for. You want someone to just accept you and tell you that you are okay. But, it's hard. And when you find someone like that, you mess up or it just gets messed up. Even when things are going well, there is this itching feeling of emptiness in your heart that you can't get rid of. It's like there is something cold, a vacuum inside of you that you can't fill no matter what you do. You feel trapped in loneliness.

Then, so much of what we do and feel is so selfish. We can't help it. We often justify it and say that it's a tough world out there and you have to take care of number 1. But the problem is that that's what everyone is doing. The world is hurting in so many places but we just want to live our lives in comfort. We are addicted to comfort. And no one cares for others who are hurting. If you don't think this is you, I want to ask to consider how much of your week has been about you and how much of it has been about others?

We ended up with hate and anger when we think about all these people who have mistreated us. Or we think people have mistreated us. The reality is that we also mistreat others and they mistreat us. We tend to only focus on what they did to us. But, whether it is justified or not, we are deeply in anger. The world is broken and it's really easy to get angry and start hating people. Sometimes, our anger is justified and sometimes our anger is not. There is something inside of us that is rotting when we continue brew in hate and anger. We perpetuate evil in the world when we retaliate based on anger.

Sometimes we hate out of ignorance, sometimes just to make us feel better about ourselves, or because someone has done something to us that we hated. No matter what, hate has destroyed the world. It created so many pain and suffering.

Some of us, when all of these things that we chased after failed us, we decided to self-mediate ourselves. At least we can find a time of solace when I take a drink, when I

get me a fix. But, these things are evil. They take a hold of you and start destroying you. They have destroyed some of you.

In God is light, and in Him was life, but we decided to walk away and continue to make a mess of our lives. And if we physically die in darkness, we will be completely separated from God. Outer darkness is one expression Jesus used for hell since hell is a place of absolute exclusion from the light of God's presence. That's where we were headed.

Yet, God, the Triune God, who loved one another and gave glory to one another and fellowshiped with one another for all eternity, loved us and could not bear to see us separated from the communion of the Trinity. He could not see us in darkness.

So, God sent his Son Jesus Christ to live a life that was fully connected to Him. He lived his entire life in complete communion with the Triune God. He lived a life that we should have lived. We have been studying the absolute beauty of his life.

Then, in order to reconcile us to God, Jesus died a death that we should have died.

III. That's the Second Point: How He Came to Bear Darkness.

Jesus came to rescue us from the darkness. He came to rescue us from our sins. Our state of separation from God. And the mess that we created for ourselves. He came to turn things around. His plan to rescue us was through bearing the weight of our darkness on his shoulders. By dying for our sins on the cross.

Cicero, first century Roman historian, describes crucifixion as:

The most cruel and hideous of tortures.

Jesus was stripped and tied to a whipping post. He was flogged with four or five thongs of leather interwoven with sharp jagged bone and lead. Eusebius, the third-century church historian, described Roman flogging in these terms: the sufferer's "veins were laid bare, and . . . the very muscles, sinews and bowels of the victim were open to exposure." Jesus was then taken to the Praetorium where a crown of thorns was thrust onto His head. He was mocked by a battalion of about 600 men and hit about the face and head. He was then forced to carry a

heavy cross bar on His bleeding shoulders until He collapsed, and Simon of Cyrene was forced into carrying it for Him.

When they reached the site of crucifixion, He was again stripped naked. He was laid on the cross, and six-inch nails were driven into His forearms, just above the wrist. His knees were twisted sideways so that the ankles could be nailed between the tibia and the Achilles' tendon. He was lifted up on the cross, which was then dropped into a socket in the ground. There He was left to hang in intense heat and unbearable thirst, exposed to the ridicule of the crowd. He hung in unthinkable pain for six hours while His life slowly drained away. It was the height of pain and depth of shame.

Yet, Jesus did not cry out to God. Why God? He didn't complain about the physical pain.

The moment of His greatest agony came when your sins and my sins were laid on his shoulders and God turned his back on Jesus and broke that eternal communion with the Triune God.

That's why there was darkness covered the land.

To someone who lived fully in the radiance of God, when that light was shut off, he cried out: **My God, My God, Why Have You Forsaken Me?**

It was to undo the separation that our sins have caused that Jesus was separated from God. The agony of his separation from God! There was an amazing intimacy between him and God, and they enjoyed each other for eternity, and to turn his face against the Son he loved, that was the most painful moment of Jesus.

This he did for us because he loved us and he didn't want us to be separated.

Here's how the Bible explains it:

Isaiah 53:5-6 says:

⁵ But he was pierced for our transgressions,
he was crushed for our iniquities;
the punishment that brought us peace was upon him,
and by his wounds we are healed.

⁶ We all, like sheep, have gone astray,
each of us has turned to his own way;
and the LORD has laid on him

the iniquity of us all.

Mark 10:45 says: “The Son of man came To give his life as a ransom for many.”

Hebrew 9:28 says: “Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people.”

1 Peter 2:24 says: “He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree.”

1 Peter 3:18 says: “Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God.”

2 Corinthians 5:21 says: “God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.”

Let me show you an illustration, a modern parable, of what Jesus did.

[Show Video]

IV. Third Point: When Jesus Sacrificed Himself, the barrier between God and human kind was ripped away.

The separation no longer became separation. The thing that symbolized the separation of Holy God and sinful human beings was the curtain of the temple. Let me explain.

[explain how the temple works, Yom Kipper, Hebrew 9]

When Jesus died (and he died outside the city in a place called Golgotha), but the next scene in the story is of something that happened in the heart of Jerusalem. At the heart of the temple, at the heart of the sanctuary, at the Holy of Holies. The curtain that separated us from God, the ultimate symbol of separation between God and man was torn from top to bottom, just to make sure we know who did it.

This means that God has opened the door for us to be reconciled to a relationship with God. This means that we can enter into God’s presence.

This means we can enjoy his presence and join the dance of the Triune God.

This means that we are going to be freed from the bondage of sin.

This means that we now enter into the presence of God. In fact, we are given the water of life, the fullness of His presence by the Holy Spirit.

That's what's going to carry us.

If we go through a tough time, we may not know why it's happening but we know what it couldn't be. It couldn't be because God doesn't care about us.

Do you see why Christianity is called good news. It is about what Jesus has done for us. This becomes our foundation. Then, we walk into a relationship. And we build that relationship based on his love and mercy.