

SACRED-WOUNDED HEAD, MT.27:27-44

Images of Lent #7

◆Intro: Greg was twelve at the time. His feet matured faster than the rest of him. He wished he was well-proportioned, like Steve. Steve didn't walk. He flowed in one continuous, cool movement of coordinated beauty. It's hard to flow when you have a pair of skies for feet, thought Greg. As the rest of his body was slow to mature, so was the maturity of his classmates. They lost no opportunity to make fun of him, calling him such things as "runway" or wondering in loud, over-hearable voices if he ever surfed without a board.

◆Have you ever been in a situation where you were mocked? There are differing kinds of pain, some worse than others. One of the worst kinds of pain is mockery by your peers.

◆Most twelve year olds would rather be slugged. Insults, and mockery hurt especially on the inside of us, the place where we feel love or rejection. It's rejection plain and simple. Well, maybe more than plain. It's brazen rejection.

◆Crucifixion was commonplace in first century Palestine. No so much to us. While we may be rather removed from the reality of killing people on poles, all of us know a bit about mockery.

◆1.

◆A. In mockery, people isolate a feature of another, and then hold it up for laughter. Usually it's something they find weak, or worthless. Then they proceed to paint it as such by pretending to think it's something special.

◆Like the Nazi's making a captured Rabbi stand disrobed and preach the Torah to a crowd of drunken German soldiers.

SACRED-WOUNDED HEAD, MT.27:27-44

Images of Lent #7

- ◆ Or like the Puritan Christians making a husbandless mother wear a red badge of adultery in the form of a scarlet “A”.
- ◆ Of 17th century Calvinists drowning their baptist opponents because, after all, they liked to be baptized so much.
- ◆ Mockery is a form of torture, of course. It is an attempt to hurt the person, to break them and to crush their spirit. When you strip your prisoner, you take away their dignity. Again, the Nazi’s enjoyed forcing government officials, wearing only say, a sword and cap, to parade before hooting SS men. So, you get a bit of the feeling of what was happening with Jesus when he was stripped, given a crown of prickles and a cape.
 - ◆ Phil Yancy imagines it might of gone something like this: *“Messiah, huh? Great lets hear a prophesy.” Wham! “Who hit you?” Thunk! “Come on, spit it out Mr. Prophet. For a messiah, you don’t know much do you? You say you are a king? Here Mr. King, we’ll fix you a crown, we will. “Crunch! “How’z that?”*
- ◆ But the thing that makes Jesus’ mockery especially poignant is the irony. Don Carson says that irony can work on several levels at the same time. It can be bitter, and vicious. It can also serve to clarify or point out a truth we might not notice at first.
 - ◆ Think of when your brother, sister, or husband glares at you after an argument in which he or she has just had the last word. Then, after a pause he or she pipes with an addendum to the argument saying something like, “And another thing that makes me mad is that you always have to have the last word!”

SACRED-WOUNDED HEAD, MT.27:27-44

Images of Lent #7

- ◆ What happens inside then is that our false self is offended by the irony. Our jaw tightens. Our eyes glow red at the injustice of it all. We haven't had the last word and yet we are blamed for it! Right?
- ◆ C. That my friends is what is happening to Jesus. there are several ironies in the crucifixion.

◆1) The one mocked as king is king!

- ◆ vs29 *Hail King of the Jews.* They give him a sceptre. They give him a cape. They give him a crown. And it's all true. Matthew the writer knows Jesus is King. He starts off his book with the stories we read at Christmas time. He shows how Jesus is the son of King David, the greatest King Israel had. And when Jesus begins his ministry he preaches what?

“Repent for the *Kingdom of heaven* is near.”

- ◆ v11 Pilate asks “*Are you the King of the Jews?*” Pilate knows it. Pilate can see he's a different kind of king, but a king. The man raised dead people to life. That's doesn't go unnoticed.

◆2) The one showing no power is utterly powerful!

- ◆ Do you know how much self-control it takes to not exercise power that you have in the face of persecutors who are actually weaker than you? These Romans have no idea they are horsing around with the Lord of Creation. They have no eyes for the legions of burly-armed angels, muscles rippling, swords of flashing light –at his disposal. (26:53) He is utterly powerful and they are beating him to a pulp.

SACRED-WOUNDED HEAD, MT.27:27-44

Images of Lent #7

◆ He is the Hulk and they are puny mutts biting his legs and he isn't smashing them!

◆ He is the undercover Boss, and they are workers making things hard for him.

◆ He is the General Manager and they are the janitors cursing him.

◆ *“Those who passed by hurled insults at him, shaking their heads and saying, “You who are going to destroy the temple and build it in three days, save yourself! Come down from the cross, if you are the Son of God!”” Matthew 27:39, 40, NIV.*

◆ He is the Son of God! He *could* save himself!

◆ Jesus told his disciples no less than 5 times that he would be crucified and then rise from the dead. Therefore he is perfectly aware of how powerful he himself is. His is a powerful act he is performing before their very eyes while they call him weak.

◆3) The one who couldn't save himself saves others.

◆ *“In the same way the chief priests, the teachers of the law and the elders mocked him. “He saved others,” they said, “but he can't save himself! He's the King of Israel! Let him come down now from the cross, and we will believe in him.” Matthew 27:41, 42, NIV.*

◆ This is yet another ironic mockery. In one sense Jesus could have saved himself. He had the ability. In another sense he couldn't save himself and others (us) too. So it's actually true what they are saying! He is letting them kill him, so that his death will pay our debt in the eyes of God. To save us he could not save himself. But that is why we honor him.

SACRED-WOUNDED HEAD, MT.27:27-44

Images of Lent #7

◆ The Bible explains to us that God, being holy and just cannot ignore sin or let it go undestroyed. Mankind must die for sin. And it is an eternal dying for sin is an eternal offense to the purity of God. Listen to how the Heidelberg Catechism puts it.



15 Q. What kind of mediator and deliverer should we look for then?

A. One who is truly human¹ and truly righteous, yet more powerful than all creatures, that is, one who is also true God.

16 Q. Why must he be truly human and truly righteous?

A. God's justice demands that human nature, which has sinned, must pay for its sin; but a sinner could never pay for others.

17 Q. Why must he also be true God?

A. So that, by the power of his divinity, he might bear the weight of God's anger in his humanity and earn for us and restore to us righteousness and life.

18 Q. And who is this mediator-- true God and at the same time truly human and truly righteous?

A. Our Lord Jesus Christ, who was given us to set us completely free and to make us right with God.

◆ So in one sense they got it ironically correct! He saved others, but he couldn't save himself in the process. That indeed was the point.

SACRED-WOUNDED HEAD, MT.27:27-44

Images of Lent #7

But it wasn't because he was not powerful enough to do so. What kept Jesus from saving himself was not physical constraint. It was love's constraint.

◆2. **The depth of Jesus' mockery reveals the depth of his passion for me.**

◆ I guess what makes Jesus such a true king is that he was so completely for his subjects and not himself. That also makes him a true love, and a true friend.

◆ Sandi and I were at the kitchen table one time and something I did...shall we say, "caused her some consternation." So she snapped at me verbally (I'm sure it was in the nicest possible way.) Still, I snapped back, only I'm bigger so I thought it appropriate to snap a little louder. After all, my subconscious self reasoned, I am morally permitted to defend myself since I was attacked first. And then she said something ironic.

◆ She said, "Hey, it hurts my feelings when you *snap* at me like that."

◆ Being an ever logical, less than sensitive man, I countered my own deep emotional insight, "Hey, it hurts my feelings when you snap at *me* like that.

◆ Then she said something I haven't been able to forget since.

◆ "I want to be able to snap at you without you snapping back at me!"

◆ I thought, "What? Are you nuts?"

◆ But then I thought, "Maybe that's what love is." It's certainly the character of God.

SACRED-WOUNDED HEAD, MT.27:27-44

Images of Lent #7

◆ *God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. (2 Corinthians 5:21, NIV).*

◆ I guess what makes Jesus a true King is that he is completely for his subjects and not himself. I guess what makes a husband a true husband is that he is completely for his wife and not himself. I guess what makes a friend a true friend is that he lays down his life for his friends.

◆ *"Greater love has no-one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends."
John 15:13, NIV.*

◆ Author and speaker Brennan Manning has an amazing story about how he got the name "Brennan." While growing up, his best friend was Ray. The two of them did everything together: bought a car together as teenagers, double-dated together, went to school together and so forth. They even enlisted in the Army together, went to boot camp together and fought on the frontlines together. One night while sitting in a foxhole, Brennan was reminiscing about the old days in Brooklyn while Ray listened and ate a chocolate bar. Suddenly a live grenade came into the foxhole. Ray looked at Brennan, smiled, dropped his chocolate bar and threw himself on the live grenade. It exploded, killing Ray, but Brennan's life was spared.

◆ When Brennan became a priest he was instructed to take on the name of a saint. He thought of his friend, Ray Brennan. So he took on the name "Brennan." Years later he went to visit Ray's mother in Brooklyn. They sat up late one night having tea when Brennan asked her, "Do you think Ray loved me?" Mrs. Brennan got up off the couch, shook her finger in front of Brennan's face and shouted, "What more could he have done for you?" Brennan said that at that moment he experienced an epiphany. He imagined himself standing before the cross of Jesus wondering, Does God

SACRED-WOUNDED HEAD, MT.27:27-44

Images of Lent #7

really love me? And Jesus' mother Mary pointing to her son, saying, "What more could he have done for you?"

◆ Jesus was not surprised to be killed. It was not an “oops” in his plans as messiah. It was his plan. Jesus was all the things they said he was. He was the King of the Jews, and everything else. He was the one who saved others and not himself. Scripture tells us he despised the shame of it all, but found joy in the prospect of it all.

◆ *Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart. (Hebrews 12:1-3, NIV).*

◆ **Conclusion:** Irony, like mockery, draws our attention to things we might miss. In the film *The Passion*, Jesus, wearing a crown of thorns stumbles under the load of his cross. We can see he is being broken. His mother Mary runs to him as he stumbles shouting, “I am here. I am here.” Jesus turns to her and whispers, stammers through his blood-drenched suffering, “Look mother, I am making all things new.”

◆ Now, as far as we know, Jesus didn't say that on the road to the cross. In the Bible he says it in the Book of Revelations. Nonetheless, it is a fitting statement for him, for that is in fact what he was doing, though most missed it.

◆ Also in the film as he hangs on the cross he shouts to the heavens, “Father forgive them, they don't know what they are doing.” And one of the thieves next to him notices the irony. He calls down to the people below, “Look, you are killing him and he prays for you!”

SACRED-WOUNDED HEAD, MT.27:27-44

Images of Lent #7

◆ Which kind of king would you want? One who saves himself at your expense? Or one who'd save you at his expense?

◆ I have one simple hope in this message tonight, and that is to awaken in you a marveling love for this king. To let the mockery and woundedness stir your spirit with awe and gratitude. As one poet put it

◆ Yea, once Immanuel's orphan'd cry this universe hath shaken

◆ It went up single, echoless, "My God, I am forsaken."

◆ It went up from the holy lips amidst his lost creation.

◆ that of the lost no son should use this cry of desolation. -Browning

◆ Because of this act on the cross, which we remember tonight, for all eternity you and I need never cry out feeling forsaken, or mocked like a clumsy school boy with big feet. There is only one appropriate response: love him back.