

CRUCIFIED

MATTHEW 27



A Scriptorium Study from The Fellowship of Ailbe

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The Fellowship of Ailbe

Crucified: Matthew 27
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Matthew 27: Introduction

Reading this chapter always fills me with sadness and shame. I realize that, had I been there among that crowd, I would have been calling for Jesus to be crucified, right along with everyone else.

But it's good to remember that this day is recalled as Good Friday. The good and perfect plan of God was fulfilled by His good and perfect Son, and we are the beneficiaries of His suffering.

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We hope you find this study of Ecclesiastes a challenging and stretching experience of journeying more deeply into the Word of God. Thank you for joining us.

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1 Word on Trial

Pray Psalm 38.13-16.

But I, like a deaf *man*, do not hear;
And *I am* like a mute *who* does not open his mouth.
Thus I am like a man who does not hear,
And in whose mouth *is* no response.
For in You, O LORD, I hope;
You will hear, O Lord my God.
For I said, “*Hear me*, lest they rejoice over me,
Lest, when my foot slips, they exalt *themselves* against me.”

Sing Psalm 38.13-16.

(Leoni: [*The God of Abraham Praise*](#))

Their threats I will not heed, nor speak to their reproof;
to hear or speak I have no need – I claim Your truth!
Lord, hear my fervent prayer! Let not my foes rejoice;
Redeem me from their traps and snares – Lord, hear my voice!

Read and meditate on Matthew 27.1-14.

Prepare.

1. How do we see the faithfulness of God’s Word in these verses?
2. How did Jesus respond to Pilate? Where have we seen this response before?

Meditate.

We’re going to look at Matthew 27 in a particular light: We want to focus on the truthfulness, power, and faithfulness of the Word of God as we walk with Jesus through His suffering. These first fourteen verses encourage us to trust the Word of God. Let’s take a closer look.

Verses 1 and 2 could be a commentary on Psalm 2.1-3:

*Why do the nations rage,
And the people plot a vain thing?
The kings of the earth set themselves,
And the rulers take counsel together,
Against the LORD and against His Anointed, saying,
“Let us break Their bonds in pieces
And cast away Their cords from us.”*

Just as God foretold, the rulers of Israel and Rome will conspire to be rid of Jesus and free from His “bonds” and “cords”. But, as the rest of Psalm 2 indicates, God sees all this, and is using it to prepare for the enthronement of His Son, and the subjugation of the nations.

Right on cue, Judas regrets his treachery and tries to atone for it by returning the bounty paid him. When the chief priests and elders refused to take it back, Judas “threw down the pieces of silver in the temple and departed, and went and hanged himself” (v. 5). The money was used to buy a field for burying strangers, just as the Scripture foretold (v. 9; cf. Zech. 11.12, 13).

The scene shifts to Jesus, standing before Pilate. We know – *know* – that Jesus was praying through certain psalms throughout this ordeal, especially, as we shall see, since He quotes from the psalms on the cross. We can be sure that, with Psalm 88 as the overall backdrop psalm, and Psalm 22 as the focusing psalm, Jesus was praying, overtly or merely in His soul, words that would help Him endure the suffering that was before Him. Psalm 38 is a psalm of one who is weighed down with sin. For the immediate context, David was thinking of himself. But in the longer view, Jesus as the sin-bearing Savior, surely saw Himself in those words. So He opted to remain silent, as the psalm commends (Ps. 38.13, 14), before His accusers. At the same time, His soul must have been crying, “Hear Me, Father, lest My enemies rejoice over Me. Do not let my footsteps fail!” (Ps. 38.15, 16) The words of that psalm were sufficient to keep Jesus on course for our salvation.

Finally, before Pilate, Jesus, the Word of God, answered the question put to Him almost exactly as He had when He indicated that Judas would betray Him, and as He repeated before the high priest: “*It is as you say*” (v. 11). Here, rather than respond in the aorist tense as before (“You said it”), Jesus responded in the present tense: “*It is as you are saying.*” He is the “King of the Jews” and the Word Who is the I AM of God, the Word Who never fails, never changes, continues always, and is continuing yet today.

We can trust the Word of God, as we encounter it both in Scripture and in our Lord Jesus Christ. The Word of God will never fail, and it has power to sustain us through every trial and for all our appointed work.

Reflect.

1. Why can we trust the Word of God? For what can we trust it?
2. Do you think your walk with the Lord would be enriched by praying the psalms? Explain.
3. Use Psalm 38 to pray for yourself for the day to come. What do you learn from doing this?

*Anyone who demands from me a scriptural text concerning the breaking of those fetters with which the chief priests and elders bound Jesus should understand that it was on account of this very event that Jesus said through the prophet, “Let us break their bonds.” It was just as though Jesus had said this of the chief priests and elders, or even more so of those rulers who operated through them and of the kings of the world who “set themselves,” and of those rulers who “take counsel together against the Lord and against his anointed,” who also said, “let us cast their cords from us.” Origen (185-254), *Commentary on Matthew 11.5**

Thank You for Your Word, O Lord! Help me to realize more of the Word’s power today as I...

Pray Psalm 38.17-22.

Imagine Jesus praying these words, so that His Father’s help would be with Him in His trial. Pray these words yourself, seeking the Father’s help for the day ahead.

Sing Psalm 38.17-22.

Psalm 38.17-22 (Leoni: [*The God of Abraham Praise*](#))

My sins I now confess; my anxious soul relieve!
Though foes are strong, Lord, heal and bless all who believe!
Forsake me not, O Lord! Repay my foes with wrath.
Stand by me with Your saving Word and guard my path!

2 Who Will Go Free?

Pray Psalm 142.1, 2.

I cry out to the LORD with my voice;
With my voice to the LORD I make my supplication.
I pour out my complaint before Him;
I declare before Him my trouble.

Sing Psalm 142.1, 2 (5, 6).

(Dix: [*For the Beauty of the Earth*](#))

With my voice, O Lord, I cry – hear my plea for mercy, Lord!
My complaint mounts up on high, bringing You my troubled word:

Refrain vv. 5, 6

Lord, You are my Refuge strong!
O receive my plaintive song!

Read Matthew 27.1-26; meditate on verses 15-26.

Prepare.

1. Who wanted Barabbas to go free?
2. Who wanted Jesus to be crucified?

Meditate.

We are all Barabbas. We are guilty of sins worthy of complete separation from God, and of isolation in misery for eternity.

But as Jesus was chosen to die, and Barabbas to be set free, so we have been freed from our sins and eternal punishment by the sacrifice of Jesus. The little drama with Barabbas (vv. 15-18, 20-23) is designed to show us two things. First, as I've suggested, it sets before us a picture of what Jesus has achieved for us: freedom! Second, it reminds us that such freedom must be jealously guarded. The same people who welcomed Jesus with salutes and praises just a few days ago, were now easily persuaded to call for His crucifixion. They had no power to resist the influence of the religious leaders, and no courage to stand up against the desires of Rome.

All of that reminds us why we need the Holy Spirit, for in ourselves, on our own strength, we are all Barabbas, and we are all that mindless, shrieking crowd.

The mention of the dream of Pilate's wife is curious (v. 19); but it serves to remind us of the choices we must all make in life: for the righteous path or the sinful way. It also serves as a final reminder of the righteousness of Jesus, making His crucifixion an absurd judgment on the part of men trapped in the lie.

Pilate considered that, by washing his hands publicly, he could exonerate himself from all guilt in this unjust act (v. 24). Isn't that, too, like so many of us? We think a little external show of piety is all it takes to make us right with God and His justice. So we go to church, put on our Christian happy face, and nod in agreement with the sermon. All so that others can see that we are certainly not guilty of trashing Jesus and denying His rule in our lives. A close reading of Psalm 50 should remind us that

God is not impressed with externals when the proper internal motivations and attendant obedience are not present.

The people spoke prophetically in verse 25 when they invoked the blood of Jesus on themselves and their children. One way or the other, Jesus' blood will determine their eternal destiny. His blood is *sufficient* to pay for all the sins of all people; but it is *efficient* unto salvation only in those who believe. All who become covered with His blood, within and without, washed and thoroughly cleansed by it, will know eternal life.

The deal done (v. 26), Jesus is handed over to the Romans. They knew what to do from there.

Reflect.

1. How could these people have been so suddenly swayed against Jesus? How can we guard against that ever happening to us?
2. In what sense does Jesus' blood atone for everyone? In what sense does it atone only for those who believe?
3. Why must we include a warning about the coming judgment when we share the Good News of Christ and His Kingdom?

Here was their choice: Let an acknowledged criminal go free, or free one whose guilt was still disputed. If they should choose to let the known offender go free, would it not be even more fitting to allow the innocent to go free? For surely Jesus did not seem to them morally worse than acknowledged murderers. But they instead chose a robber. This was not just any robber but one who was infamous for wickedness in many murders. John Chrysostom (344-407), *The Gospel of Matthew, Homily 86.2*

Thank You, Jesus, for setting me free from sin. Keep me free today as I...

Pray Psalm 142.3-7.

Trust in the Lord. Declare your confidence in Him, and call on Him to set your soul free from every care and distraction, that you might serve Him fully today.

Sing Psalm 142.3-7.

Psalm 143.3-7 (Dix: [*For the Beauty of the Earth*](#))

When my spirit faints away, You my falt'ring pathway know.
Where I take my journey they traps have hidden to my woe.

Refrain vv. 5, 6

Lord, You are my Refuge strong!
O receive my plaintive song!

Lord, look to my right and see: None takes notice of my plight.
Is there refuge left for me? Is my soul out of Your sight?

Refrain

Hear my cry, Lord, I am low! They are strong who seek my soul.
Jesus frees from every foe; He will keep and make me whole!

Refrain

Out of prison lead me, Lord; thanks and praise to You shall be.

Righteous men armed with Your Word will Your grace bestow on me.

Refrain

3 As Prophesied

Pray Psalm 22.1-5.

My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?
Why are You so far from helping Me,
And from the words of My groaning?
O My God, I cry in the daytime, but You do not hear;
And in the night season, and am not silent.
But You *are* holy,
Enthroned in the praises of Israel.
Our fathers trusted in You;
They trusted, and You delivered them.
They cried to You, and were delivered;
They trusted in You, and were not ashamed.

Sing Psalm 22.1-5.

(St. Christopher: [*Beneath the Cross of Jesus*](#))
Upon the cross of Cal'vry He suffered 'neath the rod;
Alone, He cried out, "Why have You forsaken Me, My God?"
As day to bitter darkness turned, the Savior of the blessed
Cried, "Father, answer Me, I pray; restore Me to Your rest!"

But You, O God are holy, enthroned on Israel's praise,
Our fathers trusted You and You were faithful all their days.
They cried to You; they trusted You, and never came to shame;
For You delivered them, O God, by Your great holy Name.

Read Matthew 27.1-44; meditate on verses 27-44.

Prepare.

1. How many different ways did Jesus suffer physically?
2. Why was this necessary (v. 35)?

Meditate.

The brutality to which Jesus was subjected by the Romans is something we can all experience, if only vicariously. We can imagine what it is to be spat upon, to have our head pierced with thorns, to be beaten with a rod, stripped, and mocked. We have tasted the bitterness of gall at times, and we can imagine the experience of having spikes driven through our hands and feet, then of being elevated in shame and agony for all to see.

This is what we deserve for our sins. But the sins the Romans committed against Jesus in that moment were symbolic of the sins we have all committed, being laid on Jesus, that He might bear God's wrath against them, and carry them away as far as the east is from the west.

We perhaps know what it is to be mocked and scorned; these, too, were but more of our sins directed at Jesus on the cross.

Why was all this necessary? Why did the Son of God have to endure this? Because, as Anselm pointed out in the twelfth century (*Cur Deus Homo*), we had incurred a debt of sin that we could never

pay. But God loves us too much to leave us destitute forever. God became Man to pay the debt He did not owe, so that through Him we could be free to know, love, and serve God forever. The Word of God had foretold that the Messiah must suffer and die (Lk. 24.25, 26), for this was the only way to satisfy both the justice and holiness of God.

The suffering Jesus endured at the hands of the Romans was horrific. Yet it was not the worst suffering He would endure. That was yet to come.

Reflect.

1. Why is it important that we remember the sufferings of Jesus?
2. Look at Psalm 22.1-21. How many of Jesus' sufferings can you identify here?
3. How does Jesus bearing our sins free us from the debt we owe to God?

Adam tasted the sweetness of the apple and obtained the bitterness of death for the whole human race. In contrast to this, the Lord tasted the bitterness of gall and obtained our restoration from death's sting to the sweetness of life. He took on himself the bitterness of gall in order to extinguish in us the bitterness of death. He received acrid vinegar into himself but poured out for us the precious wine of his blood. He suffered evil and returned good. He accepted death and gave life. Chromatus (fl. 400), Tractate on Matthew 19.7

You carried my sins away, Jesus. Help me to live today to...

Pray Psalm 22.6-18.

Wait on the Lord. See Him in His suffering. Enter His suffering with prayers of thanks and praise. Confess your sins, and go forth resolved to walk in newness of life with Jesus.

Sing Psalm 22.6-18.

Psalm 22.6-18 (St. Christopher: [*Beneath the Cross of Jesus*](#))

Despised by men, the Savior was more a worm than man.
They shrieked, "He trusted God, let Him redeem Him if He can.
Let God deliver Him if He indeed delights in Him!"
Thus mocked they Jesus as He died in pain and anguish grim.

Like raging bulls they bellowed, like lions set to feast.
Each gaping mouth raged loudly like an all-consuming beast.
Like water slipped His life away, disjointed hanged He high;
His tongue clung to His jaws as He prepared His heart to die.

His foes, like dogs around Him, with glee did gloat and stare.
They pierced His hands and feet; they stole the garments He did wear.
Though not a bone was broken as He promised in His Word,
Yet, wounded for our sins, thus died creation's sov'reign Lord.

4 Sin-bearer

Pray Psalm 69.13-15.

But as for me, my prayer is to You,
O LORD, in the acceptable time;
O God, *in* the multitude of Your mercy,
Hear me in the truth of Your salvation.
Deliver me out of the mire,
And let me not sink;
Let me be delivered from those who hate me,
And out of the deep waters.
Let not the floodwater overflow me,
Nor let the deep swallow me up;
And let not the pit shut its mouth on me.

Sing Psalm 69.13-15.

(Greensleeves: *What Child Is This?*)

O Lord, we make our prayer to You; receive our words, O Savior!
Let lovingkindness see us through, and answer us with favor!
Lord, lift us above the mire; deliv'rance is our one desire!
Let not the floods conspire to swallow us forever!

Read Matthew 27.1-56; meditate on verses 45-56.

Prepare.

1. What did Jesus cry out from the cross?
2. What happened when Jesus died?

Meditate.

Here is Jesus in His deepest agony and distress. His Father has turned away from Him, as He bears the sin of the world in His own body. He is forsaken by family, disciples, and even His heavenly Father. Only His mother and John are on hand for His end (Jn. 20.25-27). He is unfathomably alone, the Sin-bearer of the world. He cries out in those familiar words of Psalm 22, both to indicate the depths of His suffering, and to cue those watching concerning the meaning of His death.

Yet in the moment of His death, there is hope. In the deep darkness of mid-day (v. 45), Jesus opened the way to God, as symbolized by the tearing of the veil that separates the holy of holies from the rest of the sanctuary (v. 51). Torn from the top down, it signifies that God, through the torn flesh of Jesus, has opened a way to Himself. The earth itself, which groans under the burden of mankind's sin, seems to have leapt with hope at the death of the Lord (v. 51). Many saints who had died and been buried were raised to life, and appeared to many in Jerusalem (vv. 52, 53). When the reports of Jesus' own resurrection began to circulate, these newly-revived saints would be evidence of the reliability of that news.

It took a Roman court to condemn and execute Jesus; now it takes a Roman guard to announce to the world the meaning of Jesus' life and death: "Truly this was the Son of God!" (v. 54)

The mention of the women, watching from far off (vv. 55, 56), is important, as we shall see in the next chapter.

Reflect.

1. Jesus seems to have had two reasons for crying out the words from Psalm 22. What were they?
2. Why was the veil in the temple torn? What is the significance of this for us?
3. How did the earth and sky respond to the death of Jesus? What do these things signify?

He spoke with the voice of Scripture, uttering a cry from the psalm. Thus even to his last hour he is found bearing witness to the sacred text. He offers this prophetic cry in Hebrew, so as to be plain and intelligible to them, and by all things Jesus shows how he is of one mind with the Father who had begotten him. John Chrysostom (344-407), The Gospel of Matthew 88.1

Thank You, Jesus, that You suffered so for me. Help me to love for you today as I...

Pray Psalm 69.1-12.

God made Him Who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. Give thanks and praise for the suffering of Jesus, and go forth to live for Him today.

Sing Psalm 69.1-12.

Psalm 69.1-12 (Greensleeves: *What Child Is This?*)

“Save Me, O God, deep waters rise and threaten to undo Me!
No foothold in the mire I find; the floods must soon subdue Me.
Hear, Lord, My weary cry; My throat is parched, unclear My eye.
Foes long for Me to die and others’ debts are upon Me.”

O God, our folly all You know, our wrongs from You are not hidden;
Let those who in Your mercy go not by our shame be smitten.
“Let none dishonored be because, O Lord, because of Me!
You make Me dishonor see; on Me reproach is written.”

A stranger to the world am I, no family will own Me.
Though I for them have come to die, yet now must I alone be.
Lord, see how my tears now fall, how their reproach befalls Me!
Yet I am a curse to all, and no one ever calls Me.

5 Buried

Pray Psalm 16.8, 9.

I have set the LORD always before me;
Because He is at my right hand I shall not be moved.
Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoices;
My flesh also will rest in hope.

Sing Psalm 16.8, 9, 11.

(All to Christ: [Jesus Paid It All](#))

You are ever with me, Lord; in You I shall not fall.
But rejoicing in Your Word, I abide within Your call.

Refrain v. 11

Make me know life's way! Pleasures fill Your hand.
Fill my life with joy each day! Before Your face I stand.

Read Matthew 27.1-61; Meditate on verses 57-61.

Prepare.

1. What did Joseph of Arimathea do?
2. Who was there with him?

Meditate.

Mark and John tell us that Joseph's selfless act required great courage (Mk. 15.43; Jn. 19.38). We can certainly imagine that this was so. Identifying with Jesus before the man who had sentenced Him to death was a risky undertaking. Joseph apparently had prepared this tomb for himself (v. 60), but here he selflessly devoted it to receive the body of Jesus.

In Rembrandt's painting, "[Deposition of Jesus from the Cross](#)," we get a sense of what was involved in taking Jesus down and bearing Him to the tomb. This is a very sad and tender painting, and it shows Joseph, standing at the right, carefully supervising the work of those who helped him. The man in blue, half-way up the cross to the left, and clinging to the right hand of Jesus, is a self-portrait of the artist, and one of the ways he bore witness to his own – however imperfect – love for Jesus. We see the linen cloth as it may have been used to lower Jesus, and the women who were present at this time.

Having wrapped Jesus in a linen cloth, soaked with "about a hundred pounds" of myrrh and aloes (Jn. 19.39, 40), Joseph laid the body on the slab in the tomb. Matthew says he closed the tomb by rolling "a large stone against the door of the tomb, and departed." He must have had some help with this as well, since when the women came to the tomb on the third day, they wondered who might help them move the stone (Mk. 16.3).

Jesus was buried on Friday – day 1. He would remain in the tomb through all of Saturday – day 2. And on the third day, He would rise again.

Reflect.

1. Why are these details about the burial of Jesus important?

2. How should we be encouraged by the act of Joseph of Arimathea?

3. Why do you suppose Matthew once again (cf. vv. 55, 56) tells us about the women who were present?

*This was Joseph of Arimathea, who had been hiding his discipleship up to this time. Now, however, he had become very bold after the death of Christ. Joseph was not an obscure person. He was highly visible, a member of the council and highly distinguished. From this it becomes clear that he was a man of special courage. For he exposed himself to death, taking upon him the enmity of all by his affection for Jesus. John Chrysostom (344-407), *The Gospel of Matthew*, Homily 88.2*

Lord, give me the courage of Joseph today as I...

Pray Psalm 16.1-7, 10, 11.

Thank God that Jesus carried your sins away into the tomb, and that He rose again for your salvation. Ask Him to help you live free of sin today.

Sing Psalm 16.1-7, 10, 11.

Psalm 16.1-7, 10, 11 (All to Christ: [*Jesus Paid It All*](#))

Preserve me, O my God; I refuge seek in You.

You alone are all my good, my Lord and Savior true!

Refrain v. 11

Make me know life's way! Pleasures fill Your hand.

Fill my life with joy each day! Before Your face I stand.

The saints within the earth, majestic in their day,
delight me with the worth of all they do and say.

Refrain

They endless tears shall weep who worship idols vain.

Their ways I will not keep, nor speak their empty names.

Refrain

My portion and my cup are You, my Savior dear;

You help and hold me up and ever keep me near.

Refrain

I bless Your Name, O Lord; my mind instructs each night.

You teach me by Your Word and guide me in the right.

Refrain

Soon Your glory I shall see, for as Jesus rose again,

You will come to gather me to my home with You in heav'n.

Refrain

6 Sealed

Pray Psalm 22.23, 24.

You who fear the LORD, praise Him!
All you descendants of Jacob, glorify Him,
And fear Him, all you offspring of Israel!
For He has not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted;
Nor has He hidden His face from Him;
But when He cried to Him, He heard.

Sing Psalm 22.23-25.

(Darwall: [Rejoice, the Lord is King](#))

All you who fear the Lord, now praise His holy Name!
You children of His glorious Word, declare His fame!
We stand in awe of our eternal God, and on His mercy call.

For He has not despised the anguish of our King,
nor from Him hid His eyes, Who knew such suffering.
Let praise arise from all who love and serve the Ruler of the skies!

Read Matthew 27.-1-66; meditate on verses 62-66.

Prepare.

1. Why did the religious leaders want to guard the tomb?
2. How did they regard the whole life and ministry of Jesus?

Meditate.

The religious leaders of Israel dismissed the entire ministry of Jesus as a “deception” (v. 64). In a sense, they were correct. Not that *Jesus* was deceiving anybody. He was always upfront and public in His claims, teaching, and good works. He was clear about His provenance and mission, and He never held back from explaining that He was the Son of God.

The source of Israel’s deception was the same as continues to deceive people today. Jesus nailed it in John 8. 44: “You are of *your* father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own *resources*, for he is a liar and the father of it.” He would continue to deceive them following the resurrection, and he is deceiving multitudes yet today.

The religious leaders feared that Jesus’ disciples might be in on this “deception”, and that they would come “by night” and steal Jesus’ body, then declare Him to be risen from the dead (vv. 62, 63). Clearly, they understood that Jesus had made the claim of His rising (v. 64). So they thought a Roman guard might keep the tomb secure, and that would be the end of that.

Pilate, who sounds like he’s had enough of these people, tells them to use their private guard, which they did (vv. 65, 66). So the tomb is closed and sealed – so that it would be possible to know if it had been opened – and it looks like everything is set.

And, indeed, it is.

Reflect.

1. Why did the religious leaders consider Jesus a “deceiver”?
2. How are people today yet deceived? What is the antidote to their being deceived?
3. How do people today shield themselves from having to consider the fact of Jesus’ resurrection?

*Since the sepulcher was sealed, there could be no funny business. So then the proof of his resurrection has become incontrovertible by what they themselves have put forward. For because the tomb was sealed, there was no deceitfulness at work. But if there was no sleight of hand and the sepulcher was found empty, it is clear that he has risen, plainly and incontrovertibly. Do you see how even against their will his enemies contend for the proof of the truth? John Chrysostom (344-407.), *The Gospel of Matthew, Homily 89.1**

Live in and through me today, Lord Jesus, so that...

Pray Psalm 22.26-28.

Jesus has defeated death, and we are the heirs of eternal life. Give thanks and praise, then go forth seeking the Kingdom of God.

Sing Psalm 22.26-28.

Psalm 22.26-28 (Darwall: [Rejoice, the Lord is King](#))

Then all the poor shall eat and praise with us the Lord.

Forever we His praise repeat and trust His Word.

Praise God above, all you who keep His vows and who His mercies love!

All nations shall repent and hasten to the Lord;

all those to whom His truth is sent shall praise His Word.

The Lord is King! His sovereign rule on high now we His people sing!

7 Tried, Crucified, Buried

Pray Psalm 22.29.

All the prosperous of the earth
Shall eat and worship;
All those who go down to the dust
Shall bow before Him,
Even he who cannot keep himself alive.

Sing Psalm 22.29.

(Dix: For the Beauty of the Earth)

All the prosp'rous of the earth shall before His mercy fall;
bending low before His worth, hear them humbly on Him call.
Even those low in the grave He will by His mercy save.

Read and meditate on Matthew 27.1-66.

Prepare.

1. How can we see events of this chapter fulfilling Old Testament Scriptures?
2. How many different ways did Jesus suffer in this chapter?

Meditate.

This is a sad chapter. I always feel a certain grief and shame in reading this chapter, because I know that, had I been there, I'd have been screaming for His crucifixion along with everyone else. We do not deserve the grace shown us in Jesus' suffering here.

At the same time, we need to keep in mind that these events took place on what we refer to as "Good Friday." I recall an old *B. C.* cartoon strip (Johnny Hart) in which Wiley, the old poet, chips away on a slate in four panels to construct the following verse:

"Who can call Good Friday good?"
"Who can call Good Friday good?"
"They who are bought by the blood of the Lamb,
they can call Good Friday good."

The grisly, brutal, agonizing murder of Jesus was part of the good plan of God for our redemption. God made Him Who knew no sin, to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him (2 Cor. 5.21). As we have seen from Psalm 22, Jesus was able to see through His suffering to the coming of the Kingdom that would bring the goodness of God to the world, and would glorify Him over all the earth. We are the heirs of that Kingdom (Dan. 7.13-18), called through our own cross-bearing lives to seek and advance the rule of King Jesus in all the world.

We may feel grieved and ashamed to read of the suffering of Jesus. But let us give thanks that His suffering was for our salvation, to pay the debt of our sins, that we – unworthy Barabbases all – might be made free and have life.

Reflect.

1. Why do we call Good Friday "good"?

2. How can you see that God – Jesus – is sovereignly in control throughout this chapter?

3. How does this chapter help us in trusting the Scriptures?

“When Jesus had cried out with a loud voice, he yielded up the spirit.” This refers to what he had earlier said: “I have power to lay down my life, and I have power to take it again,” and “I lay it down of myself.” So for this cause he cried with the voice, that it might be shown that the act is done by his own power. John Chrysostom (344-407), Gospel of Matthew, Homily 88.1

Thank You for taking away my sins, Lord Jesus; help me to live for You today as I...

Pray Psalm 22.30, 31.

Pray for a clearer vision of the Kingdom Jesus has given us, then go forth to seek that Kingdom in all your activities today.

Sing Psalm 22.30, 31.

Psalm 22.30, 31 (Dix: *For the Beauty of the Earth*)

Let the generations all witness to His saving grace;

let them to all nations call, “Bow before His holy face!”

Let the children of the earth hear of Jesus’ saving worth!

Questions for Reflection or Discussion

1. Why is the story about Barabbas important?
2. How many ways did Jesus suffer in this chapter? Why?
3. How does this chapter encourage us to trust in Scripture?
4. Why was it good for Jesus to suffer?
5. What's the most important lesson you've learned from Matthew 27.1-66? How are you putting that lesson to work in your Personal Mission Field?

For prayer:

The Fellowship of Ailbe

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Thank you.