



Saint John United Methodist Church
12700 W. Hwy. 42, Prospect, KY 40059
stjohnky.com

Message for Good Friday, April 15, 2022
“Lay Down Your Plans”
Speaker: Pastor Tom Grieb
Scripture: Mark 14:21-32

A Full Cast of Characters

Mark is characteristically short and succinct in comparison to the other gospels. He moves the story of Christ's life along to the very scriptures we are considering tonight. As short and succinct as Mark is, he includes a full cast of characters along the way. I contend that we see ourselves in them.

Simon of Cyrene

Simon had traveled a long way only to have his pilgrimage interrupted by being forced to carry the cross of Christ. We don't know for sure what took place between Christ and Simon as they trudged toward Golgotha. There is evidence though that suggests that Simon's heart was turned.

What is taking place between you and Jesus as you meet on the way to Golgotha?

The Two Criminals

There were two criminals crucified along with Christ, one to his right and the other to his left. Mark characterizes the two as rebels. It is safe to say they had rebelled against God's design for their lives.

We see here a microcosm of the world. On one side is the man who derides Christ, and on the other, the man who comes to his defense.

“Today, you will be with me in paradise” offers hope to those who turn their lives toward Christ.

What side are you on?

Those Who Passed By

There were plenty of casual observers who walked right on by as Christ hung from the cross. Others chose to linger. They were much more vitriolic.

“So you said you were going to destroy the temple and build it in three days. How about saving yourself?”

There is a lot of disrespect for Jesus these days and, if not disrespect, then disregard. Some would rather revile than revere. Where do you fit into that?

Scribes and Pharisees

The Scribes and Pharisees joined in as well. We shouldn't be surprised. At least they were consistent.

“He saved others. He can’t even save himself.”

That’s another way of saying, *“You were only fooling yourself **and** others with what you were claiming about yourself.”*

The Scribes and Pharisees should have known better. Their self-righteousness had gotten in the way. Self-righteousness is just that way. It gets in the way of us experiencing what Jesus wants us to experience.

How is self-righteousness hurting your relationship with Christ?

Jesus

And then there was Jesus. He takes center stage.

His agony was severe. His sacrifice enormous. His love supreme. In fact, his was the greatest show of love that has ever been. Jesus was willing to lay it all down for our sake, including whatever plans he might have otherwise had. For Jesus, God’s plans were always his plans.

How is that sort of thing playing out in your life?

Why Have You Forsaken Me?

The only word Mark has Jesus speaking from the cross is *“Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachithani,”* which means, *“My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”*

In the press of that moment, it just seemed that way. This is a very human response on the part of Christ.

Our Lent devotional for this past Tuesday said that *“Jesus had not only been forsaken by his friends, but by his Heavenly Father.”*

I disagreed with that. God was there all along, seeing Christ through. God would see Jesus through all the way to his resurrection three days later. God is with us as well, even in our most desolate times, especially in our most desolate times.

Were You There?

The question always comes this time of year. *“Were you there when they crucified my Lord?”*

Yes, of course, we were.

Unlike the others though that stood at the foot of the cross, may it be that we are counted among the number, who with faith, thank God for the great thing he has done.

What Part Do We Play?

May we also consider the part we play in Christ’s crucifixion.

- Have our hearts been turned by Christ or are they the same as they have always been?

- Are we more prone to deride or defend Jesus?
- Would we rather revile him or revere him?
- And how is self-righteousness getting in the way?
- Most importantly, let's consider will it be our plans or God's? Are we willing to lay down our plans for the sake of living into God's plans, even if that means giving up our very lives?