Easter 2013: The Vanquished and The Victor

Mt. 27:27-31

- 27 Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the common hall, and gathered unto him the whole band of soldiers.
- 28 And they stripped him, and put on him a scarlet robe.
- 29 And when they had platted a crown of thorns, they put it upon his head, and a reed in his right hand: and they bowed the knee before him, and mocked him, saying, Hail, King of the Jews!
- 30 And they spit upon him, and took the reed, and smote him on the head.
- 31 And after that they had mocked him, they took the robe off from him, and put his own raiment on him, and led him away to crucify him.

Intro

It was one of those moments when the outcome was a foregone conclusion.

- There was never any question.
- There was never any doubt.
- The soldiers were so confident,
  - the crowd so bloodthirsty,
  - heaven was so silent
  - and hell roared in triumph.
- He came to save the world
  - and in an ironic twist,
  - he was moments away
  - from being vanquished by this world.
- He came unto his own,
  - but his own received him not.
- Like a light he shined into the darkness
  - but the darkness comprehended him not.
- And now His people,
  - the same ones that had hailed him as king
  - only a few days before,
  - were crying out for his death.
- Never has victory seemed more certain
  - than it must have seemed to hell that day.
- Never has a defeat seemed so utter
  - as the tragic terror of the cross of Calvary.

Caught up in the moment,

- motivated by powers of darkness,
  - cruel, hate-filled, soldiers
  - gathered together a mob
  - with a singular purpose in mind,
    - they intended to add insult to injury.
• The outcome was certain,
  o death was immanent,
• but before his death,
  o they would insure that Jesus
    ▪ endured tremendous cruelties
    ▪ and incredible offenses.
• Matthew tells us that they stripped him
  o and they put upon him a scarlet robe,
• then someone came up with a twisted sadistic idea
  o and platted together a crown of thorns
  o that was shoved into his brow.
• Adorned with his scarlet robe,
  o crowned with the crown of the defeated,
  o and given a reed for a scepter
• they bowed their knees before him
  o and mocked him,
  o saying, Hail, King of the Jews.
• The further they went,
  o the more brazen they became
    ▪ and they began to spit upon him,
    ▪ someone took his reed scepter
    ▪ and began to hit him on the head,
    ▪ driving the thorns of that mocking crown
    ▪ ever deeper into his flesh.
  o They mocked him,
    ▪ they beat him,
    ▪ and they laughed at him.
  o And I have no doubt that hell rejoiced,
    ▪ it seemed as if the battle was won,
    ▪ as if Jesus would be utterly defeated.

**Hell Never Understood**
In retrospect we can look back on that scene this morning
• and marvel at the irony of the whole thing.
  o We know now what no one knew then.
• We understand this morning what the soldiers,
  o the angry mob,
  o the gleeful demons,
  o or even the on looking angels
  o never fully understood.
• According to Paul, in 1 Corinthians 2:7,
  o it was the wisdom of God in a mystery,
  o even the hidden wisdom,
  o which God ordained before the world unto our glory.
• The absolute necessity of the atonement,
The Vanquished and The Victor

The absolute necessity that an innocent,
- sinless, spotless, perfect lamb
- would suffer and die
- for the sins of the whole world,

- that victory could be born of defeat,
  - that life could spring from death,
    - that the weak things could overcome the strong,
    - that humility could triumph over brute force -

- it was an inconceivable mystery,
  - the great hidden wisdom of God
    - that the foolish things
    - would forever confound the wise!

The one they crowned as king was indeed the king of the whole world,
- the one that they mockingly bowed their knee to
  - is the one to whom every knee will one day bow
  - and every tongue will one day confess
    - that he is the king of all kings!

- Hell never understood who Jesus really was.
  - Hell never understood what was happening
    - on that fateful Passover weekend in Jerusalem.

- Paul goes on to say, in the next verse,
  - that none of the princes of this world
    - knew or understood this hidden wisdom of God,
    - for had they known it,
    - they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.

To Hell it seemed as if the cross was the ultimate defeat,
- it seemed as if Jesus would be vanquished
  - by the very world he came to save.
    - But hell never understood.

- Jesus would tell his disciples, after the fact,
  - in Luke 24:46-47 that it behooved Christ to suffer,
  - and to rise from the dead the third day.

- The New King James Version says,
  - it was necessary for Christ to suffer
  - and to rise from the dead on the third day,
  - so that repentance and remission of sins
  - should be preached in his name among all nations,
  - beginning at Jerusalem.

- Jesus Christ was the Lamb of God
  - who was slain from the foundations of the world.

- The cross wasn’t some diabolical plot twist
  - that forced the hand of God.
    - It behooved Christ to suffer.
The Vanquished and The Victor

It was the plan of God,
  • it was the purpose of God,
  • it was an absolute necessity.

The Necessity Of Atonement

To understand the necessity of atonement
  • you have to grasp two things:
    o The holiness of God;
    o and the sinfulness of Man.
  • The atonement relates to the relationship between God and man.
    o This relationship is a personal one.
  • Man was made in the image of God
    o and he was ordained for fellowship with God.
  • Ladies and gentlemen,
    o we were made to know God,
    o to worship God
    o and to enter into communion with him.
  • But that relationship was damaged by sin.
    o To understand the cross,
      • we have to understand sin.
  • If sin is regarded as merely an offence against man,
    o a weakness of human nature,
      • or a mere disease of the flesh
    o then we will never truly grasp the necessity of atonement.
  • If we choose, as some do,
    o to view sin as some genetic predisposition of the carnal nature
      • instead of seeing it as rebellion against God,
      • as a transgression against the very purpose
        • for which we were created,
      • then we will never truly grasp the wonder of the cross.

On this Easter Sunday morning,
  • we must see sin as the Bible depicts it,
    o as something which brings wrath,
    o condemnation,
    o and eternal ruin.
  • We must see it as guilt
    o that deserves and needs punishment.
  • We must see sin as God sees it
    o before we can understand why it benefits Christ
      • to endure the cruel suffering
      • and inhumane torture of the cross!
  • Let us make no mistake about it this morning;
    o the terror of the cross reflects the horror of sin.
    o The incredible price of redemption
expresses the terrible penalty
for our transgressions against God.

- We are all guilty.
  - We have all transgressed against God.
    - All of us have gone astray;
    - each of us is guilty of the horrible offense of sin.
  - And sin destroys our relationship with God.

It only takes a casual reading of the Bible
- to grasp the truth that God is holy.
  - His righteousness is unimpeachable;
  - there is absolutely no shadow of turning in him,
  - no fault, no flaw,
  - He is absolutely holy.

- The Levitical law,
  - the laws of clean and unclean,
  - the Tabernacle and the Temple
  - with its outer court, its holy and most holy place,
  - the priestly order and the high priest,
  - the bounds set around Mt. Sinai,
  - things and persons that might not be touched
    - without causing defilement,
  - sacred times and seasons,
  - these, and many more testimonies of scripture,
    - speak in unmistakable terms of the holiness of God.

- We are taught by the example of scripture
  - that if sinful man is to approach a Holy God,
    - it must be through the blood of atonement.

- The holiness of God demands
  - that before the sinner can approach him
  - and have communion with Him,
    - some means of redemption must be provided.

- The atonement is the price of our redemption;
  - the shed blood of Jesus Christ
  - is the only thing that can restore us
  - to right standing with God,

- it is the only thing that can allow us
  - to enter into that fellowship with God
  - for which we were made!

Marvelous Mercy
The wonder of the cross,
- the hidden wisdom of God,
  - is that the foolish things confounded the wise.
- Like a lamb led to the slaughter,
Jesus opened not his mouth,
  • he didn't defend himself,
  • he didn't rail against his accuser,
  • instead he met hostility with meekness
  • and strength with weakness
    • and he purchased everlasting life with his death.

- The wonderful wisdom of God
  • was manifest on a hill called Golgotha
    • when Jesus Christ became the sinless sacrifice
    • that bore the weight and eternal guilt of sins
    • of the whole world to an old rugged cross.

The marvelous mercy of God
- is eternally expressed in the fact
  • that, when we could not save ourselves,
  • God made himself a little lower than the angels,
- Jesus – the creator – condescended to the level of his creation,
  • that he might taste of death for every man!
- He, whose glory makes the heavens shine,
  • He who knew no sin,
  • He who had no guile in him,
  • He of whom Pilate said I can find no fault in him,
    • He suffered in my place,
    • He suffered in your place,
    • He paid our price!

That’s what Hell didn’t understand!
- Redemption is based on the sinlessness of Christ.
- When Pilate said, I can't find any fault in him,
  • Hell said, that’s not a problem.
- He was arraigned on trumped up charges.
  • The witnesses at his trial openly lied.
  • They manufactured the charges.
  • They manufactured the guilt.
    • But they never understood
    • the significance of his innocence!

**It Is Finished**
Peter says it better than I can, in 1 Peter 2:24,
- “Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree,
  • that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness…”
- Because of his innocence,
  • when Jesus Christ went to the cross
  • He bore our sins in His own body.
- And while hell was rejoicing,
mercy was waiting for that moment
  - when the savior of the world
  - would utter those final words.

- From the cross he cried,
  - “It is finished.”

- Up to that moment,
  - it all happened just like the devil planned it.

- Up until that moment
  - the whole event seemed to have been orchestrated
  - by the kingdom of darkness.

- But I can just imagine the shudder that shook hell
  - when those fateful words were spoken,
    - It is finished!

- The word translated “It is finished”
  - is the word which
    - when used in a business transaction
    - meant “paid in full.”

- Archeologists have uncovered a tax collector’s office
  - where they found a number of tax statements
  - across the face of which had been written this same word.

- This word meant that the tax bill had been paid.
  - And when our Jesus said “It is finished,”
    - He was saying that our debt of sin had been paid for
    - and could be cancelled because sin had been judged.
    - It was paid in full at the cross.
      - The horror of the wrath and anger of God,
      - the terror of God’s judgment against sin,
        - was fully and completely poured out
        - on that old rugged cross
          - and He took upon himself the full weight
          - of the sins of the entire world!

  - Sin was judged at the cross!
    - Atonement was made.
  - The precious blood of redemption flowed down that cross
    - and, in a moment,
    - in that single instant,
    - the whole scene was transformed!

The Vanquished Becomes The Victor
The irony of ironies was perpetrated that day in Jerusalem
- when they pressed upon his brow
  - the crown of the vanquished.

- With that crude crown,
  - braided from vicious thorns,
  - they intended to make a show him.
• At the gleeful urging of demonic powers
  o they set out to openly humiliate him.
• It was a show of force,
  o it was display of brute power,
    ▪ oh how the mighty had fallen,
  o they wanted to broadcast to everyone,
    ▪ that they had triumphed over him.
• But in that fateful moment when he breathed his last
  o and uttered those powerful words with his final breath,
    ▪ IT IS FINISHED,
    ▪ it all changed!
• Paul says, in Colossians 2:14-15,
  o that he blotted out the handwriting
    ▪ of ordinances that was against us,
    ▪ which was contrary to us,
  o and took it out of the way,
    ▪ nailing it to his cross.
  o Then he said, and having spoiled principalities and powers,
    ▪ he made a show of them openly,
      ▪ triumphing over them in it.

The tables were completely turned.
• The Vanquished became The Victor!
• There is no doubt that the devil and all of his minions
  o thought that at the cross
  o their supreme moment of victory was going to arrive,
    ▪ that they had finally triumphed.
• But what actually happened was that our God triumphed.
  o He triumphed in the atonement;
  o he triumphed in that he nailed our offenses,
    ▪ the guilt for our sins, to his cross.
  o He triumphed in that the innocent
    ▪ laid down his life
    ▪ for all who were guilty.
• This morning we see him, not as the vanquished but as the victor!
  o We see him as Paul saw him in Hebrews 2:9:
    ▪ But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels,
    ▪ now crowned with glory and honor because he suffered death
    ▪ so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.
• He wears the victors crown!
  o He has overcome the world!
• What the soldiers meant in mockery,
  o what hell meant to be the ultimate insult,
    ▪ the crown of the vanquished
became the victor’s crown.
• Death was swallowed in victory.
  o The apostle Paul can now write those blessed words:
    ▪ Oh grave where is thy victory,
    • Oh death where is thy sting?
• Sin has lost its hold.
  o Captivity has been led captive.
    ▪ The bound are set free,
    ▪ the condemned are given new life,
    • the vanquished has become the victor!

The devil is a liar.
• He has made an art of misrepresenting God to men.
  o It started in the Garden of Eden
    ▪ when he said to Eve, “Hath God said?”
• His purpose was to question the motives of God.
  o He was asking not what God said
    ▪ but rather if it was fair for God to say it.
• His attack against humanity in the garden, and ever since,
  o has been based on misrepresenting God.
    ▪ God is against you, he said to Adam and Eve.
    ▪ God has held back some good thing from you.
    ▪ God has kept the best things in this life from you;
    ▪ he has forbid you from the real pleasures of living.
• The devil has been a liar from the beginning
  o and his supreme lie is against God
    ▪ and against the love of God in particular.

At the cross, truth swallows Satan’s greatest lie.
• For it was there that the greatest display of the love of God ever known
  o was made manifest for all the world to see.
• There we see the truth.
  o For God so loved the world that he gave...
• He didn’t spare himself from the agony of the cross.
  o He didn’t hold back his judgment.
• Instead, according to 2 Corinthians 5:21,
  o He ‘made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin.’
    ▪ He did it for us!
    ▪ He endured the cross for us!
• He did it for all of the rebels,
  o for all of the sinners,
    ▪ for those of us who deserve nothing but hell.
  o He made him who knew no sin,
    ▪ to become sin for US!
• It is the supreme manifestation of the love of God.
o It was at the cross that works of the devil were put to nothing,
  ▪ and where he was finally put to an open shame
  ▪ and utterly and completely defeated.

• **The vanquished became the victor**
  o and he triumphed over the enemy of our souls!

**Close**

Hebrews 2:14-15 tells us that God took on Himself flesh and blood for this reason:

• ‘That through death
  o he might destroy him that had the power of death,
    ▪ that is, the devil;
  o and deliver them who through fear of death
    ▪ were all their lifetime subject to bondage.’

• At the cross His work was finished
  o and He was buried in the ground.
  o But the grave could not contain Him
    ▪ because He wears the Victors crown!

• And He overcame that we might overcome!
  o This is why he put on flesh and blood.
    ▪ This is why he came!
    ▪ He came to set us free.

• He came for us, all of us
  o – the rebels,
  o the sinners,
  o those who had turned their back on him –
    ▪ He came that we might be saved!

**Stand**

As he hung there on that cross,

• in those moments before the crown of the vanquished
  o was transformed into the victor’s crown,

• Matthew records that the chief priests mocking him,
  o with the scribes and elders, said,
    ▪ “He saved others, but he cannot save himself...”

• Oh the irony!
  o All of heaven stood poised to come to his rescue.
    ▪ With one word, the angels would have rushed to him,
    ▪ with one word, the power of heaven would have been
      unleashed,
    ▪ with one word, he could have made himself whole
      ▪ and destroyed all those who tormented him.

• But they missed the point.
  o They didn’t understand!
    ▪ He saved others BECAUSE he did not save himself!

• Today, because he hung on that cross,
o because he suffered the cruel injustice and torture
  ▪ that was forced upon him,
    • because he did not save himself,
    • he has the power to save you!
• He wears the victors crown,
  o he snatched triumph from the jaws of defeat.
    ▪ He brought life out of the very clutches of death.
• And today, no matter what you have done,
  o no matter how far you may have strayed,
    ▪ He has the power to save you
      • BECAUSE he did not save himself!
        o He indeed wears the victor’s crown.

Today, in just a moment of time, you can surrender your life to him.
• He has the power to break the curse of sin,
  o to deliver you from the bondage of your past.
    ▪ He is the victor
    ▪ and you can find your victory in Him, today!
• That victory comes through his death, burial and resurrection.
  o We become partakers with him in death through repentance.
    ▪ We are buried with him in the watery grave of baptism in the name of Jesus Christ.
  o The promise of scripture is that
    ▪ if you repent of your sins
    ▪ and are baptized in His name,
      • he will fill you with the baptism of the Holy Ghost,
      • which is the resurrection and life.
  o It starts at an altar.
    ▪ It starts with repentance.
• Why don’t make a move this morning that will forever alter the course of your life and your eternity?
  o Why don’t you surrender to the only one that wears the victor’s crown?
  o Because he has overcome, we are made overcomers with him!