

Mark 15:16-39
August 18, 2019

The day are going to is that important. It is not because it is—

Different.

Abnormal.

Rare.

Uncommon.

Unusual.

None of these words do justice to the day Mark describes in 15:16-39. Words that describe the day we are about to witness do not come easily. What we are about to see defies explanation. All the normal words we might use to communicate that something all-together different is happening at Golgotha—fall flat. What we are about to witness together today is not just—

Different.

Abnormal.

Rare.

Uncommon.

Unusual.

There has never been a day, nor will there ever be a day like the one we are going to witness. The day we

see stands at the turning point of history. We might call this day unparalleled. There have been no days like this day and there will be no days like this day. The day we are going to witness is far more than just:

Different.

Abnormal.

Rare.

Uncommon.

Unusual.

Why?

NOT—

Different because many people have been beaten.

Abnormal because many have been mocked.

Rare because multitudes have been affixed to crosses.

Uncommon because throngs have been scorned.

Unusual because everyone, without exception will die.

This day is unparalleled because of WHO all this happens to.

We will see the King of Kings beaten.

We will hear the Son of God Mocked.

We will watch the Anointed one Affixed to a cross.

We will hear the light of the World Scorned.

We will witness the Author of life Die.

Unparalleled.

And Unparalleled because NEVER did a such a victory gained from what seemed like an complete and total loss. For all the world, Jesus beaten, mocked and crucified seems like a rout. And everyone in our passage treats Jesus like a fraud.

Mark is going to escort us to a day in Chapter 15:16—39 that is like no other day. It is the day Jesus seemed to be defeated and won. It is the day that Jesus seemed a fraud but showed himself the Messiah.

There was no day like that day.

There will never be a day like that day.

There has never been a day like that day.

There can never be a day like that day.

But today, we can and will go back to that day.

“And the soldiers led him away inside the palace (that is, the governor’s headquarters), and they called together the whole battalion. ¹⁷ And they clothed him in a purple cloak, and twisting together a crown of thorns, they put it on him. ¹⁸ And they began to salute him, “Hail, King of the Jews!” ¹⁹ And they were striking

his head with a reed and spitting on him and kneeling down in homage to him. ²⁰ And when they had mocked him, they stripped him of the purple cloak and put his own clothes on him. And they led him out to crucify him.

²¹ And they compelled a passerby, Simon of Cyrene, who was coming in from the country, the father of Alexander and Rufus, to carry his cross. ²² And they brought him to the place called Golgotha (which means Place of a Skull). ²³ And they offered him wine mixed with myrrh, but he did not take it. ²⁴ And they crucified him and divided his garments among them, casting lots for them, to decide what each should take. ²⁵ And it was the third hour when they crucified him. ²⁶ And the inscription of the charge against him read, "The King of the Jews." ²⁷ And with him they crucified two robbers, one on his right and one on his left. ²⁹ And those who passed by derided him, wagging their heads and saying, "Aha! You who would destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, ³⁰ save yourself, and come down from the cross!" ³¹ So also the chief priests with the scribes mocked him to one another, saying, "He saved others; he cannot save himself. ³² Let the Christ, the King of Israel, come down now from the cross that we may see and believe." Those who were crucified with him also reviled him.

³³ And when the sixth hour had come, there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour.

³⁴ And at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?" which means, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" ³⁵ And some of the bystanders hearing it said, "Behold, he is calling Elijah." ³⁶ And someone ran and filled a sponge with sour wine, put it on a reed and gave it to him to drink, saying, "Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to take him down." ³⁷ And Jesus uttered a loud cry and breathed his last. ³⁸ And the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. ³⁹ And when the centurion, who stood facing him, saw that in this way he breathed his last, he said, "Truly this man was the Son of God!" Mark 15:16-49

The Derision & The Dereliction

1. The Derision

Crucifixion was a macabre and dreadful agony of torture. The victim would go endure penetrating and unspeakable pain. Did you notice how much time Mark spent describing the extraordinary physical pain of Jesus?

He suffered immensely.

His body beaten.

A crown of thorns.

His feet and wrists nailed in place.

All of this happen, but Mark does not once mention the sort of pain Jesus endured. Did you notice that?

Why?

All of the original readers of Mark had seen hundreds if not thousands of people writhing in pain on Roman crosses. The pain of Jesus would have been unremarkable to them because many, many people endured the same. And usually for longer. Sometimes people would hang suspended for days before dying.

It sounds heartless but the pain was unremarkable but what WAS remarkable was the derision, the mocking he endured. People didn't let him die in peace. They heaped disdain on him with both hands. Mark wants us to focus on the mocking he endures.

And Mark explicitly mentions three groups.

First, the Roman soldiers. Passovertime in Jerusalem was a tense time for Roman soldiers. The Jews were more numerous and tensions were high. Passover riots were a real and present danger. All the soldiers were on edge.

So, when Jesus of Nazareth was handed over to them, they were able to blow off some steam and take out their frustrations on him. In vs 16, we read that the 'whole battalion' was gathered. A battalion numbered 600 soldiers and they are all making sport of Jesus.

What did they do?

Vs. 17,

"And they clothed him in a purple cloak, and twisting together a crown of thorns, they put it on him. ¹⁸ And they began to salute him, "Hail, King of the Jews!"

Soldiers of Rome understood royalty. This Jesus was no royalty they had ever seen.

He was captive.

Beaten.

Alone.

Weak.

Quiet.

He had no army.

No throne.

No crown.

No attendants.

His own people wanted him dead.

To have a bit of fun, the soldiers gave him a mock coronation. They twisted together a crown of thorns, put a purple cloak on him and gave him a scepter. All to mock him.

They probably thought it was what this fake king deserved—a fake king deserves a fake coronation. To them, Jesus was a fool and deserved to be mocked.

What kind of king would be so weak?

What kind of king would have no followers?

What kind of king would have no throne?

What kind of king would offer no defense?

What kind of king would have no army?

What kind of king would allow himself to be beaten?

What kind of king would be crucified?

To them, he was no king at all. He seemed to be a fraud. He was a fake king.

But what they did not understand was that crucifixion proved his kingly status. Jesus death was not the site of his defeat but his coronation. By dying he won.

By dying, Jesus showed himself to be not just the king of the Jews but the King of Kings.

But to the soldiers he seemed a fraud. And he endured their mockery.

Vs. 29,

“And those who passed by derided him, wagging their heads and saying, “Aha! You who would destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, ³⁰ save yourself, and come down from the cross!”

The onlookers mocked him for being a false prophet. He claimed that he was going to do something incredible, impossible and here he is suspended on a cross. A false prophet deserved to die.

How could he rebuild the temple in three days if he can't even save himself from a criminal's cross? And so, the onlookers wagged their heads and fingers at him mocking him as a false prophet and a fool.

To the onlookers Jesus seemed a fraud.

But what they did not understand was that the crucifixion did not show him to be a fraud, his dying proved he was no false prophet. He would do much better than rebuild a physical temple in three days. Jesus would come back and become the new temple.

Along with the Roman soldiers and the onlookers, the Jewish leaders added their voices to the mockery.

Jewish leaders mocked him as a false Messiah.

Vs. 31,

³¹ So also the chief priests with the scribes mocked him to one another, saying, "He saved others; he cannot save himself. ³² Let the Christ, the King of Israel, come down now from the cross that we may see and believe."

The Chosen One can't be hung on a cross! They would have all believed that Jesus was cursed by God.

"And if a man has committed a crime punishable by death and he is put to death, and you hang him on a tree, [23] his body shall not remain all night on the tree, but you shall bury him the same day, for a hanged man is cursed by God." Deuteronomy 21:22–23

If he were really the Christ, he would be blessed by God, not cursed to hang on a tree. What kind of Messiah allowed himself to die like that? Surely not the real Messiah, that is for sure.

He seemed like a fraud.

But what they did not understand was that if he did 'save himself' he would be completely unable to save

anyone else. He came to give his life as a ransom for many. And if he did what the onlookers said and 'saved himself', there would be no possible salvation for any of them.

The Soldiers, The Onlookers, the leaders and even the thieves mocked and reviled him. Jesus got it from all directions. They were thieves dying for their crimes.

He was a fake criminal because he did no wrong. They did not understand that in the crucifixion Jesus was dying to rob death of all its power. He was stealing all power away from sin.

Everyone pressing into Jesus that most important of days thought Jesus was a fraud.

Soldiers

Onlookers

Leaders

Thieves

The derision was bad but the dereliction was worse.

2. The Dereliction

That means desertion. But it is more than that. The father did not just desert the son, he cursed the son to

carry the sins of others. To pay the price for things he did not do.

He did not cry out in pain.

He did not cry out against mockers.

But when the Father rejected him—THAT caused him to cry out.

³⁴ And at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?" which means, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"

He cries in Aramaic—why? Why have you forsaken me?

He did not deserve it.

The reason this day was unparalleled is because it was the day the Father turned against the son. The day that the impossible happened, the Triune God turned against himself.

The Father turned against the son.

As the creator hung dying creation itself appears to recoil in horror and begin to fall apart. Darkness descends in the middle of the day.

³³ And when the sixth hour had come, there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour.

The sixth hour is noon. And at noon, it is as if the sun refuses to be a witness to the travesty on earth and stops its shining. This is no eclipse, because the darkness descended for three hours. The one who once called into darkness, 'Let there be light!' was engulfed by darkness.

Why?

If you are familiar with the Bible, you have heard about the famous story of the Exodus. The nation of Israel had been held as slaves four centuries. God sent Moses to demand that Pharaoh to let the people go.

Pharaoh stubbornly refused.

So God sent a series of plagues—10 in all—to get Pharaoh to dislodge Israel from Egypt. Everything from the Nile turning to blood to frogs to gnats to hail. But do you remember the final two plagues?

Most of us know that the 10th and final plague was when the angel of death visited the land and killed all the first born sons not protected by the blood of a lamb. That was the first Passover.

Interesting, the plague right before the visitation of the angel of death was darkness. A darkness descended on Egypt so thoroughly that Moses says it was a darkness that, 'could be felt.' And here centuries later in Mark 15, we have another day where deep darkness descends.

The first Passover, the first born males of the nation of Israel were protected by the blood of a slaughtered lamb. The first Passover saw the angel of death Passover the sons protected by a slaughtered lamb. Centuries later there was another son with no protection. This son had no lamb to take his place, instead he was the lamb who took the place of others.

Jesus had no passing over for Jesus, just a fearful visitation. On this Passover, the son did not go free saved by the blood of a substitute lamb, rather the son was the lamb offered up.

He paid in his own blood the price for others.

This darkness was darker than any that descended on Egypt.

The Father rejected the son.

The Father turned against the Son.

The Angel of Death came to the Son.

Jesus knew this was coming. Jesus came to earth to die—he knew this. But it is one thing to know what will happen and another thing all together have it happen. It is one thing to know that the father would reject you—another thing all together to experience that rejection.

“My God, my God—Why?”

It helps me to hear this from Jesus. In his hour of trial, he asks, ‘Why?’

Though Jesus knew the plan and understood what was coming, the act of bearing the sin for untold multitudes and being scorned by the Father was nearly too much.

Mark does not record that Jesus cried out in pain but he cries out at the rejection of God. This Jesus was no fraud he was a sin-bearer. He endured rejection of his father so that his people would never have to.

Think about that—on the cross Jesus cried out in agony when the Father treated Jesus as if he was personally responsible for all my sins—for all your sins. The Father forsook the Son. The Son was made to be Sin—why?

So that his people might never be rejected.

We all sin and stumble in many ways and as serious as that is, God will not reject those who have trusted Jesus. We will never have to cry the cry of dereliction. It might seem sometimes like we are left alone and abandoned, but it only seems that way.

Jesus was rejected so we can only feel rejected.
Jesus experienced wrath so that we might only be disciplined.
Jesus was forsaken so that we might be forever validated.

His crucifixion shows that he was no fraud—there was no Passover for him—so there could be for others.

Darkness was not the only validation of Jesus—another is explained in verse 38,

³⁸ And the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom.

Curtain does not do justice to what was torn from top to bottom. When you hear 'curtain' don't think something like a shower curtain. This curtain was 60 feet tall. The average telephone pole is 36 feet tall.

The curtain we are talking about is nearly 2 times taller than a telephone pole. Not only that, but the curtain was as thick as an average man's hand.

Mark tells us that the curtain was torn from top to bottom. There is no person on the planet who would be able to tear that curtain in that way.

The curtain kept people out.

The temple was the place on earth that God met with mankind. Inside the temple, was the Most Holy Place hidden behind a massive curtain. That curtain was designed to keep people away from the presence of God.

That room was the room that only ONE man could enter ONCE a year. The high priest would enter the room, and offer a sacrifice for the sins of the people on an annual basis.

The rest of the time, the curtain kept people out and away from the presence of God. The curtain was for their own protection. No one could go in whenever they pleased. God was holy, or separate from mankind because all are flawed, sinful and compromised.

Only one holy man armed with the blood of a lamb could enter the Most holy place once a year. When Jesus died and the curtain was torn all that changed.

The curtain being torn by God from top to bottom meant through Jesus and his death mankind's death is no longer restricted. Access to God is now granted through Jesus.

The Darkness and the Curtain tell a story that we need to understand. The Darkness and curtain tell us something about that most important of days.

What?

There was no passing over for this firstborn son. The angel of death came to the firstborn son, there was no protection for him and at his death the curtain in the temple was torn.

At the crucifixion Jesus died for the sins of others, but that is not all. At the crucifixion, Jesus also opened the way to God. If the crucifixion only purchased forgiveness that would be wonderful but we would still have no way to the Father.

But in dying Jesus opened a new and living way.

One person saw this in our account. Did you notice?

³⁹ And when the centurion, who stood facing him, saw that in this way he breathed his last, he said, "Truly this man was the Son of God!"

His death was a victory.

What does this mean? What kind of victory?

1. The Crucifixion means we will never pay for sins committed. Never.

Understand that theoretically. But lets get practical, what does it mean in your life if you are a Christian?

Your suffering is not a sign of God's anger with you. Your suffering cannot be punishment for sins that you have committed. God poured all that out on Christ.

In my experience, the most confusing, confounding experience for a Christian is when the winds of affliction batter their lives.

Nothing confuses a Christian like affliction.

Sometimes suffering comes like the rat at tat from machine gun sometimes suffering comes in short, explosive bursts.

Job loss

Unpaid bills
Credit ruined
Bankruptcy
Insolvent Business

And try as you might you can't find any cover.

Sometimes affliction comes in consistently like a never-ending rising tide.

Arthritis
COPD
Macular degeneration
Gout

And you feel like you are going to drown.

Sometimes suffering haunts you like a ghost. No one can see it but you are haunted and harangued.

You are worthless.
You are no good.
If people really knew you.
Never measure up.
Not like anyone else.

There are voices you simply cannot silence.

And sometimes the wounds of the past ride in your heart like parasites.

Sexual abuse
Verbal abuse
Physical abuse

Eating away at you from the inside out.

That is not to mention all the different ways Christians are afflicted.

There is nothing so confusing for a Christian as suffering.

Because when we hurt we wonder:

Does God care about me?

Where is God?

Does this mean that he does not love me?

How could this be a part of his plan?

What is going on?

I can tell you what is NOT going on—this is NOT happening because God is angry with you.

It is easy to think that our afflictions are a sign of God's divine displeasure. I have had too many people ask me—"Am I going through this because God is angry with me?"

If you are a Christian, No.

God does discipline those he loves—that is NOT anger or wrath—but love in action.

Are you suffering?

Are you weary?
Are you wondering if God cares?

See the Son of God with scorn heaped on him and wrath coming down on him and there is proof that he has won a victory for you.

The crucifixion is a victory for you.

2. The crucifixion purchased forgiveness and access, forever.

Because we see the Son crucified we should have no fear to come to God as our father. We can come boldly because our prayers are heard because of Jesus.

Have you ever been convicted of a pattern of sin and you feel like you are on probation?

The crucifixion gives a different message. The crucifixion says there is no probation.

Have you ever felt so dirty and so compromised?

The crucifixion gives a different message. The crucifixion says there is no one so dirty who can't be made clean.

Have you ever felt like God doesn't want to hear from you because you mess everything up?

The crucifixion gives a different message.

He lost so we might win.

He was cursed so that we might be blessed.

He was crushed that we might live.

Do you know him?

PRAY

SONG

"Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God forever and ever! Amen." Revelation 7:12