



Sunday School Lesson for April 4, 2004.
Released on: April 1, 2004.

Study John 19:16b-24, 26-30. Jesus' Crucifixion
Questions and answers below.

TIME: A.D. 30
PLACES: Jerusalem; Golgotha

John 19:16b-24, 26-30

16b And they took Jesus, and led him away.
17 And he bearing his cross went forth into a place called the place of a skull, which is called in the Hebrew Golgotha:
18 Where they crucified him, and two others with him, on either side one, and Jesus in the midst.
19 And Pilate wrote a title, and put it on the cross. And the writing was, Jesus of Nazareth the King of the Jews .
20 This title then read many of the Jews; for the place where Jesus was crucified was nigh to the city: and it was written in Hebrew, and Greek, and Latin.
21 Then said the chief priests of the Jews to Pilate, Write not, The King of the Jews; but that he said, I am King of the Jews.
22 Pilate answered, What I have written I have written.
23 Then the soldiers, when they had crucified Jesus, took his garments, and made four parts, to every soldier a part; and also his coat: now the coat was without seam, woven from the top throughout.
24 They said therefore among themselves, Let us not rend it, but cast lots for it, whose it shall be: that the Scripture might be fulfilled, which saith, They parted my raiment among them, and for my vesture they did cast lots. These things therefore the soldiers did.
.....
26 When Jesus therefore saw his mother, and the disciple standing by, whom he loved, he saith unto his mother, Woman, behold thy son!
27 Then saith he to the disciple, Behold thy mother! And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home.
28 After this, Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the Scripture might be fulfilled, saith, I thirst.
29 Now there was set a vessel full of vinegar: and they filled a sponge with vinegar, and put it upon hyssop, and put it to his mouth.
30 When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost.

Introduction

"I Surrender All"

All to Jesus I surrender,
All to Him I freely give;
I will ever love and trust Him,
In His presence daily live.
I surrender all,
I surrender all.
All to Thee, my blessed Savior,
I surrender all.

—Judson W. Van DeVenter (1855-1939)

The decade of the 1890s was a heady time in America. Ellis Island was open to immigration, new inventions such as telephones and movies were making inroads, and the importance of the automobile ("horseless carriage") was asserting itself. It was in the midst of all this prosperity and promise that Van DeVenter wrote, "I Surrender All" in 1896. Could it be that he recognized a danger that we have yet to see?

Those of us who have grown up in the church, especially churches with a more traditional worship style, probably have known and sung this hymn for decades. But what exactly is it that we have surrendered to Jesus in the midst of our prosperity? Precisely how have our lives changed because we have indeed surrendered "all" to Jesus? Can you make a list right now of five things you have surrendered—meaning sacrificed or given up—so that you will not be distracted from following Jesus?

Unfortunately, most of us are much better at singing about surrender than we are at practicing it. Too often we content ourselves with fairly minor sacrifices: I will surrender watching the sporting event on TV to attend the church potluck; I will sacrifice "sleeping in" on Sunday morning to attend church; I will give up my old clothes for the missions project; I will use a week of vacation to work at church camp.

But are these really the sorts of sacrifice that Paul had in mind when he told us to "present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service" (Romans 12:1)? What exactly can we sacrifice that truly honors Jesus that recognize the commitment He made to us while dying on the cross?

Lesson Background

Crucifixion was an incredibly brutal, painful, and dehumanizing way to die. Roman crucifixion typically was reserved for non-Roman political and military enemies of the state, and for those guilty of various heinous crimes. Runaway slaves were also subject to the cross.

As we peer at the scene before us on Golgotha, we see various related activities going on simultaneously. In the center our attention is drawn to Jesus, nailed to the cross—enduring the scorn of His contemporaries, the sins of humanity, and the wrath of His Father.

Near the cross are various clusters of bystanders. A group of soldiers is kneeling, engaged in a game of chance to divide Jesus' clothes. Another cluster is mostly women, friends of Jesus who came to mourn and to give Him whatever support they had to offer. Still another group, whose numbers fluctuate with the passing hours, is there to gawk and deride. Farther away, we notice the religious officials and Pilate

once again meeting, this time arguing over the wording of the sign above Jesus' head.

Those who acknowledge Jesus as the Messiah cannot help but hear the echoes of Isaiah 53 throughout Jesus' crucifixion. The outline for today's lesson takes its main points from Isaiah's prophecy. But the promise for all of us is also found in the prophet's words: "But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed" (Isaiah 53:5). In today's lesson we see Jesus surrender His very life-for us.

Despised and Rejected (John 19:16b-24)

1. What was the name of the place "they took Jesus" to be crucified (John 19:16b,17)?

The Via Dolorosa, or Way of Sorrows, is the name that has been given to the route Jesus took from Pilates' judgment hall to the place of crucifixion. That place is called "Golgotha" in Hebrew or Aramaic, and "Calvary" in Latin, both meaning "the place of a skull." Jesus carried His cross by Himself for a while, but after the trauma and agony of scourging, it was evidently too much for Him. The Roman soldiers compelled a man named Simon of Cyrene, a city in what is now Libya, to do this task (Matt. 27:32).

2. Why was Jesus' placement between two criminals significant (v. 18)?

Jesus' placement between two common criminals was significant, for it symbolized the fact that some people would reject and mock Him while others would accept and love Him. This is what happened with these two men (Luke 23:39-43).

Even worse than the physical suffering Jesus endured was the weight of the sins of all mankind, which He carried there in this act of atonement. God required Jesus to become a sin offering for us so that we could be made the righteousness of God in Him (II Cor. 5:21). Peter later wrote that Jesus Himself "bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness" (I Pet. 2:24).

This was a once-for-all act of redemption. The writer of Hebrews said of Jesus, "Now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself" (9:26).

3. Why did Pilate put a title over Jesus and refuse to change it when the chief priests complained (vs. 19-22)?

Pilate wrote a title to be placed on the cross above the head of Jesus. Combining information in all four Gospels, the full title probably read as follows: "This is Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews" (Matt. 27:37; Mark 15:26; Luke 23:38).

The inscription was written in Hebrew (Aramaic), Greek, and Latin. Golgotha was close to the city of Jerusalem, and people from various backgrounds who came out to see this spectacle were able to read the title. The inscribed placard above Jesus' head announced the "crime" for which He was being punished. In this case, no truer

sign was ever posted! Jesus is indeed being crucified for who He claimed to be rather than for anything He did.

When the chief priests of the Jews saw the title, they were upset by it. They came to Pilate and wanted it changed to read that Jesus said He was King of the Jews. They considered Jesus to be a blasphemer because He had declared Himself to be the Son of God (v. 7). When Pilate had referred to Jesus as their King, they had replied, "We have no king but Caesar" (v. 15). The Jewish leaders had succeeded in pressuring Pilate to crucify Jesus; now they were trying to pressure him again.

However, Pilate was not about to have these irascible Jews force him to change his mind on this particular matter. He stubbornly responded, "What I have written I have written" (v. 22). He would not change it in spite of their opposition.

4. How did the soldiers help fulfill a prophecy about Jesus (vs. 23,24)?

There were evidently four soldiers involved in the crucifixion of Jesus. His garments were considered booty for them to take. His clothing probably consisted of an outer robe, a girdle, or sash, for the waist, sandals, a head covering, and perhaps other articles. These were divided among the soldiers.

When they came to the inner tunic, which was woven from top to bottom without seams,

they decided against tearing it apart. They cast lots for it and let the winner have it for himself alone. This was actually a fulfillment of Psalm 22:18-"They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture."

These soldiers, of course, did not realize they were fulfilling prophecy. God can use anyone He chooses to bring about the fulfillment of divine prophecies, whether the person knows he is doing it or not.

Concern for a Mother (John 19:26, 27)

5. Why did Jesus give His mother over into John's care (vs. 26, 27)?

We can only imagine the intensity of emotions contained in this brief exchange between three people who love each other deeply. In the fog of pain, blood, and sweat, Jesus' eyes are clear enough to see His mother and John, one of His dearest disciples (John 13:23; 20:2). They are standing together. It seems likely that Mary's husband, Joseph, had passed on, since he is mentioned nowhere in the Gospels after Luke 2.

As the eldest son in the family, Jesus would be expected to care for His mother. Because of His present circumstances and since He knew that He would ascend to heaven soon after His death and resurrection, Jesus wanted to make arrangements for Mary. In the absence of His half brothers, Jesus decided to place Mary in John's care.

While on the cross, Jesus told His mother to behold her new "son" (John 19:26). He then told John to behold his new "mother" (v. 27). It was characteristic of His tremendous compassion and love that Jesus, while suffering excruciating agony, could give attention to this matter.

6. Jesus was concerned for others in the midst of His own pain. Have you known people who could demonstrate concern even when experiencing hardship? What gives people that kind of outward focus? How can we duplicate it?

We can attribute this concern to a sense of duty (Luke 17:7-10). Some people understand that we all have a responsibility to care for others, and that that responsibility is not dimmed by personal suffering.

We can also see this concern as an act of love. Some people have such a love for others that they are able to look past their own situations to feel and respond to the pain of others. Certainly it is an expression of discipleship; these folks are trying to imitate the Master. Answering Jesus' call to total commitment is a key to duplicating His concern for others.

Human Thirst
(John 19:28, 29)

7. Why did Jesus accept the last drink offered to Him (vs. 28, 29)?

Crucifixion provides many physical reasons for Jesus' thirst. Blood loss, exposure to the hot sun, pain, and labored breathing can individually parch one's throat. Taken together, these mean that Jesus suffers terribly from dehydration.

At this point in time, Jesus knew that "all things were now accomplished" (v. 28). He also knew that there was one last prophecy to be fulfilled regarding His crucifixion. In Psalm 69:21 the coming Messiah says, "In my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink."

The spongy sponge of vinegar offered to Jesus and mentioned in Matthew 27:48 and Mark 15:36 probably was the same as that mentioned in John 19:29. In the latter case, it is said that the sponge was lifted up to Jesus' lips with the long stalk of a hyssop plant. This drink probably gave Jesus' parched lips and throat the ability to cry out in a loud voice one more time before dying (Matt. 27:50).

Finished
(John 19: 30)

8. What did Jesus mean when He said, "It is finished" (v. 30)?

Just before He died, Jesus said, "It is finished." This is the victory cry of One whose work is complete—it is not the cry of defeat.

This great redemptive plan of God, which originated in eternity past, had involved Jesus Christ as "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world" (Rev. 13:8).

9. Why is it important to note that Jesus "gave up the ghost" rather than had His life taken from Him?

Jesus said one other thing as He came to the end of His time on the cross—"Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit" (Luke 23:46).

The yielding up of His spirit, or giving up the ghost (John 19:30), was apparently done simultaneously with the bowing of His head in death. It is important for us to realize that the death of Jesus was a voluntary act on His part. Nowhere is this more clearly presented than in John 10:17,18—"Therefore doth my Father love me,

because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again."

The Gospel descriptions help us understand, too, the depths of the terrible price Jesus took upon Himself to pay in dying for our sins. There is the obvious physical price—the torture and agonizing death of an innocent man. Much worse, however, is the spiritual torture of bearing our sins (Hebrews 9:28). This is the greater part of the punishment—a punishment that rightly belongs to us!

And Jesus did indeed suffer on our behalf. It was our sins that nailed Jesus to the cross. It was our sins that caused Him such agony. He sacrificed Himself to pay the penalty for our failures. "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them, who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage" (Hebrews 2:14, 15).

Jesus sacrificed Himself so that we could be reconciled to God. He took upon Himself the sins of the world, accepting the punishment (death) due to each of us, so that we may have eternal life (Romans 3:21-26).

10. Right to the end Jesus had His mission in mind. How can we have such a sense of mission, of knowing that our lives are fulfilling a great purpose for the Lord?

Paul said, "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord" (1 Corinthians 15:58). When we have given ourselves completely to the Lord, then we, too, can have confidence that our lives have meaning and purpose. As we give ourselves over to fulfilling the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19, 20), then we share in accomplishing Jesus' mission.

Ask your students, "If you were to die tonight, could you say with confidence, 'It is finished'? Why, or why not?" You can also use Paul's reflections on his own life as found in 2 Timothy 4:7.

CONCLUSION

Dying for Change

In a phrase, "dying for change" is exactly what Jesus did. He died for a change in us. He died that our relationship with God could change. Before Jesus' death, humanity was alienated from God. After His crucifixion, alienation changed into the possibility of reconciliation.

"Dying for change" also describes much of the world outside the walls of our churches. Think of your neighbors, your friends, your family members, your coworkers—think of the waitress in your favorite restaurant, the checker at the grocery store, the cop on patrol, the executive in her office. All are dying for change—and without a change they will die eternally.

Jesus sacrificed Himself so that they could be saved. But how will they hear? How will they know? That is up to us. What will we sacrifice to bring them the message of the cross? Will we risk personal rejection and humiliation by talking to them? Will we risk careers, ambitions, even our very lives to reach the lost? A disgraced figure hanging on a cross hopes that we will take those risks.

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, we stand in awe at the price Jesus paid for us. But we also stand in sorrow as we think of the lost. Change our hearts so that we will pay any price to reach them with Your love. You paid the highest price for us-may we share Your values. In Jesus' name, amen.

THOUGHT TO REMEMBER

Jesus has done His part. Have we?

ANTICIPATING THE NEXT LESSON

Next week we study Jesus' resurrection in Matthew 28:1-15.