

Midweek Lent 5

March 9, 2016

Sermon Text: Luke 23:35

“Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me.” That phrase just emits confidence, does it not? A person firmly defends a position that even if insulted or humiliated or physically hurt, they will never allow words to shake them.

Have you ever said that phrase? Perhaps your friends laughed at some television show you enjoy, but you still watch it despite what they say. Maybe a sibling pointed out all the wrong things about your clothing style, but you still wear the clothes you feel comfortable wearing. Maybe you defend some political candidate and regardless of what anyone else says, you will vote for that individual. Sticks and stones may break your bones, but words will never change your mind.

So, do you stand fearless when mocked for your Christian beliefs? You may face conflict and ridicule because of who you trust. Sometimes the insults are humiliating. You may even wish that sticks and stones were hurled at you instead of the insults used to describe your relationship with Jesus.

When it feels that suffering such abuse for the sake of Jesus is not worth it, hear the Word which does not hurt. **JESUS IS GOD’S CHOSEN ONE!** *a truth mocked, a truth which saves.*

That is *a truth mocked*. You see that in our reading. **The people stood watching, and the rulers even sneered at him. They said, “He saved others; let him save himself if he is the Christ of God, the Chosen One.”**

This is not the first time Jesus heard that laughter or saw the snickering faces. From Maundy Thursday to Good Friday— over a course of about 18 hours— insult after insult is heaped on him. He is arrested and shoved into a courtroom. The high priest puts Jesus under oath and runs the trial. Out comes one simple question: *“Are you the Son of God?”* Back comes the reply: *“You are right in saying I am.”* Jesus tells the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth! Yet, people dance around and call him a liar! ([Luke 22:67-71](#)).

Then, this howling crowd visits Pontius Pilate in order to get approval for execution. They take Jesus’ words and twist them: *“[Pilate], he opposes payment of taxes to Caesar!”* ([23:2](#)). Never once did Jesus teach anything about overthrowing the Roman Empire! Still, Pilate ignores Jesus’ clear teachings and sends him to Jewish governor Herod’s jurisdiction.

Even Herod cannot contain his sinister smile. He has heard so much about the miracles Jesus can do. So, he begs for some afternoon entertainment ([23:6-9](#)). When Jesus does nothing, Herod’s soldiers dress him in a purple robe, put thorns on his head, beat him, beg him to “prophecy,” and pretend to worship him like they would a king ([23:10-11](#)).

**Luke 23:35**

<sup>35</sup> The people stood watching, and the rulers even sneered at him. They said, “He saved others; let him save himself if he is the Christ of God, the Chosen One.”

Hours later— after Jesus is crucified, soldiers laugh at his claim to be the Son of God. Even the convicted criminal hanging next to him taunts Jesus, urging him to save them all! ([23:36-39](#)). Again, Jesus hears nonbelieving mouths poke fun at the power he does have and mock the words he once said.

Every step of the way, Jesus is mocked, humiliated, belittled— all over what he says about himself. Have you ever stopped to ask: “Why?”

You sense it in what everyone says. The religious leaders had their preconceived ideas of what Jesus was supposed to do. He was to be a mighty King— someone to free the Jews from Rome’s authority! Yet, Jesus does none of that. He does not answer their pleas to be their King. He does not perform miracles on their command. He does not appear to have the power to come down from the cross. Leaders, soldiers— even criminals— refuse to believe that Jesus could possibly be **God’s Chosen One**. So, Jesus’ words become *a truth mocked*.

That truth is still mocked. Some openly declare that God does not exist, but say that you feel a need to believe in some Being simply in order to cope with death. Others believe that if Jesus is the Son of God, he should unveil his power so that no trouble ever penetrates life. Still others consider the Bible too exaggerated, too unbelievable to be accurate.

You read those comments in magazines. You watch comedians glow with pride as their audience laughs at your Jesus. You may even hear your children, grandchildren, neighbors, friends, co-workers hit you with mockery. “*How can you believe in Jesus? He does not do anything you want!*”

Are there times when those words sting you and you stare at the mirror and wonder what you are doing? Why you believe in God at all? You see that crossroad— the one which erases fear of insult, fear of ridicule, if only you deny your Savior.

It sounds tempting; it sounds good. It sounds like the same thing the devil used thousands of years ago. He painted life as grand and glorious if only Adam and Eve separated themselves from God. When they removed themselves from God, they realized they were eternally removed from God. What they learned then is the same truth learned today: those who remove themselves from God will be eternally removed from him!

**JESUS IS GOD’S CHOSEN ONE!** That is *a truth mocked* but forever remains *a truth which saves*.

Never once does Jesus lie about who he is. The name “Christ” points back to God’s Old Testament promises about the Savior. Scripture said that God’s Son would be born of a virgin, would do mighty things, have words of authority, and enter Jerusalem on a donkey. At his baptism a voice from heaven says: “This is my Son!” His miracles reinforce the truth. No one else in our world can instantly cure diseases, raise the dead, read the thoughts of others, multiply food, or point out good fishing locations. The Bible and the miracles declare Jesus is God.

So, Jesus suffers on the cross, not for the purpose of becoming a martyr. He dies because he is your promised Savior, **the Christ, the Chosen One of God**. He is never

ashamed of God's Word. So, he can stand in our place for the times we are ashamed of the Word. His heart loves God even above his own reputation and feelings. Through faith the Father sees that heart of love beat within you and me! **JESUS IS GOD'S CHOSEN ONE!** That is *a truth which saves*.

See what Jesus accomplishes by his death on the cross. Jesus does not remain dead. Instead, he rises from the dead. His body works, brain functions, lungs breathe, his heart beats. More than that, Jesus enters heaven. He sits in power over all things. He will come again to judge the living and the dead.

So, are you on the wrong side, the losing side? By no means! Instead, your faith connects you to a Savior who promises to raise you to eternal life. You will have a body which never gets older, never decays, never dies. You will live in a place void of tears and sadness and heartache! Do you see that other crossroad? To walk with Jesus means that you have heaven in your hand!

Yes, you are not in heaven— yet. Yes, it is not pleasant to face insult or ridicule for your faith. You may be tempted to hide your allegiance to Jesus so that life might be easier. You can expect to be singled out, ridiculed, and mocked because of what you believe. Even Jesus says that you will be hated by the world because you believe in him ([John 15:20](#)). This does not mean that you must go out and die a martyr. It does not mean to think little of your friends and family. It means that people may openly reject your Bible-based beliefs on life and death. Still, you stand bold because your beliefs are based on God's Word— and those beliefs bring eternal life.

It also means that you must remember who you are fighting: the devil, the same enemy Jesus fought on the cross. You can expect rejection because by nature people reject the Word of God. Yet, it is not a reason to cower in fear. If you were once hostile to God's Word but have come to faith through the Word, then the same Word is able to create faith in the hearts of others as well. **JESUS IS GOD'S CHOSEN ONE!** That is *a truth which saves*.

“Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me.” That phrase just emits confidence. A person firmly defends a position that even if insulted or humiliated—or physically hurt— they will never allow words to shake them.

Jesus suffers because he is connected to God. The suffering comes because the world stands as an enemy of God. Yet, that enemy is defeated. When Jesus rises from the dead, he crushed the head of the devil; he stands in power over every opponent. Through faith you are connected to God. It means that you might be mocked because of your faith. Sometimes the insults are humiliating. You may even wish that sticks and stones were hurled at you instead of the insults used to describe your relationship with Jesus. Yet, remember why that mockery comes. It is not because the world hates you, but they hate the One you serve.

You serve the One who has opened heaven. You are on the winning side! Heaven is your guarantee! When it feels that suffering such abuse for the sake of Jesus is worth it, hear the Word which does not hurt. **JESUS IS GOD'S CHOSEN ONE!** *a truth mocked, a truth which saves*.