

I. Look Upon The Shame On Display At Golgotha.

My fellow redeemed, I call upon you to take a good, hard look at the gruesome and shameful wickedness of humanity that is put on display for you today outside the gates of Jerusalem, at Golgotha. Look at it, because that, THAT, is your shame and my shame.

A. You just heard how Jesus died; how after being treated like a criminal and put through hell on the cross, he declared it was finished, and gave up His spirit. You would think, then, that all of the predictions about Jesus would be fulfilled until the resurrection. But, even in death, there was more to be done. And it began with the hypocrisy of the Jewish leaders, who did not want to look upon the shame of their wickedness.

Normally, it would be left to the Romans in charge to decide how long they would allow those who were crucified to suffer and be left on display. As a stern warning to others, it was usually for numerous days. But since the highest Sabbath was going to be celebrated the Jews asked Pilate to respect what was said in Deuteronomy: ***“When someone is convicted of a crime punishable by death and is executed, and you hang him on a tree, his corpse must not remain all night upon the tree; you shall bury him that same day for anyone hung on a tree is under God’s curse. You must not defile the land.”***

The presence of dead bodies at the entrance to the city, especially the one that they had put there would have offended the sensitivities of the chief priests. Their objection only highlighted their hypocrisy and the shallowness of their faith. They were extremely concerned about matters of ritual purity and public optics, but they were unconcerned about treachery, injustice, murder and the rejection of their God who had come to them in Jesus. They did not want to look upon the shame that was being put on display at Golgotha.

B. Maybe we are guilty of some of the same hypocrisy ourselves. We want to consider ourselves ritually pure and holy in the sight of others, but we remain unconcerned, even impenitent, when it comes to the presumptuous sins we commit; the treachery, injustice and murder by thought, word and deed of which we are all guilty. Some of us do not want to look upon the shame on display at Golgotha on this day, because we know that, in the end, it is really our own wickedness on display. Yes, we understand that all the suffering and bleeding, all the cries of anguish in body and soul, that gruesome and shameful death on the cross was our doing. It was totally because of our sin and the price that had to be paid for the debt we owe. So we would rather not look, especially at that one who was executed for us, the one who was hung on that tree under God’s curse for us.

C. In response to the Jews request to have the unpleasantness of it all taken away, Pilate instructed the soldiers to break the legs of the men who were being crucified. One expert in crucifixion remarked, *“Crucifixion seriously interfered with the breathing process. Because of the weight of the body and muscular contractions caused by the arms being nailed to the cross, air inhaled into the lungs could not be properly exhaled. The victim soon learned that he could exhale by using his feet to push his body up and by flexing his elbows and shoulders. But this would result in muscle cramps and searing pain in the wrists and feet. Each effort to inhale and to exhale caused agony and increasing weariness. The victim would be soaked with perspiration and experience great thirst. The pain and shock often led to mental impairment. The two main causes of death were shock and suffocation, both of which brought on asphyxia - too little oxygen and too much carbon dioxide in the blood.”* So in order to keep the criminals from pushing their legs up to gain a breath, the soldiers would break their legs so they couldn’t push up on their torsos from the cross. So the soldiers came to the first criminal who hung beside Jesus, crack, then the next crack. Their legs were broken, and death would come quickly. But when they came to Jesus they found that He was already dead, so they did not break his legs.

II. Look Upon The One Who Fulfills God’s Promise.

A. Why, was Jesus already dead? Well, it could have been that the anguish and exhaustion preceding His crucifixion left Him unable to push up and breathe as well as the others. It might have been the fact that He had lost so much blood from His brutal scourging at the hands of the soldiers. But John tells us that there was a greater reason: ***“These things happened so that the scripture would be fulfilled: ‘Not one of his bones will be broken.’”*** This prediction was found in Psalm 34 and in Numbers 9. These predictions tell us two things about the one whose legs remained unbroken.

B. The first is that Jesus, the One who became a curse for us was indeed holy and righteous. Psalm 34 says, ***“A righteous man may have many troubles, but the LORD delivers him from them all; he protects all his bones, not one of them will be broken.”*** The Son of Man, whose legs were not broken is the Holy One of God, who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet was without sin. [Cf. Heb. 4] Jesus is the only truly righteous man, who knew no sin, yet became sin for us. There you see the sweet exchange, His innocence for our guilt, His holiness for our sin, His life for our death. And in the end the LORD will deliver him from all of this, and raise Him up for us all.

C. The second prediction about the unbroken legs points us to Christ as the true Paschal Lamb. The LORD told Moses: ***“Tell the Israelites: They are to eat the lamb, together with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. They must not leave any of it till morning or break any of its bones.”*** The very festival which was now being celebrated by those in Jerusalem, while the blood drained from Jesus’ lifeless body, was finding its greater fulfillment right there through the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. In the Passover celebration God’s people remembered how God spared His people and delivered them out of their slavery, through the blood of the unblemished Passover lamb. And now the True Paschal Lamb has been sacrificed to spare us from the destruction we deserve, and to deliver us from our slavery to sin. All of us who have been purchased with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot.

So again, I call upon you to look; look upon the One who fulfills God’s promises for you. Look upon the righteous One, the Paschal Lamb, who is sacrificed for you. But wait there is something more...

III. Look Upon The One You Have Pierced.

John tells us that yet another scripture is fulfilled while Jesus lifeless body was hanging upon the cross. When the soldiers came to Jesus, and discovered that He was already dead, instead of breaking His legs, ***“one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and at once there came out blood and water.”***

A. One thing that this detail of the water and the blood coming from Jesus’ pierced side does is to prove that Jesus was actually dead. It was very clear. He was not faking it - he couldn’t have been. The centurion had probably seen hundreds of these deaths, and this was a tell tale sign of death. But the reason that John makes mention of it is because it was also predicted in the Scriptures that Jesus would be pierced. Zechariah prophesied, ***“They will look upon the one they have pierced.”***

The most comforting thing for us in the piercing of Jesus - was the reason WHY he was pierced. Isaiah 53 tells: ***“But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed.”*** By having His lifeless body pierced by a spear, even in death Jesus was telling us, “you are forgiven! Your sins are paid for in full! Look at me! See what I have done - for you!” Seeing Jesus hanging on the cross and seeing blood and water pour from his side is not an attractive sight. But it is important that on this day, and every day, we look upon the one we have pierced. When we look upon that sight the message is clear - we are healed by his wounds.

B. Jesus continues to call upon us to look at Him, the one we have pierced, especially to that water and that blood that flows from His riven side. He assures us that they continue to flow to us in a different way to give us the blessings that He won for us upon that cross. The waters of baptism flow from his side - as this water connects us with Jesus’ righteousness and forgiveness. The blood of the Lord’s Supper continues to give us forgiveness, life and salvation, along with the strengthening of our faith. The power of these sacraments flow from that sacrifice of Christ to impart life through His death!

Concl.: So my fellow redeemed in Christ, I encourage you to Look Upon Jesus; Look upon your shame on display, look upon the One who fulfills God’s promises to you, and look upon the one you have pierced, and find comfort in knowing that by those wounds you are healed. Amen.