

Luke 23:26 - 31 Sympathy and Indifference for God the Son

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27 And there were following Him a great multitude of the people, and of women who were mourning and lamenting Him. 28 But Jesus turning to them said, "Daughters of Jerusalem, stop weeping for Me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. 29 "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.' 30 "Then they will begin TO SAY TO THE MOUNTAINS, 'FALL ON US,' AND TO THE HILLS, 'COVER US.' 31 "For if they do these things in the green tree, what will happen in the dry?"

We come now in our story of God visiting this fallen world to the death of the man Jesus.

In 2 Kings 14 we have the story of Amaziah coming to reign in Judah after his father, the king, had been murdered.

5 Now it came about, as soon as the kingdom was firmly in his hand, that he killed his servants who had slain the king his father. 6 But the sons of the slayers he did not put to death, according to what is written in the book of the law of Moses, as the LORD commanded, saying, "The fathers shall not be put to death for the sons, nor the sons be put to death for the fathers; but each shall be put to death for his own sin."

He killed the servants who had murdered his Father but he was careful not to disturb the children of the guilty, unlike ordinary monarchs of that time period who swept away entire families. Why?

Because of a principal in the Word of God, delivered to us by Moses in the book of Deuteronomy; 24:16 *Fathers shall not be put to death for their children, nor children for their fathers; each is to die for his own sin.*

Amaziah respected the authority of the book. He considered the words of Moses as revelation directly from God and unlike most of his contemporaries, he was careful to observe the principals as direct commands from God.

God through His prophet Ezekiel repeats the death because of sin principle for us this way; *The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him.* Eze. 18:20

Ever since Adams sin after God warned him that sin would bring death, each of us has been born in sin. We are born sinners. Condemned as soon as we enter this fallen world. The soul that sinneth, it shall die. Born into a fallen world, born condemned to die.

That is true of every man, woman, and child born into Adam's race. Except for one man, the Man, Jesus. Born of a virgin, Adam is not His father, God is His Father, and this single man who we will see this morning, bearing His cross that He will die on, was sinless.

The jews who hated Him from envy could find no sin deserving of death, no sin at all, except they accused Him of blasphemy for claiming to be equal with His Father, God.

That would be blasphemy in every case, except for the one case where it was in fact, true. Jesus, sent from God, 2nd person of the trinity, leaves heaven and is born of a virgin, to live among Adams race, a perfect and sinlessly righteous life.

His claim to be equal with His Father was not blasphemy, it was exactly true. But the jews are anxious to be rid of Him, they want their power and wealth and status. They love this world. They love their sin. They condemn the righteous Son of God to death.

The transaction we make, as christians, requires a sinless perfect substitute to

die in our place. We make a trade with Him. God imputes His righteousness to our accounts. And God imputes our sin onto Him. He literally takes the punishment that I was due. And I positionally, in Christ, am spotless and perfect before God because Christ's perfect righteous life is imputed to my account.

Every man born deserves to be dragging a cross to golgotha to die for their own sins. *All have sinned and come short of the glory of God.* Ro. 3:23 But a single man, born not to Adam's race, but born of God, is righteous and faithful and true, and does not deserve to die for His own sins. He has no sin.

In the world's courtroom He is found innocent by Pilate, then Herod, then Pilate's wife, then Pilate again, but Pilate must capitulate to the riotous jews in order to maintain his position of wealth and power.

He tries different things to try to save Jesus from death, but the jews have fallen under a spell of darkness and they are thirsty for the blood and death of Jesus. Pilate capitulates. He makes the order; Kill the king of the jews.

And we find ourselves at that moment this morning. Jesus is making the final trek to golgotha, or in our language, skull hill, to be crucified. And the Romans made you bear your own cross that you would hang on. Jesus is literally dragging His own cross to the hill where He will be nailed up onto it.

26 And when they led Him away, they laid hold of one Simon of Cyrene, coming in from the country, and placed on him the cross to carry behind Jesus.

This man Simon has come from a far away country in order to celebrate the passover in Jerusalem. He has just arrived and the Romans have for whatever reason, or no reason, pressed him into service for their purposes.

Notice that it says; *and placed on him the cross to carry behind Jesus* Most scholars think that the way this is written, he was employed, pressed into service by the Romans, who had jurisdiction and authority to do that, he is

compelled into service, probably to pick up the long end of the cross that Jesus is dragging behind Him, and help move things along faster by carrying some of the weight.

Jesus has been beaten severely. He's a bloody pulp. It has been much more than 24 hours since His fully human frame has had any rest. That combined with all of the physical trauma and the broken heart over the human condition under the darkness of Satan, Jesus is way way beyond exhaustion.

Both the Romans and the Jews want to get this over with. Get this done. So they grab a man and place part of the load Jesus is bearing to Calvary, on this man. Simon of Cyrene.

Who is he, and why do we know his name if he's just a random buff guy that the roman's grabbed to do this tiny bit part in this drama? Simon of Cyrene.

Cyrene is in North Africa in the area that we would now call Tripoli. In Libya. And at that time there was a very large contingent of jewish people who lived in North Africa. Cyrene and Alexandria both are in that area of North Africa.

So many jews lived there, that we are told in Acts 2 that one of the distinct languages familiar to jews who were in Jerusalem from the district of Cyrene and Libya, they would have had their own synagogue for their own language.

But at Penteconst, these foreign jews who spoke in the dialect of Libya and Cyrene were hearing the Galilean apostles glorifying God in their own language.

Jews from North Africa were prominent at the jewish feasts in Jerusalem. And Simon is one of these. But . . . why does he have a name. For some reason, Luke tells us this is Simon of Cyrene. That's significant.

Simon was a common name among the jews. Peter's name is Simon. Lots of Simon's. Luke makes this distinction for one reason. Christians that Luke is

writing to will recognize who *this* Simon is.

Mark tells us in Mark 15:20,21; *20 After they had mocked Him, they removed the purple robe and put His own clothes back on Him. Then they led Him out to crucify Him. 21 Now Simon of Cyrene, the father of Alexander and Rufus, was passing by on his way in from the country, and the soldiers forced him to carry the cross of Jesus.*

We can safely and interestingly make some connections, and church history and tradition agrees. In Romans 16:13 at the end of the book of Romans as Paul makes all of his salutary greetings to the christians in Rome, Paul says;

13 Greet Rufus, a choice man in the Lord, also his mother and mine. Rufus was a choice believer and one who had made it to Rome. We can glean from the statement about his mother that Simon himself is no longer alive, but Rufus mother is, and she was like a mother to Paul. Very intimate.

We learn in Acts why that may be; In Acts 11:

19 So then those who were scattered because of the persecution that arose in connection with Stephen made their way to Phoenicia and Cyprus and Antioch, speaking the word to no one except to Jews alone. 20 But there were some of them, men of Cyprus and Cyrene, who came to Antioch and began speaking to the Greeks also, preaching the Lord Jesus. 21 And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a large number who believed turned to the Lord. 22 And the news about them reached the ears of the church at Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas off to Antioch. 23 Then when he had come and witnessed the grace of God, he rejoiced and began to encourage them all with resolute heart to remain true to the Lord; 24 for he was a good man, and full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. And considerable numbers were brought to the Lord. 25 And he left for Tarsus to look for Saul; 26 and when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. And it came about that for an entire year they met with the church, and taught considerable numbers; and the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch.

Men from Cyrene came as missionaries to Antioch and preached the Lord Jesus to the greeks in that place and an important church was formed there at Antioch.

Church tradition says Simon, who believed in Jesus, at Calvary, after carrying the cross, went home to Cyrene and began a church there that fourished and that church sent Simon to Antioch to preach Jesus in that place, and that church called Barnabas, actually, he was sent by the Jerusalem church to help the folks at Antioch, and then Barnabas found Saul of Tarsus, or Paul, and they taught together there for a year.

That may be the time frame where Mrs. Simon of Cyrene became like a mom to Paul. The world never recovered from Paul, who was sent out from Antioch just like Simon was sent out from Cyrene, to plant churches.

Do you see the providence of God in salvation. Simon is just a jew who never heard about Jesus until the day he stumbled into Jerusalem and the Roman's compelled him to follow Jesus and bear His cross. Simon went back to Cyrene a different person. Somewhere in that ordeal he believed in Jesus and gave his life forevermore to Him.

A final note fwiw. A burial cave in the Kidron Valley discovered in 1941 by E. L. Sukenik, belonging to Cyrenian Jews and dating before AD 70, was found to have an ossuary inscribed twice in Greek "Alexander son of Simon".

Such is the providence of God who calls people to Himself who were not looking for Him, but were found by Him and called to be His own. Simon came to town as a faithful jew to celebrate passover with the jews, but went home a christian. He and his entire family were changed forever, and we will meet them in heaven some day.

Next we will consider 2 more groups separately;

27 And there were following Him a great multitude of the people, and of women who were mourning and lamenting Him.

We are very familiar with the multitude. People who for whatever reason find Jesus interesting entertainment. They wanted a *political* messiah. They thought perhaps Jesus was Messiah. He raised Lazarus from the dead after 4 days in the grave! He fed a huge multitude more than once with basically nothing. He created food on the spot. He taught like no one else ever taught.

They want a messiah and Jesus looks pretty good. But disillusionment sets in and this multitude is fickle. They are locked onto a certain political picture of Messiah that meets their needs. A messiah who can topple Rome and cast the foreign occupiers out and who will make Israel great again.

When Jesus doesn't do anything like what they want, they become hostile to Him. Plus their rulers, the big important high priests and scribes and pharisee's all hate Jesus. And those folks have claimed that Jesus gets his powers to do mighty works from Satan, not God. Jesus is a blasphemer.

And the same multitude that received Him as their dream king, now has cried for His blood and followed Him to Golgotha. And to make matters worse, Pilate has mocked them by delivering this helpless beaten man as their king. Here's your impotent king you idiotic jews. Rome isn't going anywhere. But here's your king.

That's the multitude. Confused. Disappointed. Betrayed. Angry. Dashed hopes. Worse off now than before He came. And Rome is rubbing it in. Here's the King of the Jews. Next? Got anyone else that wants to challenge us?

Then we have a contingent of women who are like professional mourners.

27 And there were following Him a great multitude of the people, and of women who were mourning and lamenting Him.

This group is different from Mary Magdelene and the mother of Jesus who are standing afar off. In Israel it was customary for women to howl and lament

when someone died. We see that different places in the Bible.

Here we have a group of people who are very emotional about Jesus. Mourning and lamenting His imminent death.

Will we see these ladies in heaven? Does being emotional about Jesus get you to heaven. We have lots of false religions and cults who get very emotionally charged up about Jesus. To this day. Lots of emotion about Jesus. But emotion can fall short of belief and giving yourself to Him as Lord.

His response to them indicates they have stopped short of owning Him as Lord and Savior. They are mourning His death but He tells them, don't mourn for my death, mourn over your own. Shocking.

28 But Jesus turning to them said, "Daughters of Jerusalem, stop weeping for Me, but weep for yourselves and for your children.

Daughters of who? Or what? Jerusalem. These are daughters of a city that God has abandoned and a city that has abandoned their God. They are daughters, intimately identified daughters of a city that Jesus wept over 3 days earlier.

In Luke 19:41 Jesus words as He approached Jerusalem, the place identified with these women, and the place they are daughters of; *41 And when He approached, He saw the city and wept over it, 42 saying, "If you had known in this day, even you, the things which make for peace! But now they have been hidden from your eyes. 43 "For the days shall come upon you when your enemies will throw up a bank before you, and surround you, and hem you in on every side, 44 and will level you to the ground and your children within you, and they will not leave in you one stone upon another, because you did not recognize the time of your visitation."*

If you're a daughter of Jesus, rejoice! But if you're a daughter of Jerusalem, a place that is already desolated as far as God is concerned, don't mourn for me, mourn for yourselves!

“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were unwilling.” Mt. 23:37

Jesus warns these women who are all worked up emotionally about Him. He says, I'm going to be fine . . . you need not mourn for me. Mourn for yourselves. Mourn for anyone connected to Jerusalem. It's about to be desolated. And then He says;

*29“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.’
30“Then they will begin TO SAY TO THE MOUNTAINS, ‘FALL ON US,’ AND TO THE HILLS, ‘COVER US.’*

Don't weep for me, weep for yourselves because utter destruction is coming. And that truth is actually applicable to the whole earth. Jerusalem very quickly, but the whole earth also in God's time.

Jesus quotes the prophet Hosea when he spoke of the decimation of the Northern kingdom of Israel when Assyria came into Israel and captured the northern 10 tribes and carried them away.

This is colorful language that would instantly bring a mental image to those hearers. From Hosea 10;

...7 Samaria will be carried off with her king like a twig on the surface of the water. 8 The high places of Aven will be destroyed— it is the sin of Israel; thorns and thistles will overgrow their altars. Then they will say to the mountains, “Cover us!” and to the hills, “Fall on us!”

Such was the devastation in 722 BC. The 10 northern tribes never returned. They were scattered to the 4 winds.

Jesus tells these daughters of Jerusalem, you'll be like them. Mourn for

yourselves, peoples of Jerusalem. Desolate place. God will abandon you. He already has. You just don't know it yet. Don't weep for me, weep for yourselves.

From 66 - 70 AD, within just a 3rd of a century of Jesus death, Rome came down and slaughtered hundreds of thousands of jews in 985 towns. When they got to Jerusalem, they didn't leave one stone on top of another.

When Jesus tells them; *Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bore, and the breasts that never nursed* it isn't hyperbole. Better for the barren. Better to have bourn the sorrow of never having little ones than to bear the sorrow of seeing your little ones dashed to pieces in front of you.

Does that seem like cruel and unusual punishment to our little snowflake minds these days?

31 "For if they do these things in the green tree, what will happen in the dry?"

The green tree represents perfect opportunity. The green tree is the patient grace of God waiting for sinners to repent. All of the prophets. All of the revelation. All of the history waiting for Messiah. And then He arrives. His herald identifies Him, just as prophecied.

He speaks and the demons flee in fear. He speaks and the wind and waves obey His voice. He speaks and disease flees the land of Israel. He speaks and people blind from birth see for the first time. Legs and arms that were dead and limp are restored. He speaks and the dumb speak back. He speaks and lepers are cleansed. He speaks and sins are forgiven.

Beloved the evidence was overwhelming. That was the green tree. And in spite of everything, they are dragging Him to His murder. In the green tree you murder God, what does the dry tree look like?

That's a fearful thing to consider. Revelation chapter 6 again gives us a future picture of people calling for the mountains to fall on them and hide them from

the wrath of the Lamb, when the heavens rip open and Jesus is seen returning in judgment on this world that has rebelled against Him since Adam's fall.

These lamenting daughters of Jerusalem are a cautionary tale to this world. Within the boundaries of Satan's kingdom, the authority to reign of the ruler of this world, there is a wideness. Not just Jerusalem, but the whole world is under judgement. The whole world is condemned.

We have the fiercely wicked hypocritical rulers of Israel who will have Jesus removed, murdered, basically at their hands, His blood is on their hands in spite of the Romans who physically carry out the murderous task.

We have the disillusioned mob, exemplified horrifically by Judas, who sold Jesus for 30 days wages. Jesus failed. Politically. He cannot or will not conquer Rome and make Israel great again, so then, what use is He. Kill Him.

We have the clueless Romans who are outside of the household of Israel, outside the physical chosen people of God who received all of the promises. Jesus is entertainment to these soldiers, these men who seem to thrive on cruelty. They really don't have a horse in this race, but they'll pummel Jesus face to non-recognition simply out of evil cruelty within them.

Probably the largest group present on this morning of passover busyness are the indifferent. Oh, look, isn't that Jesus? The guy who was the teacher everyone seems so infatuated with. Yeah, that's Jesus. The Romans are crucifying Him. Wonder what happened? Oh, never mind, we've got a lot to do today. Gotta keep moving.

But the most alarming group on this day are the daughters of Jerusalem who have a great sympathy and a lot of emotionally charged wailing and lamenting for Jesus, who are none the less, daughters of the city that has rejected it's Messiah. They are not daughters of Jesus. In spite of their emotional zeal, they are daughters of a condemned and desolated place.

Within the boundaries of Satan's rule, Satan's world, you can be zealous for

Jesus, sympathetic for Jesus, emotionally charged about Jesus, and still be a daughter and or son of the condemned.

It's frightening because it's so non obvious. We expect the murderous leaders of Israel and the abusive soldiers and the spineless governor and the traitorous rejectors to be in hell. Those who were so open in their rebellion. Of course.

But it's a wake up call that these sympathetic, weeping, emotion charged women will share the same hell with the openly rebellious. The haters and the sympathizers, both in the same hell. Along with the indifferent too.

Daughters of Jerusalem. Sympathetic. Emotionally moved. But never-the-less, daughters of this condemned world rather than daughters of Jesus.

This is a dark scene. Jesus has declared back in Luke 22:53 that this hour of darkness belongs to the powers of evil. Why? We could ask today, why are the real believers so thin on the ground. Why are there so few bright lights for Jesus in a dark dark world.

And He told us ahead of time; *Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it. For the gate is narrow and the way is constricted that leads to life, and there are few who find it.* Mt. 7:14

In our scene this morning, the few are really few. The disciples have fled in fear of their lives. John is present but a safe distance away. A few women who are in fact daughters of Jesus are present.

We met one bright light that has just been quickened from the dead. Simon of Cyrene. And next week we will meet a 2nd light that gets quickened out of this world and into the kingdom the same day.

Even in Satan's hour of darkness, God is still at work quickening the remnant, His choice few, to life.

Finally, we have to ask; Which group are you in this morning? I doubt that there are any rebellious enemy combatants of the Kingdom of God in our midst today. But are you among the indifferent? Are you sympathetic and emotional about Jesus but you remain a daughter or a son of this world?

Our prayer is that every one here this morning is a son or daughter of the King of kings and Lord of lords. And we pray that many more would be added to our tiny number here this morning.