

# The Road to the Cross

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Matthew 27:1-31

## Intro to Sermon

- warning - you may not hear the end of this sermon
  - wife is due in 8 days with our first baby
  - may happen this morning, if you see a very pregnant woman stand up and rush out, I'll probably go with her :)
- this sermon is covering a good amount of verses, so we will read only the last few right now, then we will read the rest as we go
  - *read Matthew 27:27-31 & pray*

## Intro

- I love going to concerts
  - experiencing music that loud, that well done, in person, with all these people, it's incredible
  - yet, if you've gone to even a few concerts, there's something nobody warns you about
  - the hours of inconvenience and suffering until the band you go to see finally comes
  - usually its a drive, and traffic gets worse and worse
  - then you forget that you have to pay extra for parking, and its usually far away
  - then you wait in lines, get searched
  - then you wait in more lines, to get inside
  - then you wait in lines for food that is double the price
  - then you wait in lines for the bathroom
  - then you finally get to your seat - which, if you're like me and want to experience the show - it's not even a seat, you're standing in the front
  - then you wait, for honestly hours
  - then some band comes up you don't even know
  - and you stand and endure that
  - then you wait for what feels like another hour
  - and easily hours later than advertised, the band you endured so much to see finally comes on stage

- you don't remember a bit of it the moment they start playing
  - all night long, you are almost in heaven
  - the next day, all you can remember is the glory
  - all that suffering, worth it
- **there is part of Jesus story and ours that we often forget about**
  - the cross
  - almost embarrassed by the cross
  - want people to know Jesus, but who wants to tell them they'll have to deny themselves and die every day
    - there are so many incredible aspects of following Jesus
    - forgiveness of sins
    - a relationship with the God of the universe
    - everlasting life and joy and peace
  - **but the cross, to suffer with Jesus, to deny our flesh and our desires, this is something that is difficult, and its easy for forget about**
    - **and yet Jesus tells us**
    - **"Then Jesus told his disciples, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me" Matthew 16:24**
    - so we must count the cost
    - we must answer the question - is it worth it?
    - am I ready to endure the cross?
- *so this morning we are going to take a close look **at the road to the cross together***
  - *and let's follow closely behind Jesus, and learn from him, and see what Jesus faced, and what we too must face as we carry our own cross and follow him*

*\*so let's read Matthew 27:1-2*

**"When morning came, all the chief priests and the elders of the people took counsel against Jesus to put him to death. And they bound him and led him away and delivered him over to Pilate the governor" vs 1-2**

**The road to the cross will lead to rejection by others.**

- it's amazing in God's sovereignty that we are in this text on the International Day of prayer for the persecuted church

- God's people have always faced hatred and suffering, from the beginning of time, to Jesus, to our current day
- from the beginning of time the rulers of the day have rejected God and his authority
  - "Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted" 2 Timothy 3:12

*\*this event was predicted and prophesied about by David in Psalm 2*

- Psalm 2:1-2 (prophecy of Jesus', and our time)
  - "Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain? The kings of the earth set themselves and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord and against his Anointed, saying, 'Let us burst their bonds apart and cast away their cords from us.'
  - the nations and kings and rulers have always taken counsel against the Lord and against his people

• **and yet, the Bible has a unique perspective on persecution we often miss**

- Our Typical Response
  - can you believe they're taking our rights and freedoms from us?
  - "But before all this they will lay their hands on you and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues and prisons, and you will be brought before kings and governors for my name's sake. **This will be your opportunity to bear witness**" Luke 21:12-13
    - what a different way to think about our persecution
    - not - defend your rights, fight for yourself
    - but - this is an opportunity to bear witness to Jesus

*\*and somehow, the early Christians got it! they understood this!*

- one day, early on in the church, Peter and John healed a man, and were testifying to Jesus
  - they got arrested and were told not to speak about Jesus anymore
  - and then, when they reported to the church what had happened, this was their prayer
    - "And now, Lord, look upon their threats and grant to your servants to **continue to speak your word with all boldness**, while you stretch out your hand to heal, and signs and wonders are performed through the name of your holy servant Jesus." And when they had prayed, the place in which they were gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and **continued to speak the word of God with boldness.**" Acts 4:29-31
- as our culture and our work places and our schools grow continually anti - Jesus, this is actually an opportunity God is giving us, each of us to bear witness to Jesus

- to return evil with good
- to be bold and love our enemies and neighbors well with the love of God
- to invite them to church
- to pray for them
- to even share the gospel with them
- **so the first thing we see on the road to the cross is that though we will be persecuted, we have an opportunity to speak up for Jesus**

*\*so let's read Matthew 27:3-5*

**“Then when Judas, his betrayer, saw that Jesus was condemned, he changed his mind and brought back the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and the elders, saying, ‘I have sinned by betraying innocent blood.’ They said, ‘What is that to us? See to it yourself.’ And throwing down the pieces of silver into the temple, he departed, and he went and hanged himself. But the chief priests taking the pieces of silver, said, ‘It is not lawful to put them into the treasury, since it is blood money.’ So they took counsel and bought with them the potter’s field as a burial place for strangers. Therefore that field has been called the Field of Blood to this day. Then was fulfilled what had been spoken by the prophet Jeremiah, saying, ‘And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of him on whom a price had been set by some of the sons of Israel, and they gave them for the potter’s field, as the Lord directed me” vs 3-10**

- in these verses we see both Judas and the religious leaders sin, and then respond in an artificial act of contrition.
  - on the road to the cross, we will face two options with our sin...
- 1) we can respond like Judas & these leaders
  - we feel bad, we go and try and make it better in our own way
  - Judas - you punish yourself
  - These leaders - you do something vaguely religious
    - where it says “he changed his mind” in the ESV, in other translations is “remorse”
    - the greek word is “metamelomai” means remorse, whereas the greek word “metanoeo” means for repentance
    - there is a difference between remorse, and repentance
    - “Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death” 2 Corinthians 7:10

- 2) we can do what the Bible refers to as repentance
  - this is going to the only place that matters with our sin - going to God himself
  - true repentance is coming before Jesus, acknowledging your sin, and asking him to deal with it
  - “Repent therefore, and turn back, that your sins may be blotted out, that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that he may send the Christ appointed for you, Jesus” Acts 3:19-20

## **The road to the cross requires true repentance.**

- looked at Peter last week
  - profound to look at Judas and Peter together
  - both were apostles, both betrayed Jesus, yet a very different outcome
- **what is the difference between true repentance and worldly sorrow?**
  - true repentances is the work of the Spirit; worldly sorrow is the work of someone’s own flesh
  - true repentance is heartbroken because they rebelled against God, worldly sorrow is heartbroken because there will be consequences
  - true repentance leads one to turn from sin and turn back to God; worldly sorrow leads one to turn from sin and yet not return to God
- a helpful verse:
  - Matthew 3:8 “...Bear fruit in keeping with repentance” Matthew 3:7-8
    - true repentance leads to fruit, leads to a truly changed life, a restored relationship with God and men
    - false repentance produces bad fruit
    - Peter repented, and was restored, and became a key apostle for the early church, contributed to Scripture, was radically used by God
    - Judas repented, gave the money back, but then went and hung himself
- **marathon picture**
  - when I was in high school, my dad and I decided to run a marathon together
  - I was only 15, we had to lie about my age to get me in
  - trained for like 6 months, our goal was to not walk a step

- I remember, around mile like 20, being miserable, and then seeing a full grown man, in the gutter, in the fetal position, cramping and aching
- the road of the cross is a marathon
  - and as you run on this road of the cross, you will see many stumble and fall
  - you too, will stumble and fall
  - what makes the difference, is if someone gets back up, and finishes
- **we all stumble and fall**
  - a true Christian repents
  - others may begin, but when they stumble, they never recover, they don't finish
  - Peter was led to a place of repentance, and finished with Jesus
  - Judas fell, then turned away from God, and finished far from God
- **the beauty of true repentance is that God accepts it**
  - Jesus went to the cross for our sins
  - so that when we sin, we can take it to a safe place - the cross, where Jesus will look on us with love, will not despise us, but will say, I took that for you
  - true repentance is modeled by David
    - acknowledged the worst part of his sin is that it was against God
    - "broken and contrite heart you will not despise"
  - come back to Jesus with your sin
  - don't run away
- **worldly sorrow, false repentance often leads to self punishing**
  - rather than letting Jesus take your punishment
- worldly sorrow, often leads to self covering
  - Adam and Eve in the garden
  - they ran away from God
  - they went and made coverings for themselves with fig leaves
  - when I think about a scenario when I'm naked and need covering, leaves would not be my first choice

- yet that's profound - we are terrible at covering up our own mess and mistake
- God comes, he pursues them, and he sacrifices and animal, a covers them with new robes, that are far better than our own coverings
- Jesus came that you could be forgiven, covered
- so go to him with your sin

*\*as we continue down this road to the cross, let's read Matthew 27:11-14*

**“Now Jesus stood before the governor, and the governor asked him, ‘Are you the king of the Jews? Jesus said, ‘You have said so’. But when he was accused by the chief priests and the elders, he gave no answer. Then Pilate said to him, ‘Do you not hear how many things they testify against you? But he gave him no answer, not even to a single charge, so that the governor was greatly amazed”**  
vs 11-14

## **The road to the cross sometimes requires us to close our mouths.**

- Jesus is standing here, asked outright if he is the king of the Jews, and he does not give a direct answer
- Jesus hears the accusations against him, and he does not seek to defend himself
  - there is certainly a time to speak up for Jesus, as we have already said
  - yet Jesus models something here probably pretty unfamiliar to many of us
- **1) we don't always need to defend ourselves**
  - this was Jesus here
  - he knew he was to go to the cross
  - he knew it was time to accept this
  - he knew he was innocent, yet it was right for him to go to the cross
    - us - our personal grievances
    - the way of the cross - I don't need to defend myself
    - I don't need to fight for myself
    - I don't always need to make my side heard and understood
  - **there there are times when the way of the cross means we don't speak up.**
    - maybe we'd suffer less if we spoke up

- but we, like Jesus, choose the way of the cross
- **2) there is a time when truth is like a pearl before a swine**
  - there are times when people are not asking you for truth because they want to know it, but because they want to trap you in your words
  - this happened to Jesus often - he was questioned about truth, yet he could perceive the question was not a genuine desire for truth
  - this is **“Walk in wisdom toward outsiders, making the best use of the time” Colossians 4:5**
    - Carl Lentz Story
      - pretty secular talk show - he was asked directly but aggressively if abortion was a sin
      - he knew what they wanted, a soundbite
      - he refused to answer directly their question
      - now, the Lord knows his heart
      - the Lord alone knows if his answer was cowardice or wisdom
      - but I am saying, there will be times when someone is simply trying to trap you, or get a statement out of you so that they can reject you
      - there is a place to refrain from speaking, to be wise, and try and win them over through love and wisdom
      - I think as we are in an ever increasingly anti - Jesus culture, we must grow in wisdom and know when to speak up for Jesus, and when it is time to refrain from speaking
      - **there are times when we must not seek to win an argument, but win the person**
      - **which may mean we shut our mouths**
  - if you are ever in question - should I speak up or not - ask yourself - what most resembles the way of the cross? what most represents Jesus here? what most represents dying to self, and seeking to love the other?

### **\*let's read the last of our verses - Matthew 27:15-26**

- want to point out two things as we close

## **On the road to the cross, we must realize we are barabbas.**

- here we have a truly guilty man
  - he was a murderer
  - he is on death row

- he deserves nothing but rejection by man and by God
- on the other hand, we have Jesus, the perfect son of God
  - he has only ever given life
  - he has only ever healed, and fed, and loved
  - he deserves nothing but praise from man and God
- and yet the chains come off of Barabbas
  - and Jesus faces death
- and God orchestrates an exchange that displays the gospel for all to see
  - a man who has done nothing to deserve the love of God goes free, and the Son of God is punished in his place
  - a man who is truly guilty, who didn't go seek forgiveness, who didn't earn this gift at all, simply received, by grace, freedom
- every one of us were or are in a situation as helpless as this Barabbas
  - not one of us could free ourselves
  - not one of us could clean up our act and make ourselves right before God and man
  - the only hope for us is that Jesus would graciously and willingly take our place and set us free
- **“while we were still sinners, Christ died for us”**
- every Christian has moments like this, when they see themselves and their situation honestly
  - David had this moment “you are the man”
  - Peter had this moment when Jesus looked at him as he denied him for the third time
  - ***Have you had this moment?***
  - ***there were 3 crosses on that hill***
    - ***and the one in the middle was meant for Barabbas***
    - ***and yet Jesus took his place that day***
  - ***picture it***
    - ***that middle cross was for you, was for me***

- **and Jesus said, “I’ll take your place”**

*\*and not only are we Barabbas, we are the crowd*

## **On the road to the cross, we must realize we are the crowd.**

- Jesus has only been good to us
  - Jesus has only fed us, and provided for us, and loved us
  - and yet, when the pressure is on, when everyone around us is going against Jesus, we too have fallen away
  - how many times have we chosen our own way, our own comfort, our pleasure over Jesus
  - how many times have we had opportunities to go with Jesus even when those around us were mocking him, and yet we simply went with the crowd
  - how many mornings have we chosen a few more minutes of sleep than time with our gracious Jesus?
  - how many evenings have we chosen to find comfort in food, drink, entertainment and rejected Jesus
  - as the hymn so well puts it, “it was my sin that held him there”
  - it was my sin, my laziness, my selfishness that said with this crowd “Let him be crucified!”

*\*and look at the irony in verse 25*

## **“And all the people answered, ‘His blood be on us and on our children!’ vs 25**

- it is - they are guilty
- it is on us as well
  - we all have gone astray
  - we all have Jesus blood on our guilty hands
- **and yet, it is this very blood, that has the power to cleanse us**
- **it is this very blood that has the ability to wash us white as snow**
- **the very act of rebellion against the son of God, led to the greatest act of the love of God - as he died for the sins of the very people who crucified him**
  - **this morning, come to Jesus**
  - **this morning, repent, acknowledge your sin**
  - **this morning, let us all see where we’ve been Barabbas, where we’ve been the Crowd**
  - **let us not run away ashamed like Judas, but run to our gracious savior who went to the cross for our sins**

- **the cross is worth it ?**
  - **Jesus is worth it**
  - **God does his most profound work through crosses**
  - **it was through a cross that God saved the world, you and me from our sins**
  - **and it is through us following Jesus on this road to the cross that God does some of his most profound work in us**
  - so those who love Jesus, we say, “Jesus is worth it. The cross is worth it”
    - and as you don’t even remember the suffering at the end of a great concert, we will not remember the suffering we endured when we finally see Jesus face to face