

Mockery

Matthew 27:27-44

Last Sunday morning I introduced my sermon from the book of James by noting the difficulty in preserving a right balance in preaching, specifically the balance between exposition of the text and its application to our lives. It is the balance between the law and the gospel. And, very often, where a particular sermon falls within the context of that balance is determined by the text itself. So when I preach on the book of James, typically the balance is upon practical application, upon the exhortations that come out true and faithful exposition of the Scripture. So James, as you remember, urges us,

James 1:22 “But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.”

Be doers of the word! That sounds like an emphasis upon application and exhortation. But by way of contrast, our text this afternoon is focused far more upon the promise of the gospel, because what we have come to in Matthew’s gospel is the account of Jesus’ suffering upon the cross. There will be some application as I preach on this passage today, but the emphasis, the focus is upon Jesus himself, the actual work of redemption which he accomplished by his suffering and death upon the cross.

I should also note the importance of words, and the verbal revelation of God with regard to Jesus’ crucifixion. We are far better off with a verbal description than a visual one, which is to say, God gave us a written gospel and not a movie. I believe it is unhelpful, even wrong, to focus our eyes upon a visual presentation of Jesus as so many movies have done, for we are not to make a graven image or likeness of God, even Jesus the son of God. We do far better to consider the words that describe what Jesus endured rather than depend upon the subjective

evaluations of what we might see with our eyes.

So here is what is revealed about Jesus’ death upon the cross, words given by inspiration of the Holy Spirit. As Jesus is hung upon the cross but before he actually dies, the focus today, is the obvious, wicked mockery which was heaped upon him. And as evil as that mockery was, what I want to emphasize this afternoon is just how much the focus of the mockery specifically identifies true aspects of who Jesus actually was! In other words, in mockery, those who so despised and hated him were actually testifying of that which was true about him. Beginning with his identity as a king.

I. JESUS WAS MOCKED AS A KING.

They made fun of him, for claiming to be a king. They mocked him, thinking so foolishly that he wasn’t a king for he was now a poor victim doomed to die the horrific death of crucifixion. He was going to die the death of a common criminal, so they mocked him—humiliated him, really—first by stripping off his clothes so that he would die naked upon the cross.

v.27

A garrison or battalion is the Greek word for a cohort, which likely would have comprised about 600 fighting men, a tenth of a Roman legion. So this was public, very public, all the more humiliating. The scarlet robe would have represented the regal attire normally adorning a King. They mocked him mercilessly with clothes which would normally represent a king. Luke’s gospel describes it this way,

Luke 23:11 “Then Herod, with his men of war, treated Him with contempt and mocked Him, arrayed Him in a gorgeous robe, and sent Him back to Pilate.”

A. Jesus was mocked with false honor.

And they went farther in their mockery of Jesus as King.

v.29a “When they had twisted a crown of thorns, they put it on His head, and a reed in His right hand.”

Now, first of all, that crown would be particularly painful. Remember Jesus is about to be hung upon the cross, nails would be driven into his hands and feet to hold him up. The physical pain of that experience is horrific, it is an unbearably painful torture of the worst order. And now thorns were pressed into his head on a fake crown, every detail emphasizing both the physical pain and the anguish of the mockery being heaped upon him. They mocked him with their words as well, again words which had they been spoken sincerely in faith would have been a right and proper expression of worship. But of course, they weren’t spoken sincerely, but with abject, unrestrained wickedness.

v.29b “And they bowed the knee before Him and mocked Him, saying, “Hail, King of the Jews!”

Mark even adds this detail,

Mark 15:19 “Then they struck Him on the head with a reed and spat on Him; and bowing the knee, they worshiped Him.”

That false honor to Jesus as king is emphasized again in, v.36-38

John adds an interested detail.

John 19:20 “Then many of the Jews read this title, for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city; and it was written in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin. 21 Therefore the chief priests of the Jews said to Pilate, “Do not write, ‘The King of the Jews,’ but, ‘He said, “I am the King of the Jews.” ’ ” 22 Pilate answered, “What I have written, I have written.”

Note again the irony of the greeting which Jesus had received

just five days earlier as he entered Jerusalem, words then spoken as worship,

Mat. 21:9 “Then the multitudes who went before and those who followed cried out, saying: “Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!’ Hosanna in the highest!”

None of that here. All we have here is the wicked cruelty of human depravity at its worst. They are making sport of him, thinking so well of themselves and speaking with such spite against Jesus. So as they mock him with the false honor of calling him king, rather than showing him any appropriate honor, they do what must be seen as the lowest form of contempt possible then and now—they spit on him.

v.30

There cruelty continued,

v.31

Jesus wouldn’t just die, if I can express it that way. Rather, he would die under the scorn and contempt of both the Jewish leaders and the Roman mob. That was, course, exactly what had been prophesied of him, exactly what he himself had predicted,

Mat. 20:18 “Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and to the scribes; and they will condemn Him to death, 19 and deliver Him to the Gentiles to mock and to scourge and to crucify. And the third day He will rise again.”

All of that was foretold by the Old Testament prophets as well.

Ps. 69:19 “You know my reproach, my shame, and my dishonor; My adversaries are all before You. 20 Reproach has broken my heart, And I am full of heaviness; I looked for someone to take pity, but there was none; And for comforters, but I found

none. 21 They also gave me gall for my food, And for my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink.”

Jesus himself would later quote Psalm 22, a Psalm that identifies this very suffering,

Ps. 22:1 “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me? Why are You so far from helping Me, And from the words of My groaning? 2 O My God, I cry in the daytime, but You do not hear; And in the night season, and am not silent. 3 But You are holy, Enthroned in the praises of Israel. 4 Our fathers trusted in You; They trusted, and You delivered them. 5 They cried to You, and were delivered; They trusted in You, and were not ashamed. 6 But I am a worm, and no man; A reproach of men, and despised by the people. 7 All those who see Me ridicule Me; They shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying, 8 “He trusted in the LORD, let Him rescue Him; Let Him deliver Him, since He delights in Him!” 9 But You are He who took Me out of the womb; You made Me trust while on My mother’s breasts. 10 I was cast upon You from birth. From My mother’s womb You have been My God. 11 Be not far from Me, For trouble is near; For there is none to help. 12 Many bulls have surrounded Me; Strong bulls of Bashan have encircled Me. 13 They gape at Me with their mouths, Like a raging and roaring lion.”

Let me stress the irony of all this, this mockery of Jesus with all the false honor as if he were king. This is the irony, and the gospel itself...

B. Jesus was a true king.

So they mocked him for claiming to be a king, but he was, actually a great king, the savior of all mankind. Consider Psalm 2,

Psalm 2:1 “Why do the nations rage, And the people plot a vain thing? 2 The kings of the earth set themselves, And the

rulers take counsel together, Against the LORD and against His Anointed, saying, 3 “Let us break Their bonds in pieces And cast away Their cords from us.”

That’s the mockery Jesus endure in person. But then the God of heaven makes this great declaration as that Psalm continues,

Psalm 2:4 “He who sits in the heavens shall laugh; The Lord shall hold them in derision. 5 Then He shall speak to them in His wrath, And distress them in His deep displeasure: 6 “Yet I have set My King On My holy hill of Zion.”

Jesus then speaks in that Psalm, speaking of his rightful position as king,

Psalm 2:7 “I will declare the decree: The LORD has said to Me, You are My Son, Today I have begotten You. 8 Ask of Me, and I will give You The nations for Your inheritance, And the ends of the earth for Your possession. 9 You shall break them with a rod of iron; You shall dash them to pieces like a potter’s vessel.”

So Jesus is the King! And that glory which is his as king is certainly clear in that warning to the corrupt church in Thyatira,

Rev. 2:24 “Now to you I say, and to the rest in Thyatira, as many as do not have this doctrine, who have not known the depths of Satan, as they say, I will put on you no other burden. 25 But hold fast what you have till I come. 26 And he who overcomes, and keeps My works until the end, to him I will give power over the nations—27 ‘He shall rule them with a rod of iron; They shall be dashed to pieces like the potter’s vessels’—as I also have received from My Father; 28 and I will give him the morning star. 29 “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”

With even more triumphant emphasis, we read,

Rev. 19:11 “Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white

horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war. 12 His eyes were like a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns. He had a name written that no one knew except Himself. 13 He was clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God. 14 And the armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, followed Him on white horses. 15 Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations. And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron. He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. 16 And He has on His robe and on His thigh a name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.”

Jesus is King! Jesus is Lord. And that declaration is the very essence of what you must declare as the profession of your faith. Jesus is Lord! Long live King Jesus. He was mocked as king at the cross, but he will be worshipped as King for all eternity, for ever and ever. Thus the words of worship found in,

1 Tim. 1:15 “This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief. 16 However, for this reason I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show all longsuffering, as a pattern to those who are going to believe on Him for everlasting life. 17 Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, to God who alone is wise, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.”

Second,

II. JESUS WAS MOCKED AS A HUMAN BEING.

His very humanity was attacked, he was treated inhumanely. What we see is that,

A. Jesus was mocked with human indignity.

The crucifixion itself portrays its own inhumanity, with is evident brutality. So we read,
v.32

Then, with obvious reference to his human suffering, his thirst,
v.33-34

This, too, is a fulfillment of the Old Testament prophets.

Ps. 69:16 “Hear me, O LORD, for Your lovingkindness is good; Turn to me according to the multitude of Your tender mercies. 17 And do not hide Your face from Your servant, For I am in trouble; Hear me speedily. 18 Draw near to my soul, and redeem it; Deliver me because of my enemies. 19 You know my reproach, my shame, and my dishonor; My adversaries are all before You. 20 Reproach has broken my heart, And I am full of heaviness; I looked for someone to take pity, but there was none; And for comforters, but I found none. 21 They also gave me gall for my food, And for my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink.”

It wasn't enough for Jesus simply to die. He would die a horrific, painful, grievous death, engulfing all of his humanity in that suffering. That human indignity continues to be expressed by the gospel writer in,
v.35-36

That description takes us back to,

Ps. 22:14 “I am poured out like water, And all My bones are out of joint; My heart is like wax; It has melted within Me. 15 My strength is dried up like a potsherd, And My tongue clings to My jaws; You have brought Me to the dust of death. 16 For dogs have surrounded Me; The congregation of the wicked has enclosed Me. They pierced My hands and My feet; 17 I can count all My bones. They look and stare at Me. 18 They divide My garments among them, And for My clothing they cast lots. 19

But You, O LORD, do not be far from Me; O My Strength, hasten to help Me! 20 Deliver Me from the sword, My precious life from the power of the dog. 21 Save Me from the lion's mouth And from the horns of the wild oxen!"

This suffering speaks so clearly of his actual humanity, his human nature. And it was in the fullness of that human that he suffered for us. That reality is shown so very clearly, for...

B. Jesus was a true man.

Phil. 2:8 "And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross."

And it was necessary for him to be a man, truly and fully a man. It was necessary for him to suffer in his humanity. And this is why,

Heb. 5:7 "[Jesus], in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications, with vehement cries and tears to Him who was able to save Him from death, and was heard because of His godly fear, 8 though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered."

This humanity of Jesus is our encouragement, so plainly explained in,

Heb. 2:14 "Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, 15 and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. 16 For indeed He does not give aid to angels, but He does give aid to the seed of Abraham. 17 Therefore, in all things He had to be made like His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the

people. 18 For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted."

In his humanity, Jesus was tempted. In his human suffering, he learned obedience. For this reason, "that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest" for us." "He is able to aid those who are tempted."

Heb. 4:15 "For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. 16 Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need."

Thirdly,

III. JESUS WAS MOCKED AS A PROPHET OF GOD.

Again, it isn't hard to see how this mockery corresponds to that which was completely true of Jesus.

A. Jesus was mocked for his prophetic claims.

v.39-40

Remember what Jesus actually said, recorded in,

John 2:18 "So the Jews answered and said to Him, "What sign do You show to us, since You do these things?" 19 Jesus answered and said to them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." 20 Then the Jews said, "It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will You raise it up in three days?" 21 But He was speaking of the temple of His body. 22 Therefore, when He had risen from the dead, His disciples remembered that He had said this to them; and they believed the Scripture and the word which Jesus had said."

Jesus had just recently challenged the High Priest as well,

when questioned,

Mat. 26:59 “Now the chief priests, the elders, and all the council sought false testimony against Jesus to put Him to death, 60 but found none. Even though many false witnesses came forward, they found none. But at last two false witnesses came forward 61 and said, “This fellow said, I am able to destroy the temple of God and to build it in three days.’ ” 62 And the high priest arose and said to Him, “Do You answer nothing? What is it these men testify against You?” 63 But Jesus kept silent. And the high priest answered and said to Him, “I put You under oath by the living God: Tell us if You are the Christ, the Son of God!” 64 Jesus said to him, “It is as you said. Nevertheless, I say to you, hereafter you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power, and coming on the clouds of heaven.” 65 Then the high priest tore his clothes, saying, “He has spoken blasphemy! What further need do we have of witnesses? Look, now you have heard His blasphemy!”

So now we read,

v.40b “If You are the Son of God, come down from the cross.”

Then, with direct reference to his declared work of salvation, we read this mockery,

v.41-44

So many references there, including Psalm 22 that I have already read.

Ps. 22:6 “But I am a worm, and no man; A reproach of men, and despised by the people. 7 All those who see Me ridicule Me; They shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying, 8 “He trusted in the LORD, let Him rescue Him; Let Him deliver Him, since He delights in Him!”

The point, of course, is that Jesus is the savior of mankind.

He came to seek and to save those who are lost. He did trust in God whom he knows will deliver him. He is the son of God. All of those things are keystones among the various declarations of his ministry. And he is mocked for saying all those things. But they are all true!

B. Jesus was a true prophet of God.

In fact, he is not the prophet who speaks God’s word, he is the word of God, the word which became flesh.

John 1:1 “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was in the beginning with God. 3 All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made...14 And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.”

Jesus is the prophet whom God had promised to raise up, that very declaration is the foundation of biblical preaching, evangelistic preaching, such as the preaching of Peter in,

Acts 3:18 “But those things which God foretold by the mouth of all His prophets, that the Christ would suffer, He has thus fulfilled. 19 Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, 20 and that He may send Jesus Christ, who was preached to you before, 21 whom heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began. 22 For Moses truly said to the fathers, The LORD your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your brethren. Him you shall hear in all things, whatever He says to you. 23 And it shall be that every soul who will not hear that Prophet shall be utterly destroyed from among the people.”

So this is the gospel, “that the Christ would suffer.” And the

amazing application of that as Peter preached was simple and direct, “Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord.”

So who would have thought that a sermon on the suffering of Jesus leading up to his death would be an evangelistic sermon. And for you who believe, that same message of evangelistic promise is also a promise the continuing, ongoing work of Jesus, the suffering servant, who learned obedience through this suffering we have looked at today. And it is that suffering that gives you, and me, such great hope and encouragement.

Heb. 2:18 “For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted.”

Heb. 4:15 “For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. 16 Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.”