

St. Paul's Lutheran Church, Muskego, WI

April 7, 2019

Luke 22:66-23:25

ALL ROADS MEET AT THE CROSS

I have a lot of memories of growing up in the household of Richard and Lois Strobel. Dad was a pastor and a German professor; mom was a mom and an office worker and the one who moved our household along from day to day. Overall, those days were awesome!

One memory that lingers is watching either the *CBS Evening News* with Walter Cronkite or *ABC World News Tonight* with Harry Reasoner, Barbara Walters and Peter Jennings...and my dad. I just remember dad's frustration with the news! That was the time of Roe vs. Wade and the legalization of abortion by a 7-2 vote. The end of the Vietnam War with the fall of Saigon on April 30, 1975. The Watergate Scandal was "fun"! Dad's frustration would simmer. A comment here, a comment there. But once in a while his frustration would boil over a bit as a godly man and he would say to the TV, "Ach, you're just a bunch of honyockers!"

I finally looked up that word "honyocker" for this sermon—a bit fearful for what it would mean, wanting to maintain the positive image I always cherish of my dad. It comes from the German, "Honigjager", meaning "honey chaser—a pursuer of sweet opportunities who will ultimately get stung by predictable consequences." It was definitely a derogatory term!

The best lesson, I believe, we kids learned from listening to my father "filter" this life through his faith, was the comfort that the evil of this world would ultimately be resolved in this scriptural truth that **ALL ROADS IN LIFE MEET AT THE CROSS OF JESUS, Where Injustice Had Its Day, but Where Justice is Finally Served.** (*READ the text*)

1. Where Injustice Had Its Day

a. The Plotting of the People

The injustice is hard to stomach, wouldn't you agree? It almost makes you want to yell at the text, "You bunch of honyockers! Chasing after your own sweet goals and personal benefits! Don't you realize how foolish you look and who it is you are condemning?! He could crush you, you know?! But he is a better man than you!"

My friends, THAT righteous anger is not so helpful. Think of what the Spirit says in Jude: ***Even the archangel Michael, when he was disputing with the devil about the body of Moses, did not himself dare to condemn him for slander but said, "The Lord rebuke you!"*** The Lord's rebuke for evil still comes at the cross where all roads meet, and that is enough.

But it certainly was a "kangaroo court" that took place that day! Kids, a "kangaroo court" is a trial that has already "jumped to judgment" without any care for truth or facts—a time when injustice has its day! The trial of Jesus had begun in the dark of night when any voice of justice was still asleep! When the facts came out that Jesus IS the Messiah and IS the Son of God, the Jewish leaders didn't debate it, they just condemned it! They did not want it or him to be true and in the absence of God's visible glory and power, they thought that THEY ruled the day and could snuff out truth! The devil wanted to muzzle the voice of God!

Half-truths and lies before Pilate who alone could sentence Jesus to death! 1) Jesus WAS subverting the nation, but spiritually as the Holy Spirit of God was calling people to Jesus! NO threat to Rome. 2) Jesus did NOT oppose paying taxes to Caesar. In fact, Jesus had stated the exact opposite that very week! 3) And, in fact, Jesus IS a king, and had come to BE their King—the spiritual ruler of all who believe in him. AND the ruler of the world whether mankind likes it or not!

The Jewish leaders spun lies that injustice could have its day. Pilate saw right through their deceit and hatred but took the “easier road” of injustice so HE could have HIS day—no riot among the people! *“I have found in him no grounds for the death penalty. I will punish him and release him. Oh, not good enough for you? ‘Crucify! Crucify!’? Shall I crucify your king? OK, then I will release from custody a man who IS guilty of the very things of which you have accused this Jesus! I will allow you to unjustly kill an innocent man.”* Injustice all around, from and in everyone! Except from the One! “Where is God in this if he real?” the world asks.

b. The Rebellion of Mankind

But wait, the injustice is deeper. Would you and I ever stand with the Jewish mob and cry out, “Crucify! Crucify! This man is not my king!”? These Jews were kin! His blood! They had loved the miracles—the healings, the exorcisms, the multiplying of the loaves, the raising to life, the POWER! But they had soured on him when he began to talk about sin and their need to repent and the judgment to come and the need to believe in him for the saving of their souls. They didn’t want repentance; they wanted his power. They weren’t interested in forgiveness; they were interested in independence! And when he did not give them what they wanted, they chewed him up and spit him out! To silence his voice! Oh, the naiveté. One cannot silence the voice of God!

You and I would never stand with the Jewish mob and cry out, “Crucify! Crucify!”, would we? For that would be unjust—and injustice would have its day...

APPLICATION Do you and I squirm a bit when reading of the sins of Old Testament believers? Noah drunk in his tent? Judah sleeping with his daughter-in-law? David committing adultery and murder and covering it up before God for a year? Multiple wives and the hurt that caused? Favoritism? Why does God share with us the ugly details of believers’ lives?! Those moments when their actions cry into the future, “Crucify! Crucify! In this moment I do not want Messiah as my King!”

Do we squirm in our seats as we read because of the ugliness of *their* sins, or because the ugliness of their sin resonates with the ugliness of **MY** sin?! If God wrote your life story, my life story, for all of us to read, if he recorded our thoughts for others to know and our words for others to hear—things said in the privacy of your home, your bedroom--would we be proud of every chapter? Would we be proud of every page? Or have our thoughts, words and actions ever said of Jesus, “I don’t want him as my King. I have written my own commandments. I make my own decisions. Crucify! Crucify! Just don’t let him know!”

Why DOES God highlight our sin? Isn’t it because hell—sin’s punishment--is real and one day the road, the journey, of all people will **MEET AT THE CROSS Where Injustice Had Its Day—**

the King WAS crucified—but where **God’s Justice Is Finally Served?** Sin punished and faith in Jesus frees?

2. Where Justice Is Finally Served

a. The Plan of God the Father

Pilate released Barabbas, the man who had been thrown into prison for insurrection and murder, the one they asked for, and surrendered Jesus to their will.

Whose will ultimately was done that day? Who was in control of what we see? If it were not God, then what hope would we have in this life? All we would have left is despair and the rant “You bunch of honyockers!”. What does the bible have to say about this chain of events? Well, you know the “Tale of Two Gardens” wayyy back in the beginning.

“I will put enmity between you, Satan, and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.” The suffering and the payment for sin HAD to be, for that is how justice works—our sense of justice we get from our God. The suffering and the payment for sin was the will of God, worked through, and in spite of, the hatred of the devil for all that is God. “Crucify! Crucify!” was the strike of the serpent. “Why have you forsaken me?!” was the poison of sin and the justice of God—the necessary plan of the Father.

We have also visited the second garden this Lenten season. Remember when Jesus asked, *“Father, if it is possible, take this cup of suffering from me?”* The answer was “No, my Son. Justice must be served. Sin is real; so must the punishment be. You must do this for them.”

b. The Work of God the Son

So, what *seems* to be the work of man alone and the victory of evil is used by the hand of God! The chief priests, the elders, Pilate, Herod, the crowds play their parts in their sin. Yet, the very Son of God plays his role in holiness--planned before the creation of the world! Listen to Jesus’ own words, *“Sacrifice and offering, Father, you did not desire, but a body you prepared for me; with burnt offerings and sin offerings you were not pleased. Then I said, ‘Here I am—it is written about me in the scroll—I have come to do your will, my God.’”*

A sniper going to war suits up like this. An astronaut going into orbit suits up like this. A firefighter going into an inferno suits up like this. The world’s Savior from sin suits up like this to go to hell and back again. *“The form of a servant, being made in human likeness.”* Wearing his suit he did not fire bullets, ignite rockets or take along a fire suppression system. No, Jesus was passive and silent as he took the fire for you and me!

Isaiah had previewed the story. *“We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to our own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth. By oppression and judgment he was taken away. Yet who of his generation protested? He was cut off from the land of the living; for the transgression of my people he was punished. He was assigned a grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death, though he had done no violence, nor was any deceit in his mouth. Yet it was the Lord’s will to crush him and cause him to suffer, and though the Lord makes his life an offering for sin, he will see his offspring and prolong his days, and the will of the Lord will prosper in his hand.”*

Justice for sin was finally served in the person of Jesus, at the cross that bears his name—the cross that became the crossroad for every person’s journey in life! ***“At the name of Jesus every knee will bow,”*** so says God’s Word. **ALL ROADS MEET AT THE CROSS**—where injustice once had its day, but justice rose victorious, and forgiveness became the cornerstone of God’s Kingdom through faith in the One God sent!

APPLICATION Looking back, I am sure that Andy and Emily had their moments in the struggle when they questioned “where is God in all of us? HOW is this right? How is this fair? We just want a baby. What did we do wrong, Father?! Tell us and we will repent!”

The medical team had told Andy and Emily that their little girl would not live apart from her mother more than minutes. For three months after the discovery, Emily carried her daughter inside of her, felt her move, held her close and loved her with all of her being! For three months Andy and Emily, family and friends asked the Almighty to wield his arm of power and to work a miracle of miracles! But alas, the power of the Almighty seemed silent.

Until the day when the power of God came to life again in his promises and in his love! Andy and Emily realized that **ALL ROADS**—even the difficult--**MEET AT THE CROSS**. So in faith they brought the cross to their daughter! Water was there at her birth—and the Name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Her middle name given her in that moment is “Home Forever” as they introduced her to **her** Savior--Jesus who died **first** for her and who had cried **FOR** her, “It is finished!” The Savior who was separated from his Father, “My God, My God!” so that would **NEVER** be! Born into this world of sin, she was immediately baptized and became a daughter of the Most High! The cross resolved any fear of sin and God’s judgment--forgiven in Jesus. The cross softened the separation that was about to come. She lived 60 minutes and then God was faithful and took her home. Henrietta Home Forever Baxter is in heaven; she waits for mom and dad to follow. The empty cross, the empty tomb, declare it so.

Jesus once said, ***“I have told you all these things so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.”***

CONCLUSION Without the cross there is only evil here. Without the cross, death would rule each day. Without the cross there is no hope. But at the cross ALL roads meet. May Jesus keep us in faith that his cross daily reveal the justice of God and the peace that it brings! Amen.

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