Mark 15:21-32

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[0:00] Mark chapter 15, we'll look at verses 21 to 42. We're pausing from 1 Corinthians for just a few weeks.! And over the next three Sundays, we're going to be focusing on the events of the crucifixion in Mark's Gospel.

Specifically, we're going to look at the crucifixion this week, Jesus' actual death next week, and then his burial the week after that. And we often focus on these events on a Good Friday service, don't we?
But this moment we're in here, in Mark, is so important, so key to our lives, and key to our salvation, and to the whole Christian faith, that this deserves coming back to.
And so over the next few weeks, I want to encourage you, if you've been a believer for years, decades, your whole life, use this time to be brought back to the central moment of your faith.
And to simply remember what Christ went through for you. Or if you are a new Christian here, maybe you've just been a Christian two or three years, maybe even less, and you know the cross is central to your life.
[1:11] But maybe you've never actually spent time thinking about the actual event. Well, I want you just to take it all in, and keep building your life on this moment.

Whether you're young or old in the faith, you never move past this moment. Or if you're not a Christian here today, I would encourage you, use this time to see why this moment in history is so important to every single Christian around the world.
So would you please turn with me to Mark chapter 15. If you watched King Charles' coronation a few years ago, there was this huge build-up to it, wasn't there?
You had the crowds and the carriages and the flags and the cheers. And inside Westminster Abbey, you had the choirs and the musicians and the trumpets and the robes and the scepters.
And as the king made his way through London and to the abbey and to the front of it, all the cameras were on him. And the choirs rung out and the trumpets blared.
[2:19] But as he took his seat on the throne, waiting to be crowned, and the archbishop slowly approached with the crown, do you remember?

Everything went silent. The choirs stopped. The servants stood still. The broadcasters stopped speaking. You could hear a pin drop in the abbey.
And if you were watching from home, you couldn't help but just stare in silence from your living room. As the crown went on to our king, there was this sacred hush around the nation.
Because everyone knew something very special was happening here. Something unlike anything else. We knew this is a precious moment in history.
And we just watched on in wonder, knowing after all this weight and build-up, finally it's happening. It's happening. All in this holy silence.
[3:29] Well, reading the moment of Jesus' crucifixion feels like that kind of moment, doesn't it? We know this is important. We know this is the central moment of our faith.

And just reading it, you can't help but think, this moment deserves a sacred hush. There is this holy silence about it. It's a moment where you put your phones down, and the conversation stops, and you must simply watch.
Because it is a moment unlike anything else. And we are right to think that this is an incredibly holy moment. In fact, the crucifixion is more like King Charles' coronation than we may realize.
Because this is Jesus' coronation. This is where Jesus is crowned King. And so even more than Westminster Abbey, the cross of Golgotha deserves a holy silence.
But at the same time, as we read this passage, it doesn't seem holy at all, does it? It doesn't appear regal or special, or in any way a precious moment you want to savour.

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[4:45] There are no choirs, no carriages, no ceremony, no trumpets. In fact, everything that we just read seems very, very far from holy.

This passage is filled to the brim with mockery, with blasphemy, with criminals, with loneliness, with suffering, with torture. Unfolding at the place of a skull.
And it's a scene filled with a stench of death. This is the last thing you would put into Westminster Abbey. But what I want us to see today is that it is actually these unholy things that make this moment so holy.
It is actually these disgraceful things that are what make this Jesus' coronation. Rather than tainting this coronation, all these things actually make this the central moment of our salvation.
It is because Jesus experiences this, that this moment must be the centre of history, and it must be the centre of your life.
[5:57] And so I want us to see today, in a surprising way, two unholy things actually make this a holy coronation. Two things crown Jesus in this moment.

The mockery crowns Jesus, and the nails crown Jesus. And so in this sacred hush, I want us to listen very carefully to the mockery cutting through it.
Because this is what crowns Jesus. The mockery crowns Jesus. It's my first point today. The mockery crowns Jesus. I want us to picture the scene.
Up until this point, Jesus has been put on trial. Beaten. Whipped. Spat on. Verbally abused. And if you look at the end of verse 20.
They led him out to crucify him. Which is where our scene begins today. And to be led out to be crucified means Jesus would have had to carry the horizontal beam.
[7:02] Of the cross. And carry it through Jerusalem. Out of the gate. To a place called Golgotha. A patch of land just outside the walls of Jerusalem.

Where the vertical beam would be waiting for him. But he is likely so battered and weary at this point. That he can't actually carry it.
They have to call someone over to help him. Simon of Cyrene. We'll come back to him in a moment. And when Jesus gets to Golgotha. We aren't given the details. But the readers of Mark would have been very aware.
In verse 24. It just says four words. And they crucified him. Only four words. But they involve a lot. Jesus would have had thick metal nails. Like tent pegs. Nailed through his wrists into the horizontal beam.
[7:59] Then he would have been attached to the vertical beam. Then nailed to that through his feet. Then raised up. To hang there by the side of the road.

So that the weight of your body pulls on the wrists. And to find any relief. You have to push up on the nails in your feet.
And for those crucified. You would have likely died eventually from shock. Or either suffocation. Because you just can't lift yourself up. In fact the word excruciating.
In our language. It comes from the word crucifixion. And verse 25. It's the third hour. Around 9am when this starts. In verse 27.
He's hung up there with two robbers. Either side of him. But we just get four words. And they crucified him. Mark never gives us the details.
[9:00] That's not his focus. And what does Mark focus on instead? It's the words hurled at Jesus. Verse 29.

Passersby ridicule him. And wag their heads. Shaking in disapproval. And they say. Aha. You who would destroy the temple. And rebuild it in three days. Save yourself.
And come down from the cross. And then verse 31. The chief priests and the scribes. Start laughing between each other. He saved others. He cannot save himself.
Let the Christ. The king of Israel. Come down now from the cross. That we may see and believe. Even the words above him. The king of the Jews. Is meant to be biting sarcasm.
And to top it off. Even the two robbers. Start mocking him. This is the scene. And it's the opposite. Of what you would expect.
[9:59] For a king. Isn't it? King Charles had. Helpers. And publicists. And organizers. And a cheering crowd. But Jesus had no one.

Only the words of mockery. From the crowd. It's like. In this holy silence. Mark wants to turn up. The volume.

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Of the insults. So we don't miss a thing. And he's doing that. For a reason. It is because. This is how.
Jesus becomes king. This unholy. Blasphemy. Against the son of God. This is actually. What makes this moment. So holy.
Because it is through. This exact humiliation. This is how. He bears the sins. Of his people. It is not only.
[10:55] By physically. Bleeding. That he suffers. For our sins. Which is essential. But it is also. Through the humiliation. Of severe mockery. That Jesus saves us.

God's punishment. On sin. In this moment. It's taking the form. Of both. Death. And derision. And so. His suffering.
Goes deeper. Deeper. Than only. The physical wounds. His suffering. Goes deep. Into his soul. And mockery. And mockery.
Does that. Doesn't it? Having everyone. Turn against you. It's a pain. Worse than loneliness. Isn't it? Because people.
Are our comfort. And support. Aren't they? So when you're running. A marathon. Or a 5k. The cheers. From your family. On the sideline. They lift your soul.
[11:52] Don't they? They give you that second wind. When someone encourages you. You can ride the wave of those words for years. And so when those words are not only taken away.

But turned into painful. Biting scorn. That goes deep down into your soul. And that is even more intensified in Jesus.
Because he is so innocent. The man who dined with sinners. And loved them. Now battered with hatred. The man who spoke truth and grace.
Every day of his life. Now hurled out with lies. Not a drop of sin in his heart. Yet lumped up there with the robbers. The man whose heart was filled with compassion for a lost people.
Now cut off from all comfort and support. And not only that. It's all public. It's painful enough to weep into our pillows.
[13:04] But this man has to deal with it on a roadside. And so if you. If you ever feel pain in your soul. There is someone that you can know.

Someone that you can actually call friend. Who truly knows the darkness of sorrow in the human soul. The wounds of Jesus are far deeper than we realize.
But that is what makes this moment so holy. This is all integral to him bearing our curse. Because this. Because this.
This is what our sins deserve. This is how we should be treated. We take for granted the comfort that we have in this life.
We every day. We take for granted the comfort that we actually feel in our souls. But we deserve none of it. And so in this mockery. This is Jesus bearing what our sins deserve.
[14:06] Feeling the true sting of being cursed before God. And so in this holy hush. We are actually witnessing Christ tasting hell for us.

Because in hell. It will be both the torments of body and soul. And in hell. All the comfort and support of this life.
Will be taken away. No encouragements. No relief. And it will all be turned into weeping and gnashing of teeth. A fate worse than loneliness.
And so it is no coincidence that all these events take place the way that they do. This is the Lord making very clear for all to see.
This is the one being cursed for sinners. Hanging next to criminals to be publicly and visibly numbered with the sinners.
[15:08] Audibly mocked to make his humiliation unquestionable. And hanging on a wooden cross. A tree of all things.

The most cursed way to die in the Bible. Making it clear for the world to see. Not just that cursed is the man who is hanged on a tree. But cursed is that man hanging on that tree.
And it is through bearing this curse and mockery. This is how he becomes the saviour. This is how he becomes our king.
So in one sense, we want the mockery to stop. It isn't right. But actually, we don't want it to stop. Because this is how he saves us.

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This mockery is actually his crowning. Which is why there's so much irony in this passage. Did you see? They put the sign, King of the Jews, to reject him as king.
[16:14] But actually, him taking that ridicule actually makes him the king of the Jews. They mock him for claiming to tear down the temple and rebuild it.

But that mockery makes him the very cornerstone of the temple. They say he can't save himself. But with those very words, brothers and sisters, he is saving you and me.
And at this point, it would be very tempting to point the finger at the crowd and say, how could they do that? And as with all events in the Bible, we look at this scene and we try to figure out where we are, which character are we?
And we think we're above the crowd. But we need to realize in this holy moment, we shouldn't be pointing the finger. Because as he hangs there, Jesus is bearing our mockery.
Every time we said in our hearts, Jesus, I wish you weren't in charge of my life. Jesus is hanging for that. Every time we entertain the thought, I think my life will be better without him.
[17:31] Jesus is hanging for that. Every time we were ashamed of him and avoided talking about him in front of our friends, hoping that they won't ask us what we're doing on Sunday.

Jesus is hanging for that. For all our past, when we refused to see he was king, and we just went our own way, and we simply didn't care, Jesus is hanging for that.
But he is hanging there to forgive you. Saying, I will bear it. I will bear your mockery. With every insult that hit his eardrum, that was Jesus making sure that you are forgiven.
And that is what makes him king. And so the crowds, they hurl this abuse, but they have no idea what they're really doing.
They're making this whole scene into a coronation. And in this sacred hush, just like Westminster Abbey, a crown is going on to Jesus.
[18:42] A king is being enthroned. But not with a headpiece. No, the mockery crowns Jesus. This is why such unholy, blasphemous words actually make this the most holy moment of history.

But there's something else to see. Something else that makes this holy. Another surprising thing that makes this actually a coronation.
I want us to see in this sacred hush, something else crowns Jesus. I want us to see the nails crown Jesus. The nails crown Jesus.
Come back with me to verse 21. Have a look at verse 21. I've always puzzled over this verse. As Jesus carries his cross out the city, verse 21, they compelled a passerby, Simon of Cyrene, who was coming in from the country, the father of Alexander and Rufus, to carry his cross.
I've always puzzled over this verse because it makes you think, doesn't this take away from Jesus' work? Because we can see here, he had help.
[20:05] Simon of Cyrene, a Jew visiting from Africa, picked up Jesus' cross and carried it for him. It seems like it almost detracts away from Jesus' work, doesn't it?

Or maybe lessens his suffering in some way. Well, I want us to see the opposite is actually true. Rather than taking away from his suffering, Simon of Cyrene carrying the cross is actually Jesus plunging himself into worse suffering.
And actually, this is Jesus all the more determined to save us. Because think about it. Jesus had been flogged so severely and beaten to a pulp that he physically wasn't able to carry his own cross. That's why Simon of Cyrene had to step in. But what would have happened if Simon didn't? What if he had stayed back to the side and Jesus kept trying to carry the beam but just collapsed on the way into the dust and died there on the road?
What would have happened? He wouldn't have been crucified. He wouldn't have felt the nails. He wouldn't have experienced that crowning mockery.
[21:31] And so actually, without Simon of Cyrene, Jesus wouldn't have felt the full weight of suffering. And so in God's providence, Simon of Cyrene was there to make sure Jesus goes all the way to the cross.

And not just skim the dark waters of sorrow but be plunged all the way down into the depths. Simon of Cyrene doesn't suffer.
He isn't the one that dies. No, it is only Jesus. And so Simon of Cyrene is not about Jesus less involved in his crucifixion but actually all the more.
This shows Jesus is determined to save us. Which is also why he refuses the wine. Did you see that in verse 23? And they offered him wine mixed with myrrh but he did not take it.

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Wine mixed with myrrh would have been like an anesthetic. It's a drug to numb the pain or make someone fall asleep to make it all easier.
[22:39] But what does Jesus say? He says, no. I cannot take the easy way out. The only way to save my people from sin it's not to numb the suffering but I need to bear it.

It's like Jesus saying, no. I must feel the nails. He's determined to suffer for us. And so the nails, as the nails pierced his hands and his feet and he hung there on the tree Christian, you need to realize this you are there in his heart.
And he's feeling this pain for you because he knows you need him to be there. This is how he saves us.
And so we see again that the great irony of the crowd's mockery verse 31 He saved others he cannot save himself let the Christ, the King of Israel come down now from the cross that we may see and believe.
Jesus could have come down. He could have sent a thousand angels from heaven to bring him down and remove the nails and just end this mockery. He could have drunk the wine and lessened the pain and just slept this away.
[24:00] He could have collapsed on the way and spared himself the grief. He can save himself but he doesn't. He refuses to.

And why? Brothers and sisters why would any man choose to go through this? Because he loves you. It is not only the nails holding him up there and it's not only our sin but for those in Christ it is his love for you that drove him to the cross and it's keeping him up there.
Because this is how he saved you. This is how he becomes your king. Not only the mockery but also the nails crowned Jesus. And so if you have if you have any doubt about Jesus' love if you have any doubt about how he feels about you if you think the sin that you've committed this week can take away that love you must never ever forget these nails.
He went there not because he might love you. No, he went there because he forever loves you.
And please remember this if Jesus stayed up for you then do you think he will ever abandon you now?
He is still very, very determined to save you. And so these nails may be an unholy weapon of torture but actually they are what make this moment so holy.
[25:41] In these nails a divine love is on display. They crown him. And so no wonder this moment deserves such a sacred hush.

It is the most holy of coronations. But I don't want us to leave here today thinking this is just a coronation far off in the midst of history.
I don't want us to think this is just like reading about Henry VIII coming to the throne. That's how coronations can feel can't they? We watch the king's coronation on TV and it all just seems very far off and I'm detached and just watching.
No, Jesus' enthronement isn't like that. I want you to realize this coronation couldn't be more relevant to your life. In fact you can actually be a part of this coronation.
And we see that with Simon of Cyrene. Now he doesn't add to Jesus' saving work here but he does have the privilege of being a part of it.
[26:50] Simon is mentioned here to show us that this crucifixion has a significance that goes beyond Jesus to others to nobodies like Simon.

And like Simon we can have an involvement and share in these sufferings and actually be defined by them.
Did you notice we get specific details about Simon which would have really mattered to the church when this was first written. Did you see Mark says it's not just any old Simon.
He writes down you know him. it's Simon of Cyrene. It's like saying oh it's Paul of Hanwell. And you know his sons he's the dad of Alexander and Rufus you know them.
They were known to the church they're Christians. And these Christians Simon of Cyrene and his family have been forever defined by one thing.
[27:54] He's the one that's shared in Jesus' crucifixion. He was a part of it. And he's mentioned here because you need to know that can be you as well.

When you trust in the Lord Jesus his crucifixion actually becomes yours. You share in this coronation. You actually participate in this victory and in his glory.

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It becomes yours. And like Simon of Cyrene you and your family forever become defined by one thing. You become defined by this one holy moment of history.
You no longer become that guilty sinner. You no longer become the one enslaved by sin. You are no longer the lost.
No you become the one who shares in this crucifixion. it's unlike any coronation. And you may have lived your life mocking Jesus and you maybe you have thought just some awful things about him and you had all the arguments against him and you watched all the YouTube videos and learned all the arguments and you never once recognized him as king.
[29:15] And if that is you here today well now is the time to look to his crucifixion. and you can actually be a part of this. Jesus can take all that mockery from you and it can be paid for.

Whatever sin you have the king can take it all away because for everyone in Christ here today that is what has happened to us. but only only if this crucifixion defines you if you are a part of this.
And so there is a question we must all ask ourselves today as we witness this holy moment in this sacred hush how will you be involved? Like the crowds will you stand back and just watch and refuse to acknowledge the king or will you be a part of this coronation?
Will you trust in the king and have his crucifixion define you? Wherever you are in life today this crucifixion it doesn't have to be this far off event this can be yours right now.
And so I urge you today don't stand back don't stand back come to the king trust in this savior and all of this all of this can belong to you come to this cross and you will find his love you will find forgiveness let's pray for to to to to to to!

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