

Life-Giving Love

Death of Jesus

Matthew 27

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The Angelus

P: The Angel of the Lord
declared unto Mary

R: And she conceived of the
Holy Spirit.

P: Behold the handmaid of the
Lord

R: Be it done unto me
according to Thy word.

P: And the Word was made Flesh

R: And dwelt among us.

P: Pray for us, O Holy Mother
of God

R: That we may be made worthy
of the promises of Christ.

Together: Pour forth, we beseech Thee, O Lord, Thy grace into our hearts; that we, to whom the incarnation of Christ, Thy Son, was made known by the message of an angel, may by His Passion and Cross be brought to the glory of His Resurrection, through the same Christ Our Lord.

Overview

- Keep in mind that Matthew is not simply concerned with a historical event. He wants to communicate the *meaning* of Jesus' suffering and death.
- His goal is to portray Jesus as the true King of the Jews and Son of God on the Cross. (Mitch & Sri, 348)
- Additionally, Matthew aims to portray Jesus as the righteous one of Ps. 22, whom God will rescue and vindicate over His enemies – a subtle foreshadowing of Jesus' Resurrection triumph. (Mitch & Sri, 348)



Took Counsel

- It was morning:** A continuation of the trial which began at night.
- The religious leaders are trying to figure out how they can put Jesus to death given that only the official Roman authority could execute a prisoner.
- Thus, they send him to Pontius Pilate to convince him that Jesus deserves death.
- Pilate:** The Roman prefect over Judea from 26 to 36 AD.
- He would have been in Jerusalem to keep the peace.



Took Counsel

- Under Roman Law, blasphemy was not a capital offense against Rome. Keep in mind that many gods were worshipped in the Roman Empire.
- Thus, the religious authorities must bind Jesus so as to make him appear to be a revolutionary or a dangerous criminal.
- While unaware, the religious authorities are fulfilling Ps. 2:2.
 - Ps. 2:2:** Kings on earth rise up and princes plot together against the Lord and his anointed one.
 - Mt. 20:18-19:** The Son of Man will be handed over to the chief priests and the scribes, and they will condemn him to death, and hand him over to the Gentiles.

Death of Judas

- Regretted what he had done:** Matthew avoids the Greek word *metanoeō*, which describes a fundamental change of direction in one's life. (Mitch & Sri, 349)
- Note:** Both Peter and Judas betrayed/denied the Lord. However, their fates are very different!
- While Jesus' mercy is extended to both, notice the difference between Peter who accepts His mercy and subsequent changes of life versus Judas who despairs.
- Hanged himself:** Acts says that falling headlong, Judas burst open in the middle, and all his insides spilled out. (Acts 1:18)

Blood Money

- **Thirty Pieces of Silver:** The price of a slave (Exod. 21:32). Ironically, Judas who was concerned about the "waste" of precious oil in anointing Jesus betrays Him for so little.
- According to Dt. 23:18, accepting money used to betray innocent blood was a detestable practice. Hence, the chief priests refuse to deposit the money in the Temple.
- **Potter's Field:** Cemetery for travelers – given that cemeteries were ritually unclean places, it is a fitting purchase to make with the unclean money. (Mitch & Sri, 350)



Valleys of Jerusalem

#1: Hinnom Valley
(traditional spot)

#2: Tyropoeon Valley

#3: Kidron Valley



Comparison with Pilate

Judas

- "I have sinned in betraying innocent blood." (27:4)
- Told by others: "Look to yourself." (27:4)
- Judas declares guilt for betraying innocent blood.

Pilate

- "I am innocent of this man's blood." (27:24)
- He says, "Look to it yourselves." (27:24)
- Pilate denies any guilt for betraying innocent blood.

~Allison, 883

Old Testament References

- **Jeremiah 18:2:** Arise and go down to the potter's house; there you will hear my word.
- **Jer. 19:** Jeremiah goes and buys a potter's jar, and then is told by the Lord to smash it in the Valley of Hinnom (Potter's field) symbolizing the destruction of Jerusalem as a punishment for their sins, as well as innocent blood. (Mitch & Sri, 350)
- **Jer 19:11:** The Lord says that the place (Topheth) will become a burial site.
- **Zech. 11:13:** Throw it in the treasury—the handsome price at which they valued me. So I took the thirty pieces of silver and threw them into the treasury in the house of the LORD.

Pilate Questions Jesus

- Apparently, the religious authorities have presented Jesus as a political threat to capture Pilate's attention.
- **King of the Jews:** Suggests a political danger connected with popular Jewish uprisings. (Harrington, 388)
- **He made no answer:** Jesus does not deny the truth of His kingship. His silence expresses a decision not to resist the evil being done to him. (Mitch & Sri, 352)
 - **Matt 5:32:** But I say to you, offer no resistance to one who is evil.
- **Greatly amazed:** For Roman Law, one who did not defend himself was considered guilty. (Mitch & Sri, 352)

Trials of Injustice

Jewish Trial

- Chief priests and elders are present (26:57)
- Jesus is called by others 'the Messiah' (26:63)
- Jesus is silent (26:62-3)
- You have said so (26:64)
- Jesus is mocked (26:67)
- Trial of injustice

Roman Trial

- Chief priests and elders are present (27:17)
- Jesus is called by another 'the Messiah' (27:17, 22)
- Jesus is silent (27:12)
- You have said so (27:11)
- Jesus is mocked (27:27-31)
- Trial of injustice (Allison, 883)

Barabbas

- **Notorious:** Matthew indicates that Barabbas was a well-known insurrectionist.
- **Barabbas:** Name means "son of abba," or "son of father."
- Hence, which "son of father" will the crowd choose? The choice is symbolic of its identity and mission.
- **Barabbas:** "son of father" who strives to fight off the Romans with violence and murder.
- **Jesus:** "Son of Father" who calls Israel to repent, endure persecution, and love their enemies.
- Way of life versus way of death (Dt. 30:15-19) (Mitch & Sri, 353)

Symbolic Choice



Scene from the Passion of the Christ

For Us

- As our Father, God will protect and provide for all of our needs. Our part, of course, is to trust Him.
- Adam, the son of God, doubted God as a Father who provides and therefore took matters into his own hands.
- At the root of every sin is ultimately a distortion of who God is, and thus, who we are.
- Jesus, the true son of God, trusted God as His Father at every moment. While He suffered injustice, violence, and vengeance, ultimately, He is vindicated in the Resurrection.
- **Our choice:** Trust our Father or take matters into our own hands

Trial of Jesus

- **Out of Envy:** Pilate recognizes that it was out of envy that the religious authorities handed over Jesus.
- They view Jesus as a threat to their authority in Jerusalem. (Mitch & Sri, 353)
- Reminiscent of Herod who perceived the child was a threat to his throne.
- **Pope Benedict XVI:** Do we have a little "religious authority" or "Herod" in us? Is Jesus a threat to our goals or plans?



Trial of Jesus

- **Dream:** Recorded only in Matthew's gospel.
- Divine communication occurs by means of dreams in Matt. 1:20; 2:12, 13, 19-20.
- Pilate's wife contrasts with the spiritual obtuseness of the chief priests and elders in Matt. 27:20. (Harrington, 389)
- **Persuaded the crowds:** The crowds no longer view Jesus favorably.
- While certainly not conclusive, this may be from the fact that their leaders had condemned Jesus and an unfavorable Roman governor favored him. (Mitch & Sri, 354)

Trial of Jesus

- **Let him be crucified:** The crowds push for a Roman execution. Pilate recognizes Jesus' innocence, and will try to excuse himself from the public upheaval that is brewing.
- **Took Water & Washed Hands:** Pilate tries to excuse himself with a ceremonial washing symbolizing his innocence (Deut. 21:6-9, Ps. 26:6-10, Is. 1:15-16). (Harrington, 389)
- **Blood be upon us:** Idiom for taking responsibility for a death (Lev. 20:9; Deut. 19:10; Josh. 2:19). (Mitch & Sri, 354)
- Crowd includes their children, which comes about with the fall of Jerusalem within a generation (70 AD).

Jesus is Scourged

- This is much more cruel than the thirty-nine lashes given by the local Jewish community.
- Victim is stripped and tied to a pillar or low post where he would be whipped with leather thongs tied to sharp bone fragments or metal spikes that would tear open the person's flesh. (Mitch & Sri, 355)
- The more severe the scourging, the less the victim would hang on the cross before dying. Given that Jesus died only a few hours on the Cross indicates that He received a very brutal scourging and was close to death before he ever reached Calvary. (Mitch & Sri, 355)

Jesus is Scourged



Scene from the Passion of the Christ

Upside Down World

Characters Think

- Pilate judges Jesus from the judgment seat
- Governor believes he governs
- Religious leaders rail against Jesus
- Crowds release false "son of father"

Reality

- Jesus is the judge of the world
- Governor does not govern, but rather excuses himself
- Truth is revealed to Pilate's wife, a pagan
- Crowds condemn the true "son of Father"

~Allison, 885.

Jesus is Mocked

- Praetorium: Official residence of the Roman governor. It is the place where Pilate stayed – Herod's palace at the western edge of the city or Antonia Fortress north of the Temple Area (Harrington, 394).



Jesus is Mocked

- Whole Cohort: At least 600 soldiers.
- Scarlet Military Cloak: Scarlet was the color worn by Roman military, high ranking Roman officials, and sometimes the emperor himself. (Mitch & Sri, 356)
- Crown of Thorns: Parody of royal wealth or diadem
- Reed: A royal scepter held in the right hand of the king
- Hail, King of the Jews: Imitation of "Hail Caesar!"



Jesus is Mocked

- Spat upon Him: Fulfills prophecy of Isaiah
 - Isaiah 50:6: I gave my back to those who beat me, my cheeks to those who tore out my beard; My face I did not hide from insults and spitting.
- Striking Him on the head: Imagine the tremendous pain given that the thorns would have dug in further with each blow.
- Overall, Jesus' prophecy that He would be handed over to the Gentiles to be mocked and scourged and crucified, and be raised on the third day is coming to fulfillment. (Matt. 20:19)

Symbolic Meaning

- **Hail, King of the Jews:** Signify His kingship and triumph over sin.
- **Scarlet robe:** Represents Jesus' defeat of Satan through his shed blood
- **Crown of thorns:** Points to the crown of glory that adorns Jesus at his Ascension
 - **Gen. 3:18:** Jesus takes on curse of "thorns and thistles" which resulted from Adam's original sin
 - **Gen. 22:13:** Foreshadowed by the ram caught in a thicket
- **Reed:** Signifies the scepter of His heavenly kingdom (Hahn & Mitch, 68)

Way of the Cross

- **Outside the Walls:** Crucifixion normally took place outside the city walls at major crossroads in order to maximize the victim's public shame. Prisoners normally carried their own crossbeam to the execution site. (Mitch & Sri, 336)
- **Simon of Cyrene:** Cyrene was a city in North Africa with a large Jewish population. He may have been a pilgrim visiting Jerusalem for Passover.
 - **Spiritually:** The fifth station of the Cross invites us to see ourselves as Simon called to help others bear their cross.
 - **Salvation History:** From all eternity, God foresaw Simon's path would meet Jesus on the road to Calvary.

Way of the Cross

- Simon is the first person to take up his cross for Jesus (10:38; 16:24) and provides us with an image of discipleship (Martin, 632).
 - Sometimes our crosses seem randomly assigned to us or too heavy to bear. How have you handled them?
 - What can you learn from Simon about your own discipleship? About your cross bearing for Jesus? How have you been "pressed into service?"
- **Key:** Ask Simon to help you carry your cross!



Crucifixion

- **Golgotha:** Matthew translates as "Place of the Skull." The Latin translation is *calvaria* or "Calvary." The term refers either to its function as a place of execution or to its physical shape (a hill like a skull). (Harrington, 395)
- **Wine mixed with gall:** Given so as to ease the pain. Gall was a bitter discharge of the liver to the gall bladder. Gall referred to bitter substances or even poison. Hence, the soldiers further mock Jesus by offering him this drink.
 - **Psalm 69:22:** They gave me poison for my food; and for my thirst they gave me vinegar.



Crucifixion

- **After they Crucified Him:** Matthew does not give much detail concerning the crucifixion itself. Roman crucifixion, intended to maximize the criminal's pain, included the following:
 - Criminal is stripped naked and nailed to a cross with arms extended or raised;
 - Victim had no means of coping with heat, cold, insects, or pain;
 - Crucifixion did not strike a major organ, therefore death could occur over days from shock or asphyxiation;
 - Footrest enabled victim to lift himself up, thereby allowing him to breathe and prolong the torture. (Mitch & Sri, 338)



Matthias Grünewald – Isenheim Altarpiece (1515)

Isenheim Alterpiece

- Robert Barron believes that this is the greatest depiction of the crucifixion in Western art. A few highlights:
 - Agony of Christ:** His hands writhe in agony; His body is marked with spots of pox.
 - Mary overwhelmed with grief:** She falls into the arms of John; and you yourself a sword will pierce. (Lk. 2:35)
 - John the Baptist:** Points and holds a scroll which reads, "He must increase, I must decrease." (Jn. 3:30)
 - Lamb:** Symbol of the Passover and liberation from the slavery of sin; notice that it is cut and blood is pouring into the chalice – Eucharist re-presents the Cross.

Crucifixion

- Why did Jesus die on the Cross?** God could have saved us in any number of ways. The Crucifixion is most fitting because:
 - Reveals:** As true God and true man, Jesus reveals both God perfectly (His face!) and man perfectly. (see Pope John Paul's *Redemptoris Missio* 2, 11)
 - Thanksgiving:** Jesus' sacrifice (i.e., Cross) is an outward expression of interior thanksgiving/love.
 - Perfect Self-Offering:** The Father willed perfect satisfaction from sin, which is an infinite offense. Jesus, as man, satisfies for sin superabundantly. (Jn 3:16, 1 Jn 2:2)

Crucifixion



Jesus Reveals –
face of God &
face of man



Sacrifice –
expression of
thanksgiving
& love



Medicine Chest –
Jesus atones for sin
superabundantly

Crucifixion

- Divided His garments:** Soldiers obviously do not capture the significance of what is happening before them.
 - Psalm 22:** They divide my garments among them; for my clothing they cast lots.
- Jesus, King of the Jews:** Intended to humiliate Jesus and probably the Jews in general. (Mitch & Sri, 359)
 - "Behold, your king! He is naked, scourged, and crucified!"
 - Psalm 22:6:** But I am a worm, not a man, scorned by men, despised by the people.

Crucifixion

- Two Revolutionaries:** They are on his right and his left – the very positions that James and John wanted! (20:20-23)
 - Is. 53:12:** Because he surrendered himself to death, was counted among the transgressors...
- Shaking their heads:** The mocking continues...
 - Ps. 22:18:** All who see me mock me; they curl their lips and jeer; they shake their heads at me.
- If you are the Son of God:** Reminiscent of the devil's temptation of Jesus that He throw Himself down from the parapet of the Temple. (Matt. 4:56)

For Us

- Foot of the Cross:** Notice the various reactions surrounding Jesus as He dies on the Cross.
 - Some casts lots or play games** (Matt. 27:35)
 - Some keep watch** (Matt. 27:36)
 - The two revolutionaries are just there** (Matt. 27:38)
 - Some mock him** (Matt. 27:29-44)
- The Eucharist re-presents (makes present) the sacrifice of the cross. (CCC 1366) Therefore, we should expect the same reactions around the Eucharist.
 - Some people are focused. Others are just there. Others read the bulletin. And still others mock the Mass.

For Us

- All the struggles of human existence surround Jesus' crucifixion and death.
 - **Human sin:** Mocking of Jesus; horrible torture
 - **Silence of God:** In the face of these horrible circumstances, there appears to be a divine absence
 - **Friedrich Nietzsche:** "God is dead." (the Gay Science, Section 125)
- In the face of our own sin, the sins of others, and the seeming absence of God, what is our attitude/response?

Death of Jesus

- **Darkness covered the whole land:** Fulfillment of OT
 - **Amos 8:9:** I will make the sun set at midday and in broad daylight cover the land with darkness.
 - **Exod. 10:22:** Dense darkness throughout the land of Egypt for three days (sign of judgment)
- **Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani:** (Aramaic language) opens psalm 22, prayer of a righteous sufferer. (Harrington, 399)
 - By invoking the opening of Ps. 22, Jesus evokes the whole of Ps. 22 wherein the psalmist ultimately trusts in God. (Mitch & Sri, 360)

Death of Jesus

Public Ministry

- **Baptism:** The heavens were opened for him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending upon him like a dove. (Mt. 3:16)
- **Transfiguration:** While he was still speaking, behold, a bright cloud cast a shadow over them, then from the cloud came a voice. (Mt 17:5)

Crucifixion

- The heavens that opened at His baptism remain closed.
- The bright cloud that enveloped Him is now darkness.

~Martin, 643

Death of Jesus

- **Wine:** Presumably cheap, sour, or vinegary wine
 - **Ps. 69:22:** They gave me poison for my food; and for my thirst they gave me vinegar.
- **Gave up His spirit:** "Gave up" underscores Jesus' willing relinquishment of his life, actively handing over his spirit to God. (Mitch & Sri, 361)
- **Veil of the Sanctuary:** Presumably the inner curtain in front of the holy of holies. The meaning is debated.
 - God's action (top to bottom) symbolizes destruction of the Temple (70 AD) and access to God's presence now opened for everyone.

Death of Jesus

- **Earth quaked:** Literally the earth "was shaken." (Martin, 646). Associated with God's activity in the world, especially his coming in judgment (Ps. 68:8-9). (Mitch & Sri, 361)
- **Saints fallen asleep raised:** Literally "holy ones" (Martin, 646). Possibly righteous Jews who had fallen asleep, a metaphor for death (Dan. 12:2). (Mitch & Sri, 361)
- **Key:** Jesus' death is a turning point of cosmic significance. It is the "day of the Lord" (Martin, 646).
- **Roman Centurion:** Continues Matthew's theme of irony given that this profession of faith comes from a Gentile!



Death of Jesus

- **Women at the Cross:** Notice the beauty of these faithful women! They are mentioned, but the apostles are not!
- **Mary Magdalene:** She and the other Mary witness Jesus' death (27:56), his place of burial (27:61), and the empty tomb (28:1). (Harrington, 401)
- **Mother of Sons of Zebedee:** Not mentioned in the narrative that follows.
 - **Matthew 20:20:** Then the mother of the sons of Zebedee approached him with her sons and did him homage, wishing to ask him for something.

Death of Jesus

- Mary looks young and beautiful, yet strong in holding her Son.
- She holds his right arm up pushing up His flesh a little.
- Mary's left hand presents Christ's body to the viewer. This the path to salvation.
- Jesus' body offers no resistance. He is open and vulnerable.



Michelangelo's Pietà

Death of Jesus

- After the death of Jesus, there is an explosion of supernatural activity which has special meaning.
- Darkness (*Joel 2:31*; cf. *Acts 2:20*), torn veil (i.e., end of the temple), earthquake (*Ps. 68:9*; *Ps. 77:19*), resurrection of the dead (*Dan. 12:1-3*), and conversion of the Gentiles are signs of the end time.
- The "day of the Lord" dawns at Golgotha. The divine judgment descends, and the future resurrection are gathered.
- The end of Jesus is the end of the world in miniature. ~Allison, 884



Death & Resurrection

Death of Jesus (27:51-5)

- An earthquake
- Opening of tombs
- Resurrection (saints' bodies)
- The guards fear
- Resurrected saints go into the holy city (witnesses)
- Women witnesses (Mary Magdalene, another Mary)

Resurrection of Jesus (28:1-11)

- An earthquake
- Opening of tomb
- The Resurrection
- The guards fear
- Roman guards to into the holy city (witnesses)
- Women witnesses (Mary Magdalene, another Mary)

~Allison, 884

Death & Resurrection

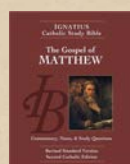
- **Key:** The similar circumstances surrounding Jesus' death and Resurrection tells us that the two always go together.
- In other words, there is never a period after Jesus' death, only a comma. Death does not have the last word, but Life.
- **Death Alone:** If for this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are the most pitiable people of all. (1 Cor. 15:19)
- **Resurrection Alone:** [Jesus] turned and said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are an obstacle to me. You are thinking not as God does, but as human beings do."
- Next week, we will discuss the Resurrection!



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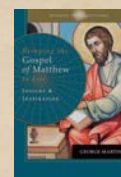


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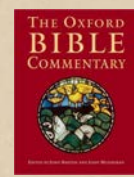
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