

Following Jesus to the Cross

Matthew 27:1-31

Matthew 27:1-31 (CSB)

When daybreak came, all the chief priests and the elders of the people plotted against Jesus to put him to death. 2 After tying him up, they led him away and handed him over to Pilate, the governor.

3 Then Judas, his betrayer, seeing that Jesus had been condemned, was full of remorse and returned the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders. 4 “I have sinned by betraying innocent blood,” he said. “What’s that to us?” they said. “See to it yourself!” 5 So he threw the silver into the temple and departed. Then he went and hanged himself. 6 The chief priests took the silver and said, “It’s not permitted to put it into the temple treasury, since it is blood money.” 7 They conferred together and bought the potter’s field with it as a burial place for foreigners. 8 Therefore that field has been called “Blood Field” to this day. 9 Then what was spoken through the prophet Jeremiah was fulfilled: They took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of him whose price was set by the Israelites, 10 and they gave them for the potter’s field, as the Lord directed me.

11 Now Jesus stood before the governor. “Are you the King of the Jews?” the governor asked him. Jesus answered, “You say so.” 12 While he was being accused by the chief priests and elders, he didn’t answer. 13 Then Pilate said to him, “Don’t you hear how much they are testifying against you?” 14 But he didn’t answer him on even one charge, so that the governor was quite amazed.

15 At the festival the governor’s custom was to release to the crowd a prisoner they wanted. 16 At that time they had a notorious prisoner called Barabbas. 17 So when they had gathered together, Pilate said to them, “Who is it you want me to release for you—Barabbas, or Jesus who is called Christ?” 18 For he knew it was because of envy that they had handed him over.

19 While he was sitting on the judge’s bench, his wife sent word to him, “Have nothing to do with that righteous man, for today I’ve suffered terribly in a dream because of him.”

20 The chief priests and the elders, however, persuaded the crowds to ask for Barabbas and to execute Jesus. 21 The governor asked them, “Which of the two do you want me to release for you?” “Barabbas!” they answered. 22 Pilate asked them, “What should I do then with Jesus, who is called Christ?” They all answered, “Crucify him!” 23 Then he said, “Why? What has he done wrong?” But they kept shouting all the more, “Crucify him!”

24 When Pilate saw that he was getting nowhere, but that a riot was starting instead, he took some water, washed his hands in front of the crowd, and said, “I am innocent of this man’s blood. See to it yourselves!” 25 All the people answered, “His blood be on us and on our children!” 26 Then he released Barabbas to them and, after having Jesus flogged, handed him over to be crucified.

27 Then the governor’s soldiers took Jesus into the governor’s residence and gathered the whole company around him. 28 They stripped him and dressed him in a scarlet robe. 29 They twisted together a crown of thorns, put it on his head, and placed a staff in his right hand. And they knelt down before him and mocked him: “Hail, King of the Jews!” 30 Then they spat on him, took the staff, and kept hitting him on the head. 31 After they had mocked him, they stripped him of the robe, put his own clothes on him, and led him away to crucify him.

Today we are looking at Jesus’ path to the cross.

We will examine what it means for us to follow Jesus to the cross.

- What does this mean for our lives?

Recently we’ve considered whether Jesus is WORTH following.

- His disciples had done a fair job of following Jesus up until recently...
 - Judas has betrayed Jesus.

- Peter has denied Jesus.
- The other disciples have “all fled”

Today we see Jesus all alone—What had happened?

- These 12 disciples had followed Jesus for 3 years without much physical reward or comfort.
- They had followed Jesus through good times AND hard times.
- They stuck by Jesus when He was confronted by the religious leaders who obviously hated him.
- They followed Him even after Jesus healed just one guy when there were MANY other needy sick people.
- They accepted Jesus’ wild claim to be the Messiah.
- These guys walked HUNDREDS of miles in sandals on dirt roads following Jesus.
- These men had been very FAITHFUL followers of Jesus.

What caused these 12 faithful men who has followed Jesus for 3 years to suddenly abandon Jesus?

These 12 followers of Jesus were repulsed by the same thing many of us shy away from...the cross.

We see that it is the reality of the cross that scattered the disciples.

BUT Jesus spent His entire ministry focusing on the cross.

- He invited people to follow Him by picking up a cross and following Him.
- He promised that anyone who would follow Him would suffer.
- The cross was inevitable for Jesus—and He knew that He was headed for a cross.

Jesus taught His disciples that suffering and death lay ahead for all who remained faithful to God.

- Satan is not a complacent enemy.
- Sin has real power apart from the cross.

Jesus clearly taught His disciples—AND US— that we will suffer and even die as we live for Christ.

- This isn’t some obscure detail true of only Christians in dangerous places.
- This isn’t a metaphor for how hard it is to try and not sin—like, “It’s so HARD that I feel like I’m dying...”

Jesus taught that His followers would experience hardship, suffering and death.

So the cross isn’t some optional detail for persecuted Christians.

The cross is the CENTRAL PART of what Jesus came do do for us!

- Jesus tells anyone who would follow Him to “Count the cost”.
- He cautions us to know what we are getting in to.
 - **There is daily self-denial as we follow Jesus.**
 - **There is real persecution for those willing to publicly follow Jesus.**

So as we are look at these verses today we will examine Jesus’ way to the cross.

- **We will focus on what it looks like for us to follow Jesus—this man who ended His life on a cross...**

Matthew 27:1-2 (CSB)

When daybreak came, all the chief priests and the elders of the people plotted against Jesus to put him to death. After tying him up, they led him away and handed him over to Pilate, the governor.

****NOTE TO KEYNOTE: Please build the following 4 point list as the sermon progresses. Start with point one now and then add each additional point as we get to them. The items in this list are highlighted with **RED****

- 1. The Way of the Cross is a way of REJECTION.**
- 2. The Way of the Cross Requires True REPENTANCE.**
- 3. The Way of the Cross Sometimes Requires Us to be QUIET.**
- 4. The way of the cross reveals to us that WE ARE BARABBAS.**

The 1st thing we see is that there is rejection as we follow Jesus to the cross.

1. The Way of the Cross is a way of REJECTION.

- At some point you will experience rejection as you follow Jesus.

- If we would follow Jesus, we will experience rejection.
- Rejection is just part of what it means to follow Jesus.

Both the religious leaders AND the government rejected Jesus and persecuted Him.
If we faithfully follow Jesus we will experience rejection too.

2 Timothy 3:12-14 (CSB)

In fact, all who want to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted. Evil people and impostors will become worse, deceiving and being deceived. But as for you, continue in what you have learned and firmly believed.

Persecution is a NORMAL part of following Jesus.

The Bible has a unique and totally unAmerican perspective on persecution...

How do we feel when we hear that our religious liberties are taken away or infringed upon?

- We RESIST that, don't we?
- We all feel that is VERY wrong and totally COUNTER to God's will for our country and our lives.
 - This is 'MURICA—we have RIGHTS!

What does the Bible say is happening when our religious liberties are taken away?

Luke 21:12-13 (CSB)

But before all these things, they will lay their hands on you and persecute you. They will hand you over to the synagogues and prisons, and you will be brought before kings and governors because of my name. This will give you an opportunity to bear witness.

Look at the word Jesus uses to describe persecution: OPPORTUNITY.

- When we are mistreated it is an opportunity to bear witness to Jesus
- In persecution, we are given an opportunity to go the way of the cross as Jesus did.

Jesus says that our persecution is an opportunity to bear witness to God's love for us in Christ.

This literally happened to every single Apostle in the early church.

- They were put in prisons, some tortured, most murdered...

One day Peter and John went into the synagogue and heal a man on the sabbath.

Listen to their prayer following this arrest:

Acts 4:29-31 (CSB)

And now, Lord, consider their threats, and grant that your servants may speak your word with all boldness, 30 while you stretch out your hand for healing, and signs and wonders are performed through the name of your holy servant Jesus." 31 When they had prayed, the place where they were assembled was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak the word of God boldly.

Persecution brought them to this place of desperation, social powerlessness and dependance on God.

- They're not begging God to "Make it stop!"
- They don't ask for comfort.
- They don't ask for "blessing"
- They don't ask for a bigger house or better job...

They pray for BOLDNESS!!

- They pray with EXPECTANCY...
- They pray for HEALING...
- They pray for SIGNS & WONDERS...
- **Here we see these Apostles asking God for His Spirit to break down fearfulness and timidity!**
- **Here they ask God to BE GOD and HEAL and GET CRAZY!!**

Why does it so often seem like things are stagnant in the American Church?

- Why aren't people healed more often?
- Why is there not CRAZY SPIRITUAL BREAKTHROUGH?

Why isn't the Word of God spoken boldly by all of us all over Ventura County?

Perhaps its because don't pursue and receive the way of the cross.

- We tend to pray for comfort and blessing more often than boldness and spiritual authority.
- We tend to pray for safety and security more often than we ask for signs and wonders.
- We tend to trust the wisdom of man more readily than we turn to God for supernatural healing.

Just picture this happening:

Acts 4:31 (CSB)— When they had prayed, the place where they were assembled was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak the word of God boldly.

Sometimes I wonder if this isn't happening because we don't experience the same need...

- Or maybe its because we aren't really persecuted.
- Maybe its because we aren't in enough need of God's supernatural power to sustain us.

These early Christians had the RIGHT perspective on persecution.

- They turn from persecution STRAIGHT to God in prayer asking for supernatural power!

They turn from the powerlessness of being arrested prisoners to praying for BOLDNESS and POWER to preach with BOLDNESS!

It's not that we seek out persecution or create a weird self-inflicted suffering...

It's our job to pursue the way of the cross.

- We live in light of our calling to take up a cross and follow Jesus.

In today's text, we see the disciples did not consider Jesus worth the risk of persecution.

- **When faced with the cross, the disciples denied Christ and scattered.**
- **When we are faced with the cross, how do we respond?**

When we face hardship or persecution because of our faith we should not be surprised.

- This is our opportunity to walk in the WAY OF THE CROSS.

****Our passage continues to show us the way to the cross...Matthew 27:3-10**

2. The Way of the Cross is True Repentance.

The religious leaders reject Judas' 30 coins calling it "blood money"...

- BUT they are the one's who made the coins blood money by paying Judas to betray Jesus!

What Hypocrisy!

- These men have Jesus' blood on their HANDS and they're worried about these coins...

Even worse—and more tragic and truly sad— is Judas's false repentance...

- Judas seems to have felt bad about his sin, but he doesn't bring it to the Lord in true repentance.

The way of the cross confronts our sin and leaves us with 2 options—we either:

- **Deal with it ourselves.**
 - Feel bad about our sin, regret the consequences
 - try to ignore it or cover it
 - or maybe we just wallow in self-pity over it.
- **A 2nd option is for us to bring our sin to God and turn from it.**
 - this requires us to OWN our sin
 - This means we recognize our sin is against God.

Each of us face these options every day with every sin.—**What do we do with our sin?**

- Do we feel bad and hide our sin or wallow in self-pity and self-deprecation?
- Or do we go to Jesus in repentance and ask for forgiveness?

Vs 3 says Judas had remorse. He regretted betraying Jesus. He wished he hadn't done what he did.

- This word in the Greek is a DIFFERENT word than the word for REPENTANCE.

We must be clear about what Judas is feeling here:

- Judas feels bad about his decision and actions, but he is NOT repenting.
- Judas has remorse and regret, but he does not have a heart that is submitted to the Lord in repentance.

This is valuable for us to look at because there is a difference & We face this nearly every day.

When faced with our sin we often feel sorrow, but there are 2 types of sorrow:

- Worldly sorrow
- Godly sorrow

2 Corinthians 7:10 (CSB)—For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret, but worldly grief produces death.

We see this LITERALLY happen with Judas—his worldly sorrow brought death.

This is especially powerful for us to see because last week we looked at the story of Peter's fall.

It's good to examine Judas & Peter side-by-side because there are striking similarities:

- They both followed Jesus
- They both witnessed miracles
- They both denied Jesus

Judas continues down the path that Chad talked about last week

- This is the path that leads away from God.
- This is the path of worldly sorrow.

Peter responds to the Holy Spirit and changes course and returns to God in repentance.

- Peter repents to the Lord and becomes a powerful pillar in the church—repentance had led to real fruit!
- Judas goes out and hangs himself—he lingered in his sorrow and literally murders himself.

So what is the difference?

- Worldly sorrow is a work of our emotions—it is a work of the flesh.
- Godly repentance is a work of the Holy Spirit—it is a supernatural work that CHANGES us.
 - Worldly sorrow is mostly sad about the consequences of the sin.
 - Godly repentance is mostly sad that I've rebelled against my God.
 - Worldly sorrow leads to death—it separates us from the Lord and we spiritually die.
 - Godly repentance leads us back to God where we find LIFE.

We can determine the nature of our sorrow over sin by examining the fruit of it:

- We see Judas going out alone filled with hopeless regret, and he ends his life.
- Peter, however, OWNS his sin and goes on to be filled with the Holy Spirit and help lead the early church!

In Matthew 3 John the Baptist says to bear fruit in keeping with repentance.

- **We can tell when we have a heart of repentance because we CHANGE.**
- **We can tell when others are truly repentant because they CHANGE.**

The way of the cross is a lifelong journey—it's a marathon, NOT a sprint.

- Repentance is a lifestyle—Peter lived a repentant life and ran the long race.
- Worldly sorrow is a stream of emotions—Judas allowed his emotions to control him and burned out.

Judas was swallowed up in worldly regret—and it is easy for us to fall into too...

There are two ways we we can fall into this "false repentance":

1. **We punish ourself**
2. **We commit ourself to trying harder.**

1. Judas punished himself—

- He felt bad about his sin and punishes himself.
 - **The error here is that we can NEVER fully punish ourselves enough to pay for our sin.**
- **The good news is that Jesus was punished for me.**
- **So when I fall I don't beat myself up—Jesus was beaten up in my place.**

2. We commit ourselves to trying harder.

- We try to make up for our weaknesses by doing more good things.
- We become super-religious.
- We commit to performing better.
- We make promises to ourselves, to God and to others.

This is all false repentance!

**Adam & Eve did this—tried to cover their nakedness with leaves... that doesn't work.
What does God do?—Kills an animal and GOD COVERS THEM.**

- **When we truly repent we are FAR more covered and safe than when we try to hide our mess from God!**

NEXT STEP on the WAY OF THE CROSS:

Matthew 27:11-14 (CSB)

11 Now Jesus stood before the governor. "Are you the King of the Jews?" the governor asked him. Jesus answered, "You say so." 12 While he was being accused by the chief priests and elders, he didn't answer.

13 Then Pilate said to him, "Don't you hear how much they are testifying against you?" 14 But he didn't answer him on even one charge, so that the governor was quite amazed.

3. Quiet Confidence is the Way to the Cross

**This is not something that I am good at... I like to defend myself—I've been known to have the last word...
We live in a culture where we are encouraged to seek justice and fairness for ourselves**

Here's a mind-bender for us to consider:

There are times when we are FULLY JUSTIFIED, but the right thing for us to do is to keep silent.

- My tendency is to point out how I am NOT wrong.
- My tendency is to make sure I've been heard and that people understand that I'm RIGHT.

But the way of the cross sometimes requires us to be Quiet...

- I don't NEED to justify myself to others—Jesus has already justified me!
- **Jesus was FULLY JUSTIFIED, yet he remains silent.**

The cross does this for us.

We are justified by Christ so we don't have to justify and prove ourselves to others.

The cross frees me from what other people think about me—I am justified by the cross!

I am now able to receive what other people think and say about me—even lies and accusations.

- **The cross of Jesus means that I don't need to defend myself!**

- Maybe we would suffer less if we spoke up...
- Maybe we'd feel better about ourselves if we defended ourselves...

But that self-defense and self-promotion is not what Jesus shows us on the way to the cross.

Of course there is a time for us to be bold and speak truth!
Of course we do not keep silent out of fear or shame!

However, I think it is good for us to realize that Jesus said there are times when speaking Biblical truth is like throwing pearls before swine.

- We are NOT supposed to be the correctors of every wrong thing in the world.
- There were times when Jesus was asked DIRECT theological questions and He kept silent.
 - This happened throughout His ministry, but it became more common toward the end.
 - Jesus would see the hard-heartedness of the people asking and would remain silent.

It is OK and good to have a righteous anger over the sins of our culture.
But we need to guard our mouths so we're not simply a bunch of noisy gongs.

In Ecclesiastes we are told that there is a time to speak and a time to be silent.

- When faced with false accusations from dishonest men with twisted hearts Jesus doesn't argue theology.
- When falsely accused of threatening the Roman authority in Israel, Jesus doesn't waste words on deaf ears.
 - Jesus sat silently knowing He is FULLY APPROVED and FULLY JUSTIFIED by his Father.

Paul says in Colossians 4 we must "Walk in wisdom with outsiders, making the best use of the time" This doesn't mean that we hold off from truth.

This doesn't mean that we remain silent so that people don't think we're zealous for Jesus.

- No, we must be bold!
- We must uphold truth and speak the truth in love!

We must be wise!

We need to ask ourselves, "what resembles the way of the cross right now?"

4. The way of the cross reveals Jesus is the Hero—Not Us

Barabbas is a TRULY guilty man— a murderer.

Contrast this with Jesus, who is on trial in our text.

- Jesus sits in stark contrast with Barabbas.
- **Jesus has only ever healed and fed and comforted and encouraged and enlightened people.**
- If there is anyone who deserves a pardon & apology it's Jesus.

Yet, the chains are removed from Barabbas and Jesus goes to the cross.

Remember, there were 3 crosses set up on Golgotha

- **We know there were two criminals executed that day, but that third cross was probably for Barabbas.**
 - Jesus took the cross meant for Barabbas.
 - Jesus hung on a cross that Barabbas had earned.

This absurd exchange is a CLEAR picture of the Gospel.

- A murderer with no remorse goes free.
- Jesus, the innocent son of God hangs on the murderer's cross in his place.

Here is the point that we need to hear—I WAS LIKE BARABBAS

- I literally deserve NOTHING from a holy God because of my sin.
- I was GUILTY in my sin when God came to me.
- I deserved punishment for my sin and separation from God
- **God sent His son Jesus who met me in my sin and set me free and hung on a cross that I deserve.**

- The Gospel tells me I deserves the cross, but Jesus takes that punishment for me so that I can go free.
- If we want to follow Jesus on the way of the cross, we must recognize that we have nothing to offer God.
 - Because of our sin we are like condemned criminals.
 - And so when we approach God, we come to Him in repentance.

- **David came to this point in Psalm 51 when he was called out while in adultery...**
- **Peter just had that moment when he denies Jesus 3 times and then looks eyes with Jesus...**

Both of these men came to God and said, "I AM GUILTY!"

We are not only like Barabbas, but we are also like this crowd.

- Jesus has only ever loved us and offered us salvation and connection with God.
- Jesus had only ever taught, instructed, fed and healed this crowd.

When faced with this way of the cross, the crowd turns on Jesus.

The shame of the cross is too much.

Their fickle hearts turned, and they turn from Jesus and turn toward safety & comfort.

I think we tend to do the same thing...

- When I start to drift from God, the way of the cross can start to seem like drudgery.
- When I start to drift from God, I become like this crowd and I turn to other things for comfort.

It can be easy for us to fall into a crowd mentality too, and turn from Jesus to what is easier in the moment.

Look at the irony of verse 25: **All the people answered, "His blood be on us and on our children!"**

This is true, they are guilty of sending Jesus to the cross—but so am I.

- I also have Jesus' blood on my hands.
- **God's love sent Jesus to the cross to deal with my sin.**
- **Jesus didn't just take the place of some wicked criminal—he took my place on the cross.**

When I sin, it is a reminder that I have Jesus' blood on my hands too.

My sin reminds me that the wages of sin is death, and that Jesus stood in the place of death FOR ME!

Here is another wild truth of the cross:

My sin and rebellion toward God has actually brought about the most incredible response of love from God.

God saw me dead in my sins and responded in LOVE to save me!

So, when I remember that it was MY SIN that sent Jesus to the cross and I see Jesus' blood on my hands:

- I now REJOICE because God has responded to my rebellion with love.
- I now worship God for His incredible love and grace.
- I am reminded EVERY DAY that God met me in my hopeless, broken life and set me free.

Jesus' blood on my hands isn't a shameful reminder—His blood reminds me my hands are CLEAN!

If we want to follow Jesus and go the way of the cross, we must start by seeing that we are Barabbas.

- We are not the heroes of the story.
- We are the guilty and hopeless and broken one.
- Jesus is the hero of the story!

If we want to endure this life and remain faithful we must fix our eyes on Jesus:

Hebrews 12:1-2 (CSB)

Therefore, since we also have such a large cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us lay aside every hindrance and the sin that so easily ensnares us. Let us run with endurance the race that lies before us, 2 keeping our eyes on Jesus, the source and perfecter of our faith. For the joy that lay before him, he endured the cross, despising the shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

- There is encouraging community as we pursue the way of the cross.
- There is faith that is provided and perfected for us on the way of the cross.
- There is JOY that awaits us as we pursue the way of the cross.
- There is intimacy with God as we pursue the way of the cross.

It is worth it to go the way of the cross!

- It will be worth it to endure the temporary shame and hardships that our faith brings us in this world.
- It will be worth it to endure persecution in this life as we pursue perfect intimacy with God.
- It is worth it to walk WITH JESUS on the way of the cross.

This morning, let's not get near the cross and then scatter—this is what the disciples did.

- Let's take the steps that Jesus took.

Today as we worship, we have the opportunity to go the way of the cross and come to Jesus.

- Let's be BOLD and pray for BOLDNESS and COURAGE and POWER!
- Who cares what hardships come with following Jesus—we get to KNOW and BE WITH GOD!
- We have the opportunity to acknowledge our sin and our rebellion before God.
- We have the opportunity to ask God for forgiveness and REPENT of our sin.
- We have the opportunity to be forgiven and to have our hands made clean and holy!

Church, let's join together pursue the way of the cross as a church community—families walking together.

- This morning the communion elements are here to direct us BACK to the way of the cross.
- The carets are here to guide us into the right place & position before God.
- The prayer team is here to help direct us back onto the way of the cross.