

"Were You There When Jesus Was Crowned with Thorns?"—
Matthew 27:27-31

The text for this sermon, the theme of which is, "Were You There When Jesus Was Crowned with Thorns?", is Matthew 27:27-31 → *Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the governor's headquarters, and they gathered the whole battalion before Him. And they stripped Him and put a scarlet robe on Him, and twisting together a crown of thorns, they put it on His head and put a reed in His right hand. And kneeling before Him, they mocked Him, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!" And they spit on Him and took the reed and struck Him on the head. And when they had mocked Him, they stripped Him of the robe and put His own clothes on Him and led Him away to crucify Him.* This is the text.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ Jesus:

Over two thousands years ago an angel appeared to a young woman to give her news of a miraculous birth. He said that she would give birth to a son Who would be holy. Her response? She asked: *How will this be, since I am a virgin?* (cf. Luke 1:34) Good question. However, within that "birth announcement" the angel talked about Him being a king in Luke 1:32-33, saying: *He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to Him the throne of His father David,*

and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end. This “miracle baby” would reign over God’s people in an eternal kingdom? Must have been quite an overwhelming “birth announcement” to say the least!

Yahweh had promised about seven hundred years before this special “birth announcement” through the prophet Isaiah: *To us a child is born, to us a Son is given; and the government shall be upon His shoulder, and His name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over His kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.* (cf. Isaiah 9:6-7) It is the promise of a divine child to be born of a woman Who will reign as king over God’s people *from this time forth and forevermore!* The promises given in the whole incident is beyond our natural ability to fathom. They can only be grasped by faith as one simply trusts in Yahweh, the great miracle worker, to perform such a work and for one to look forward to its fulfillment.

Maybe at this point in the sermon you’re thinking: “Wait a minute pastor. This is the Lenten season of the church year calendar—not the Advent or Christmas season. This is about the end of Jesus’ earthly life—not the beginning of it. Aren’t you kind of ‘seasonally challenged’ when

it comes to your church year calendar?” While it may appear that I’m “out of season” consider the words of Matthew 27:37, describing the reason for crucifying Jesus: *Over His head they put the charge against Him, which read, “This is Jesus, the King of the Jews.”* The One described in His “birth announcement” to reign as king over God’s people **in an eternal kingdom** is now hanging on a cross, condemned to die for being the king of God’s people? How could a people look forward to the coming of a promised king only to kill Him in the end? While seeking leadership and direction the sinner will fight submitting to such leadership if he cannot manipulate that leadership for his own sinful desires.

Our text depicts the depths of such sinfulness in the mockery of *the soldiers of the governor* when they *took Jesus into the governor’s headquarters*. (Verse 27) It was mockery directed at the charge against Him—being *King of the Jews*. A scarlet robe was placed on Him to depict the color worn by royalty (also purple—cf. Mark 15:17; John 19:2). A king is distinguished amongst royalty by his crown. Thus, *twisting together a crown of thorns, they put it on His head*. A king’s authority was usually symbolized by the scepter, usually held with the right hand which also symbolized power. However, the soldier’s placing of a *reed in His right hand* appears to depicted their perceived powerlessness of Jesus, since a reed was simply a tall blade of grass. (cf. Verse 29)

Maybe the most disgusting part of their mockery was their treatment of Him as described in verse 30 of our text: *They spit on Him and took the reed and struck Him on the head.* Spitting on someone is considered by many as the most disgusting insult human beings can offer anyone. Using the reed to strike Jesus on the head actually demonstrated the weakness of His authority. The fact that any person could take His sign of authority out of His hand and strike Him with it was a mockery of His power. The Gospel of John's account tells us they also *struck Him with their hands.* (cf. John 19:3) And this after He had been severely flogged, probably with a whip containing strands of leather strips tipped with sharp pieces of metal. Such physical suffering was intense.

Could Pilate, in an effort to reinforce the innocence of Jesus, have ordered such disgusting mockery in an effort to show these Jewish religious leaders that Jesus was no king to be feared as a threat to either the Jews or the Roman government? How could such a weakling be a threat? Or maybe Pilate, in an effort to reinforce the innocence of Jesus, ordered such disgusting mockery so he could present a disgusting man of suffering to these Jewish religious leaders in an effort to elicit pity for Him, in hopes that they would drop their charges. Scripture does tell us that Pilate wanted to release Jesus. (cf. John 23:20)

While you may gasp in disgust at such treatment of Jesus by unbelievers, it is countered by the greater wonder of faith which

recognizes that Jesus *endured from sinners such hostility against Himself* (cf. Hebrews 12:3) **for you**. You were there when Jesus was crowned with thorns because He underwent such humiliation for your sins, for the sins of those soldiers and the sins of all people. Here too you can behold Him by faith as your perfect Savior! Jesus suffered the humiliation and pain of that *crown of thorns* in mockery so that you might receive the crown of Life through faith in Him as the *King of kings and Lord of lords!* (cf. Revelation 17:14) In one respect, the soldier did get one thing right: It is all about Jesus being King and reigning.

All sin which we commit is that which goes against the command of Jesus, the King, and is actually a mockery of Him. When we sin we fail to recognize His Lordship over our lives as our King at that moment. The Holy Spirit will convict us when we sin to drive us to the cross where Jesus paid the punishment our sins deserve, dying not only as the *King of the Jews* but as the perfect sacrifice for our sin, once for all sins and all time. Hebrews 10:10 talks about Jesus **willingly** doing this for us: *By His will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.* He chose willing to undergo their mockery so that He might offer Himself as the perfect sacrifice for all the sin of all people as *the Lamb of God, Who takes away the sin of the world.* (cf. John 1:29)

Thus, when we view the *crown of thorns* which Jesus wore for us it

should bring us to see our sin, confess that sin to God and claim Him as our Savior **and King**. Trusting in Jesus as your King means that He is in control of your life and you constantly desire to submit to His Will and Word in service to Him. In the 2nd Article of the Apostles' Creed we confess in the meaning that Jesus is our "Lord, Who has redeemed me, a lost and condemned person . . . with His holy, precious blood and with His innocent suffering and death." Why? So "that **I may be His own and live under Him in His kingdom and serve Him in everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness**, just as He is risen from the dead, lives **and reigns to all eternity.**"

It also means that you will share in His suffering as you remain faithful to Jesus, your King. James 1:12 gives the promise: *Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love Him.* As you continue to remain faithful to Jesus in your daily vocations of life you will receive *the crown of life* in the eternal glory which we will share with our King on the Last Day! Amen.

Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life.

(Revelation 2:10)

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