

**April 21, 2019**

**Mark 15:27-39**

**Saves**

**Introduction** This past Sunday, April 14, commemorated what is generally known as Palm Sunday. This is the Sunday which marks the beginning of the last week of the earthly life of Jesus. This event is also known as the “Triumphal Entry.” Mark described this event a few chapters earlier by stating: “Many people spread their clothes on the road, and others spread leafy branches cut from the fields . . . those who followed shouted: ‘Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!’” (Mark 11:8-9). The week that began on such a high note now comes to a culmination with the crucifixion of Jesus. At the beginning of the week, people were shouting “hosanna.” By the end of the week, they were shouting “crucify him.” In this week’s lesson, we will examine a few of the key features of the crucifixion of Jesus.

**Crucified (Mark 15:27).** A series of events that started several hours before comes to their pinnacle at this time. Mark explained: “Then they crucified him (Jesus) and divided his clothes . . . Now it was nine in the morning when they crucified him” (Mark 15:24-25). In addition to Jesus, the text states that two others were crucified. These two are described as criminals (Mark 15:27). Other Bible translations specify that these men were thieves (KJV). So, these three men were crucified together. In New Testament times, crucifixion was the most painful form of execution. One commentator explained that it was reserved for non-citizens of Rome and intended to warn others about the consequences of crossing Roman law. And yet, here is Jesus of whom Pilate himself said, “I find no grounds for charging him” (John 19:6). So, one innocent man and two thieves now hang on crosses for all to see.

**Mocked and Forsaken (Mark 15:29-36).** As this scene unfolds, the responses of people to the crucifixion recorded in scripture are interesting. For instance, some yelled insults at Jesus (Mark 15:29). Others mocked Jesus while he hung on the cross. Of that group, Mark noted that the chief priests and scribes exclaimed, “He saved others, but he cannot save himself!” (Mark 15:31). Besides the human reactions to the crucifixion of Jesus, we read about a heavenly response, too. At three in the afternoon, Jesus cried out with a loud voice, “My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?” (Mark 15:34). Not only had his disciples abandoned him, but now, at this moment, with the full weight of the sin of the world on his shoulders, his father, too, abandoned Him for a short span of time. Besides being insulted and mocked, Jesus is now forsaken. He would not be like this for long, however.

**Victorious (Mark 15:37-39).** Shortly after crying out to God, Mark wrote that Jesus “let out a loud cry and breathed his last” (Mark 15:37). Mark explained that two immediate and significant actions occurred after Jesus died. First, “the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom” (Mark 15:38). This is indicative of the fact that the death of Jesus opened access to God for all people. In other words, there is no need for anyone to go through another human being to approach God. Individuals now have access to God on their own. Second, the reaction of the Roman centurion should not go unnoticed. When this Roman soldier saw how Jesus died, he

exclaimed, “Truly, this man was the Son of God!” (Mark 15:39). This is a startling and truthful claim. Even in death, the divinity of Jesus was manifested.

**Conclusion** On this day, April 21, Christians worldwide celebrate the resurrection of Jesus. Paul explained that “. . . if Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins” (1 Corinthians 15:17). Since Jesus has been raised, our faith is valuable and our sins have been taken care of on the cross. The lesson today affirms that the death of Jesus opened access to God and demonstrated that Jesus is God’s Son.