



## **“Jesus Is Crucified”**

Luke 23:26-38

March 14, 2021

We are in Luke Chapter 23 this morning where we now come to the most important moment in human history. It is to the very crucifixion of the Lord Jesus Christ. The only moment in history that can parallel the importance of this moment is what came three days later when Jesus rose from the grave. Those two important moments come to us in an adjoined way—the cross and the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

This morning as we move into this very crucial portion of the Bible, it is on my heart to remind you that this story is being passed on to us by one who was a medical doctor in the First Century world. Saint Luke. Doctor Luke. The beloved physician, as Paul called him.

As Luke investigated everything about Jesus, how intriguing it must have been for him to research and record all of the healings that Jesus performed especially up in the region of Galilee where massive groups of people came to Him. If it was of special interest to Luke to think about how so many bodies were made well by the hand of the Messiah, how distressing it must have been for this man to record this portion of the story of Jesus Christ, recollecting in vivid detail about how His body was beaten and bloodied and was ultimately nailed to a rugged Roman cross.

While Luke was a First Century physician passing these things on to us, let us also understand that Luke was not the only physician involved in this story. What Christ did on the cross, He did to bring spiritual healing to people like us.

The Scripture is clear and so is human observation of the human race. Every single individual is born with a moral disease called sin. We have desires gone awry. We have desires that are rebellious. We act out on those things quite willingly, each and every one of us in a whole myriad of ways.

Yet even Christ is spoken of as the Great Physician; the One who has come into the world to bring forgiveness of sin and to bring transformation of heart. He does this by the grace of God. So as we see what is before us this morning and into the weeks ahead, let us look upon our Savior who is our Great Physician who came to heal us of the malady of sin.

As we look into what is before us this morning, my prayer coming into this time of study is that you would look upon what is here and that by faith, the healing power of Jesus Christ would be filling you and touching your soul. I pray that as we see Christ who is the Great Physician, we would also follow Him in the desire and practice of being agents of His healing grace in the lives of others.

The message before us this morning is titled *Jesus is Crucified*. There are two scenes that are laid out before us in this segment of the Gospel of Luke. The first scene takes place on the so-called Via Dolorosa, Latin for the path of sorrow. It is the path that Jesus walked from inside the city of Jerusalem to outside of its gates to the place of the crucifixion.

We see the healing grace of our Messiah there, as He walked that path. Then that leads us to a second scene. That scene takes place at the place that was called The Skull. Remarkably in both of these scenes where the suffering of Christ is depicted so plainly for us, we see in Him a heart that was turned for the well-being of others.

So first as we walk through this passage, we will see this healing grace come out in His prophetic warning on the Via Dolorosa. Then second, we will see the Lord's kind intercession, His forgiving heart, even as He prayed on the cross for those who were crucifying Him. These are the things that are laid out before us this morning.

As we enter into the story, the religious civil trials of Jesus had concluded. Pilate had reluctantly sentenced Jesus to death by crucifixion. It was close to 9:00 AM on the morning of the Great Passover Feast.

Jesus was completely weakened. He was totally sleep deprived. He was bruised and swollen and He was abused. The time had come for Jesus to go to the cross and here even in the midst of this, we see Jesus giving grace through prophetic warning to those who were surrounding Him on that path that led to the cross.

## **1. Prophetic warning on the Via Dolorosa (Luke 23:26-31)**

So we read in Luke Chapter 23, starting in Verse 26:

**<sup>26</sup>And as they led him away, they seized one Simon of Cyrene, who was coming in from the country, and laid on him the cross, to carry it behind Jesus. <sup>27</sup>And there followed him a great multitude of the people and of women who were mourning and lamenting for him. <sup>28</sup>But turning to them Jesus said, "Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. <sup>29</sup>For behold, the days are coming when they will say, 'Blessed are the barren and the wombs that never bore and the breasts that never nursed!' <sup>30</sup>Then they will begin to say to the mountains, 'Fall on us, and to the hills, 'Cover us.' <sup>31</sup>For if they do these things when the wood is green, what will happen when it is dry?"**

This is an amazing picture that is laid out before us. Here we have our Christ, our Jesus, weakened to the point of muscle fatigue. It was astonishing that He could even walk at that point. And He collapsed under the weight of the cross beam, the horizontal portion of the cross that He was carrying to the place of crucifixion.

Jesus could not carry it himself, so the guards seized this man Simon from Cyrene. Cyrene was in Northern Africa. They required him to carry the cross for Jesus. As Jesus moved forward, blood dripping from His back. Then He became aware of a grieving group of women behind Him.

Even in His condition, Jesus stopped and turned around and He addressed them. At the heart of it, Jesus said, You should not be weeping for Me. You should be weeping for yourselves. Jesus was basically taking their pity and turning it back on them. Looking at the grand scheme, the big picture, Jesus was saying, I am not the one to be pitied here.

This is such an astonishing thing that happened here coming from the heart of the Lord. What we have in what we have just read is the third moment in the Gospel of Luke where Jesus gave this lament, expressing sorrow over what was soon to befall the city of Jerusalem.

It was the third time within a week that Jesus spoke like this. He did so the first time at the Triumphal Entry on Palm Sunday. Everybody was cheering and yelling Hosanna. Then Jesus moved himself off to the side and he began weeping profusely, crying over Jerusalem, saying in Luke Chapter 19:

**<sup>42</sup>“Would that you, even you, had known on this day the things that make for peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes. <sup>43</sup>For the days will come upon you, when your enemies will set up a barricade around you and surround you and hem you in on every side <sup>44</sup>and tear you down to the ground, you and your children within you.”**

That was one week prior to this. Then you will also recall during the Olivet Discourse, when Jesus was on Mount Olivet with His disciples. They were talking about the beauty of the temple. and Jesus warned that the time was coming when there would not be one stone left on top of the other.

Jesus talked about how armies would surround Jerusalem and Jerusalem would be pulverized by the Gentiles. In that place too, Jesus also expressed sorrow for nursing mothers. Then here even at He was approaching the cross, Jesus said, It would be better to be a woman who never gave birth at all than to live through that time with children.

These warnings were coming straight from the heart of the Messiah. He issued these things forth as warnings coming from His heart of grace, so that people could take heed to what was to come when the Roman armies came by the hand of God and brought judgment, striking the city for its grievous and violent rejection of the Son of God.

So this was a moment of grace where Jesus gave warning and He was speaking of judgment to come. Imagine hiking somewhere in the Sierra Nevada's, hiking back in the woods. You come across a pack of angry California Black Bears that are out to do some damage.

You get away and then see some hikers going the way you just came from. Would it be kind to walk right past them, telling them good luck? No! You are going to tell them that there are black bears ahead, and you best change directions and stay out of there.

That is the essence of the Lord's prophetic warning about the judgement that was to come. There is judgment to come. In all the holy perfections of who God is, there is love and there is holiness and there is wrath. From cover to cover, the Scripture speaks emphatically and consistently of the wrath of God.

Judgment is His pure, measured, righteous indignation against human sin. Here Jesus gave warning once again of the judgment that was going to befall Jerusalem for its sin, so that open ears could hear and repent. Jesus had given warning—when you see those armies coming, get out of Jerusalem. History bears record that the church remembered His words, and they got out. Go back to the message on the Olivet Discourse to hear about this.

This warning came from a heart of goodness and holiness and grace. Jesus explained this with something of a cryptic statement at the end. Did you catch that? It is not one of the verses in Scripture that we are as familiar with. Jesus described all of this and said in Verse 31:

**<sup>31</sup>For if they do these things when the wood is green, what will happen when it is dry?**

This is almost like a riddle. There are a lot of different interpretations about what Jesus was getting at here. Those of you have had bonfires, you kind of understand the imagery that Jesus gave.

If you want to have a fire in the backyard, you are not going to do so well with branches that have been recently attached to trees. They still have life in them. They still have green leaves on them. They can still bend and they don't burn well.

However, when you have a hunk of wood that has been removed from the ground and there is no life in it and it is dried out, it burns fast and it burns hot. That is the imagery that Jesus laid out here. For if they do these things. Whose they?

I would understand that these were the Romans. The picture is the: if the Romans would perpetrate such atrocities on Jesus who is the green wood, vibrant and the source of life for the branches, what will they do to the Jewish nation, the dry wood? Barren and ripe for judgment when the time appointed for their judgment came?

It would not be pleasant and Jesus was giving warning. Jesus was given warning and He gives us warning out of grace. Scripture teaches of the judgment to come and the wrath that needs to be fled and it can only be escaped in the shelter of the Messiah, Jesus who went to the cross to endure the wrath that our sin deserves.

In Christ there is shelter from the wrath to come. As we look upon the Lord Jesus Christ, He spoke very freely about Heaven and Hell. About grace and about judgment. If we are going to follow Christ, we need to be more willing than we are to speak about both aspects of the nature and the works of God.

We must speak of God's forgiveness which comes in Christ and what will come where that forgiveness is denied. And that is Hell. Jesus spoke of this often and if we are going to be faithful to Jesus, so must we.

Let us take these things to heart and if there is anybody in the hearing of this message who has not come into the shelter that is in Jesus, confess your sins to the Lord. Come to Jesus who will save you and transform you and who will cleanse you by His grace. You must come to Jesus Christ. You are invited to come to faith in Him.

If you are hearing about Jesus and are your eyes see the One who is the Savior, and this is registering to you for the first time, please I would love to encourage you about what it is to follow Christ. Let me know. Let someone know because we are in this walk with Jesus together.

We see the healing grace of Jesus and we see a second way that this comes out as we continue walking through this portion of Scripture together. Now we arrive to the place of the crucifixion and we see this healing grace in the form of His:

## **2. Kind intercession at the Place of the Skull (Luke 23:32-38)**

We see the form of His gracious prayer for those who were putting Him to death. Verses 32 through 34:

**<sup>32</sup>Two others, who were criminals, were led away to be put to death with him. <sup>33</sup>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. <sup>34</sup>And Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." And they cast lots to divide his garments.**

First notice how Luke draws our attention to the place of crucifixion. It was a strange place. It was a fearsome place in the Aramaic language, which was the language lingua franca of Jerusalem. That was the common speech of Jerusalem in that day and that place was called *Golgotha*.

In the Latin it was called *calvaria* or sometimes *calvary*. Both words translate into the English word *skull*. This was a place outside the city walls of Jerusalem. Some people would understand it was called this because of some of the rocky terrain that kind of resembled a human skull. So some surmise that maybe this was the place called *The Skull*.

Others suggest that a human skull was permanently placed there on a post indicating it as a place of execution. One way or the other, brothers and sisters, this was not a comfortable place to die. That is kind of the point.

Here we have Dr. Luke, a man who had devoted his life to physically healing people. As a physician, if he understood that he would not be able to heal a person, he would have tried to whatever he could to make the process of physical death as tolerable and comfortable as possible.

That is what Dr. Luke would have done but the Romans, they designed this form and place of execution to be as painful and menacing as possible. There Jesus was crucified in between public enemy number two and public enemy number 3.

Jesus was in the middle in the position of public enemy number one, though He Himself was blameless, perfect, pure, and all together generous—who did nothing but give and proclaim truth in all His thirty-three years.

Jesus was not there dying for His own sin. He had no sin. He was there dying as a substitute for the sin of others. So we see Jesus in that place. In the midst of all this, we see the healing grace of our Messiah. Here is a man. Nails had been driven into His hands and feet. He was suffering physically, and He was not thinking of His own suffering. Instead He was crying out for the forgiveness of the ones who pinned Him there; for the ones who mocked Him there, and here we see a heart that was filled with grace.

So there on the cross He cried out that there would be an outpouring and a movement of the Spirit so that others would be taken off the hook as He was being put on the hook for them. This is a profound picture of the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, whose heart is to cancel the debts before God of sinners like us. Only in Christ is that debt cancelled!

To make this scene of crucifixion even worse, we are reminded that Jesus was publicly deprived of clothing and dignity as He was crucified in that public setting. There were soldiers there that were drawing straws, casting lots, to see who got which portion of His garments.

By the way, it should have all went to His mother. How many of you have lost a loved one? They have been taken away from you in death, and it is nearly impossible to get rid of the clothing that they wore. It is precious. You remember what it was like when they were wearing those clothes.

You remember what it felt like when you put your hand on their back when they were wearing that coat. It might have strands of hair still on them . Maybe their smell is still in them. Maybe there is portions of their DNA left. Some people are even known to hug the clothing of somebody they love that has gone on before them in death.

And here we have these garments that belonged to Jesus. They smelled like Him. They had His sweat in them, and they should have gone to His mother. But these mindless soldiers who could not care less taking His clothes for themselves for whatever reason.

As we look at their thoughtlessness, we must see that we are cut from the same fabric. We are all so capable of being so dense and thoughtless about the things that matter to other people. So let's not look at those soldiers and say how dare they, pointing some self-righteous finger when we are all the same way. How we need Jesus to transforms us and to make us new. And the good news is that not only does He forgive us, but He also gives us eyes to see.

The soldiers took His clothing to keep for themselves, but even here we have a reminder of the glorious and gracious and overwhelming salvation that Jesus gives to His church. They took away His garments, but He has better garments still to provide.

Let us recall that the salvation Jesus brings to us does not leave us in a neutral position. We are those justified by grace through faith. Justification is more than just as though I had never sinned. Amen, there is forgiveness and the guilt is taken away, but that is an incomplete view of what justification is all about.

In justification, it is not that you are declared not guilty. It is that you are declared righteous. You are declared righteous not on your own merit. Your own merit is going to take you straight to Hell if you try to go before the Lord on the basis of your own merit.

You and I are daily sinners. Jesus cancels that debt and washes it away and He adorns us in His merit, His robes, His righteousness, so that when we stand before the holiness of Almighty God, it is not in a neutral position. It is as those made righteous as a gift from the heart of this One who we see dying in our place.

We have the healing grace of Jesus Christ that is presented for us here even on the cross. Jesus lifted up prayers of gracious intercession and even as He did that, other voices were calling out and those voices were not kind.

So we see what comes next. Verse 35:

**<sup>35</sup>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!”  
<sup>36</sup>The soldiers also mocked him, coming up and offering him sour wine <sup>37</sup>and saying, “If you are the King of the Jews, save yourself!” <sup>38</sup>There was also an inscription over him, “This is the King of the Jews.”**

So we have this band of people surrounding Jesus and they were misusing the capacity of speech that this One on the cross Himself had provided them with. They were scoffing and mocking and they were tormenting Him verbally.

There are a lot of ways that our sin becomes manifested and evident. But, boy-oh-boy, what about speech? What about the things that we say? How would you like it if somehow I was in possession of an mp3 file of everything you have said over the last month? The last year? Your entire life?

Then I tell you that I am going to post it on YouTube for everybody to hear. Yikes! How diverse are the ways that we have misused the capacity of speech, where we tear down rather than build up?

Where we say things that are untrue about people, rather than portraying them in a positive light. Where we talk about people behind their backs rather than addressing them personally with our concern. Where we distort truth. Where we use crass humor. All of us are capable of this.

The Lord summarized His perspective based on what He has heard and He hears everything, and Scripture says it is like the poison of vipers is on their lips. And how we need His healing grace. Even when we become Christians, we are still stumbling in the things that we say.

We need forgiveness and we need God's grace not only to forgive us, but also to empower us to be new so that our speech will be holy. Yes, that is God's standard for us; that our capacity for speech be a fountain of beauty and truth and help and grace. We need the Savior that was hanging on that cross, don't we? Amen and hallelujah that He receives us.

Notice that this passages starts by saying that the rulers were scoffing Jesus. People stood by but the rulers were scoffing Him. This points us to the synagogue rulers. There was kind of a two-party system in the religious leadership of Israel in the First Century.

There was the liberal Sadducees who had power in the capital city and who controlled the temple. Then there was the conservative Pharisees who were spread across the landscape of Israel, and they were the men that were in charge of all of the synagogues, the places of learning.

Then each one of the synagogues would have a person who was appointed to be the synagogue ruler. That is most likely what this text is speaking of when it says the rulers were scoffing Him. So there were probably some colleagues there, men who knew each other, based on their pilgrimages to Jerusalem.

There they were at Passover, seeing some old friends. The synagogue rulers were gathered together scoffing the Christ—He is the Chosen One. He calls Himself the Chosen One. You were there in Nazareth when He quoted Isaiah and said this prophecy is related to Him. He has fulfilled it. Let's see this Chosen One save himself.

So those men had a little band among themselves in their little company and were speaking like that. It seems that they had an influence on the Roman guards because the Roman guards got into the swing of it all, saying, Yes, that is a good idea! Save yourself.

So there were the religious Pharisees who were a little bit more refined in their scoffing who were off by themselves, saying, Let's see Him save himself. Then the more rugged guards, they were a little bit more bold, saying, Yes! Save yourself. Save yourself. Save yourself.

So the chorus that Jesus heard when He was nailed to the cross dying for sinners must have sounded something like, Let Him save himself. Is He going to save himself. There is the Chosen One. Is He going to save himself? Save yourself. Save yourself. Is He going to save himself? Is this getting irritating yet? What if the moment came where Jesus finally said, Fine. Have it your way. I'm going to save myself.

How could have Jesus gone about this? Let's say that at the moment of saving himself, He did it in a way that was comparable to what He did about one year earlier on the Mount of Transfiguration, when He allowed the glory of what was inherent to His very nature, to His divinity, to explode in light, so that all those mocking Him verbally would then be in inapproachable light that would give them absolute heart failure.



That could have been one way He could have saved himself. But what if He took a little bit of a different approach. What if He said, Ok, we are going to take the power of the resurrection that is being reserved for the third day and we will go ahead and manifest the power of the resurrection now.

Then suddenly His frail body that had been beaten and bloodied and abused all of a sudden, in the twinkling of an eye, it was made into a resurrection body. Imperishable. Powerful. Glorious. So there He was suddenly made strong. The nails that were in His hands and feet, they would not be there anymore because they were healed, so they shot forth like missiles whizzing past their heads.

The crown of thorns broke off. A diadem appears and there was Jesus in glory before them as King Christ. I think about that and part of me says that would have been seriously awesome. There is no other word for it. Awesome! It would have been incredible, and guess what? There is coming a time when Jesus returns to this earth and a display such as that will be revealed.

However if Jesus had done it then, I would be in my sin. You would be in your sin. Your sin would not be atoned for. The cup of wrath would not have been ingested down to the dregs by the Messiah for you. The wrath of God would remain on you.

When you breathed last breath on this earth, you would enter into the judgment that your sin has gathered for you as you are sentenced to Hell. That is what would have happened if Jesus would have saved Himself as the chorus was chanting repeatedly for Him to do.

So it was one way or the other. Jesus could either save Himself or He could save His people. He could save Himself or He could save His church. Brothers and sisters, glory, glory, hallelujah, praise His Name, He did not save Himself. He saved us instead.

So let your lips praise Him. Let your heart worship Him. Let your lives be taken under the power of His Spirit, that you might serve Him and walk in His way and become an agent of His healing grace.

What happened here, this was the most important moment in human history. The only thing that stands beside it is the twin tower of His resurrection, and they come together. I pray that our hearts are being pervaded with the healing grace of Jesus Christ and that our hearts would adore Him.

I pray that by the Spirit, you would love Him. I like how Chis put it a couple weeks ago when he preached. We in our own selves are at enmity with God. It is like saying you must now like liver. What?! Yes, you have to like liver and savor it.

That would require the removal of one palate and the replacement of another palate. And we must ask God through the power of His preached Word and through the movement of the Holy Spirit for Him to produce new affections inside of us. That is why the Scripture says that you

must be born again. We must go before the Lord, saying, Let your life fill me and use me. First that I might worship You; that I might be a testimony of Your saving grace to all who will listen.

Let's go back to the story at the beginning. Look at one last picture of God's saving grace. How did this account begin? Verse 26:

**<sup>26</sup>And as they led him away, they seized one Simon of Cyrene, who was coming in from the country, and laid on him the cross, to carry it behind Jesus.**

That is an amazing story. Here we have this man that was called to take the cross beam for the Messiah. Jesus walked in front of Simon and he walked behind Him, carrying the cross to the place of Calvary.

That in itself is amazing, but here is a question I have. How did Luke know Simon's name? Evidently Dr. Luke, who was a part of the early church, was familiar with this man's name. Did Luke go track him down? How did Luke know this man's name. His name is clearly known.

Now Mark gives us a little bit more detail in the parallel account. Mark 15:21:

**<sup>21</sup>And they compelled a passerby, Simon of Cyrene, who was coming in from the country, the father of Alexander and Rufus, to carry his cross.**

What?! Yes. Rufus. Alexander. Mark wrote from Rome, and the first one's to read his Gospel would have been the members of the small church of Rome. Hallelujah, it was a growing church of Rome. It was not a megachurch. Maybe it was about as big as Bethel Grace, or a little bigger.

But isn't that remarkable? Mark said, Simon of Cyrene. Rufus and Alexander's dad. He was the one carrying the cross. Now the next verse is kind of interesting. Mark wrote in Rome. The Roman Christians would have been the first one's to read it. Simon had sons name Alexander and Rufus and Paul, writing a little bit later said in Romans 16:13:

**<sup>13</sup>Greet Rufus, chosen in the Lord; also his mother, who has been a mother to me as well.**

Now whether the Rufus of Romans 16 is the Rufus of Mark 15, I am not sure but I like to think that he is. But just based on Mark Chapter 15, what we can be clearly certain about is that this moment had a tremendous impact on the man Simon of Cyrene and his family.

Just the familiarity of this indicates that they were family. So I am telling you that Rufus and Alexander were men of God, Christians, and this moment in their dad's life had probably just about everything to do with that as the Holy Spirit applied it to their hearts.

So you have this man Simon of Cyrene called out from the crowd. He was just coming out of the country trying to go into the holiday, and he got called out from the crowd and was told to carry the cross as he followed Jesus out to the place of execution.

Does anybody else see a picture here? For Jesus said, If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself daily, and take up his cross and follow Me. If we want to be those who are used of the Lord as agents of His healing grace, understand that it involves a work of the Holy Spirit that includes self-denial. And in that self-denial and servant's heart, we will find life.

Let us take these things to heart and let us pray that our lives will be lives that testify to the grace and to the glory of our Redeemer. Let's pray.