



# SCOURGED MY LORD

*SERIES: THE GOSPEL OF LUKE*

Luke 22:63-71

81st Message

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February 22, 2015

George Herbert wrote a poem describing the suffering of Jesus called *The Sacrifice*. The poem consists of 63 stanzas, four verses each, and each stanza concludes with the refrain, “Was ever grief like mine?” Here is the first stanza:

O, all ye, who pass by, whose eyes and mind  
To worldly things are sharp, but to me blind:  
To me, who took eyes that I might you find:  
Was ever grief like mine?

In these weeks leading up to Easter the focus will be on the sufferings of Jesus which culminate in the crucifixion. We are invited to enter into these sufferings, to companion with Jesus, to know the depth of grief that the man of sorrows experienced. But that is not necessarily easy for many of us. We have a keen eye to worldly things but are often blind to Jesus. Or we are moved deeply when we read about the death of twenty Coptic Christians in Egypt as we did this week or when we watch a video that details the sex trade industry around the world. Or we can empathize with someone who is suffering in a way that we have suffered but have no experience that compares with that of Jesus. As a result, when we read the story of Christ’s suffering we can do so in a detached, uninvolved way. The story is so familiar to us and beyond our personal experience.

Is it important for us to enter into the passion story? Why is it important? How do we engage in a less detached manner? What can we learn about God and ourselves through the sufferings of Jesus? These are some of the questions we will ponder in the next several weeks. We would rather talk about hope and the resurrection but we have to realize that there is more on the passion of Jesus than on the resurrection.

Our Luke studies resume following the betrayal and arrest of Jesus, and the denial of Peter.

## Mocking and Beating

**Now the men who were holding Jesus in custody were mocking him as they beat him. They also blindfolded him and kept asking him, “Prophesy! Who is it that struck you?” And they said many other things against him, blaspheming him. (Luke 22:63–65 ESV)**

Luke gives attention to the torture and cruel treatment of Jesus mainly in these verses. The other three gospels include a scourging that takes place prior to the crucifixion. But Luke seems to tread lightly on the physical and emotional pain inflicted on Jesus. Here the harsh treatment of Jesus is handed out by the men holding him, a reference most likely to the temple guards or soldiers who were present at the arrest. Later, Roman soldiers will carry out the scourging ordered by Pilate.

The primary verbs in this text are mocking, asking, and said (or saying). Holding, beating, blindfolding, striking, and blaspheming are modifying words. This would seem to suggest that although Jesus

was physically tortured, Luke wants to emphasize the fact that the mocking cut deeper than the physical blows.

Of course I don’t want to minimize the physical beating that Jesus experienced. The scourging that took place prior to his crucifixion was a brutal punishment. The person to be scourged was tied to a column or post and struck with a whip consisting of several thongs, each one of which had pieces of bone or metal attached. As a result of flogging the flesh was ripped apart.

We don’t know if scourging was part of the striking that took place here. I am inclined to think not because scourging was a Roman punishment. In any event the strikes or blows given to Jesus in this scene were violent and perhaps included the use of a rod or club.

The three main verbs are all in the imperfect tense indicating that the mocking and beating took place repeatedly throughout the night. After the arrest Jesus was brought to the high priest’s home. Jesus was questioned not only by Caiaphas, the high priest, but also by his father-in-law Annas, the former high priest who still wielded enormous influence. We assume that the questioning has concluded and Jesus is being tortured throughout the night as they await the dawn and a more formal trial before the Sanhedrin.

Jesus fully anticipated his suffering as well as his resurrection. We read what Jesus told his disciples in chapter 9:

**“The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised.” (Luke 9:22)**

Jesus repeats the same idea to his disciples in chapter 18:

**“See, we are going up to Jerusalem, and everything that is written about the Son of Man by the prophets will be accomplished. For he will be delivered over to the Gentiles and will be mocked and shamefully treated and spit upon. And after flogging him, they will kill him, and on the third day he will rise.” (Luke 18:31–33)**

Mocking not only happens here, but also by Herod and his soldiers as well as Pilate’s soldiers:

**“And Herod with his soldiers treated him with contempt and mocked him. Then, arraying him in splendid clothing, he sent him back to Pilate.” (Luke 23:11)**

**At the crucifixion, Pilate’s soldiers “also mocked him, coming up and offering him sour wine”.** (Luke 23:36)

Mocking means to ridicule or make fun of. The temple guards were having a good time. For them this was a party atmosphere where even the most conscientious of the soldiers were joining into the revelry. They put a blindfold on Jesus, one of them would strike him, and then they would command him to prophesy and give the name of the person who had struck him. One can almost hear the shouting and laughter. Jesus is fulfilling his role as a prophet and suffering the same fate as the prophets did in the Old Testament.

Both Matthew and Mark describe this same activity:

**Then they spit in his face and struck him. And some slapped him, saying, “Prophecy to us, you Christ! Who is it that struck you?” (Matt 26:67–68)**

**And some began to spit on him and to cover his face and to strike him, saying to him, “Prophecy!” And the guards received him with blows. (Mark 14:65)**

Bullying, teasing, and mocking are cruel, demeaning, abusive, and dehumanizing. Children do it as well as adults. If you were the subject of such abuse as a child growing up you know how hurtful words can be when a crowd gangs up on a weaker victim. The saying that “sticks and stones may break my bones, but words can never hurt me” is absolutely false. The body can heal from physical blows but the words remain forever entrenched in our minds. Even an unkind nickname can remain lodged in your memory. The emotional trauma experienced by prisoners of war remains long after the body has healed. Most of us have been made fun of at some point in our lives. Even sarcasm is humor at someone else’s expense.

As I suggested, the words of disdain and dishonor may have hurt Jesus more than the physical blows. The reason might be that Jesus is the Son of God. And yet he was being ridiculed and tormented by the very people he came to save. The soldiers speak many blasphemous things against him. Over and over Jesus was reviled, defamed, and slandered. These soldiers whom God loved and longed to redeem represent the world’s hatred of Jesus. “Was ever grief like mine?”

In the passion narrative we are reminded over and over of Isaiah’s words:

**He was despised and rejected by men;  
a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief;  
and as one from whom men hide their faces  
he was despised, and we esteemed him not.  
Surely he has borne our griefs  
and carried our sorrows;  
yet we esteemed him stricken,  
smitten by God, and afflicted. (Is. 53:3–4)**

I believe it is crucial for us to enter into the sufferings of Jesus. But why? One reason is that we might know deeply and personally what God did for each of us, what it cost him, what he had to endure to redeem my life and your life. We have a God who spilled blood for us. This is hard for us to imagine. No other god would do this. No other human would do this. And yet that is exactly what the God of the Bible did. He stood in our place. The one who knew no sin became sin on our behalf and took God’s judgment upon himself that each of us deserve. This represents to us how deeply our God loves us.

One of the hardest things for me is to come up with sermon titles, just ask our women in the office. I will try out several on them, asking what they think. This week I had some ideas but was unsettled. I asked my wife and she suggested a title taken from a poem that Jill Briscoe shared at our women’s retreat in 1984: Scourged My Lord.

I was a little hesitant because I didn’t think the scourging actually happened in our text and so I asked her why that was a good title. Her response was immediate and emotional—they scourged MY Lord. Her emphasis was on “my.” This was deeply personal. It was as if she were saying they hurt MY child. The Lord is MY shepherd. The Lord is MY redeemer. God is MY rock. MY Lord was beaten and mocked for me.

A second reason that we enter into the sufferings of Jesus is so that we can follow Jesus, take up our crosses, and suffer like he did. We are learning the way of Christ, the way of the cross, the way of self-sacrifice, the downward way. We are learning to die to self, to shed the way of self that seeks to promote and protect. We are learning to be humble, other-centered, and accepting rather than controlling, dominating, selfish, and manipulative. We learn to do this in our marriages, our family relationships, our work situations, and our church community. Jesus doesn’t just give us words, but also the pattern to follow. Jesus shows us what it is like to be truly human and live in the image of God.

How do we enter into the sufferings of Jesus? One thought that is important to remember is that Jesus suffered as a human being, abandoned and alone. He didn’t suffer as God, as a superhuman unaffected by pain. Yes, Jesus is God, but he emptied himself and took on the form of a man and he suffered as any person would suffer under such cruel treatment. Even though Jesus anticipated his suffering and death he felt real pain and real agony, the same kind of agony that a hostage would suffer by the hands of ISIS terrorists or a woman would experience who was sold into sexual slavery. Jesus suffered undeserved, unfair, and unwarranted pain.

And so we contemplate and mediate on the Scriptures. We use our imagination. Art can be helpful especially for more visual people. My wife is visual and so a work of art moves her deeply. She has been thinking all week about the painting of the denial of Peter that I showed you last week. Poems can help by placing together words that come at us in a different way and move our souls. For me a phrase of well-crafted words from a George Herbert poem goes straight to the heart. Music can move us deeply. Attending an Ash Wednesday or Good Friday service or a more reflective service can help us simply meditate on what Jesus endured for us.

We are all unique in the way we experience God and will be moved by different things. The important thing is to make space for us to turn our gaze on Christ and to know that his love is so high and wide and deep and long that he would take such punishment personally for me.

Therese of Lisieux was captivated by the suffering servant songs in Isaiah and she read them over and over. She wrote:

Those words of Isaiah: There is no beauty in him, no comeliness, have been the whole foundation of my devotion to the Holy Face, or to express it better, the foundation of all my piety. I, too, have desired to be without beauty, treading the wine press alone, unknown to everyone...It is true that His Cross has followed me from the cradle, but Jesus made me love that Cross with a passion.<sup>1</sup>

Jesus doesn’t set his sights on going to heaven but going to Jerusalem, to his death and suffering. The cross is central to our faith and the way we live our lives, both individually and corporately. May we learn to love it as well.

### **Trial Before the Sanhedrin**

In the next scene we see a dramatic example of how Jesus suffered.

**When day came, the assembly of the elders of the people gathered together, both chief priests and scribes. And they led him away to their council... (Luke 22:66)**

A new day dawns after a dark night. The elders gather together. Everyone is there, the priests and the teachers of the law. This is the

Jewish leadership, Jesus' own people whom he came to save. They lead Jesus to the council, meaning the Sanhedrin. The Sanhedrin was the highest tribunal of the Jews, the Supreme Court. Luke may be alluding not just to the group but also to the location where the council met near the temple. Even though Annas and Caiaphas had questioned Jesus, night trials had no legal status by Jewish law. This was a formal trial.

The council asks Jesus two questions and Jesus give two ambiguous responses. Both questions focus on Jesus' identity and status.

...and they said, "If you are the Christ, tell us."

**But he said to them, "If I tell you, you will not believe, and if I ask you, you will not answer. But from now on the Son of Man shall be seated at the right hand of the power of God." (Luke 22:67-69)**

The first question is "are you the Christ?" The question is political with the purpose of getting Jesus in trouble with Rome. There were many Messianic figures in Jesus' day. They were insurrectionists and revolutionaries. Rome dealt with these people in a harsh way. The Jewish leadership was hoping that Rome would deal with Jesus in the same manner.

Jesus really refuses to answer. If he tells them he is the Christ, they won't believe him. And if he asks them what they think of him, they will not answer. Jesus knows that the council's mind is made up. They are not looking for a dialogue. All they are looking for is a way to kill him.

But then Jesus takes the offensive by alluding to Psalm 110 and Daniel 7. Psalm 110 begins:

**The LORD says to my Lord:  
"Sit at my right hand,  
until I make your enemies your footstool." (Ps. 110:1)**

God promised that a son of David would sit on David's throne and this son would be greater than David. David refers to this son as "my Lord." This Davidic son would sit at the right hand of God, which is a position of authority and power to judge. Jesus is indirectly making the claim that he is the greater son of David. The council thinks they have authority to judge, but it is really the other way around. Since no one can sit in heaven other than God, Jesus condemns himself by claiming to be the Judge.

Jesus also refers to Daniel 7 by using the term "Son of Man," a phrase that Jesus often uses for himself. Daniel sees a vision of four nations rising up like wild beasts. But he sees the Son of Man coming in the clouds:

**I saw in the night visions,  
and behold, with the clouds of heaven  
there came one like a son of man,  
and he came to the Ancient of Days  
and was presented before him. (Dan. 7:13)**

The Son of Man would arise, be vindicated, come to the Ancient of Days, and be given dominion over all the nations of earth. He would judge the nations that had arisen as wild beasts.

**So they all said, "Are you the Son of God, then?"  
And he said to them, "You say that I am." (Luke 22:70)**

The second question is "are you the Son of God?" The Jews are asking if Jesus is a uniquely exalted one, a regal figure, who claims to be able to sit next to God and thus is his virtual equal. Again the Jews are seeking a condemning confession that would give Rome a reason

to kill Jesus. If Jesus claimed to be God's son, this would run counter to the polytheistic culture of Rome and the supremacy of Caesar.

Jesus replies by saying, "You say that I am." This is not a direct affirmation, but the Jews would have inferred a positive answer with the lack of a denial. By saying "I am" Jesus might also be referring to the divine name, a major idea in John's gospel. Our text today highlights Jesus' identity in relation to God as prophet, Messiah, Son of Man, and Son of God.

**Then they said, "What further testimony do we need? We have heard it ourselves from his own lips." (Luke 22:71)**

Jesus has cooked his own goose. The Jews have what they need even though there are no witnesses or no formal verdict. Jesus has condemned himself by inferring that he is the Christ and the Son of God. The Jewish leaders have no authority to execute, but now they can take him to the Romans based on a political agenda.

When you think about it the poise and character of Jesus is really remarkable. After a sleepless night of questioning and mistreatment Jesus is calm and able to meet the challenge of his persecutors. I wonder how I would fare under such treatment. There are more trial scenes to cover in the next couple of weeks, but I want to come back to the example of Jesus and what we can learn about responding to suffering.

Again we take note of themes that run through the passion narrative. Jesus does not defend himself or argue. He doesn't fight nor does he flee. He doesn't play the power game. He doesn't play the victim. He deliberately and voluntarily gives himself over to death. Despite what the Jews might think, Jesus is in complete control. He knows he is fulfilling the greater purposes of the Father.

Jesus gives us encouragement to deal with our own pain and struggles in the same way. It feels right and natural to respond to mistreatment with hate, find our identity in our pain, or play the victim to gain superiority over others. The cross tells us that God is in control, he is good, he can be trusted, and he is on our side. Without the cross we won't accept our sufferings, we won't grow, we won't surrender, and we won't forgive. If our pain is not transformed it will be transmitted. If we play the victim we will victimize others.

"Jesus receives our hatred and does not return it. He suffers and does not make the other suffer. He does not first look at changing others, but pays the price of change within himself. He absorbs the mystery of human sin rather than passing it on. He does not use his suffering and death as power over others to punish them, but as power for others to transform them."<sup>2</sup>

Life is hard. Life is unfair. At times life seems utterly cruel. Our life consists of many little deaths and a great deal of letting go. But knowing Christ means that we can suffer like Christ. If we can put our painful and frustrating circumstances under the sufferings of Christ it changes our attitudes. If we see that our circumstances are the crosses we must bear they become bearable. When we realize that God is in control and that he uses our sufferings and deaths to accomplish his saving and transformative purposes it changes everything.

1. Thérèse of Lisieux *Maurice & Thérèse*, (Doubleday, New York, 1998), 150,153

2. Richard Rohr, *Hope Against Darkness*, (Franciscan Media, Cincinnati, 2001), 31

