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## Sunday's Sermon

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Lent 4 / Gospel Lesson

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# Sunday's Sermon

March 31, 2019 (Lent 4 C)

**Matthew 27:27-31**

***Jesus' Darkest Moments: BULLIED***

Is it tough to believe that Jesus of Nazareth, the victim of such horribly ***bullying*** as we see in our Gospel Lesson for today . . . *really is* . . . the

KING of kings / the eternal and almighty member of the Triune God-Head who is the Creator, Redeemer, and Judge of all mankind / in control of all the universe at all times? Our first reaction might be, *“No – not at all! That’s exactly what I believe and why I’m here today: to worship my King and my Savior! He and He alone could fulfill all those hundreds of ancient prophecies. God provided all sorts of eye witness testimony about His miracles / His death / and His glorious resurrection. God provided more than enough rock solid evidence as to who Jesus really is and what His sacrifice means for us all.”*

But . . . it’s not as easy to believe that incredible Truth as we might think. Jesus’ own half-brothers, who grew up with Him in His own family – had trouble believing that he / this MAN / this brother with whom they had grown up – was the King of kings. John records for us: ***“Jesus’ brothers said to him, ‘Leave Galilee and go to Judea, so that your disciples there may see the works you do. No one who wants to become a public figure acts in secret. Since you are doing these things, show yourself to the world.’ For even his own brothers did not believe in him.” (John 7:3–5).***

The leaders of His own Jewish people – the most well educated people of that day: the scribes, Pharisees and Sadducees (who knew the Scriptures and the prophecies SO WELL) didn’t think he was *THIS King*. They even witnessed and thoroughly investigated his miracles – and they heard him speak in person (where He eluded every single one of their clever traps). Many of His own followers – people who gathered around Him . . . gave up on Him because He did not act the way they expected *THIS King* to act. And – He taught things they found revolting and too difficult to accept. John records these facts for us too: ***“On hearing it, many of his disciples said, ‘This is a hard teaching. Who can accept it?’ . . . From this time many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed him. ‘You do not want to leave too, do you?’ Jesus asked the Twelve.” (John 6:60,66-67).***

Down through the ages we’ve seen vast multitudes of people who call themselves “Christians” (along with, of course, many others who don’t

consider themselves to be Christians) esteem this “Jesus of Nazareth” as a great man, a good moral example to follow, and a wonderful prophet – but they would vehemently deny that He is *the Almighty King* – the One and Only True God and man in One. The vast majority out there just can **not** and will **not** accept that. They find it not only difficult, but downright impossible to believe.

And . . . now we turn to our **Gospel Lesson** for today: *THIS is the King of kings?* The God of Almighty and limitless Power . . . seemingly powerless? This victim there being bullied and assaulted both psychologically and physically . . . being tortured, mocked, and poked fun of? Being led away in shame to be executed as a rotten criminal? *Can THIS “king” . . . be THAT King – the Almighty King of kings?*

**Matthew 27:27–31** (EHV)

**27 Then the governor’s soldiers took Jesus into the Praetorium and gathered the whole cohort of soldiers around him. 28 They stripped him and put a scarlet robe on him. 29 They twisted together a crown of thorns and put it on his head. They put a staff in his right hand, knelt in front of him, and mocked him by saying, “Hail, King of the Jews!”** [That word “mocked” highlights how this was such a childish, ridiculous, mean-spirited, and foolish thing they were doing here . . . to GOD Himself?!] **30 They spit on him, took the staff, and hit him repeatedly on his head.**

**31 After they had mocked him, they took off the robe and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him away to crucify him.**

YES . . . that was GOD there facing that wretched display of the depth of what His sinful creatures are capable of. I don’t have to ask you to “pretend you were there” at this ugly event – you were! We were all there. Jesus said, **“Whatever you did for the least of these brothers and sisters of mine – you did for me.”** The flip-side of that coin is true as well. Jesus said to Paul: **“Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?”** When you mocked, ridiculed, and bullied that person – you did that to Him . . . and so did I. When you gathered with that ugly mob to gossip and poke fun at that “loser” there in the corner – you did that to Him. When you hit that person in anger . . . you hit

HIM. When your anger boiled over and you spat in hatred – you spat at HIM. When you sat back and did nothing to defend that person being victimized – you stood there among the onlookers who did nothing to defend your King. *Oh – you were there, and so was I.* We might **say** we follow Jesus as King and Lord – but, just like His brothers, like the religious leaders of Israel, like the disciples, and like our culture – we take serious issue with some of the things this King says and does! We have the audacity to chuckle when He says our priorities are all messed up. We ignore Him when He says our families are suffering because we have disregarded His instructions to us regarding our duties and roles. We smugly shrug our shoulders when He points out that we are thinking about no one but ourselves. He tells us to be in worship, to study the Bible, to read it and take it to heart . . . but if we don't want to, well then no one is going to tell us what to do! We get downright angry when He says that we are insubordinate, greedy, and self-centered weaklings who would rather be led by our own corrupt desires and follow the mob . . . rather than follow Him. We flat-out refuse to let Him be the King of our bank accounts / check books, or King over our weekly calendars. We say that we serve our King – but we'll only serve Him or His church if it's convenient, rewarding, and fun. In addition to all that, we get frustrated and angry when He allows any degree of pain, suffering and injustice into our lives (even though He told us to expect it!)

Look at Him there in this lesson – suffering such horrible pain and injustice Himself . . . *do you really want Him to be your King . . . or do you think it's all a **big joke** – and that He is a joke too.* This is a tough and critical question (not a downright simple one) I am putting before you today. Jesus says the answer / your relationship with THIS KING – is the difference between eternal salvation and eternal damnation: ***“For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because they have not believed in the name of God's one and only Son.” (John 3:17–18).***

If . . . despite all your doubts and objections, despite all your sins and mistakes, mockery and hatred, if – despite all that the crowds have and continue to say about this “Jesus of Nazareth” and despite how you might feel about His governance of your life and this world . . . if you BELIEVE that **He is** the KING of kings – then it’s not just a matter of evaluating the evidence . . . you have experienced the greatest and most powerful miracle you will ever experience: you have been adopted and baptized as His child and you are an heir of eternal paradise.

You’ve experienced the same transformation that **James** (the half-brother of Jesus) experienced that led him to become a pillar in the early church, writer of the book of the Bible that bears his name, and valiant martyr for the Faith. That same transformation led two religious leaders: **Nicodemus** and **Joseph of Arimathea** to risk their lives and approach Pilate for the body of Jesus to prepare it for burial. It turned **Saul** – the murderer and persecutor, into **Paul** – the apostle and martyr. It has turned us from being sceptics and scoffers into His followers and disciples – for everything He endured on that dreadful Friday He did for us.

These miraculous transformations (from those who hate Him to those who love Him) continue to happen every single day. The Spirit of God has made YOU into who you are today, and what you will be in eternity. Your KING is a **Savior King** – He endured all that shame for you. He restrained His power and took it all; for you. Your King became your sin – so that you could have His glory. You have been made His servant and His child, and will now reign with Him in everlasting holiness. This is all true because He says it’s true – and His resurrection is proof that He indeed is ***THIS KING – the Almighty King of kings, who is like no other king there has ever been, or ever will be.*** Enough; enough with the mockery.

In HUMILITY – **bow** before your King and pledge your allegiance anew to Him. If He says it . . . believe it. If He exposes your guilt and sin . . . repent of it. If He tells you that you are forgiven . . . you are. If His plans for you are not your plans . . . accept whatever your King

should decide to give you or take from you. If He demands something of you . . . give it. If He wants you to lay down your life . . . offer it. It belongs to Him anyways. If you have to face **bullying** in your life (in whatever manner it should come – from the culture we live in / your siblings / your neighbors / your spouse / your government / your own body that has begun to torture you) then remember YOUR KING on this day, and stand there stone faced in His power . . . **and face it**. He is your KING – and He is the best, most glorious, most humble, most loving, most powerful, and most victorious King of all . . . and He's with you, right there next to you, no matter what it is that you should ever have to face down here in this dark world, where yes . . . things can be that ugly and horrible. For vindication / EASTER – is right around the corner!

In Christ, the Way, the Truth, the Life -  
Pastor Wayne Halldorson



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