

“Jesus Bears Contempt” (Matt 27:39-44)

Next Sunday is Easter Sunday. We will celebrate the resurrection of Jesus as a whole church. Please look forward to it! Before resurrection, there is something we cannot miss. That is the cross. There is no resurrection without the death on the cross. Matthew recorded the scene of Jesus on the cross as follows.

Matt 27:39-44 (NLT)

The people passing by shouted abuse, shaking their heads in mockery. ⁴⁰ “Look at you now!” they yelled at him. “You said you were going to destroy the Temple and rebuild it in three days. Well then, if you are the Son of God, save yourself and come down from the cross!”

⁴¹ The leading priests, the teachers of religious law, and the elders also mocked Jesus. ⁴² “He saved others,” they scoffed, “but he can’t save himself! So he is the King of Israel, is he? Let him come down from the cross right now, and we will believe in him!” ⁴³ He trusted God, so let God rescue him now if he wants him! For he said, ‘I am the Son of God.’” ⁴⁴ Even the revolutionaries who were crucified with him ridiculed him in the same way.

Here various people were speaking to Jesus who was being crucified. First, those who were passing by. Then the chief priests, the teachers of the law and elders. And the criminals who were crucified with him. They have something in common. What is it? They are all mocking Jesus.

It’s understandable that the chief priests, the teachers of law, and the elders mocked Jesus. They don’t like Jesus. They are jealous of him. Now that Jesus is being crucified before their eyes, they are triumphantly taking the opportunity of saying everything they wanted to say to him.

Luke recorded the insulting words of the robber, “Aren’t you the Christ? Save yourself and us!” (Luke 23:39) Emotionally, I can kind of understand why he wanted to say this. They were being crucified, and in the midst of extreme pain, they were just waiting for their death. In their agony, they were venting their feelings which they had no idea how to handle.

The people passing by. Just a few days earlier, they welcomed Jesus into Jerusalem, shouting “Hosanna, Hosanna!” But now he was caught and crucified

with criminals. I wonder if they mocked Jesus because they felt he let them down, if they felt deceived, tricked, and now suffering lost hopes.

Jesus Bears Contempt. We will study this theme this morning.

1. The Power of Contempt

Contempt have power to destroy the others.

“Contempt isolates its victims by branding them unworthy of love.”¹

Who wants to be in the position of those who are ridiculed and mocked? Contempt draws line and separate the victims and crowds. Those who are on this side of the line are the group who ridicule. And there is a quiet crowd on their side. They will never take a risk and cross over to the side of the victims.

“Contempt is a poison that paralyzes our deepest longing for love and meaning, stripping us of hope.”² Contempt has a power to nullify the fundamental human needs.

2. The Face of Contempt in Daily Interactions

In his book “The Cry of the Soul” Dan Allender discusses that contempt appears in three faces in daily interactions. That is, all gossip, most boasting, and all blame shifting.³ Let’s look at them one by one.

People love to know. We love to know. Think about what kind of articles are getting people’ attention on internet, TV, magazines. The private moments, the heartache stories, the shame of others. Even more, we love to talk about those stuff. We talk about others just to make us fun. It’s called gossip.⁴

“Gossip is slander: accusing without recourse to defense, passing judgment without due process. It is soul murder... Gossip occurs almost every time we speak negatively about another person. This is backbiting.”⁵

¹ Dan Allender, *The Cry of the Soul*, NavPress, 1994, p.146

² Ibid., p.146

³ Ibid., p.150

⁴ Ibid., p.150

⁵ Ibid., p.150-1

Gossiping puts a label on people “unlovable”.

The second one is boasting.

“look at me! Look at what I know, whom I know, what I can do, what others do for me!” The Bible tells us that the arrogant boast about their power, their desires, their wealth, their cleverness, their future, their abilities. The core of their ungodly boast – “Glory in me” – is framed with contempt. ... All self-glory contains a contemptuous diminishment of others.⁶

The third one is blame shifting.

We criticize others. We blame others. So that we don't have to face our mistakes. We can avoid to see we have a problem. We can believe our illusion that we are ok but it happened because of others. Can you see the line? I'm on this side, they are on the other side.

The classic example is Adam. God asked, "Have you eaten the fruit I commanded you not to eat?" "Yes," Adam admitted, "but it was the woman you gave me, who brought me the fruit, and I ate it." (Gen 3:11-12 NLT)

“God, you are a terrible creator. You made this woman and brought her to me. It's your blunder. You messed up my life. And let me clarify this. She gave it to me. I didn't ask her to give it to me. I had no interest of the fruit at all. It's crystal clear it's her fault.” Finally, he added one thing in very small voice, “I took a bite, just one small bite.”

Blame shifting draws a line, separating people into two groups; evil and good, wrong and right. And I'm in the group of good and of right always.

What does his contempt cost? Adam missed the chance to repent which would have let him experience a very new thing, that is God's mercy and forgiveness.

3. God Mocks of Evil

Are you ready to hear this? You may not able to imagine this, but actually God also mocks. God mocks of evil.

⁶ Ibid., p.152

Psalm 37:12-13

The wicked plot against the righteous and gnash their teeth at them; ¹³ but the Lord laughs at the wicked, for he knows their day is coming.

“God observes the deceit and rage of evil and laughs.”⁷ This laughter is completely different from the laughter of an amused parent, seeing their little child cover their whole face with a full-size hat.

“God’s laughter is harsh... God does more than rage against arrogance; He plans on humiliating it. He laughs at evil... Humiliation is the final warning: Repent or be consumed by God’s burning rage.”⁸

Psalm 2:2-5

The kings of the earth take their stand and the rulers gather together against the Lord and against his Anointed One. ³ "Let us break their chains," they say, "and throw off their fetters." ⁴ The One enthroned in heaven laughs; the Lord scoffs at them. ⁵ Then he rebukes them in his anger and terrifies them in his wrath.

Humans oppose God. This is the natural way of sinners. They boast to each other about their own strength. They think and act as if God is not worthy of their attention. They don’t care about what God says. They don’t think they are under God’s authority. They think they know best what is right and wrong. They destroy what gets in the way of what they want to do. They tear up what stops them. “Who is God?” They despise Him, mock Him, ignore Him.

God laughs at those who despise Him. He scoffs at how foolish they are.

Where does it say God is? He is in heaven, in His kingdom. He is seated on His throne. He is the King of kings, the Lord of lords (Rev 19:16). Man cannot change this. No matter what they plot or how they gather and combine forces, they cannot change who God is. God is enthroned in heaven. His rule, authority and glory are forever.

God not only laughs at those who despise Him. One day He will judge them. According to the depth of His holiness, and the height of His righteousness, God’s wrath burns against them.

⁷ Ibid., p.158

⁸ Ibid., p.159; 158; 161

Psalm 2:10-12

Therefore, you kings, be wise; be warned, you rulers of the earth. ¹¹ Serve the Lord with fear and rejoice with trembling. ¹² Kiss the Son, lest he be angry and you be destroyed in your way, for his wrath can flare up in a moment. Blessed are all who take refuge in him.

God will not just be mocked. He calls us to repent – or face His cruelest mockery. He will relentlessly expose our secret idolatries and our brazen arrogance. If we turn our heart against Him and show off our sinful actions before heaven and earth, He will not hesitate to respond with his wrath but no kindness at all.⁹

Now you are going to hear the most shocking news, the most unbelievable truth. All the contempt that should be directed against us because of our sins, God left upon His glorious Son, Jesus.¹⁰

4. Jesus Bears Contempt

Psalm 22:7-8

All who see me mock me; they hurl insults, shaking their heads: ⁸ "He trusts in the Lord; let the Lord rescue him. Let him deliver him, since he delights in him."

Every one of them who surrounded Jesus on the cross mocked him. Roman soldiers, the people passing-by, religious leaders and even robbers, they all mocked Jesus. But he didn't turn his face away from them, nor did he talk back. He didn't plead for mercy, nor did he attack. He just received all their mockery silently.

"The Son of God bears our contemptuous hatred in order to intensify our contempt and expose the petty self-centered ugliness of our hearts."¹¹

Our words reveal what is inside our hearts. People threw insults at Jesus. If he responded, it would be fun for them because they would feel they were answered. However, Jesus didn't reply. So people got more and more heated.

⁹ Ibid., p.161

¹⁰ Ibid., p.162

¹¹ Ibid., p.164

Their thoughts inside came out more and more. “Jesus may say great things, but they are only words.” “His words actually have no power. He cannot save me. Believing in Jesus doesn’t change anything.” “What’s the use of being called the Son of God. He may be loved by God, but he is still suffering.”

Jesus took all this mockery, and blasphemy against God, upon himself.

Jesus Bears Contempt. Jesus received all humanity’s blasphemy, disbelief, apathy and hostility against God. These became His, and He became one with them. And he received God’s wrath against this blasphemy on our behalf.

In addition to mocking God, we also mock others in our daily life. We do this unconsciously or even consciously sometimes. Gossip, boasting, and blame shifting. This is murder against the soul. Destroying human dignity which is a reflection of the glory of God.

God doesn’t just look at it silently. He burns with anger and judges us. Jesus received all God’s anger upon himself on our behalf. Jesus said on the cross, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” God’s burning anger was poured upon Jesus. Jesus drank it up. He Bears Contempt.

“The willingness of Jesus to bear the stripes of mockery opens our heart and draws us to see that God’s contempt has been poured out on the perfect, unblemished Son of God.”¹²

1 Peter 2:23-25

When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly. ²⁴ He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed. ²⁵ For you were like sheep going astray, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.

Before we were lost sheep. We didn’t know where we were going. We were easily swayed by irritation, anger, fear and anxiety. To divert ourselves from those feelings, we mock others and God, hurt others and ourselves.

¹² Ibid., p.165

By the redemption of the cross, we are forgiven our sins, and reconciled with God. We came back to God again. There we experience God's forgiveness, grace, mercy and tolerance daily.

God also knows that you are emotionally hurt. He knows your heart was broken because of the thoughtless words of others. He knows even now your heart is screaming.

Jesus Bears Contempt. Jesus not only bore your sins, but he also received the contempt of those who hurt you and who are still causing you pain. Jesus knows your suffering as his own. By his wounds you have been healed. When you come to Jesus, you'll know that the healing has already started.

5. The Laughter of Trust

No matter how many times we experience the healing from disease or emotional healing, we humans will surely die one day. No matter how wonderful your experience of healing is, you will die one day.

Death triumphantly laughs at those who believe in Jesus. "Among those who have flesh, there is no one who doesn't die. You are fool. There is no use believing in Jesus. Eventually, you will die and that's the end."

Death is a liar; hopeless sorrow, a deceiver. Both pretend to be more true than trust. "Can you trust a God who lets you and your loved ones suffer and die?" "You are alone. No God exists – and if by chance He does, then He is impersonal and a brute. Trust only in what you can see."¹³

But in that situation, the laughter of trust mocks evil.¹⁴

1 Cor 15:20; 26; 55 (NLT)

But the fact is that Christ has been raised from the dead.... And the last enemy to be destroyed is death... O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?

¹³ Ibid., p.166

¹⁴ Ibid., p.166

True laughter is a reflection of resurrected hope.¹⁵ “Jesus’ miracles [such as healing and deliverance] were not the ultimate reason for his coming. His great victory was not his miracles but his resurrection.”¹⁶ For those who believe in Christ, death is the door to resurrection.

The Word of God says, “Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted” (Matt 5:4). Those who weep will one day laugh, and the laughter of glory can be borrowed today to keep hope alive in the face of pain and death which we cannot avoid, they are part of our lives.¹⁷

Today, we’ve prepared for a special communion.

The night before Jesus was crucified, he was having the Passover meal with his disciples. He took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to the disciples, saying, “This is my body given for you” (Luke 22:19).

And he also took the cup, gave thanks, and offered it to them, saying, “This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins” (Matt 26:27-28).

Jesus Bears Contempt. Jesus received all humanity’s blasphemy, disbelief, apathy and hostility against God. These became His, and He became one with them. And he received God’s wrath against this blasphemy on our behalf, on your behalf.

Not only mocking God, we also mock others. Gossip, boasting, and blame shifting. This is murder against the soul. God doesn’t just look at it silently. He burns with anger and judges us. Jesus received all God’s anger upon himself on your behalf.

“This is my body given for you.” “This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.” “Come and eat. Live through me.” Jesus is inviting you.

Jesus also knows that you are emotionally hurt. He knows your heart was broken because of the thoughtless words of others. He knows even now your heart is screaming.

¹⁵ Ibid., p.166

¹⁶ Jerry Sittser, *A Grace Disguised*, Kindle, 2004, Location 1901-2

¹⁷ Dan, p.167

Jesus Bears Contempt. Jesus received the contempt of those who hurt you and who are still causing you pain. By his wounds you have been healed. "Come and drink. Live through me." Jesus is inviting you.

Let's quiet ourselves before God for a while. Have you ever mocked God? Do you have any contempt against anyone in your heart? Today is the day you receive forgiveness through the cross.

Are you broken hearted by the contempt of others? Are you holding contempt against yourself, and hurting yourself? Now is the time you receive healing through the cross. Come to Jesus and receive him.

Communion table is prepared in front. "Come and eat. Come and drink. Live through me." Jesus is inviting us. Whoever is ready to receive Jesus' forgiveness and his healing, please come to the front and receive it. And please return to your seat quietly after receiving it. Continue to meditate on the theme "Jesus Bears Contempt."

"Search me, O God, and know my heart. Try me and know my thoughts. And see if there be any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting" (Psalm 139:23-24 ESV).

For Lifenet groups and personal reflection:

1) Read Matt 27:39-44. People who surrounded Jesus on the cross mocked him. Who were they? What thought might they have when they saw Jesus on the cross?

2) It is said that contempt appears in three faces in daily interactions: all gossip, most boasting, and all blame shifting. What may drive us to say or think like that? What would be its consequences?

3) God mocks (Ps 37:12-13). Whom and why does He mock? (Ps 2:3-5)

4) Jesus bears contempt. What does it mean for you today? How would you respond to him now?