

## The Man on the Center Cross

Today on "It's a Good Life," I'd like for us to look at that man on the center cross. Of course, we're talking about none other than the Lord Jesus Christ.

In Matthew 27, we're going to start reading with verse 26, and then we're going down to verse 33. It says in verse 26: *Then released he Barabbas unto them: and when he had scourged Jesus, he delivered him to be crucified.*

Now picking up the story in verse 33: *<sup>33</sup>And when they were come unto a place called Golgotha, that is to say, a place of a skull, <sup>34</sup>They gave him vinegar to drink mingled with gall: and when he had tasted thereof, he would not drink. <sup>35</sup>And they crucified him, and parted his garments, casting lots: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, They parted my garments among them, and upon my vesture did they cast lots. <sup>36</sup>And sitting down they watched him there; <sup>37</sup>And set up over his head his accusation written, THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS. <sup>38</sup>Then were there two thieves crucified with him, one on the right hand, and another on the left.*

That means Jesus was that man on the center cross. I made a comment just a few moments ago. I said we would pick up with the story. It's actually not a story. It's an account of what actually took place there as Jesus was being crucified and as He was crucified.

But I'd like for you to notice the unique behavior of the man on the center cross, first of all. His likeness was the likeness of men, but His behavior and attributes were the behavior and attributes of deity. There is no other man who could have acted... who could

have done what Jesus did on the cross as He went there and as He died on that cross.

In Isaiah 53:7, it says, *He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth.*

No one could take the life of Jesus. No one could take His life from Him. He laid down His life voluntarily. He went to the cross, and He did not say anything to stop that. It was time for Jesus to go to be the sacrificial lamb whom God had sent into this world to seek and to save those who were lost. His likeness was like that of an ordinary man, but His behavior proved and showed that He was deity.

His poise was the poise not of a mere man, but a deity. In Isaiah 42:2, it says, *He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street.* And once again in Matthew 12:19, it says, *He shall not strive, nor cry; neither shall any man hear his voice in the streets.* This is a quotation (Matthew 12:19), of course, from Isaiah 42:2.

And then we see this fulfilled in our text for the day in Matthew 27. He didn't do anything to stop what was happening. He laid down His life.

Well, Jesus didn't strive. He didn't cry in the streets. And also, we look, and He reflects always that same quiet consciousness of power, the calm assurance of control, and the clear sense of direction. He had one purpose and that was to come and to seek and to save those who were lost.

In John 18:37, it says, *Pilate therefore said unto him, Art thou a king then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice.*

Jesus didn't deny that He was King of the Jews or that He was King. He simply said, as Pilate said it. He said, "You've said it and it's true; I am the King."

One of these days we know that Jesus is coming back and He is actually going to set up a kingdom here on Earth. He is going to sit upon the throne of David... the King of the Jews, King of this world.

Well, notice also, His fearlessness was not the fearlessness of ignorance, and it wasn't reckless but of complete trust and dedication. We read about this dedication and this trust in Psalm 27:1. It says there, *The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? the LORD is the strength of my life...* (and this is talking about Jesus Christ and those of us who have trusted Him)... It says, *The LORD is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid.*

We don't have to fear man in this world. Man may kill us. You know, someone could actually kill the body, but the Bible tells us, "Don't fear the people who could kill the body, but fear the One who can destroy both body and soul in Hell." For those of us who have trusted Jesus as Savior, we have that referential fear, understanding Who He really is and that He is the Savior of this world. He will save those who call upon His name.

We don't have to concern ourselves as Christians of ever going to Hell, because Jesus took the sin upon Himself... our sin... that we would not have to go to Hell.

Notice something else. His grace was not the grace of man, but of deity. His crucifiers whom he could have slain with one breath... think if that... He prays this prayer, "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do." This is found in Luke 23:34. This man was unique. He behaved differently from the other two being crucified with Him.

Notice something else. Notice the awe-inspiring miracles that attended this crucifixion. In Matthew 27:45, it says, *Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land unto the ninth hour.* This tells me that there was total darkness at midday. Can you imagine that? It was as though the heavens could not bear to look upon the agonies and the indignities inflicted upon the Son of God. The sun draped itself in total darkness so that the agony would not be seen by the creation that Jesus had actually created.

The Bible says in Genesis 1, *In the beginning God created...* In John 1 it says, *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.* Well, Who was the Word? We read further down in the book of John 1, and it says, *And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.* And that is none other than Jesus Christ. He is the Creator.

Notice something else that took place. Matthew 27:51 says, *And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom...* (and notice this)... *and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent.* Not only was there total darkness at midday, there was a terrifying earthquake. This earthquake was as though the Earth could not bear to receive the blood drops of the Sun of God, but was seized with convulsions of horror. The earth shook

with a mighty earthquake as those drops hit the ground.

And as we read Matthew 27:51 once again, the first part of that verse talks about the veil. *And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom.* This rending of the veil in the temple from the top to the bottom.... what could be more beautiful, the symbolism of Heaven coming to Earth, the opening to sinners, the Way of access to the mercy seat. Jesus has made a way for us to come to God. He's made a way for us to go to Heaven. When He died on that cross, the veil of the temple was rent in twain, saying, "It's now available to all who would call upon His name. *For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved,* Romans 10:13.

I want you to notice with me not only the unique behavior of the man on the center cross, not only the awe-inspiring miracles that attended this crucifixion; there were others. But I want you to notice the unprecedented stirrings of the centurion's own soul. The centurion's work was done. Remember. This centurion was a seasoned veteran. He would have been a seasoned veteran at crucifying people. But notice what took place here. The last words from the cross had been spoken. "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do," Jesus said. And then He said, "Forgive them. It is finished. Into Thy hands I commend my spirit."

As we see the quivering body on that middle cross, that quivering body had become still. The Savior of the world was dead, but behind the dim unknown standeth God within the shadows holding watch over His own. This was His Son Who had died on the cross. God was there.

I know that the Bible tells us that Jesus said, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Jesus died alone on that cross for you

and me. God was close by. He was within the shadows, keeping watch.

Notice something else. The centurion hears the voice of God. The voice of God penetrates the hardest heart with the thickest crust which none other can enter. It speaks to every soul, this voice that actually spoke to that centurion. It speaks to every soul, even that of a small child. And such is the voice of God. In Luke 18:16, it says, *But Jesus called them unto him, and said, Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God.*

The Bible teaches us that, unless we come as a little child, faith believing, we will not enter in. In other words, we come faith believing that Jesus is the Son of God and He died for us. The soul... the soul of God... the voice of God pursues the guilty to the ends of the Earth.

In Psalm 139:7, it says, *Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence?* God is everywhere and God speaks to the heart of man.

And might I say it was at the cross that these people... this centurion first saw the light. And this is where I saw the light, was at the cross of Jesus Christ. It says in Matthew 27:54, *54And came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many. 55Now when the centurion, and they that were with him, watching Jesus, saw the earthquake, and those things that were done, they feared greatly, saying, Truly this was the Son of God.*

Have you trusted the Son of God today? Have you received Him into your Heart. That wicked thief on the cross pleaded this: "Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom."

And the Lord said, "Today shalt thou be with me in paradise."

Jesus wants you to go to Heaven. He wants to save you. Isaiah 1:18 says, *Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.*

Trust Him today. Ask Him to come into your heart. He'll save you.

"Lord, come into my heart. I receive you as my Savior. I believe you died for me. Save me, Lord, today."

If you'll pray a prayer like that, Jesus will save you.

It's been good being with you today. Let me invite you to look at our Website, [www.LRWM.org](http://www.LRWM.org). On that Website, you'll be able to download this program and other programs of "It's a Good Life."

Until the next time when you hear me say, "It's a good life," may the Lord bless you richly is my prayer.