

Journey to the Cross...

...the cross we carry belongs to Jesus - Matthew 27:11-31

Pilate condemns Jesus to die

11 Now Jesus was standing before Pilate, the Roman governor. "Are you the King of the Jews?" the governor asked him. Jesus replied, "Yes, it is as you say." 12 But when the leading priests and other leaders made their accusations against him, Jesus remained silent. 13 "Don't you hear their many charges against you?" Pilate demanded. 14 But Jesus said nothing, much to the governor's great surprise. 15 Now it was the governor's custom to release one prisoner to the crowd each year during the Passover celebration – anyone they wanted. 16 This year there was a notorious criminal in prison, a man named Barabbas. 17 As the crowds gathered before Pilate's house that morning, he asked them, "Which one do you want me to release to you – Barabbas, or Jesus who is called the Messiah?" 18 (He knew very well that the Jewish leaders had arrested Jesus out of envy.) 19 Just then, as Pilate was sitting on the judgment seat, his wife sent him this message: "Leave that innocent man alone, because I had a terrible nightmare about him last night." 20 Meanwhile, the leading priests and other leaders persuaded the crowds to ask for Barabbas to be released and for Jesus to be put to death. 21 So when the governor asked again, "Which of these two do you want me to release to you?" the crowd shouted back their reply: "Barabbas!" 22 "But if I release Barabbas," Pilate asked them, "what should I do with Jesus who is called the Messiah?" And they all shouted, "Crucify him!" 23 "Why?" Pilate demanded. "What crime has he committed?" But the crowd only roared the louder, "Crucify him!" 24 Pilate saw that he wasn't getting anywhere and that a riot was developing. So he sent for a bowl of water and washed his hands before the crowd, saying, "I am innocent of the blood of this man. The responsibility is yours!" 25 And all the people yelled back, "We will take responsibility for his death – we and our children!" 26 So Pilate released Barabbas to them. He ordered Jesus flogged with a lead-tipped whip, then turned him over to the Roman soldiers to crucify him (Matthew 27:11-26 – NLT).

The cross of Jesus was a result of...

- Not recognizing Jesus for who He was - God in camouflage (v. 11-14)
- An unrighteous man being preferred over Jesus - the sinless One (v. 15-26)
- False charges made against Jesus - out of envy (v. 18)
- The one who could do something washing his hands (v. 24)
- The people Jesus had healed and set free turning against Him (v. 26)
- God's plan to finish what He started (John 19:10-11)
Then Jesus said, "You would have no power over me at all unless it were given to you from above (John 19:11a – NLT)."

The one dissenting voice was from a *Gentile* woman who had a prophetic dream (v. 19)

Jesus accepts His cross

27 Some of the governor's soldiers took Jesus into their headquarters and called out the entire battalion. 28 They stripped him and put a scarlet robe on him. 29 They made a crown of long, sharp thorns and put it on his head, and they placed a stick in his right hand as a scepter. Then they knelt before him in mockery, yelling, "Hail! King of the Jews!" 30 And they spit on him and grabbed the stick and beat him on the head with it. 31 When they were finally tired of mocking him, they took off the robe and put his own clothes on him again. Then they led him away to be crucified. (Matthew 27:27-31 – NLT).

Carrying the cross by himself, Jesus went to the place called Skull Hill – in Hebrew, Golgotha (John 19:17 – NLT).

When Jesus accepted His cross people felt free to dishonor Him...

- They entertained themselves at the expense of Jesus (v. 27-28)
- They mocked Him (v. 29)
- They bullied Him (v. 30)
- They humiliated Him (v. 31)

Simon of Cyrene carries the cross of Jesus

21 A man named Simon, who was from Cyrene, was coming in from the country just then, and they forced him to carry Jesus' cross. Simon is the father of Alexander and Rufus (Mark 15:21 – NLT).

The cross that Jesus carried should not have been a challenge for Him

- His job: He was a carpenter and used to carry beams
- His call: He was *God* in human flesh and this was His assignment

But the cross that Jesus carried is ours as well!

He personally carried away our sins in his own body on the cross so we can be dead to sin and live for what is right. You have been healed by his wounds (1 Peter 2:24 – NLT)!

Who would assist Jesus in carrying the cross? Among the options...

- Those healed from blindness, leprosy and so much more
- Those who had been set free from demonic oppression
- Religious persons (touching the cross defile them)
- Roman soldiers (only the guilty person could carry the cross)

Simon of Cyrene

- Was in the crowd - from what is now Libya
- Father of Alexander and Rufus (Acts 13:1; Romans 16:13)
- Carried a cross that was not his
- Abused by the soldiers as a replacement for torturing Jesus

The cross that we carry belongs to Jesus

28 Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. 29 Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. 30 For My yoke is easy and My burden is light (Mathew 11:28-30 – NKJV)."

23 Then He said to them all, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me. 24 For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it. 25 For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and is himself destroyed or lost? 26 For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words, of him the Son of Man will be ashamed when He comes in His own glory, and in His Father's, and of the holy angels (Luke 9: 23-26 – NKJV).

Salvation is free... but discipleship will cost you your life (Dietrich Bonhoeffer)