

Mark 14:6-40

<sup>6</sup> Now at the festival he used to release a prisoner for them, anyone for whom they asked. <sup>7</sup> Now a man called Barabbas was in prison with the rebels who had committed murder during the insurrection. <sup>8</sup> So the crowd came and began to ask Pilate to do for them according to his custom. <sup>9</sup> Then he answered them, "Do you want me to release for you the King of the Jews?" <sup>10</sup> For he realized that it was out of jealousy that the chief priests had handed him over. <sup>11</sup> But the chief priests stirred up the crowd to have him release Barabbas for them instead. <sup>12</sup> Pilate spoke to them again, "Then what do you wish me to do with the man you call the King of the Jews?" <sup>13</sup> They shouted back, "Crucify him!" <sup>14</sup> Pilate asked them, "Why, what evil has he done?" But they shouted all the more, "Crucify him!" <sup>15</sup> So Pilate, wishing to satisfy the crowd, released Barabbas for them; and after flogging Jesus, he handed him over to be crucified. <sup>16</sup> Then the soldiers led him into the courtyard of the palace (that is, the governor's headquarters); and they called together the whole cohort. <sup>17</sup> And they clothed him in a purple cloak; and after twisting some thorns into a crown, they put it on him. <sup>18</sup> And they began saluting him, "Hail, King of the Jews!" <sup>19</sup> They struck his head with a reed, spat upon him, and knelt down in homage to him. <sup>20</sup> After mocking him, they stripped him of the purple cloak and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him out to crucify him. <sup>21</sup> They compelled a passer-by, who was coming in from the country, to carry his cross; it was Simon of Cyrene, the father of Alexander and Rufus. <sup>22</sup> Then they brought Jesus to the place called Golgotha (which means the place of a skull). <sup>23</sup> And they offered him wine mixed with myrrh; but he did not take it. <sup>24</sup> And they crucified him, and divided his clothes among them, casting lots to decide what each should take.

<sup>25</sup> It was nine o'clock in the morning when they crucified him. <sup>26</sup> The inscription of the charge against him read, "The King of the Jews." <sup>27</sup> And with him they crucified two bandits, one on his right and one on his left. <sup>28</sup> Those who passed by derided him, shaking their heads and saying, "Aha! You who would destroy the temple and build it in three days, <sup>29</sup> save yourself, and come down from the cross!" <sup>30</sup> In the same way the chief priests, along with the scribes, were also mocking him among themselves and saying, "He saved others; he cannot save himself. <sup>31</sup> Let the Messiah, the King of Israel, come down from the cross now, so that we may see and believe." Those who were crucified with him also taunted him. <sup>32</sup> When it was noon, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon. <sup>33</sup> At three o'clock Jesus cried out with a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?" which means, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" <sup>34</sup> When some of the bystanders heard it, they said, "Listen, he is calling for Elijah." <sup>35</sup> And someone ran, filled a sponge with sour wine, put it on a stick, and gave it to him to drink, saying, "Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to take him down." <sup>36</sup> Then Jesus gave a loud cry and breathed his last. <sup>37</sup> And the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. <sup>38</sup> Now when the centurion, who stood facing him, saw that in this way he breathed his last, he said, "Truly this man was God's Son!"

<sup>39</sup> There were also women looking on from a distance; among them were Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the younger and of Joses, and Salome.

TODAY WE REMEMBER THAT JESUS DIED, NOT SYMBOLICALLY OR SPIRITUALLY, BUT ACTUALLY BY THE TORTURE OF CRUCIFIXION.

THE LYRICS OF THE HYMN "DEEP WERE HIS WOUNDS, AND RED" DRAW OUR ATTENTION TO THE MEANING OF THIS HOLY DAY.

"DEEP WERE HIS WOUNDS, AND RED, ON CALVARY, AS ON THE CROSS HE BLED IN BITTER AGONY. BUT THEY WHOM SIN HAS WOUNDED SORE FIND HEALING IN THE WOUNDS HE BORE.

HE SUFFERED SHAME AND SCORN AND WRETCHED, DIRE DISGRACE, FORSAKEN AND FORLORN, HE HUNG THERE IN OUR PLACE. BUT ALL WHO WOULD FROM SIN BE FREE LOOK TO HIS CROSS FOR VICTORY."

PASTOR RICK WARREN OPENS HIS BOOK "THE PURPOSE DRIVEN LIFE", SAYING "IT'S NOT ABOUT YOU."

HIS STATEMENT SEEKS TO DIRECT OUR ATTENTION OFF OF OURSELVES ONTO GOD AND OTHERS.

HOWEVER ON GOOD FRIDAY HIS STATEMENT IS ONLY PARTLY TRUE IN THAT TODAY IS AS MUCH ABOUT US AS IT IS ABOUT JESUS.

INDEED, IF NOT FOR HUMAN SINFULNESS THERE WOULD BE NO CROSS, NO NEED EVEN FOR JESUS TO HAVE BEEN BORN, LET ALONE DIE ON THE CROSS.

EACH OF THE GOSPEL READINGS TELL US THAT THE ROMAN GOVERNOR, PILATE DID NOT WISH TO EXECUTE JESUS, BECAUSE HE DID NOT SEE HIM AS A THREAT TO ROME.

HOWEVER PILATE DID SO ANYWAY FOR THE SAKE OF POLITICAL EXPEDIENCY.

AFTER ALL THE ONE THING HE WISHED TO AVOID WHILE SO MANY JEWS WERE GATHERED IN JERUSALEM FOR THE PASSOVER CELEBRATION, WAS A RIOT.

RIOTS, ESPECIALLY DURING A TIME OF RELIGIOUS FERVOR COULD EASILY LEAD TO A REVOLUTION, AND THAT WOULD BE BAD FOR ROME, AS WELL AS FOR PILATE PERSONALLY.

SO THE GOVERNOR SOUGHT TO PACIFY THE CROWD BY RELEASING ONE CONDEMNED PRISONER.

JESUS OF NAZARETH AND BARABBAS WERE OFFERED AS THE TWO CHOICES.

BARABBAS WAS GUILTY, WHETHER FOR THEFT OR MURDER OF BOTH-IT DOES NOT MATTER THE REAL ISSUE WAS- HE WAS A REVOLUTIONARY, IN ROME'S EYES.

SO PILATE HOPED THE CROWD WOULD PICK JESUS OF NAZARETH, WHOM HE CONSIDERED INNOCENT OF ANY CRIME AGAINST ROME.

HOWEVER IT WAS BARABBAS AND NOT JESUS THEY WANTED AND RECEIVED.

IT SHOULD BE REMEMBERED THAT BEING SET FREE DID NOT MAKE HIM ANY LESS GUILTY OF HIS ACTS OF REBELLION AGAINST ROME.

INDEED, ALL OF THE GOSPELS CONTAIN THIS STORY AND ALL PROCLAIM THE INNOCENCE OF JESUS AND THE GUILT OF BARABBAS.

AND THIS IS WHERE WE ARE REMINDED THAT WE ARE A LOT LIKE BARABBAS.

WE ARE LIKE HIM IN THE SENSE THAT ALL OF US ARE GUILTY OF REBELLION AGAINST GOD BECAUSE OF OUR SIN.

THEREFORE, JUST LIKE JESUS TOOK THE PLACE OF BARABBAS, SUFFERING AND DYING ON THE CROSS IN HIS PLACE, HE DID SO IN OUR PLACE AS WELL.

WE ARE GUILTY AND YET PARDONED THROUGH CHRIST, BUT BEING PARDONED, AND SET FREE DOES NOT MAKE US ANY LESS GUILTY THAN BARABBAS OR ANYONE ELSE.

FORGIVENESS THROUGH CHRIST DOES NOT SAY WE DID NOT SIN, BUT RATHER THAT CHRIST HAS ATONED FOR OUR SIN.

THIS BRINGS US TO THE IRONY THE WORDS OF THOSE WHO TAUNTED JESUS. THEIR WORDS SHOW THE DEPTHS OF THEIR IGNORANCE.

THEY MOCKED HIM SAYING: "SAVE YOURSELF AND COME DOWN FROM THE CROSS" AND "HE SAVED OTHERS BUT HE COULD NOT SAVE HIMSELF."

JESUS, IN TRUTH, COULD HAVE SAVED HIMSELF, BUT ONLY AT THE EXPENSE OF SINNERS.

IF HE HAD COME DOWN FROM THE CROSS SO THAT PEOPLE WOULD SEE HE WAS THE MESSIAH AND KING OF ISRAEL, IT WOULD HAVE BEEN THE UNDOING OF THEM AND OF US.

BELIEF IN JESUS MATTERS ONLY BECAUSE HE DIED IN OUR PLACE FOR OUR SAKE.

WITHOUT HIS DEATH THERE WOULD BE NO ATONEMENT FOR SIN, NO PROMISE OF SALVATION, THROUGH HIM FOR THOSE WHO REPENT AND BELIEVE.

SO JESUS STAYED ON THE CROSS, AND AFTER HE BREATHED HIS LAST BREATH THE CURTAIN OF THE TEMPLE WAS TORN IN TWO.

THIS MIGHT NOT SOUND LIKE MUCH, BUT IT HAS PROFOUND MEANING.

THAT CURTAIN SEPARATED THE "HOLY OF HOLIES" FROM THE REST OF THE TEMPLE SANCTUARY.

IT WAS IN THAT ROOM, BEHIND THE CURTAIN THAT THE PRESENCE OF GOD WAS BELIEVED TO HAVE DWELT AMONG HIS PEOPLE.

THEREFORE IT WAS A SACRED PLACE, SEPARATE FROM THE REST OF THE TEMPLE, A ROOM ONLY ENTERED ONCE A YEAR BY THE HIGH PRIEST.

THE THICK AND VERY HEAVY CURTAIN WAS THIRTY FEET WIDE AND SIXTY FEET LONG, AND DID NOT RIP EASILY.

SCRIPTURE POINTS TO THE HAND, THE WILL OF GOD ALONE THAT DID IT.

GOD'S TEARING OF THE CURTAIN SYMBOLIZED HOW THE DEATH OF CHRIST IS THE KEY THAT UNLOCKS THE DOOR TO SALVATION, BY TEARING APART THE BARRIER BETWEEN SINNERS AND OUR HOLY GOD.

THUS DIVINE JUSTICE WAS SATISFIED BY THE SACRIFICE OF GOD'S SON, JESUS. THE SINLESS ONE DIED FOR SINNERS, THE INNOCENT FOR THE GUILTY.

THIS IS WHY THE CROSS OF CHRIST IS A WONDROUS CROSS AND WHY WE CAN CALL THIS DAY "GOOD" FRIDAY.

INDEED WE CAN ONLY CELEBRATE THE EMPTY TOMB AND THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS, BECAUSE HE REALLY DIED FOR US, AND HIS LIFELESS BODY WAS BURIED.

THIS IS WHY THE CROSS IS THE MAIN SYMBOL FOR THE CHRISTIAN FAITH, IT WAS CHRIST'S DEATH ON THE CROSS THAT CHANGED EVERYTHING.

PASTOR AND AUTHOR MAX LUCADO WROTE ABOUT THE CROSS:

"THE CROSS RESTS ON THE TIMELINE OF HISTORY...HISTORY HAS IDOLIZED IT AND DESPISED IT, GOLD PLATED IT AND BURNED IT, WORN IT AND TRASHED IT. HISTORY HAS DONE EVERYTHING BUT IGNORE IT...."

THESE WORDS VOCALIZE THE POWER OF THE CROSS OF CHRIST NO MATTER WHAT ONE THINKS OF IT.

SO FOR US, TONIGHT WE REMEMBER CHRIST WAS CRUCIFIED, DIED, AND WAS BURIED. THIS IS THE MEANING OF THE CROSS OF CHRIST FOR US.

THE WORDS OF THE APOSTLE PAUL TO THE CORINTHIANS SUMMARIZE THE PURPOSE OF JESUS TAKING OUR PLACE.

"FOR THE MESSAGE OF THE CROSS IS FOOLISHNESS TO THOSE WHO ARE PERISHING, BUT TO US WHO ARE BEING SAVED IT IS THE POWER OF GOD."

MAY THE POWER OF GOD'S MERCY, THE DEPTHS OF CHRIST'S LOVE, AND THE CONVICTION OF THE HOLY SPIRIT RENEW OUR TRUST IN THE GLORY OF THE CROSS.

LET US PRAY:

ETERNAL AND HOLY GOD WE PRAISE YOU FOR THE MERCY YOU HAVE SHOWN IN SENDING YOUR SON INTO THE WORLD.

BLESSED SAVIOR, LAMB OF GOD WHO TAKES AWAY THE SIN OF THE WORLD, THANK YOU FOR TAKING AWAY OUR SIN. MAY THE SHADOW OF YOUR CROSS BE A SHELTER FOR US.

HOLY SPIRIT, FILL US WE PRAY WITH A GRATITUDE THAT LASTS PAST THIS DAY, TO FILL US ALL OF OUR DAYS AND NIGHTS SO THAT OUR LIVES WILL BE A TESTIMONY TO CHRIST.

GIVE COMFORT TO THOSE WHO MOURN AND THOSE WHO ARE DYING, AND GIVE STRENGTH AND HEALING TO THOSE WHO ARE WEAK OR ILL, AND ENCOURAGEMENT TO THOSE WHO ARE LONELY, OR DOWNTRODDEN.

WE ALSO PRAY, O LORD OUR GOD, FOR ALL THOSE WHO HAVE NOT HEARD THE MESSAGE OF SALVATION, AND FOR ALL WHO HAVE LOST THEIR FAITH.

WE PRAY FOR THOSE WHOSE SIN HAS MADE THEM INDIFFERENT TO CHRIST, AND FOR ALL ENEMIES OF THE CROSS. OPEN THE HEARTS OF EACH OF THEM TO THE TRUTH; LEAD THEM TO FAITH AND GRANT THEM YOUR SALVATION.

LOOK ALSO, WITH MERCY UPON YOUR WHOLE CHURCH, AND BRING TO COMPLETION YOUR WORK OF SALVATION THAT THE WORLD WILL SEE THE FALLEN LIFTED UP, THE OLD MADE NEW, AND YOUR WILL PERFECTLY DONE ON EARTH AS IT IS IN HEAVEN.

IN THE NAME OF CHRIST OUR SAVIOR, WE PRAY. AMEN