



THE STORY OF *Everything* LUKE 24:27

Don't Reject Jesus (vv. 1-20)

For various reasons, the religious leaders and people around Jesus rejected him. Before Jesus was brought to Pilate, he had already been rejected by the Sanhedrin. They had heard his confession that he was the Messiah, they spit and beat him, tearing their robes and shouting “blasphemy!” (Mk. 14:61-65). Their hatred was strong. But why?

He was a threat to the power of the Jewish system. He taught with a type of authority that meant that power was about service, not about control. But the religious leaders of Jesus’ day had a strong grip on power. They wanted to maintain the traditions, to prevent the people from falling back into idolatry, and returning to exile. But what Jesus had done was showed that they had exchanged the idols of the nations for the idols of the heart. For just hours earlier, Jesus told his disciples, “If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not be guilty of sin. Now, however, they have no excuse for their sin. He who hates me hates my Father as well. If I had not done among them what no one else did, they would not be guilty of sin. But now they have seen these miracles, and yet they have hated both me and my Father. But this is to fulfill what is written in their Law: ‘They hated me without reason’” (Jn 15:22-25).

And since they could not convict Jesus to death on mere religious grounds, they altered their charge, bringing him to Pilate. Pilate was a heavy handed and inept leader who loved the praise of people. So when Jesus was brought before him, the threat that he was trying to be king would have raised his hackles. Pilate also knew that his heavy-handed leadership style was under the scrutiny of Rome, so he sought to find a way to keep things from getting out of hand. He offered the people the choice between Jesus and Barabbas, thinking he could escape their fury. Instead of declaring Jesus to have no fault and releasing him, Pilate rejected Jesus because of social pressure.

For the crowds, they rejected Jesus because he wasn’t the Messiah they wanted. When Pilate offered Jesus Barabbas, the people cheered for this gross zealot, a political activist who appealed to the mob. He would lead them to freedom through his lawlessness. Instead of taking Jesus, the son of Joseph, the people chose an ugly substitute – Jesus Barabbas – whose name means Deliverer, the son of the father. Jesus Christ didn’t fit the political expectations, so a different Jesus would have to do.

For the soldiers, they rejected Jesus as mere savages. They mocked him. Spit on him. Bowed down in mock worship. Hit him on the head. Mob violence just builds. And for many soldiers, it’s just what you did. You followed everyone else.

Yet in his rejection, Jesus shows us what the King of the Universe has come to do. The thorns that Adam had struggled with since the Garden of Eden and plagued his role as God’s



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representative king were now fashioned into a crown and placed on the head of God's true King. The sting of the curse would be coupled with the rejection of people so that the King of the Universe would feel the curse weigh upon his head and pierce his skin so that those who know that they are rejected, worthless, despised, and unloved, could come and...

Receive the Love of Jesus (vv. 21-32)

If there ever was a display of love, Jesus walked that road. Carrying the beam of the cross along the longest route throughout the city, a Jew from North Africa, Simon of Cyrene, carried the crossbeam. This was not how he had envisioned celebrating the Passover. But as the cross was brought to the place of crucifixion, Jesus refused to take anything that would numb the pain of the cross. Taking no wine with myrrh, there was no dulling the physical pain, and there would be no numbing of the spiritual pain he would experience.

Instead, he would endure all of the pain of the cross. There would be the physical pain – spikes driven through his wrists and feet which would have been preceded by a flogging of the worst kind, ripping skin from his back. The cramping, the beating, the pain to gasp a single breath. They would put the charges above his head on a placard: "The King of the Jews."

As if the crucifixion was not enough, Jesus was hung between two robbers who would hurl their insults at him (vv. 27-32). Yet Jesus would not return insult for insult. If anything, Luke's gospel tells us that there was a change of heart in one of the robbers. Having watched the scorn and derision that Jesus faced, and hearing the words of grace that came out of his mouth offering forgiveness, Luke tells us that the one robber's heart was melted (read Lk. 23:39-43).

Misunderstood, beaten, mocked, and abused, Jesus took it all. And for those who have eyes to see and ears to hear, the greatest punishment he took that day was for those who would look upon him as their sacrificial substitute, like that thief on the cross. For there, with eyes opened, he could see that there was a love beyond any measure. A love that would endure pain and suffering, a love that would take the wrath and punishment of God so that guilty, vile sinners like me could be forgiven.

If there was ever a display of love, the cross shows us that it was displayed in Jesus, for those who would receive. And what it means to receive his love is to...

Believe by Faith (vv. 33-39)

As Jesus took the wrath for sin, as he endured the scorning and mocking, as the pain set in – spiritually, emotionally, physically, he could only cry out with the words of Psalm 22: "My God, my God! Why have you forsaken me?" In a few hours, Jesus would be dead. But first, darkness would set in. As Amos 8:9-10 says, "I will make the sun go down at noon and darken the earth



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in broad daylight...I will make that time like mourning for an only son..." Wrapped in darkness, the curse of God fell upon him. The thorns of Adam lay on his head. He was despised and rejected. What Adam deserved, Christ took. The horror of being despised and rejected. And as he would breathe his last and give up his spirit and commit it into the hands of his Father, he would finish all the work of God for anyone who would look upon the cross and receive him by faith.

And when he died, Mark tells us what he accomplished. As he breathed his last and cried out, the veil that had separated humans from coming in to the presence of God was torn in two. The place where God had dwelt was no longer separated from humans. No longer was God inaccessible. No longer was God closed off to one person one day a year in a shroud of darkness and cloud. God is no longer far off. God is no longer removed from us. God has made himself known. But the God of all power and might has made himself known in weakness.

This is how Christ is seen. Christ is not seen for who he is in his power and might. Christ is not seen in his strength and force. Christ is seen in weakness. For as the Roman centurion standing at the foot of the cross looked at the dead Christ, he could only say, "Truly this man was the Son of God!"

It is only when we see the power of God in the weakness of God that we see our sin there. It is only when we see that he was despised and rejected that we can be accepted and loved. And it is only when we see that he suffered for us that we can come near. For until we learn to embrace the bloody mess of the Messiah, we will always despise pain and suffering.

But that is not the way of the cross. The way of the cross has always been an embrace of the lowly, the despised, the rejected. It is the way of love that opens the eyes to show that there is real beauty in the mess, the pain, the sorrow, the suffering of this life. Because in the pain, sorrow, and messiness of this life, Christ comes to show us what true love, wholeness, and beauty is. He doesn't reject the weak, the broken, the hurt, the despised. He welcomes those who will look upon him and see that their thorns are worn by him and their crosses have been removed so that the King can take your heart and fill you with the love of the kingdom.