



SERMON TITLE: A Curse, A King, A Lamb

DATE: March 14, 2021

SCRIPTURE: John 19:1-16

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SERIES SUMMARY

“These things are written that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ” (John 20:31). This is how John concludes his biography of Jesus. He wanted the young, the old, the sick, the well, the despairing, the hopeful, the skeptics, the faithful, and whoever reads his account of Jesus to believe and trust him more fully. But what did John want them to believe? He wanted them to believe that Jesus alone brought eternal life into the present, broken world. And for all who enter this eternal life with God right now, we—like John—are exiles. For all who enter a relationship with Jesus, we will very likely be marginalized and dismissed because we follow him. So, what does it mean to believe? And how do we mature in believing? What does it mean to remain faithful to God when the pressure is on? These are the things that John will help us explore by showing us the glory and beauty of Jesus.

My sons love to dress up. Superheroes, ninjas, looking like daddy, etc. One of my favorite things is when I walk through the door and they invite me into those moments. When they dress up or pretend to be someone else it reveals two things: an expression of their heart and identifying with someone else. Think about it. They wouldn't dress up like someone they didn't admire or wouldn't want to be. I get to see into their heart in these moments. Who's important to them? Which superhero is their favorite right now? What qualities made them want to identify with them?

Did you know that God did this too? Not the pretending or fictional aspects like my sons do, but God modeled this very thing once. In fact one of the overarching narratives of the Bible is that God would one day become someone no one had ever seen before. God, who is divine Spirit, put on flesh and blood and stepped out of His Heavenly realm and into the earth. God became man. His name was Jesus. Why? Why would God do something like this? It's the same two reasons: it expresses God's heart and identifies with someone else. Who was God identifying with by becoming human? Us. But why? Because He radically loves us and desired to repair the relationship that was broken long ago seen in Genesis 3.

In John chapter 19:1-16 we pick up this story between Jesus and Pilate. Jesus has been arrested based on false claims made by envious religious leaders, has gone through the Jewish process, and now stands in front of a Roman governor named Pilate.

READ 19:1-5. Jesus was beaten according to the Roman system. This would have been 39 lashes with a multi-stranded leather whip with pieces of bone and metal tied to the cords. His hands would have been tied to a singular pole so that the skin on his back would be as tight as possible for the maximum damage. Afterwards being given a crown of thorns and a purple robe, He would be brought back in front of the zealous crowd.

What Pilate doesn't realize is that for all his efforts to humiliate and mock Jesus as a “king” he is actually speaking truth and wisdom. By placing a purple robe on his back the soldiers bestow on him the color of royalty. By placing a crown on his head they mark him as King. The crown wasn't simply made of precious metals, but thorns. This is symbolic of man's plight due to the curse of sin. When Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden of Eden God pronounced a curse on the ground. Part of this curse was that thorns and thistles will grow making labor much more difficult (Gen. 3:17-18). The Roman soldiers crown Jesus with the image of the curse of sin. When Pilate brought Jesus back out to the crowd beaten, bloody, bruised, and battered he declared, “Behold the man!” Indeed he is accurate. Jesus at that moment represents all of mankind and the reality of their curse due to sin. Disfigured and appalling to look at. The image of a recognizable person, marred. Jesus was symbolically representing the effect sin has had on mankind since the first sin was committed in the Garden. The outward, physical appearance of Jesus resembles what our inward spirituality looks like due to sin. Jesus didn't just become a human. He became our curse. Why?! Because Jesus is identifying with us in our weakness and expressing the heart of God's radical love and grace.

READ 19:6-11. The Jewish leaders reveal their real reason for wanting Jesus to be put to death. It's not that he made himself King of the Jews and poses a threat to Rome, but to the religious power *they* held. It has been their charge all along when they began asking, "Who is the *man*?" (5:12) and ended by "seeking all the more to kill him, because he was... claiming God as his own Father, making himself equal to God" (5:18) or tried to stone him for blasphemy "you being a man are making yourself God" (10:33). To go through Rome to accomplish the death of Jesus had two benefits: Rome would not object (legally) to his death, and his followers would not be tempted to seek revenge. This is why the case began with Jesus being a "King" and the Jewish leaders declaring loyalty to Caesar. Pilate was far less interested in justice and more in political harmony because of his mistakes in office so far. Jesus alludes to one of these in Luke 13:1. This statement (son of God), however, changes Pilate's demeanor with Jesus and he actually becomes afraid. Roman religion thought that deities could have human representatives and he might be beginning to question the way he's already treated Jesus. He decides all the more he wants to release him.

READ 19:12-16. The religious leaders are not interested in Jesus' release, but death. Pilate gives into the pressure of the crowd, largely to keep political harmony, but in doing so violates his own conscience. John makes a special note in these verses about the day and time. It was the day of preparation for passover when according to Jewish customs, sheep would be getting slaughtered as symbolic sin offerings to God. We are meant to recall John the Baptist's declaration upon seeing Jesus, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29)

Through this text we are left with three striking conclusions:

1. Jesus heals the curse of man by becoming the curse of sin.
2. Jesus is the King who models a better way of power.
3. Jesus is the sacrifice that takes away our sins.

Discussion Starters

1. Was there anything in Matt's sermon that stood out to you? Why?
2. Read Isaiah 53:3-5. This was predicted 700 years earlier. What is prophesied about the way Jesus would be treated?
3. What was the point of the thorns and robe from the Roman perspective? What was Jesus actually symbolizing by wearing those?
4. What comes to mind when you hear the phrase, "Behold the Man"?
5. Why is Pilate keen to release Jesus? Why do the Jewish religious leaders want to kill him so badly?
6. What are potential dangers when power is abused? You see both on display in this passage (political power and religious power).
7. How did Jesus model a better way of power? (you can use his whole life as a reference if you want to go beyond this passage).
8. What was the significance of this happening on the preparation day for Passover? What are the dots John is wanting us to connect?
9. What did you learn about Jesus from this passage?
10. How is the Spirit prompting you to respond? Is there anything you personally need to do coming out of this passage? (examples: embrace God's grace and forgiveness, confess sins, change the ratio of how much hope you're putting into the power systems of this world vs. God, give thanks, etc.)