



# WEEK 10 STUDY GUIDE

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## Monday, June 27, 2022

**Read:** Mark 15:27; Luke 23:33-43

**Scripture Verse:** *"They crucified two robbers with him. One was on his right, and one was on his left." Mark 15:27*

### Today's Thought:

We are nearing the end of Mark's narrative on the life of Christ. As you will recognize from today's verse, we have come to the place of the skull, Golgotha, where we read Mark's description of the scene at the crucifixion site. He presents us with the image of Jesus hanging on a cross between two criminals. Interestingly, Mark chooses not to provide us with the profoundly alarming picture of Jesus' physical abuse but focuses on the verbal and psychological. As excruciatingly painful as the physical abuse was, I believe the blasphemous insults were just as bitter.

As Christ hung on the cross, three groups of people were mentioned that cast verbal insults at him. Mark only mentions them by using anonymous pronouns, but we know who they are from other sources. The first group that hurled insults was described as "those who passed by." The "those" represented general humanity, who passed by mocking the divinity of God's Son. Mark uses the word "blaspheme" for their words because they speak evil against God. Humanity's ridicule of Christ was the same as that levied by the Sanhedrin, both utterly blind to the nature of Jesus. The second set of taunts against Jesus come from the religious leaders and scribes who blasphemed Christ with the exact phrase as the crowd, "He saved others, but He can't save himself." Because Jesus was other-centered, it kept Him from saving himself. Then, the mocking came from a new direction aimed at his deity and came from the scribes taunting him with, "Let this Christ, this King of Israel, come down now from the cross, that we may see and believe." The chief priests and scribes only showed their arrogance and ignorance with their inability to understand the nature of faith and miracles but in no way is our belief attached to miracles.

The problem I see today is that most people want to follow a Messiah who looks like the Jesus we read about in the first half of Mark. Yet, for Jesus to fulfill His role as Messiah, He must first be covered with our shame and suffering. The passion narrative we read demands a deeply held faith in a man who hung dying on a cross. We place our faith and

trust in the One whom the Jewish leaders and religious elites rejected. To whom have you put your trust?

- Why do you think Mark chooses not to give the physical description of Jesus' suffering?
- Why does Mark focus on the verbal and psychological side of Jesus' suffering?
- How do you think it helps us to see and understand this side of His pain?
- Why is it hard for people today to face up to the crucifixion and Jesus as Messiah?
- How has this text helped you grow in your faith?

**Further Reading:** Psalm 22

## Tuesday June 28, 2022

**Read:** Mark 15:27; Luke 23:33-43

**Scripture Verse:** *“Those who were being crucified with Jesus also made fun of him.” Mark 15:32b*

### Today's Thought:

*Yesterday, we looked at the verbal and psychological shame and suffering Jesus endured from three specific groups. Today, I want us to move our focus from the “those,” who ridiculed Jesus as worldly bystanders to the criminals who hung on either side of Jesus at Golgotha. All that stood below the cross and made their blasphemous comments toward Jesus showed great contempt for the meaning of the cross. They mocked what He stood for. They mocked His miracles, and they knocked His Messianic mission. Yet, Jesus did not respond to them.*

*It was probably a bit easier to mock and ridicule when you could freely walk away. But for the criminals who find themselves nailed to a cross like Christ to begin mocking and making fun of Him to me is a whole new level of contempt. But then, for some reason, Mark stops his narrative of any further interaction between Jesus and these criminals. We don't find an answer from the text itself, but if we jump over to Luke 23:33-43, we get the rest of the story. While Mark writes they both made fun of Jesus, Luke mentions only the criminal on the left mocked Jesus. The criminal mockingly said to Jesus, “if you are the Christ, why don't you save yourself, and us!” Right before the criminal said these words, Jesus made one of his last seven statements from the cross, in which He said, “Father, forgive them, they don't know what they are doing.” Maybe the criminal to his left was unable to hear, we don't know, but it would seem the one on the right got the message.*

*As I read this text from Luke, I couldn't help but wonder what was going through the crook's mind on the right. This criminal, vulnerable to the crowds and his peers, chastised his fellow partner in crime instead of joining those tossing insults. It is so easy for us when we find ourselves surrounded by the “crowds” to get caught up in the world's ways, protected by the crowds, instead of walking away. Walking away brings with it the fear ridicule. Yet, the criminal on the right ignoring the peer pressure, hanging naked on a cross for his crimes and having nowhere to hide, is heard baring his soul to Jesus. He acknowledged his crime, accepted his punishment, and scolded the other criminal for disre-*

specting God. In this moment of repentance, admitting that Jesus was innocent, asked Him to remember him when He came into His Kingdom. In his moment of sincere confession and repentance, Jesus responds with the announcement of his reward. Jesus, amid his breath-taking pain and agony, pushes himself up to speak and tells this man, "What I'm about to tell you is true. Today you will be with me in paradise."

*The criminal's actions on the right struck me as I read it. I am that criminal. You are that criminal. When we realize the criminals that we are, compared to the innocence of Christ, we see only our guilt and shame. Yet, when we cry out to Jesus from under the weight of our sin, He hears our cries of confession and repentance. Jesus pours his blood over our hearts and washes away all our past, present, and future sins!*

*In addition to his honesty, I am equally struck by the criminal's incredible faith and willingness to place his eternity in the hands of a dying man. Only by Jesus' grace, through faith, was this man saved. And so are we. Even more exciting than seeing this man give his life to Christ was the timing of his reward. I'm not sure he was expecting anything so soon, but Jesus took him into heavenly paradise that day! That is our blessed hope to be with Christ someday in heaven. Paul said, "to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord." If you haven't, receive Him today, and be assured of your place in paradise.*

- What do you think caused one or both criminals to ridicule Jesus?
- Why did the criminal on the right chastise the other criminal?
- What caused the criminal on the right to confess/repent?
- How do you explain this man's faith in Jesus? How does it affect your faith?
- In what ways are we like the criminal on the right?

**Further Reading:** Matthew 27:39-44

## **Wednesday June 29, 2022**

**Read:** Mark 15:27; Luke 23:33-43

**Scripture Verse:** *"The soldiers brought them to the place called The Skull. There they nailed Jesus to the cross. He hung between the two criminals. One was on his right and one was on his left." Luke 23:33*

### **Today's Thought:**

*"It costs much to obtain the power of the Spirit. It costs self-surrender and humiliation and a yielding up of our most precious things to God. It costs the perseverance of long waiting and the faith of strong trust. "But when we are really in that power, we shall find this difference, that whereas before, it was hard for us to do the easiest things, now it is easy for us to do the hard things." —A. J. Gordon*

When I think of Christ being led to the place of the skull that day, I cannot help but think of the price He paid. Jesus had just come through the messy work of a corrupt trial and false conviction. Upon his conviction, Jesus was led away by a mob, yet in reality, it was only because the King of Kings allowed it. With Golgotha as a backdrop, if I were to seek the perfect picture to illustrate what A.J. Gordon was trying to convey in his poem, it would be a portrait of Christ on the cross. It is in Jesus that we see the price of self-surrender and humiliation. It was the sacrifice of a Father yielding up his most precious treasure for the world's sins.

Jesus endured the longsuffering of perseverance in carrying our sins to the cross. He very quickly could have called in legions of angels to rescue Him but fulfilling the Scriptures remained more important than His needs. All the power of heaven and earth were at His fingertips, yet Jesus submitted to that which was hard. He allowed himself into the hands of those who would have their will with Him. What seemed so hard became easy because Christ was committed to his redemptive mission. He did what He did because He had you and me on his mind. And when we surrender our lives entirely to Christ, His Spirit enables us to easily do what is hard for the world, lay our lives down at the foot of the cross and live for Him.

- When was a time you had to make a costly sacrifice for someone else?
- What makes perseverance so hard?
- Why can it be so hard to do the easy things concerning our faith journey?
- How does laying our life at Jesus' feet make it easy to do the hard things?

**Further Reading:** Psalm 1

## Thursday June 30, 2022

**Read:** Mark 15:27; Luke 23:33-43

**Scripture Verse:** *"Jesus said, "Father, forgive them. They don't know what they are doing." Luke 23:34*

### Today's Thought:

*"One evening, Maskepetoon was deeply moved by the missionary's address on our Lord's dying prayer, "Father, forgive Maskepetoon, the most powerful chief of his tribe of North American Indians." This chief reveled in cunning ambushes, midnight attacks, and all that goes to make savage warfare.*

*But the Gospel Herald once carried the following story of his conversion under the early Methodist missionaries: One evening Maskepetoon was deeply moved by the missionary's address on our Lord's dying prayer, "Father, forgive them." The next day a band of Indians was approaching, which was the man who had murdered Maskepetoon's only son. His son, sent into a secluded valley, had never returned; and the son's companion said that he had fallen over a precipice, though he had murdered him. Unknown to the murderer, the tragedy had been witnessed by some Indians who later reported it to the bereaved chief. When the two bands were within a few hundred yards of each other, the eagle eye of the old chief detected the murderer, and, drawing his tomahawk from his belt, he rode up till he was face to face with the man who had murdered his son. Maskepetoon, with a voice tremulous with suppressed feeling, yet with an admirable command over himself, looking the man full in the eyes, said: "You deserve to die. I sent him with you, his trusted companion. You betrayed my trust and cruelly killed my only son! You have done me and my tribe the greatest injury that is possible. You deserve to die, but from what I heard from the missionary at the campfire last night, I would already have buried this tomahawk in your brains! The missionary told us that if we expected the Great Spirit to forgive, we must forgive the greatest wrong. "You have been my worst enemy and deserve to die!" With deep emotion, he continued, "As I hope the Great Spirit will forgive me, I forgive you." Then, hastily pulling his war bonnet over his face, Maskepetoon bowed down over his horse's neck and gave way to an agony of tears.*

*For years Maskepetoon lived a devoted Christian life. He preached to others. And after influencing many of his tribe to turn from killing their enemies, the Blackfeet, he gave them no other weapon but the "Sword*

*of the Spirit, which is the Word of God." But a bloodthirsty chief of that vindictive tribe, remembering some of their fierce conflicts of other days and, perhaps, having lost by Maskepetoon's prowess some of his relatives in those conflicts, seized his gun. Then in defiance of all rules of humanity, coolly shot down the converted chieftain.*

*Who can say that forgiveness is not a costly thing? Maskepetoon suffered a broken heart to forgive the murderer of his son. Then it cost him his life to forgive his enemies, to go to them unarmed and preach to them forgiveness of sin." —Prairie Overcomer*

Have you ever had to tell someone you were sorry or ask them for forgiveness? Why are those words so hard for us to say? I'm reminded of the tragedy of people hurting people every day, just look at social media. Hurting people are hurting other people all the time. It's always something from another school shooting, someone crashing their van into a parade, the 1700 daily abortions, or weekly neighborhood shootings in Chicago. Opportunities for forgiveness never seem to end but is it ever given? It appears that instead of forgiveness, we only see vengeance.

If there were ever anyone who deserved to pour out vengeance, it was Jesus. He was accused and arrested for something he did not do. He was given a mock trial, errantly pronounced guilty, and sentenced to death. Before they killed him on the cross, they beat him to within an inch of his life with a cat of nine tails, punched him, kicked him, and drove a crown of thorns deep into his head. If anyone were to be avenged, wouldn't it be Jesus? As we see our Savior and Lord suffer unjustly and watch the innocent today treated with injustice, we find it hard to forgive the perpetrators. And yet, as Roman soldiers hammered 9-inch spikes into Jesus' wrists and ankles, affixing him to a wooden cross, He begged his Father in heaven to forgive them all. Even while crying out to the Father, his enemies continued to mock and ridicule the One who was dying for them.

Jesus, deep in death's grip, was still able to offer life, peace, and hope to sinners. For the sinner, He came to earth and, by His death, provides for their salvation. The criminal next to Jesus was the first to benefit, and now that same benefit is available for you and me. And because Christ has forgiven us, we can forgive others. Who do you need to forgive today?

- Why is it so hard to say we're sorry or forgiveness so hard to give?
- What is the difference between justice and vengeance?
- Do you think Jesus, in his humanness, ever thought about getting even with those who brutally hurt him?
- What does Jesus teach us about forgiveness?
- What is the consequence for not forgiving others?

**Further Reading:** 2 Corinthians 5:21-6:2

## Friday July 1, 2022

**Read:** Mark 15:27: Luke 23:33-43

**Scripture Verse:** *"Jesus answered him, "What I'm about to tell you is true. Today you will be with me in paradise." Luke 23:43*

### Today's Thought:

#### Just Think

*"Of stepping on shore,  
And finding it heaven;  
Of taking hold of a hand.  
And finding it God's hand;  
Of breathing new air,  
And finding it heavenly air;  
Of feeling invigorated,  
And finding it immortality;  
Of passing from storm and  
Tempest to an unbroken calm;  
Of waking up—  
And finding it HOME!"  
—Selected*

Jesus, barely alive, turns to the criminal on his right and promises him paradise. Even in His most incredible pain, Jesus was thinking of others, and did you notice the timing of that promise? Today. Today, you will be with me in paradise. When I think of paradise, I dream of being in Kauai, the "garden island." Don't get me wrong, I think of heaven too, but the closest thing to it in this realm is this Hawaiian island. At least for me. It is an island filled with miles of tropical rainforest beauty surrounded by sand-covered beaches with the most vivid aqua blue water you've ever seen. As I said, it's heaven on earth.

Did you know that the word 'paradise' is a Persian word adopted by both Greeks and Jews? It literally means a "delightful garden," a place of beauty and refreshment. When translating to Greek, many Old Testament scholars use the word 'paradise' to describe the Garden of Eden, which becomes a picture of heaven. And it was the place Jesus promised the criminal would be that day.

John describes it the best he can in Revelation 21 as a beautiful bride prepared for her husband. The city walls will be jasper; its streets will be transparent gold, its foundations built on 12 kinds of precious gemstones, with gates made of single pearls. In the middle of the New Jerusalem will be the throne of God and His Lamb. The River of Life will flow from beneath their thrones and run through the middle of the city. The Father and the Son will be its light. There will be no night, and its gates will never close. However, only what is pure will enter. No liars or anyone who does shameful things will enter; only those whose names are written in the Lamb's Book of Life will enter the city. Only those who overcome will receive all that this heavenly paradise offers. The criminal on the cross overcame his sins that day by calling on the name of Jesus to save him, his name was written in the Lamb's Book of Life, and his reward was paradise. Have you overcome? Is your name written in the Book of Life? If you aren't sure, then why not have that same assurance the criminal had and repent of your sins and ask Jesus to forgive you and be the Lord of your life? If you do, His promise is for you, "today, you will be with me in paradise."

- What or where is your earthly "paradise?"
- What do you think was on the criminal's mind when Jesus said you will be with me in paradise?
- How do you think he understood Jesus' promise that it would be today?
- What did the criminal do to deserve paradise? What about you?
- Is your name written in the Lamb's Book of Life?

**Further Reading:** Revelation 21







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