

Day 159, Luke 23

by David Servant

The sermon explores the events surrounding Jesus' crucifixion, highlighting the contrast between the cruelty of the religious leaders and the amazing love of Jesus, who died for the sins of the world.

Description

David Servant delves into the events leading to Jesus' crucifixion, highlighting the betrayal by the Sanhedrin, Pilate's reluctance, and the crowd's shift from 'Hosanna!' to 'Crucify Him!' The repentant thief's salvation through faith and works is contrasted with the unrepentant hearts of the religious leaders and soldiers. Jesus' compassion for others, even in His suffering, and the supernatural darkness during His crucifixion signify the gravity of His sacrifice for humanity.

Transcript

the Sanhedrin, Pilate, Herod, the soldiers who mocked Him, and the crowd who cried for His crucifixion---would all be judged before Jesus' throne." - "The Son of God, clothed in flesh, was dying for the sins of the world, the most significant day in all of history." applicationPoints: - "We should reflect on our own faith and works, ensuring that they are genuine and lead to salvation." - "We should not be like the thief who whispered his acceptance of Jesus, but rather openly confess our sin and publicly ask for salvation." - "We should remember the significance of Jesus' death and the supernatural signs that accompanied it, such as the darkness that fell over the land." keywords: - "Sanhedrin" - "Blasphemy" - "Pilate" - "Herod" - "Simon of Cyrene" - "Passover" - "Crucifixion" - "Darkness" - "Supernatural sign" - "Salvation" - "Faith" - "Works" - "Repentance" ---

The Sanhedrins' charge against Jesus was blasphemy. They found God guilty of claiming to be divine. But their powers were limited by the occupying Roman government, which did not allow them the right of capital punishment. Needing to persuade governor Pilate that Jesus was worthy of death, they accused Him of treason. Pilate tried to pass the responsibility to Herod Antipas, murderer of John the Baptist, but to no avail. Now consider this: eventually all those people---the Sanhedrin, Pilate, Herod, the soldiers who mocked Him, and the crowd who cried for His crucifixion---would all be judged before Jesus' throne.

How is it that the people who cried, "Hosanna!" on Palm Sunday were crying, "Crucify Him!" on Good Friday? We shouldn't conclude that they were the same crowds. Those who called for Jesus' crucifixion were primarily the chief priests and religious leaders according to 23:13. Wanting to avoid a Jewish riot during Passover in Jerusalem, Pilate acquiesced to their request even after declaring Christ's innocence three times.

During Passover, Jews from many nations converged on Jerusalem to celebrate the feast. Simon of Cyrene, who had journeyed as many as 800 miles from Libya, became involved with a Passover Lamb on a grander scale than he ever imagined---as he carried Jesus' cross. Some commentators suggest that Simon later became a Christian. Mark's Gospel identifies him as "the father of Alexander and Rufus" (Mark 15:21), two men whom Mark assumed his readers would know. And Paul once sent greetings to a Christian named Rufus in Rome (Rom. 16:13), and so perhaps Simon and his sons did become followers of Christ. What an honor it would have been to have helped Jesus carry His cross!

While anyone else who found themselves in similar circumstances would have been consumed with their own troubles, Jesus amazingly was more concerned for the weeping women along His route to Golgatha than He was for Himself. Their sympathy for Him would not prevent the holocaust that would ultimately befall Jerusalem within forty years. Jesus' quotation from Hosea (23:30) reveals that He also had the earth's final judgment in mind, something that was only foreshadowed by Jerusalem's destruction in AD 70. God takes no delight in the death of the wicked (Ezek. 33:11), which is one reason He forestalls His judgment. Jesus' amazing love shines so brightly in today's reading as it is contrasted with the cruelty of the mocking religious leaders and Roman soldiers.

The repentant thief who hung beside Jesus is a beautiful example of a person who was saved by grace through faith, but through a living faith made evident by works. What were those works? First, he openly confessed that he was a sinner, which is the first step toward salvation (23:40-41). Second, he stated his belief that Jesus was innocent and unworthy of death, defending Him before the other thief (23:40-41). Third, without shame he looked to Jesus as the source of salvation and, before a hostile crowd, publicly asked Him for it. His faith was genuine, and Jesus responded to it with an affirmation: "Today you shall be with Me in Paradise" (23:43).

I wonder, however, how Jesus would have responded if that thief had whispered, "Pssst....Jesus! Keep looking straight ahead. Act like we're not talking right now. Hey, I want to tell You that I accept You into my life right now. I've heard that if I do that, things will begin to get better in my life. Now that I've accepted You, I'm expecting my situation to change!"

Jesus hung on the cross for six hours. It was during the second three hours that "darkness fell over the whole land" (23:44). When astronomers attempt to establish the exact date of Jesus' crucifixion by means of past solar eclipses, they run into one problem. That is, Jesus was obviously crucified during the Passover, which always occurs at the time of a full moon, which makes a solar eclipse an impossibility. The darkness that day was a special supernatural sign from God. The Son of God, clothed in flesh, was dying for the sins of the world, the most significant day in all of history.

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