

Sacrificed
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Luke 23:33-49

As things open back up in our country, soon we can get back to going to concerts and sporting events. Did you ever consider that you'll pay money for a ticket to be in the midst of a crowd but you would run the other way if faced with a mob? **Question: What causes a crowd to turn into a mob?**

Today we're looking at the responses and reactions of a crowd.

In 1989 Tom Petty wrote a song entitled: "*A Face in the Crowd*." It's a love song with simple lyrics and a straightforward meaning: Before you "came into my heart and into my life, you were just a face in the crowd." Before we met and fell in love, if we passed on the street you were just another face in the crowd.

In the gospel accounts many of the "players" in the drama of Jesus' crucifixion were nameless, faces in the crowd at Calvary. We may not know their names but their reactions to the event provide a "snapshot" of how people down through the ages have responded to the cross of Christ. Some mourned, some mocked, some even blasphemed God's Son. At least one trusted Him for salvation. To us they are nameless faces in the crowd around Calvary.

Here's the truth that should change us: In Jesus' sight no one is just a "face in the crowd." Every face has a name and an eternal soul and on the cross Jesus died as the perfect sacrifice in the place of every face in the crowd.

In less than ten verses of scripture, Luke's account of this familiar scene gives us a complete picture of the "substitutionary atonement" Jesus provided for all mankind. We see that even in the midst of horrible suffering Jesus still showed amazing love and forgiveness for those who hated and abused Him. We see that no one can look at Christ on the cross and not have a reaction. His last dying words

confirm Jesus was not a victim to be pitied but a victor to be worshipped.

Luke 23:33–46 (ESV) — 33 And when they came to the place that is called The Skull, there they crucified him, and the criminals, one on his right and one on his left. **34** And Jesus said, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” And they cast lots to divide his garments. **35** And the people stood by, watching, but the rulers scoffed at him, saying, “He saved others; let him save himself, if he is the Christ of God, his Chosen One!” **36** The soldiers also mocked him, coming up and offering him sour wine **37** and saying, “If you are the King of the Jews, save yourself!” **38** There was also an inscription over him, “This is the King of the Jews.” **39** One of the criminals who were hanged railed at him, saying, “Are you not the Christ? Save yourself and us!” **40** But the other rebuked him, saying, “Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? **41** And we indeed justly, for we are receiving the due reward of our deeds; but this man has done nothing wrong.” **42** And he said, “Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.” **43** And he said to him, “Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in paradise.” **44** It was now about the sixth hour, and there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour, **45** while the sun’s light failed. And the curtain of the temple was torn in two. **46** Then Jesus, calling out with a loud voice, said, “Father, into your hands I commit my spirit!” And having said this he breathed his last.

- “Calvary” is derived from the Latin word for “skull.” We don’t really know how this hill of execution got that name but it’s entirely appropriate.
- Jesus was nailed to a cross between two violent thieves fulfilling the prophecy of Isaiah 53:12: “...*he poured out his soul to death and was numbered with the transgressors...*”ⁱ
- “*Father forgive them, for they don’t know what they are doing.*”
- Jesus demonstrated love and forgiveness for those seeking to destroy Him. That same verse in Isaiah predicted: “...*he bore the sin of many, and makes intercession [pleading to the Father] for the transgressors.*”ⁱⁱ

- The soldiers “*gambled for his clothes.*” **Psalm 22:18 (ESV) — 18** they divide my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots.
- The reaction of the crowd on that day is STILL the reaction of people today when confronted with Christ on the cross:
 - “*The crowd watched.*” Some people are simply spectators who think the cross of Christ has not impact on them at all.
 - “*The soldiers mocked Him.*” Some people hate everything Christ represents and aggressively attack Him and His Kingdom.
 - “*The leaders scoffed.*” Some people reject Jesus because they see Him as a threat to their sense of self-sufficiency. They taunted Him to “*save himself*” because they believed THEY could save THEMSELVES. People reject Jesus today for the same reason.
 - The Roman government posted the sign: “*This is the King of the Jews*” as a way to minimize Him and to discourage insurrection. Ironically, their sarcastic sign was completely accurate.
- Then the lens of our scriptural camera zooms in to focus on the three men hanging on the three crosses. Their reactions are a picture of the eternal choice facing every human being when confronted with Christ.
- What a contrast we see between the two thieves.
- One joined in the scoffing and mocking.
- Even the sight of Jesus’ forgiveness of His murderers couldn’t penetrate a heart so hardened by sin.
- **Proverbs 28:14 (ESV) — 14** Blessed is the one who fears the Lord always, but whoever hardens his heart will fall into calamity.
- Thief #1 was headed for that eternal fall. Then there was thief #2.
- The other thief responded with conviction, repentance, and faith: “Don’t you fear God?” (conviction) “We deserve to die.” (repentance) “Jesus, remember me when you come into your Kingdom.” (faith in Christ.)

- Jesus response to that thief is His response to anyone that falls at His feet in repentance: *“I assure you...you will be with me in paradise.”*
- The salvation story of this thief confirms for all time the truth of Ephesians 2:8-9. There was no time for this dying thief to earn his way into paradise, but Jesus assured Him he would be there by God’s grace and through his own faith in Jesus as Savior and Lord.
- As the old saying goes, “as long as there is breath, there is hope” for anyone to turn in repentance to Jesus.
- At this point the crowd, whether believing or rejecting the Savior, were witnesses to the culmination of the Father’s plan to reconcile mankind.
- A strange and dramatic darkness fell for three hours. The earth trembled (Matt. 7:54.) Graves of the saints opened up (Matt. 7:52-53.)
- Imagine the panic that ensued throughout Jerusalem!
- When the light emerged again, those serving in the temple would discover the supernaturally torn curtain in the “sanctuary.”
- The writer of Hebrews would later explain the significance of this: **Hebrews 10:19–20 (NLT) — 19** *And so, dear brothers and sisters, we can boldly enter heaven’s Most Holy Place because of the blood of Jesus. 20* *By his death, Jesus opened a new and life-giving way through the curtain into the Most Holy Place. [Direct access to the Father]*
- Luke 23:46 confirms Jesus’ death for us was completely voluntary.
- We need to acknowledge two things as we read this verse: 1) Normally crucifixion was a slow painful death lasting several days. Such a quick death was exceptional. 2) The toll crucifixion took on the body and in particular the respiratory system would render the person barely able to breathe and certainly not able to “shout.” Yet, Jesus shouted: *“Father, I entrust my spirit into your hands.”* Jesus’ life wasn’t taken, it was given.
- Jesus had told His disciples: *“I lay down my life for the sheep...No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord.”* (John 10:15-18) ⁱⁱⁱ

- John tells us Jesus “said, *“It is finished,” and he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.*”^{iv}
- In verses 47-49 we see three more reactions from the crowd at Calvary:

Luke 23:47–49 (NLT) — 47 When the Roman officer overseeing the execution saw what had happened, he worshiped God and said, “Surely this man was innocent.” [Matthew’s account adds: “Truly this was the Son of God!”^v] **48** And when all the crowd that came to see the crucifixion saw what had happened, they went home in deep sorrow. **49** But Jesus’ friends, including the women who had followed him from Galilee, stood at a distance watching.

- Even a hardened Roman officer had to acknowledge Jesus as the sinless, saving, Son of God.
- The crowd left in sorrow because of His suffering.
- They didn’t yet understand that Jesus’ suffering would open the curtain so people can escape eternal suffering and have eternal life.
- Jesus’ friends and followers watched from a distance not knowing how to react. In three days they would understand that the story of redemption didn’t end on the cross, it began at the empty tomb.

So, What’s the Takeaway?

- In this passage we’ve considered the reactions of the nameless faces in the crowd at Calvary.
- In Jesus’ sight no one is just a “face in the crowd.” Every face has a name and an eternal soul and on the cross Jesus died as the perfect sacrifice in the place of every face in the crowd.
- The reactions of the crowd at Calvary provide a “snapshot” of how people down through the ages have responded to the cross of Christ.
- Some mourned, some mocked, some even blasphemed God’s Son.
- Most importantly, at least one trusted Him for salvation.
- Jesus paid the price for salvation but people must receive that gift He purchased on our behalf. When people look closely at what Christ accomplished on the cross, they must make a decision.

- You and I may have never been a thief, but we were all born a sinner.
- Just like those two thieves, how we respond to Jesus will determine whether we'll spend eternity with Him in paradise.
- Just like that dying thief it's as simple as recognizing our sin, turning away from our sin, and turning to Christ as the only solution for our sin.
- You and I are not just a nameless face in the crowd. Each of us is a soul Jesus longs to save through His death on the cross.

ⁱ [*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*](#). (2016). (Is 53:12). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

ⁱⁱ [*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*](#). (2016). (Is 53:12). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

ⁱⁱⁱ [*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*](#). (2016). (Jn 10:15–18). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

^{iv} [*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*](#). (2016). (Jn 19:30). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

^v [*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*](#). (2016). (Mt 27:54). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.