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Matthew 27:27-31

This is a strange passage that we picked for today, isn't it? We're looking at Matthew 27. It's found in your worship folder. I'd invite you to follow along. It's a strange passage for today because today the big idea in our worship is that Jesus is the glorious King of the whole world. But in the passage Jesus is getting humiliated and embarrassed. So why was this passage picked for today? Well, Jesus is a very special kind of King. Jesus is a King who loved you so much that he was willing to be humiliated for you. And since Jesus was willing to be humiliated for us, we also should give up our pride to serve others.

This passage can be hard to read. The details make us wince. But I want you to realize that what happened to Jesus here was not simply an accident. What happened here did not catch Jesus by surprise. Jesus had actually been predicting this for quite some time. A few weeks before this Jesus said to his disciples in Matthew 20:18-19 **"We are going up to Jerusalem and the Son of Man will be handed over to the Gentiles (that's the Roman soldiers in our passage) to be mocked and flogged and crucified."** (Matthew 20:18-19). First of all Jesus saw this coming.

Second, Jesus certainly had the power to escape this cruel treatment. But he knew that this was God's plan. When Jesus was arrested and his disciples tried to prevent his arrest, Jesus said in Matthew 26:53-54. **"Do you think I cannot call on my Father, and will not at once put at my disposal more than twelve legions of angels? But how then would the Scriptures be fulfilled that say it must happen in this way."** Jesus could have escaped this cruel treatment, but he knew it was part of God's plan. God's plan to do what? When Jesus undergoes this cruel treatment, what did it accomplish?

Well right before Jesus was born an angel appeared to his stepfather Joseph and said, Name the child Jesus, **"because he will save his people from their sins,"** (Matthew 1:21). And right before our passage Jesus is eating the Last Supper with his disciples and he takes the cup of wine and says, **"This is my blood of the covenant which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins,"** (Matthew 26:28). That was God's plan. That his Son would be mocked and beaten and shed his blood to pay for the guilt of our sins. That's what Jesus is doing in our passage today, he's taking the punishment for your sins and mine.

Before we get into the passage I have to say that I have to be very careful how I describe this passage because there are a lot of things in this passage that are very cruel so I have to be careful that I don't describe it too graphically. And you might ask yourself, this passage is so cruel, could I ever come to love this passage? I thought about that this week and here's what I came up with. Sometimes I feel guilty. Sometimes it takes me a while to admit to myself that I feel guilty. Maybe I'm upset about something and I think about it and think about it and think about it. And finally I realize, "I'm upset because I feel guilty. I'm most of all mad at myself because I failed." Do you ever feel guilty? This passage is where guilt goes to die. This passage is where sins go to be forgiven. Next time you're feeling guilty, go to this passage because this is what Jesus did to take away your guilt.

Now you might read the passage and think, “This just makes me feel even more guilty because it was my sins that made him have to go through this.” But no one forced Jesus to do this. He just loves you this much.

Look with me at verse 27. **“Then the governor’s soldiers took Jesus into the Praetorium and gathered the whole company of soldiers around him,” (Matthew 27:27).** Imagine being surrounded by a locker room full of NFL football players. That would be intimidating right? That’s what happened to Jesus. These are the mightiest soldiers in the world. They were big and they were cruel.

At this point in the story Jesus has already heard the sentence of death from the governor. He’s already been flogged severely. And now these bullies add insult to injury. The worst kind of enemy is the enemy that gets in your head. The Romans were especially good at getting in your head. They would psychologically demoralize people. They humiliate Jesus. First, they humiliate him with props. Look at verse 28. **“They stripped him and put a scarlet robe on him and they twisted together a crown of thorns and set it on his head. They put a staff in his right hand.”**

What was the official reason why Jesus was put to death? Jesus was put to death for trying to be a king in rebellion against Rome. It wasn’t true. Jesus never suggested rebellion against Rome. In fact he said the opposite. He said, “Give to Caesar what is Caesar’s.” But that’s the charge that got pinned on him. When people were crucified they would put the official charge against them on a sign next to them. Do you remember what the sign said for Jesus. **“This is Jesus, the king of the Jews,” (Matthew 27:37).** So that was the charge against Jesus, being a king in rebellion against Rome.

The Roman soldiers know this, and so they decide to play a joke on Jesus and dress him up like a king. They grab a soldier’s uniform which looked kind of like a king’s robe because it was red and they throw it around him for his king’s robe.

And every king needs a crown. Sometimes on coins the king’s crown had rays, beams of light coming off of it. Well instead of beams of light, this crown has thorns coming off of it.

A lot of times kings had scepters so they get Jesus a pretend scepter. So first they humiliate Jesus with props. Then they humiliate Jesus with their actions. Look at the middle of verse 29. **“Then they knelt in front of him and mocked him. ‘Hail, King of the Jews!’ They said.”** No one likes to get made fun of. Jesus was getting made fun of.

This is bad but for me what the soldiers do next, takes it to another level. Look at verse 30. **“They spit on him.”** There’s something about getting spit on. One commentator said, “This is humanity at its worst.” Jesus is getting absolutely humiliated.

I’m just amazed at how cruel these soldiers are. They are still not done yet. Look at the middle of verse 30. **“They took the staff and struck him on the head again and again.”** Remember what’s on his head. Many of you work in a garden. I’m sure that you’ve reached into a bush and pricked your finger on a thorn. That’s hurts a lot. It’s just cruel to drive those thorns into Jesus

head. These soldiers are so cruel! But here's the amazing part of the story for me. Jesus was doing this not just out of love for you and me. Jesus was doing this out of love for these soldiers. I'm sure that some of these same soldiers went out to the cross with Jesus. And if you observe Jesus long enough even the most hard hearted person can become a changed man. If you keep reading the story these soldiers watched Jesus and they saw the crazy things that happened at his death. For example it became dark at noon. And upon Jesus death there was a huge earthquake. And Matthew says, **“When the centurion and those who were with him who were guarding Jesus saw the earthquake and everything that had happened, they were terrified and exclaimed, ‘Surely he was the Son of God,’” (Matthew 27:54).** At the end of the story the soldiers change their minds about Jesus! I'm sure that we'll see some of these soldiers in heaven! That's how great the love of Jesus is!

You see in this passage Jesus looks pretty weak. But what's more powerful: to hate those who are making fun of you, or to love them?

Now how does this passage affect the way we live our lives? Does this passage have anything to say to husbands and wives? You know it struck me reading verse 31. **“After they had mocked him, they took off the robe and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him away to crucify him.”** When you were crucified you had to carry your own heavy beam out to the sight of crucifixion. And it struck me. Jesus carried that heavy beam, and I'm not willing to carry in the groceries. If Jesus humbled himself to serve us, then husbands and wives should humble themselves and serve each other.

Does this passage have anything to say to young children. Well, when you are making fun of your classmate, are you acting more like the soldiers or more like Jesus?

I told the pioneer group this week, that in my family I'm the oldest of seven children and when I was growing up I always demanded that since I'm the oldest I get special privileges. I get the front seat because I'm the oldest. I get the remote control because I'm the oldest. I read this and I realize, I should have gladly given up the front seat and gladly given up the remote, because that's what Jesus did for me.

Does this passage have anything to say to the church? I read a lot of books about the modern church and I listen to a lot of people talk about the church and the church just gets humiliated. “The church is a bunch of hypocrites. People in the church are just as likely to say nasty and hurtful things.” And our first reaction is usually to fight back and refute statements like that. But maybe again we are angry because we're feeling guilty. Maybe instead of getting angry and trying to refute statements like that, maybe we in the church need to humble ourselves and say “Yes that's right. We need to change the way we live our lives. Everyday I try to let my heart be transformed by the love of Jesus. Never for one day have I done it perfectly but I really do want to follow Jesus”

Our king humbled and humiliated himself out of love for us, let's humble ourselves out of love for one another. Amen.