

Sacrificed  
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Mark 15:24-39

We've all heard the term "scapegoat." What does it mean in modern language?<sup>i</sup> Where does the term come from?<sup>ii</sup> Normally we think of the "scapegoat" as a hapless victim who was in the wrong place at the wrong time. Most people wouldn't voluntarily take the punishment for someone else's crime, but that is exactly what Jesus did for all mankind.

As we come to Mark chapter fifteen's account of Jesus' crucifixion, we might think the choice of text would be more appropriate for Good Friday than the Sunday before Thanksgiving. Though I didn't choose the timing, I think this text is very appropriate as we begin to focus on the things for which we are thankful. Let me explain.

I tend to struggle with staying focused in my early morning prayers. As a result, I have a set of lists in my phone to keep me on track. One of them is a "thanksgiving" list. If asked what was on our list of things to be thankful for, no doubt we would all start that list with things like family, health, provision, etc. As much as I adore my family and appreciate my blessings, at the top of my "thanksgiving list" is Jesus' sacrifice for me.

The point: Before I am thankful for the many blessings of this life, I should be thankful for Jesus' sacrifice which bought me eternal life. As precious as my family is, and as wonderful as our many blessings are, if I'm headed toward separation from God for eternity, none of those blessings will matter when I die. Because of Jesus' atoning death on the cross, I can experience eternal life. Trusting Christ as Savior and Lord allows me to be eternally thankful for that reality. That's should be at the TOP of my "thanksgiving list" every day!

Let's read Mark's concise account of this painful event keeping in mind how thankful we should be that Jesus voluntarily endured such suffering for us.

**Mark 15:24–39 (ESV) — 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.

- The other gospel writers gave a more detailed description of Christ's suffering. Mark simply stated: "*they crucified him.*" His readers knew what that meant.

- I'm won't go into the painful details of crucifixion at eight a.m. but if you want to absorb them later, I've provided a concise description at the end of the notes.<sup>iii</sup>
- The soldiers "divided his garments among them casting lots..." This was just one detail that amazingly fulfilled the Old Testament prophecy of Psalm 22:

**Psalm 22:14–18 (ESV)** — **14** I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint; my heart is like wax; it is melted within my breast; **15** my strength is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue sticks to my jaws; you lay me in the dust of death. **16** For dogs encompass me; a company of evildoers encircles me; they have pierced my hands and feet— **17** I can count all my bones— they stare and gloat over me; **18** they divide my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots.

- It is estimated that David wrote that 1,000 years before Christ was born. The details of Jesus' crucifixion are an amazing fulfillment of that Messianic psalm!
- "The victim usually wore a placard that declared his offense..."<sup>iv</sup> then this sign was hung above them on the cross.
- The Roman Governor Pontius Pilate ordered the inscription "King of the Jews" taking a jab at the Jewish leaders. Ironically, his sarcasm spoke truth.
- Jesus was crucified between two "robbers" (more likely insurrectionists).
- There may be no verse 28 in your Bible. Instead there may be a footnote stating: "Some manuscripts insert verse 28: *And the Scripture was fulfilled that says, "He was numbered with the transgressors"*"<sup>v</sup>
- That footnote references Isaiah 53:12 which reads: "...because he poured out his soul to death and was numbered with the transgressors; yet he bore the sin of many, and makes intercession for the transgressors."<sup>vi</sup>
- Verses 29-32 record the mocking and derision yelled at Jesus while He died:  
<sup>31</sup> So also the chief priests with the scribes mocked him to one another, saying, "He saved others; he cannot save himself. <sup>32</sup> Let the Christ, the King of Israel, come down now from the cross that we may see and believe."<sup>vii</sup>
  - We see some irony here. In their hatred and sarcasm, the religious leaders also spoke truth. when they said, "he saved others, he should save himself."
  - "Their words **He saved** (from sōzō) **others** refer to His healing miracles, which they could not deny."<sup>viii</sup>
  - Besides being cruel and blasphemous, when they yelled, "Come down and save yourself," why was their challenge to Jesus a dangerous dare to make to Him? How could it have backfired? Why did Jesus NOT call their bluff?
  - "Ironically their words expressed a profound spiritual truth. If Jesus was to save others, delivering them from the power of sin, then He could not save (rescue) Himself from the sufferings and death appointed to Him by God (cf. 8:31)."<sup>ix</sup>
  - Could Jesus have come down from the cross? What did he say? When He was being arrested He said to his captors: "Do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father, and he will at once send me more than twelve legions of angels?" Matthew 26:53
  - When questioned by Pilate, "Jesus answered him, "You would have no authority over me at all unless it had been given you from above." John 19:11

- Jesus said in **John 10:17–18 (ESV)** — **17** *For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it up again. 18 No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from my Father.*
- Paul wrote in **Philippians 2:8 (ESV)** — **8** *...he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.*
- Jesus healed the sick and raised the dead. There's no question His divine power would have made it possible to come down from the cross – but HE STAYED!
- If He had not stayed on the cross mankind would have been doomed!
- Rusty Goodman, in his song “*Had It Not Been*” captured this thought well:

*“...I'm so glad  
He was willing to drink His bitter cup  
Although He prayed  
"Father, let it pass from me"  
And I'm so glad  
He never called Heaven's angels  
From these hands  
Pull the nails that torment me*

*Had it not been  
For a place called Mount Calvary  
And had it not been  
For the old rugged cross  
And had it not been  
For a man called Jesus  
Then forever my soul would be lost”<sup>x</sup>*

- Jesus could have come down from the cross, but He stayed. He suffered and died so you and I could have eternal life. What an amazing sacrifice!
- The next verses of Mark's account further confirm that Jesus chose to die.

**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!”

- “*My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?*” Jesus was quoting Psalm 22.
- John MacArthur: “*Is that an indication that God was not there? That God was not there to punish the blasphemers? He was not there to protect His Son? He was not there at all? Well, the answer to that question is: He was there. In the moment that Jesus said that, He was feeling the absence of God. But God was*

*there. And God was there in a way that you would not suspect...He was there not to punish the blasphemers, and not to protect His Son, but to punish His Son.*"<sup>xi</sup>

- **Isaiah 53:10** tells us, "...it was the will of the Lord to crush him..."
- In **2 Corinthians 5:21 (ESV)** — Paul wrote: **21** For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.
- God the Father in His holiness could not look at His Son while Jesus hung on the cross. Jesus temporarily lost fellowship with His Father and the Holy Spirit. On the cross He was abandoned by His Father so we could be reconciled to Him.
- Verse 37: As His parched lips were moistened Jesus used what was left of His ebbing human strength to "utter a loud cry" then breathe His last.
- Jesus voluntarily bore the suffering, made the sacrifice, and paid our ransom.
- He was not a victim; He was the VICTOR over sin and death.
- Verse 38: *"The curtain of the temple was torn in two."* "Hebrews 9:1-9 tells us that in the temple a veil separated the Holy of Holies—the earthly dwelling place of God's presence—from the rest of the temple where men dwelt."<sup>xii</sup>
- This was no flimsy curtain. Though scripture doesn't specify the details, scholars speculate it was *"60 feet high. An early Jewish tradition says that the veil was about four inches thick..."* Ripping that curtain would be humanly impossible.
- Tearing down the barrier between human beings and God the Father was also not humanly possible; only the atoning death of God's Son could accomplish this.
- Verse 39 can give you a chill if you allow your imagination to put you in the sandals of this Roman Centurion. He oversaw crucifixions. He had seen hundreds die in this manner. Yet, as He witnessed THIS crucifixion, he could only state the reality: *"Truly this man was the Son of God!"*
- Any other thoughts?

So, What's the Takeaway?

- Scripture says to be thankful every day and, in all circumstances, (1 Thess. 5:18). Still, I'm glad in our country we set aside a day to really focus on thanksgiving.
- This week, before we overstuff ourselves with rich food and enjoy the company of family and friends, I'm glad today's study in Mark 15 reminds us of what should be at the TOP of our thanksgiving list.
- Before I am thankful for the many blessings of this life, I should be thankful for Jesus' sacrifice which bought me eternal life.
- As precious as my family is, and as wonderful as our many blessings are, if I'm headed toward separation from God for eternity, none of those blessings will matter when I die.
- Because of Jesus' atoning death on the cross, I can experience eternal life. Trusting Christ as Savior and Lord allows me to be eternally thankful for that reality. That's worthy of being at the TOP of my "thanksgiving list" every day!

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<sup>i</sup> scapegoat - one that bears the blame for another or others -- synonyms fall guy, goat, patsy, whipping boy -- related words mark, target; victim - Merriam-Webster, I. (1996). In Merriam-Webster's collegiate thesaurus. Merriam-Webster.

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ii Scapegoat - A goat which was sent into the wilderness by the high priest, as a symbol of the removal of the sins of the people. The scapegoat as part of an OT ritual - Lev 16:7-10, 20-22 See also Lev 16:26; Isa 53:4 The scapegoat anticipates Jesus Christ's atonement - Jn 1:29; 2Co 5:21; Heb 9:11-14 Jesus Christ's death is here contrasted with the OT sacrificial system. - Manser, M. H. (2009). Dictionary of Bible Themes: The Accessible and Comprehensive Tool for Topical Studies. Martin Manser. [The Old Testament ritual from Leviticus (16:7-10, 20-22) where, on the Day of Atonement, the priest would kill one goat as a sacrifice and send the other into the wilderness symbolically carrying away the sin of the people, was a picture of what Jesus would do once for all people for all time.]

iii *"His arms were now in a V position, and Jesus became conscious of two unendurable circumstances: the first was that the pain in his wrists was beyond bearing, and that muscle cramps knotted his forearms and upper arms and the pads of His shoulders; the second was that his pectoral muscles at the sides of his chest were momentarily paralyzed. This induced in him an involuntary panic; for he found that while he could draw air into his lungs, he was powerless to exhale. At once, Jesus raised himself on his bleeding feet. As the weight of his body came down on the insteps, the single nail pressed hard against the top of the wound. Slowly, steadily, Jesus was forced to raise himself higher and higher until, for the moment, his head hid the sign which told of his crime. When his shoulders were on a level with his hands, breathing was rapid and easier. Like the other two, he fought the pain in his feet in order to breathe rapidly for a few moments. Then, unable to bear the pain below, which cramped legs and thighs and wrung moans from the strongest, he let his torso sag lower and lower, and His knees projected a little at a time until, with a deep sigh, he felt himself to be hanging by His wrists. And this process must have been repeated again and again."* (From Jim Bishop, *The Day Christ Was Born and The Day Christ Died* (New York: Galahad, 1993), 491–492.)

iv Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). [\*The Bible exposition commentary\*](#) (Vol. 1, p. 165). Victor Books.

v [\*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version\*](#). (2016). Crossway Bibles.

vi *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Is 53:12). (2016). Crossway Bibles.

vii [\*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version\*](#) (Mk 15:30–32). (2016). Crossway Bibles.

viii Grassmick, J. D. (1985). [Mark](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, p. 188). Victor Books.

ix Grassmick, J. D. (1985). [Mark](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, pp. 188–189). Victor Books.

x <https://genius.com/The-gaither-vocal-band-had-it-not-been-lyrics>

xi <https://www.gty.org/library/sermons-library/41-82>

xii <https://www.gotquestions.org/temple-veil-torn.html>