

Jesus was mocked for us (Matthew 27:27-44)

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 30 March 2025

Preacher: William HC

- [0 : 0 0] And now I'm going to read the Bible passage that Pastor William will be talking about today.! So the passage we are reading would be in Matthew chapter 27 verses 27 to 44.
- ! They stripped him and put a scarlet robe on him, and then twisted together a crown of fawns and set it on his head.
- They put a staff in his right hand, then they knelt in front of him and mocked him. Hail, King of the Jews, they said. They spit on him and took the staff and struck him on the head again and again.
- After they had mocked him, they took off the robe and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him away to crucify him. As they were going out, they met a man from Cyrene named Simon, and they forced him to carry the cross.
- They came to a place called Golgotha, which means the place of the skull. There they offered Jesus wine to drink, mixed with gall, but after tasting it, he refused to drink it.
- [1 : 2 9] When they had crucified him, they divided up his clothes by casting lots and sitting down, they kept watch over him there. Above his head, they placed a written charge against him.
- This is Jesus, the King of the Jews. Two rebels were crucified with him, one on his right and one on his left. Those who passed by hurled insults at him, shaking their heads and saying, You who are going to destroy the temple and build it in three days, save yourself.
- Come down from the cross if you are the Son of God. In the same way, the chief press, the teachers of the law, and the elders mocked him. He saved others, they said, but he can't save himself.
- He's the King of Israel. Let him come down now from the cross, and we will believe in him. He trusts in God. Let God rescue him now if he wants him.
- For he said, I am the Son of God. In the same way, the rebels who were crucified with him also heaved insults on him. This is the word of God. Thank you for that reading.
- [2 : 5 1] Please keep that passage open with you. Hopefully your phones are in in-flight mode as we just focus on these precious words of our Lord Jesus and his death.
- Let me pray, and let's hear from our living word. Oh Lord, we are here in one of the most tender parts of your gospel message.
- So, open our eyes. Help us to see afresh. And again, the Son of God. Crucified. Mocked. Rejected for us. Help us to see here in this passage. Our King. Our Savior. The true Son of God. We pray these things in Jesus' name.
- Amen. There's a new bridge near where I live. I'm sure some of you have driven past it. And any time there's a new bridge, eventually there's new graffiti. And so, you drive past and you're like, oh, okay.
- [3 : 5 8] All right. Well, that didn't last very long. But, you know, graffiti's been around for a very long time. So, actually, centuries and centuries. Here's one. I'll show you.
- This was from the second century. All right. Found on a Roman wall. You can actually see it in the, I think it's the Athens Museum. I could be wrong. No, it's a museum in Italy.

That's not Athens. So, I'll send you the link later. Just on a nondescript Roman wall. But, what do you guys see? It's someone on a cross with the head of a donkey.

The word says, Alexamenos, who's probably the person's friend, worships his God. So, is this caption read.

All right. One of the earliest pieces of graffiti. And this unknown artist, right, mocks his friend Alex by drawing his God. A man with a donkey's head hanging on a T-shaped cross.

[5 : 03] It just goes to show, if you're a follower of Jesus, right, you're not alone. Followers of Jesus have always been mocked, looked down on, ridiculed for their faith.

In fact, the earliest Christians living in Roman times, they were actually accused by other writers, famous writers, of cannibalism, right, because they had the Lord's Supper.

Accused of sexual immorality and secret gatherings because they called their gatherings love feasts. One writer claimed that they are initiated by the slaughter and blood of an infant.

Right. They thought, oh, you know, they worship this infant that gets killed. You know, mixing up all kinds of things. Another writer declared, the religion of the Christians is foolish. They worship a crucified man and even the instrument itself of his punishment.

How about today? I think it's the same, isn't it? Brothers and sisters in our global church family are arrested. They're accused of false crimes.

[6 : 04] They're tortured and killed for following Jesus. And we in the West, we feel the same pressures, don't we? Right. We're mocked for being intolerant, hateful.

Jesus is more likely to be a curse word than a personal savior for most of our work colleagues, most of our classmates. I mean, what kind of king ends up on a cross anyways?

Right. We welcome kings, right, and we give them VIP treatment. How can this guy be a king? So goes the narrative. What kind of royal figure starts his reign stretched out on an instrument of death?

And yet, this is the Christ. This is Jesus. This is the one that God has given us who sits at the center of God's saving plan for our world.

This is a precious passage of scripture. And so we slow down, right, this week, next week, the week after. As we approach Good Friday, we are here at the foot of the cross.

[7 : 07] Just as Matthew slows down in this chapter to linger at the events of Good Friday, so will we in these next three weeks. We recall from last week, right, the Roman governor, Pilate, has just condemned Jesus to death.

And in our passage, the Lord is handed over to the brutality of his soldiers. He then endures his final suffering on the cross. And right throughout this section of scripture that Grace read for us, we see he is mocked, insulted, reviled for us.

And Matthew really cares that we know that Jesus was humiliated. He really wants us to know that his death is part of God's saving plan for you and me, sinners.

He's really concerned, right? He spends time writing this account so that we would hear and not dismiss the Lord Jesus. Not like how the chief priest did. Not like how the scribes and those who passed Jesus on the cross did.

And so my prayer is that even if you heard this a thousand times, we've never heard this part of the story of Jesus. We come to this crucified Lord and Savior.

[8 : 23] We come to him as our king. And we say with the faithful, truly this was the Son of God. Let's look at our passage in two parts.

Let's first consider his royal humiliation according to plan. Have a listen again. Then the governor's soldiers, verse 27, took Jesus into the praetorium and gathered the whole company of soldiers around him.

Then they stripped him and put a scarlet robe on him. And then they twisted together a crown of thorns and set it on his head. In just a few words, Matthew starts to describe the suffering of Jesus at an unthinkable level.

Look, this is actually the last 12 hours of Jesus' life, in a sense, his earthly life. If you were to imagine the last 12 hours of your life, how would you want it to go?

Would you want it to end this way? And yet our Lord and Master willingly walks this painful path for us. By this point of the story, as you know, Jesus, he's already experienced a sleepless night, right?

[9 : 34] Spending all night praying to the Father. He's already been dragged from the Garden of Gethsemane. He's been dragged there to the chief priest's council. He's been dragged to Pilate's judgment seat.

He's already been placed on trial. He's already been condemned to death. And by this point, actually verse 26 tells us, Matthew has already said, Pilate's already ordered Jesus to be flogged.

And just one verb, this actually describes something horrific. Taking a whip covered with pieces of metal that would strike the victim's back until it drew out his blood, his bones, even internal organs.

You can imagine the morning's events, right? It's this Jesus suffering, bleeding that is dragged into the praetorium where the Roman soldiers are gathered.

And here are some soldiers on duty. They're experts in killing and inflicting pain. They're pent up perhaps with frustration. These are soldiers who are posted far from home.

[10 : 44] It's a long way back to Rome, right, if you live in Jerusalem. Eager for something perhaps to pass the time, a bit of sport. All of a sudden, word comes from the governor.

He is a prisoner that we're about to crucify. Can you please soften him up? And we read verse 27. And I think we need to be honest and say, if we had to put a label on this today, we would call this abuse, wouldn't we?

Think of how many soldiers there are, right? They gathered to him the whole cohort. A cohort of soldiers in the Roman army was as many as 480 soldiers.

More likely, it was probably whoever was among that crew that was on duty that day. But even then, that's still a humiliating scene, isn't it? They gathered around him, stripping him of his clothes.

And then dressing him up as one of their military commanders, right? A scarlet robe, what something a Roman officer would wear. And they mock him. They take a wreath, a crown shape made from thorns, right?

[11 : 52] Sharp. And they press it on his head to crown him. And this weary Jesus has to hold a staff in his hand. And then soldier after soldier walks past, bows the knee before him, and in mockery say, Hail, King of the Jews.

They cry at him. They mock him. They spit on him, it says. And they beat him. And after they do this, they give his clothes back.

They lead him to a place outside the city walls called Golgotha. A bit of a rubbish dump for that city. And regarding the crucifixion, Matthew simply then says, verse 31, Then they led him away to crucify him.

Again, verse 35, And they crucified him, right? With such few words, Matthew describes something so horrific that even Roman citizens were not allowed to be crucified.

It might help for us to understand how much misery and sorrow our Lord had to go through. If you had to come up with the cruelest way to put someone to death, it would be crucifixion.

[13 : 12] Designed to be as painful as possible. To be tortured to death in the slowest, most painful way. According to this method, Jesus and those who were crucified, they laid on their back on a piece of timber.

In the shape of a T-shaped cross. And then, he would have had nails driven through his hands, his feet, to fasten him literally to the wood, like a painting to a wall.

And as he's bleeding and agonizing from these wounds, the cross gets raised up. It's driven into the dirt, and there he is just humiliated in front of everyone.

His need to breathe would force him to raise and lower his chest. That would just aggravate his wounds even more. His need to relieve himself, perhaps, would just be shown in public display.

Eventually, hour after hour, too exhausted to breathe any longer, the person crucified would finally die. And it could take as many as three days for this cruel way to die.

[14 : 18] Why does our Lord endure this? Why does he willingly accept this cruelty? Because beneath his royal humiliation, there is something history-changing going on for us, even in these verses.

Notice how many times in the section, even as they mock him, there are clues, reminders of Jesus' royal identity. Yes, it's thorny, but it's a crown.

Yes, it's to mock him, but he's wearing a royal robe. And the written charge there on him, he's called the king of the Jews. Of course, they laugh at him, they mock him, but that's what it says.

Even as everyone mocks and disbelieves, God is gloriously showing the whole world the true, real identity of our king.

Do you notice in verse 35, right? Have a look. Matthew records that Jesus' humiliation of losing his clothes and so on, it all occurred. Right? It all occurred, actually, to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet.

[15 : 26] It's just a throwaway line, isn't it? Right? They divided up his clothes by casting lots. But listen to Psalm 22, verse 18. And in these lyrics, written thousands of years ago, hundreds of years ago, it precisely details what happens here.

Psalm 22, verse 18. Right? Right? Reading before that. Dogs surround me. Right? A pack of villains encircles me. They pierce my hands and my feet.

Psalm 22, verse 16 says. All my bones are on display. People stare and cloak over me. They divide my clothes among them and cast lots for my garment.

That's prophetic, isn't it? Speaking forth a future suffering king. Listen to from Isaiah, chapter 52, which speaks of a suffering servant.

Right? Just as there were many who were appalled at him, his appearance was so disfigured. His form marred beyond human likeness. And yet he will sprinkle many nations and kings will shut their mouths because of him.

[16 : 31] Right? Right? Through Matthew's gospel, right? He keeps wanting us to see the bigger picture. He keeps pointing us to Jesus as more than just a humiliated, crucified man.

Even as they do that, as they humiliate Jesus, God's royal plan predicted by the prophets is still going on. Despite appearances, this is how God's kingdom comes to our world.

Right? Not through a military maneuver. It's not through a political takeover or corporate buyout. It's through a sacrificial death on a hill on Golgotha.

And the world has always mocked this turn of events. But with eyes of faith, this is precisely how God has chosen to save the world, to save you and me.

It's what makes the good news so good for all the earth. We rejoice and weep with Isaiah 53, which says, He was pierced for our transgressions, crushed for our iniquities.

[17 : 36] The punishment that brought us peace was on him. By his wounds, we are healed. It's precious, isn't it? Pierced for our transgressions.

And that's exactly what Matthew then addresses next in verses 38 to 44. Right? We've heard about and we've seen kind of his royal humiliation.

But we also see in our passage today his saving death. Because listen to verse 38 again. It says here, Two robbers were crucified with him.

One on his right and one on his left. Those who passed by hurled insults at him, shaking their heads and saying, You who are going to destroy the temple and build it in three days, save yourself.

Come down from the cross if you are the son of God. They mock him, right? Save yourself. Save yourself. We'll track back a bit. Remember who should have hung on that cross instead of Jesus?

[18 : 33] Who got released, as we heard last week from Pastor Nathan, right? Jesus Barabbas. Where Barabbas should have hung for his actual crimes, Jesus of Nazareth, innocent of a single crime, is there in his place.

This section starts and ends, though, with the response of the two other rebels that were to be crucified with him. It's interesting. This section, you know, it starts with these rebels crucified with him.

And then in verse 44, it goes back to these rebels who heap insults on him. It's a bit of a sandwich in between, right? It's kind of like a start and a finish.

And sandwich in between are pastors by who mock him, are leaders who disbelieve him. And yet all these people, as they mock, they mock him with the very titles that describe Jesus' true mission, right?

Savior. Son of God. We should pick these up and go, yes. That's right. Keep mocking him. But yes, he is the Savior. Yes, he will save us.

[19 : 41] Luke's gospel actually includes the fact that one of the robbers later does turn to Christ. He does ask his favor to be in paradise with him. But Matthew's focus, right, as you can see, he brackets the section to say, from start to finish, Jesus was mocked for us as our Savior.

The pastors by, verse 40, they mock him, right? You who would destroy the temple, rebuild it in three days, save yourself.

If you're the Son of God, come down from the cross. They pick up here one of the hopes that the Jewish people had when they were there in Jerusalem, coming to the temple for the Passover.

The temple was where God's presence, his pardon, his praise were all experienced. You would come and you would just enjoy the worship in a sense. That the people around you, you would be reminded of God's saving grace.

But it was only in a small sense, a limited sense. The Jewish people, they were forgiven, yes, as they brought their sacrifices there. But Jesus comes and he is able to destroy and rebuild the temple of Jerusalem.

[21 : 00] Not the physical temple, but he rebuilds it spiritually and now he becomes the temple. His own body becomes what gets destroyed and built up to bring a new and living way.

A new way, a better way of salvation. All the suffering points to a purpose. By his cross-shaped death, Jesus becomes the Passover lamb.

He carries God's judgment at all human wickedness. And then by his resurrection, three days later, he brings the blessings of the physical temple, right?

God's presence, his pardon, his praise, yes, and even more, forever, in us through the Holy Spirit. And for everyone who believes in Christ all over the world.

You see, Jesus has come to bring us salvation far better than this brick and mortar place in Jerusalem. And from this Good Friday onwards, our sins become fully forgiven because of what Christ has done.

[22 : 08] And we meet God in and through Jesus Christ. And so the irony is that actually, if Jesus were to actually rescue himself, he could have. He could have just come down from that cross.

Could have called his angels to bring him to a safe place. He could have struck down all those who opposed him there and then. But if he did that, he would not have been able to save you and me.

The world. Right through this passage and right through then to the rest of the New Testament, we are told time and time again, Jesus' suffering here, as horrendous as it was, was to save us.

It was not for his own sins that he died, but for our sins, for your sins and my sins. His sufferings here have a specific sin-bearing, shame-covering, guilt-addressing point.

Scripture tells us, right? 1 Peter 2. Jesus bore our sins in his own body on the tree. Scripture tells us, right? 1 Peter 3.18, he suffered the sins that's just for the unjust.

[23 : 16] That's us. Scripture tells us, 2 Corinthians 5.21, that he who knew no sin was made sin for us, that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

That's what's going on on the cross. It's life-changing. That's what's going on when the Son of God hangs there. He is enacting a saving death for us.

Again, Isaiah tells us, we all like sheep have gone astray. Each of us has turned our own way. And yet the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

This was the death of Christ for us. This is what he was doing for six long hours, hanging there before the watching crowd. This is what he was doing for us, naked and bleeding from his forehead, his back, his hands, his feet for us.

And all the while, mocked by people beside him in front of him until his final breath. But it wasn't just nails that held him there, right? It was his love for us, for you.

[24 : 28] It was his love for the rebels to his right and left and every rebel before him through all time and space. Not just nails held him there, but his love for you.

How he loved us, carrying this cruel punishment. How he loved us, though innocent, right, doesn't speak a word of hatred or selfishness or revenge at these people who have done this to him.

How he loved us, precisely because he came to save us. He will not, he chooses not to save himself. And so he stays on the cross for you.

Do you believe this? Do you cherish this, that Jesus has taken the wrath of God's judgment against sin for you? That he's borne our sins in place of us?

Do you believe that Jesus was condemned and crucified so that in him you would have a different life? Do you believe that Jesus was innocent so that in him your guilt would be laid aside?

[25 : 36] That he was abused in shame so that you don't have to live in shame anymore? Jesus was stripped of all dignity so that we would be clothed with God's favor and blessing.

Jesus was mocked so that you might be blessed and honored. Brothers and sisters, at the foot of the cross, there's nothing you and I can do, right, other than to see again, to experience again Christ's love for us, crucified, mocked for us, both in his humiliation and both in his saving death, all according to his plan.

Can I suggest as well, finally, three things that I think we need to see clearly, right? Maybe this message just sounds like old news to you.

Maybe this is something that is new for you. Maybe you're still wrestling with this, but let me suggest three things we ought to see clearly here at the foot of the cross. Firstly, please see how sinful and rebellious humanity, you and I, remain.

All right? There's an old hymn that says, were you there when they crucified my Lord? The answer, in a sense, is yes. Sure, we weren't physically there in 33 AD, but in a sense, we were there.

[27 : 06] We were represented, just as our first parents represent our rebellion in the garden. These first witnesses, as they mock our Lord Jesus, they represent our inclination.

They represent our desire, our bent to mock and revile and dismiss the Son of God. Do they not? If you were there, what would you have done?

Would you have started up a worship set? Would you have opened up the scriptures and said, no, no, no, and defended him? I don't think so. I know I wouldn't.

If we were not the Holy Spirit transforming our hearts, giving us boldness, we would have been the same. And Matthew, I think, is brutally honest, right? Because Judas betrayed Jesus.

Peter disowned him. The chief priests schemed against him. The mob shouted, crucify him. Pilate washed his hands of him. The soldiers abused him. The robbers reviled him. What about you and me?

[28 : 07] Are we the exception? Given the right set of circumstances, alone in your room, pressured in the workplace, tempted in the schoolyard, aren't we all so prone to shameful acts of evil, of cruelty, of selfishness?

We share the sinful heart, the same sinful heart as those soldiers, as those passers-by. We all have failed to give King Jesus the position he deserves in our lives.

All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. And so often the first step when we come to the cross, we truly understand what Christ has done for us is to repent.

If you've not done so or maybe you've forgotten to, can I invite you to repent of those sins that you share, that I share, that nailed him to that cross.

Bow before him as your Savior and King. If you're here and you are slowly just drifting towards the seat of mockers, be warned. Come back to the servant king again.

[29 : 17] Sink your roots deep into his life-giving grace again for you. Put him first in your life while you still can. We see how sinful and rebellious our hearts are and they still are.

Let me suggest though the second thing that we can remember. We see how unshakable God's sovereign plans and hand remains, right? Look, without eyes of faith, we would look at this scene at the cross and think, ah, let's give up.

There's nothing more to see here. God's plans to save the world just seem so defeated. But Good Friday happens before Easter Sunday, right?

The cross precedes the resurrection and the empty tomb. God's plans to save the world might seem bleak right now, defeated, everyone mocking Jesus.

But God is going in his own timing, in his own plan, is he not? In his sovereignty, he's bringing out the salvation of the world. Every gasping breath of Jesus is according to his plan.

[30 : 23] And so every cruel taunt from his mockers is according to plan. Your plans today may feel like they are unraveling. I don't know how you're feeling today. Maybe your life, you might feel like my life is just unbearable.

But this is the same God who is working things out according to plan here, who is working out your plans as well. What assurance we can have, right? That there is a servant king who is worthy of your praise and his saving death fulfills God's plan to save you and me, to give you purpose.

He's in control. And so by God's grace, we don't have to be. So we see how unshakable God's hand remains. And that's good news for you if you're struggling.

Good news for you if you are wavering. And finally, here at the foot of the cross, let us be reminded how the call to carry his cross remains.

Verse 32, right? We've looked at it. The soldiers compelled Simon of Cyrene to carry Jesus' cross. Right? Hey, I love this line. As of all reliable history, this man is specifically named for us.

[31 : 34] It's as if he, it's like footnotes in your assignments. It's like, go talk to Simon of Cyrene. Okay? Ask him how it was like to carry his cross. To carry his cross, of course, is not to take his place.

It's not to add to Christ's saving death. And yet, to follow in the footsteps of our Savior is to do as Simon did. To grasp, to hold on to that emblem of mockery and shame, that cross.

And to follow the crucified King wherever he goes. May I never boast in anything other than the cross of Christ, Paul says in Galatians, through which the world has been crucified to me and I to the world.

Is that your motto for life? Can you say that is how you want to live your life? Taking up the cross and following Jesus? How will you make sure that is the boast of your life and not something else?

Not some other pipe dream that will come and go. How will you embrace the cross? Endure the shame with Jesus as your king? Well, one way you will do that is to do it together as a church.

[32 : 44] It's easy to drift away, right, when we are not surrounded by brothers and sisters encouraging us to hold on, carry the cross, let's do it together. together. As we pursue this cross-shaped life together, we are saying we are a community of sufferers and we're following the suffering servant.

Our gracious Lord leads us to the cross with him, just as he will lead us to resurrection life in him as well. So let us not be surprised, discouraged by being outnumbered.

Let us not be disappointed by being outcast this Easter. Let us not be discouraged by things not going on as we planned or hoped. At the cross, gaze at the cross again, because there at the cross we look at how Jesus was mocked, and yet he was still the king of kings, son of God, saviour of the world for us.

Both in his humiliation and in his death. take heart. It's all going according to plan for our everlasting good and for God's glory.

Shall we pray? Manasaurus, we lift up our hearts and our eyes to you now.

[34 : 13] We pray to you knowing that it was love as well that held you there to the cross. It wasn't just nails.

It wasn't just what other people did. It was your love for us. And so we give thanks. And we confess how we have mocked you too, son of God.

We confess how we have ignored you. and for those of us where this is hitting home, we repent. We trust you again.

We ask that you would bless us. Give us a bigger vision of your saving death for us. We thank you, Lord. We pray all these things in Jesus' name.

Amen.