

“MAN OF SORROWS”
Imagine Meeting Christ #15
Isaiah 42:1-7, Hebrews 2:9-18, Matthew 27:26-31
July 17 & 18, 2021

We're on a journey, moving toward growing closer in our relationship with Jesus Christ, Son of God, Savior of the world, Teacher, Lord and Master, Changer of hearts and minds, and Mediator of the new covenant. This process of coming to know Jesus has brought us “*Into the Morning's Warmth of Blooming Friendship* with Jesus, experiencing the euphoria of discovering for the first time what He's like.” We have seen how He interacted with those in the synagogue, and those at a funeral. We've seen Him calling out to people, touching their lives and encouraging them.

Our journey of meeting Christ has taken us “*Into the Daytime Paths of Deeper Companionship*, into the challenging joy of getting to know Him more intimately.” This has opened our eyes to see how Jesus walks with us personally, how He cries for us in our sorrow, how He trains us to deeper levels of faithfulness, rebuking our false understandings, and calling us to follow Him.

Our journey with Jesus has taken us “*Into the Solitude of the Night Watches*, where He has taught us how to resist temptations, modeled for us how to serve others as His disciple, and has shown us His grace in forgiving us of our sins.¹

Today, we go deeper in our journey of understanding who Jesus is for us, and we explore His willingness to suffer for us to alleviate our own pain and anguish. This week and next week we look at the full passion of Jesus, His great love for us, enough to take our place of punishment in order to relieve us of our sin. It is an awesome concept to learn about.

But let's stop for a moment to consider a few things. First of all, God is supreme, the Creator of the heavens and the earth. As the Supreme Being, the true Master of the Universe, does God have to answer to anyone? No. God rules the universe and we, as His subjects, are to obey Him. He tells us what is right and wrong. He instructs us as to how the universe works. He gives us the guidelines that we are to base our entire lives upon. We have no right to even think about telling God what to do.

¹ (Robert Rasmussen, *Imagine Meeting Him*, [Sisters, OR: Multnomah Publications, 1998] pg. 12)

Isaiah 29:16 states it very well; *“You turn things upside down, as if the potter were thought to be like the clay! Shall what is formed say to the one who formed it, “You did not make me”? Can the pot say to the potter, “You know nothing”?* God is the One who makes all the rules; we are the ones who are to follow them. That’s why we call God omnipotent – He is all powerful.

But consider further, does God ever have to learn anything? Is there anything that God does not know? Nothing at all. God formed all things, put all things into their places, from the microscopic to the universal. God knows everything that He created, and understands everything. He is the One who made gravity! He is the One who formed protons, electrons and neutrons that all things are made of. He is the Mastermind of all that we know and see and hear and touch. Psalm 24:1 explains it well, *“The earth is the Lord’s, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it.”*

Is there anything that God does not know? Hardly! He even knows the thoughts and intentions of every living thing. He knows what you ate for supper two months and 3 days ago, and He knows what you are planning for that project that is ahead of you. He knows about your anger with that pesky neighbor, and He knows the secrets of your heart. He knows the joys and delights of your life, as well as the greatest disappointments and sorrows. And God knows every temptation that you have. So there is nothing that God doesn’t know and needs to learn, for that is why we call God omniscient – He is all-knowing and all-wise.

Yet, when Jesus came to the earth to become like one of us, *“...even though He was God’s Son, He learned to be obedient through His suffering”* (Hebrews 5:8). The Word, made flesh came to dwell among us, deliberately humbled Himself here in this world so that He would have to learn – something that He never had to do because He already knows everything. And the very thing that He learned was obedience – which He didn’t need to know because He is Lord of All.

And the greatest perplexity is the way that Jesus learned obedience – *through suffering*. “But the Son of God, the King of kings and Lord of lords, did not need to learn what obedience was or how one did it. Then why did He endure it? Perhaps He volunteered so He could learn what it cost a human to

obey. And the only way to do that was to be mentored by the teacher called Suffering.”² Jesus willingly gave of Himself to become human like us so that He could become one with us, just so that He could know the difficulty of all humans to obey God.

I want you to understand the great trial that Jesus went through in order to know all about our own suffering. It is important to fully grasp the depth of His love for us, to know us so deeply that He experienced the extent of our own hurts and sorrows. The only way that Jesus could fully understand us as humans was to learn the expense of our obedience to God through suffering. So He purposefully gritted His teeth and endured suffering so that as completely human like us, He could bring all those who would acknowledge Him out of the eternal damnation in hell back to Himself with God the Father.

It would have been absolute torture for Him; the perfect, all knowing ruler of the universe, to be willing to take the very thing that separates us from God upon Himself, to experience alienation from His Father during that time, and then pay the price for that sin through agonizing pain and suffering, and then death. But in His great love for us, with His great desire to bring all people back to Himself, Jesus gave Himself up to *learn obedience through suffering*.

That was His purpose as the Servant of the Lord God. Isaiah 42 lays it all out perfectly, “*I, the Lord, have called you and given you power to see that justice is done on earth. Through you I will make a covenant with all peoples; through you I will bring light to the nations. You will open the eyes of the blind and set free those who sit in dark prisons*” (42:6-7). Jesus is the new covenant for us, established through His great suffering for us, so that we might find eternal life with Him.

And Hebrews 2:10 gives us the explanation, “*It was only right that God, who creates and perseveres all things, should make Jesus perfect through suffering, in order to bring many sons (and daughters) to share His glory. For Jesus is the One who leads them to salvation.*”

Listen to how it all happened. This is Matthew 27:26-31. (Read Matthew 27:26-31)

Having become offended by Jesus’ ministry, out of jealousy of Him, and in offense of His

² (Rasmussen, *Imagine Meeting Him*, pg. 179-180)

claiming to be the Son of God, the Jewish leaders had arrested Jesus. They had tried Him illegally in a midnight court, and now they had taken Jesus to Pilate, the Roman Governor of Jerusalem. While he did not find any reason to crucify Jesus, the Chief Priests and Pharisees persuaded the crowd to cry out for the release of Barabbas and the crucifixion of Jesus.

Barabbas was guilty of murderer and had been a participant in one of the riots that had shaken Jerusalem. His heart was filled with anger, bitterness and contempt for the Roman government. His wickedness had brought him into conflict with the Roman army, where he had been arrested and sentenced to death because of his wickedness. There was nothing good about Barabbas.

Yet it was Pilate's custom to release a prisoner to the people at their Feast of Passover, so when He asked which one he should give to them, they shouted, "Give us Barabbas!" The people were willing to condemn an innocent man in exchange for a vile, wretched man. In the place of Barabbas, they would have Jesus be crucified. And Jesus willingly took his place, knowing that as the servant of God, He would exchange His own life for those who were sinners. So Pilate had Jesus whipped and then "*handed him over to be crucified*" (Matthew 27:26).

Now we have to remember that the Roman soldiers were very well trained in brutality and torture. It was not in their job description to have compassion for anyone. And they were not shy about showing their hatred of the people of the Jews. The Jews were the captives, the occupied people, and they were counted as scum to the Romans. And to have one who was considered to be any type of royalty was treated with especially great contempt, especially one who was called a king. They thought of the Jews as being extremely foolish to have only one god, especially when that one god had not protected them from being conquered.

So when Pilate handed Jesus over to be whipped, it was not just a few lashes with a belt that Jesus would receive. This was torturous, even murderous, hatred delivered with the cruelest of devices. The lashes given by the instrument called the "cat-o-nine tails" was a whip of multiple ends. And each end had metal or bone or stone woven into them that delivered horrific blows when swung against the

body. Each bit of metal or bone or stone would rip and tear the flesh of the person at each strike, not just causing bruises, but great gashes in the human flesh. And as the blood began to flow, the soldiers' thirst and lust for more drove them into a furious state of great madness and sick delight. The violence in which they treat Jesus was not much different than those they had captured and put into prison. There wasn't much difference between the prisoners and the majority of the soldiers.

So it was not long before Jesus' back was lacerated and torn to shreds. But His back was not enough for the soldiers. They would turn Jesus over and continue on with His chest and abdomen and legs and arms until there was very little flesh left that had not been macerated into a bleeding pulp. That's the state that Jesus found Himself in when the whipping finally stopped.

It was often that a person being whipped would die of shock, due to the extreme pain and loss of blood. It was unbelievable cruelty and brutality! But that wasn't enough for the soldiers. They knew that Jesus had been sentenced to crucifixion, too, so they continued on with their sport of Him.

They sat Jesus down, draped a "royal robe" around Him, crowned Him with a thorny crown mashed onto His head, and put a stick into His right hand, pretending Him to be a king. In all of the vile spite and vindictiveness of the world, they bowed down before Jesus, cried out, "*Long live the King of the Jews*" (Matt. 27:29), and then spat upon Him, and then covered His eyes and hit Him on the head with the very "scepter" they had given to Him, demanding of Him, "Prophecy. Who hit you?" With all of the evil that they could conspire against Him, the soldiers ridiculed Jesus and scorned Him. It is amazing what happens to hateful people when they get fresh meat to torture.

Yet, Jesus never cried out, never retaliated and never fought back. Remember, He was learning obedience through suffering. And the soldiers were great instructors of suffering. So when Jesus did not respond to their malicious villainy, they grew tired of their game. And they stood Him up, stripped the robe off of Him, and returned His own clothes to Him. Any relief the robe had afforded to Him to help stop the blood flow was immediately reversed when they stripped off the robe.

This is the way that Pilate displayed Him to the crowds before He was sentenced to death. He

would have been barely able to stand up, much less walk. Is it any wonder, then, that Jesus was unable to carry the cross, Himself?

Yet, this was the treatment that Barabbas was supposed to receive as a prisoner of the state! And when we really think about it, this is the treatment that was destined to be ours because of our own sin. Why would the All-powerful, All-knowing, All-righteous, perfect Son of God undergo such horrendous treatment? He had the power to stop the abuse at any time. He had the authority to call down legions of angels to wipe out all those who were mistreating Him. Why did He let the treatment go on? Why didn't He fight back? He was learning obedience, because He knew what had to be done to bring people back to God.

“But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed” (Isaiah 53:5). Jesus stepped into our place, was willing to take the punishment of our sins, so that through Him paying the price for that sin, we could become free from the eternal consequences of that sin.

I cannot imagine the pain and anguish that Jesus must have been experiencing. I remember being spanked as a child out of love by my parents, but this is nothing close to what Jesus endured for me. Yet, if I am honest with myself, if Jesus received one stroke of the whip for each one of my sins, He got off easy that day. My sins alone are enough to destroy a man if one lash of the whip paid for one sin.

Yet, that is what I deserve if I am to account for my own sinfulness. If God were to hold me accountable for each and every sin that I have committed over the 63 years of my life, and I were to receive a lash stroke for every sin, there would be nothing left of me but a blood spot right there at the whipping post. I am absolutely hopeless if I am to be held responsible for each and every one of my sins. And that's what I have to expect from God if I were to stand before Him on my own with all my sins hanging out. The crushing punishment of my sin would absolutely obliterate me.

For God cannot stand the presence of sin. God is perfect and holy, All-righteous, truly pure.

There is nothing wicked or vile in the Lord our God. Sin is intolerable to Him, however, and anyone who comes before Him with ANY SIN in their life, He puts out His hand and exclaims, “Depart from Me, you wretched person!” And we will be thrown out of His presence to endure the anguish and torture and punishment for the sins we have committed. That’s what we have to look forward too IF WE TRY TO MAKE HEAVEN ON OUR OWN!

But out of His great love for us, Jesus came to the earth, to make a way for us to find release from the crushing punishment of our sins. He came to learn obedience through suffering, so that in His suffering, He takes the punishment that is rightfully ours upon Himself in order to free us and release us from that crushing load. There is no one else who can save us from our sins! There is no one else who can help us find forgiveness from God. Jesus has made it all possible for us to come before God, sinful though we be, and to be wiped clean of all that sin because of the suffering that He endured on our behalf.

Folks, we don’t stand a chance before a holy and perfect God on our own. We just can’t do enough to pay for our sins. We can’t work harder to right the wrongs that we’ve done. We can’t give enough to the church to cover all our sins. We can’t sacrifice enough to relieve the burden of guilt from our lives. There is nothing that we can do by our own efforts to bring forgiveness of our own sins. Though we may strive to be pure and holy, we are like filthy rags before the Lord our God.

So where is our hope? Where can we find any assurance for redemption? That, my friends, is in Jesus Christ. When we realize the depravity of our own sinfulness, when we accept that He endured such great suffering as payment for our sins, when we claim Him as the only One who can make us clean and pure before God through the blood that He shed on our behalf, when we call out to Him and receive Him as our Savior, THEN we have hope for redemption and reconciliation from the Lord God.

Only when we let Jesus become the Savior of our lives do we find the sins of our life washed away. Only as we allow Jesus to recreate us into brand new creatures through Him can we hope for eternal life. Only as we claim the blood of Jesus on our own lives do we find hope and assurance.

You see, as Jesus was learning obedience through suffering, He was taking the sin from each of our lives away from us. With each stroke of that whip, ripping His own flesh and pouring out His own blood, Jesus was receiving one of our sins. With the sin of disobedience on my life, Jesus received that stroke of the whip on my behalf. With the thoughts of jealousy in my mind, Jesus took a lash from the whip on my behalf. With every act of selfishness, Jesus took a lash of the whip for me. With every rude or cruel word spoken to another person, Jesus received another lash of the whip for me. With every thought, word, or action I have done in disobedience to God's Laws, Jesus received the lash of the whip for me. It's as if I were there with the whip in my own hand giving blow after blow on the body of Jesus, yet He received each blow in order to free me from that sin.

Friends, give up the sin in your life and receive the forgiveness of Jesus Christ. He has suffered for each of us so that we might not have to endure the eternal penalty of our sin. He invites us to take Him into our own lives so that by His stripes we are healed.

Jesus does not desire that anyone should perish because of the penalty of sin, but that all might come to Him, and through His suffering find forgiveness of that sin and become pure and holy in the sight of God. He has made the way possible to eternal life, but the choice is ours. Our only hope is in Jesus' great loving sacrifice, made for us, to set us free.

Let's pray...Father, thank You so much for the love You have for us. Thank You that You saw our situation of hopelessness without any way of finding forgiveness on our own. Thank You for stepping up to make a way for us to find forgiveness through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Savior. Thank You for the new life we have, as we let Jesus save us, through our own confession of our sins and the cleansing of our unrighteousness. Give us the courage to admit our sinful condition, so that we might find the hope we have only in Jesus as we claim Jesus as our Savior. Jesus, I am a sinner in need of Your grace. I am sorry for all my sins that created such suffering on Your part. Forgive me today, and make me brand new. Guide me and direct my life so that I might not sin any more, but live for You each and every day. This I pray in Your great and powerful Name, Jesus, AMEN.