

Wednesday Lent
Matthew 27:27-31, 39-44
March 17, 2010

In this two part text, we see Jesus under arrest and condemned, then we see Him crucified. So, this evening it is easier to imagine ourselves passing by as we, through God's Word, behold Jesus as we pass by to take a look and to consider, what shall our reaction to Jesus be?

As you view Jesus in these verses, Jesus is your King! (Savior/King)

One reaction to Jesus is totally unconcerned mockery. Not all mockery of Jesus is as clear as is this, but that's only because the opportunity for this direct kind of mockery is not available now. But the underlying unconcern about Jesus is common. Most people do not take Jesus seriously at all. He's not important to them. His Word is worth nothing to them. In this case, we are looking at how some men – Jewish soldiers – acted. We'd call it inhumane treatment, inhumane, yes, but very human. Given any opportunity to be mean, crude, and cruel to someone who seems unpopular and helpless people will surely take that opportunity, people who otherwise look pretty good. Sin is always so close to the surface, though, for all sinners.

What did these soldiers focus on? On Jesus being a King. Let's make absolutely clear that Jesus is a King. He is THE King, in fact. Long before Jesus was born into this world to do His work, God's Old Testament Word identified Jesus as King, King absolutely, God the Son, anointed by God the Father with the Holy Spirit as King. At His conception, the angel told Mary that Jesus and His kingdom were eternal and that Jesus was that special, promised descendant of David.

This King wants to rule all people by His grace and mercy, forever. He, in fact, wants to make us rulers with Him in life. This King, in order to accomplish this, came here to defeat our sin, to end our appointment with eternal death and to free us from our slave driver, the devil.

God is at work here. God does things His way and that's a good thing. All people individually and all people together, including all rulers and governments, fail at defeating sin, death, satan, and hell. Even the best of governments only partly succeed at outwardly suppressing the grossest outbreaks of evil and terror. They can never save no one!

Jesus is God, our King, and here, in appearance. The weakest of all is strongest of all.

The soldier could not even imagine Jesus as a king, though obviously they had heard it said that He was. Maybe they heard it during the trial. Perhaps a few of them heard Jesus say He was to Pilate. Some of them may have heard our Lord say it in His very public teaching. Roman soldiers were everywhere. And they didn't have their heads

buried in the sand. It was their job to know what was going on and to keep a lid on things in this volatile place.

But, Jesus an actual king?! Ridiculous! They thought! To get into the mood for abusing Jesus, these soldiers even needed to dress Jesus up like a king, a “Halloween-type” king that is. They mock. They laugh. They spit. They hit. They pounded that thorny crown down into Jesus’ head with the pretend scepter they put into His hand.

Jesus quietly took it. He was calm. He didn’t get mad. He didn’t scream or yell or curse or threaten. He just went through it. It was part of His job description. He’d suffer all it took in place of all the world’s sinners.

The soldiers acted they way they did because 1) they were sinners as all people are, 2) because they did not take Jesus seriously. They did not care about Him. They saw nothing in Jesus but a little cruel fun for them, 3) Most of them, like most people today, knew next to nothing contained in Holy Scripture. On the basis of God’s Word, we have God-given knowledge about exactly what Jesus (God) was doing here. And we have the powerful resurrection of Jesus. That makes things clear, if we will believe God’s Word.

If we believe God’s Word! – God’s got all of His power in His Word. But God’s Word doesn’t seem powerful either, does it? But it’s always right. What it predicted is always fulfilled and that includes the lowly, suffering method God had used to defeat sin and death.

The Jewish leadership, -- the chief priests, the Pharisees (teachers of the law), and the elders – more directly, overtly rejected Jesus and the Word. They had Scripture and Jesus’ Word. They were familiar with it. They knew it, but rejected it in several ways.

The Sadducees (chief priests) had long before rejected almost all of the Old Testament Scripture and the rest of it they forced under their brains. They thought they were too smart for the Bible. Today, this is the majority of the so called Christian leadership. In those days, the Sadducees were a tiny minority. Unbelieving, wholesale rejecters of God’s Word are the majority however, a big majority, of the leadership today.

The Pharisees believed their Bible was God’s Word. In fact, they watered down the commandments into mere outward rules and rejected the Gospel altogether. They thought of themselves as so good at keeping rules that they could not comprehend needing God’s mercy or forgiveness.

And the elders were the lay leaders, most of whom went along with their clergy leaders instead of with God.

God will have the truth spoken, if need be, even by His enemies. They mocked Jesus with these words –

“He saved others!” Yes, He did from disability, disease and death, to say nothing of sin and hell!

“He is the King of Israel!” Yes, He is, forever! He is the King of all.

“He trusted in God!” He did so perfectly and did so for you, me, and all people.

“He said, ‘I am the Son of God.’” That’s exactly what Jesus said.

And he said that He is The Messiah, The Christ – The Anointed One, Prophet, Priest, and King. And He said the His is “I Am,” The LORD, The Sovereign LORD. And Easter would back up everything He said.

And they say, “He is not able to save Himself.” They were correct about that, too, but not as they meant it. Since He is the eternal, almighty, Holy One of Israel, He could have wiped out the whole Roman army and all the rest of His enemies and came off that cross and ascended into heaven all in a second’s time. But He did none of that. He could not do it because of His love for all sinners. He came to save them from their sin and death. Nothing was going to stop Him from finishing His work. And He loved His Father whose will it also was that His Son give Himself, in life and death, as the atoning sacrifice for the sins of the whole world. That is what our Savior did.

Do not pass by this Jesus with lack of interest and do not reject His Word in whole or in part. Rely on Him as your eternal, total, and only Deliverer from sin, death, and hell. Your King! Amen.