

BIBLE STUDY HELPS

TITLE: Sacrificed

TEXT: Mark 15:21-39

TARGET: SESSION IN A SENTENCE

Jesus paid the penalty for our sins on the cross.

LOOK UP: FOCUSING THE GROUP

Introduce: Has anyone heard of the “bridge to nowhere”?

- There are actually two bridges with that title. One is in California and one is in Alaska. The California bridge was built in 1936, north of Azusa, California in the San Gabriel Mountains. It spans the East Fork of the San Gabriel River and was meant to be part of a road connecting the San Gabriel Valley with Wrightwood, which was never was built.
- The second bridge was never finished. This Bridge to Nowhere was a proposed bridge in Alaska and would have connected the town of Ketchikan with Gravina Island, an island with a local airport and 50 residents. The bridge was going to be nearly as long as the Golden Gate Bridge and higher than the Brooklyn Bridge. The estimated cost was almost \$400 million in federal taxpayer funds, so the public stopped the construction of the bridge.

Today we are going to look at a bridge that has a destination, a specific destination. It was built for a specific purpose.

Here are the events leading up to the passage we are going to study today:

- Mark 14:53–15:41 describes Jesus’s arrest in the early morning hours.
- Mark 14:53-65 describes Jesus’s trial and His verbal and physical abuse.
- Mark 14:66-72 tells of Peter’s denial of Christ.
- In Mark 15:1-20, Jesus is once again on trial before the Roman authority, Pontius Pilate, the governor of Judea. Jesus was convicted of political treason, and Pilate agreed to have Jesus crucified. Jesus was subjected to the torture of a Roman flogging. Pilate’s soldiers made sport of Him by paying mock homage, adorning Him with a painful crown of thorns and a purple robe, all the while beating Him, then finally escorting Him to the place of crucifixion.
- In Mark 15:20, the path to the place of crucifixion begins, “When they had mocked Him, they stripped Him of the purple robe, put His clothes on Him, and led Him out to crucify Him.” (Mark 15:20, CSB)

This takes us to Jesus’s crucifixion, death, burial, and resurrection. It is here that the gospel story finally reaches its climax as the perfect Son of God gives Himself as a final sacrifice to pay the penalty for man’s sins. He bridges the gap for those who willingly respond to His invitation to follow Him! Let’s rejoice for the gift Jesus gave as we observe the sacrifice Jesus made for us!

LOOK IN: UNPACKING THE BIBLICAL TEXT

Someone Read: Mark 15:21-27

²¹ They forced a man coming in from the country, who was passing by, to carry Jesus’s cross. He was Simon of Cyrene, the father of Alexander and Rufus. ²² They brought Jesus to the place called Golgotha (which means Place of the Skull). ²³ They tried to give him wine mixed with myrrh, but he did not take it. ²⁴ Then they crucified him and divided his clothes, casting lots for them to decide what each would get. ²⁵ Now it was nine in the morning when they crucified him. ²⁶ The inscription of the charge written against him was: The King of the Jews. ²⁷ They crucified two criminals with him, one on his right and one on his left.

The prophet Isaiah predicted that the Messiah would die in this specific way – “He willingly submitted to death, and was counted among the rebels; yet he bore the sin of many and interceded for the rebels.” (Isa 53:12 CSB)

Ask: Knowing what you know about Jesus today, how would you respond if you had been observing this? What would you be feeling or thinking?

Let’s see how people of that day responded.

Someone Read: Mark 15:29-32

²⁹ Those who passed by were yelling insults at him, shaking their heads, and saying, “Ha! The one who would destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, ³⁰ save yourself by coming down from the cross!” ³¹ In the same way, the chief priests with the scribes were mocking him among themselves and saying, “He saved others, but he cannot save himself! ³² Let the Messiah, the King of Israel, come down now from the cross, so that we may see and believe.” Even those who were crucified with him taunted him.

John 2:19-22 will help us understand the context of some of the scoffers’ statements – Jesus answered, “Destroy this temple, and I will raise it up in three days.” Therefore the Jews said, “This temple took forty-six years to build, and will you raise it up in three days?” But he was speaking about the temple of his body. So when he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this, and they believed the Scripture and the statement Jesus had made.

Guide:

Who were the groups of people who scoffed at Him in this passage?

- Those who passed by – vss.29-30.
- The chief priests and scribes – vss.31-32
- Those being crucified with Him – v.32

Discuss: What groups could this represent today?

- Those who passed by—the casual observers who have only heard stories about Jesus.
- The chief priests and scribes—The religious leaders who have distorted the Scriptures and mock the truth in Scriptures.
- Those being crucified—Those facing death with a hardened heart

The Truth Jesus taught was now being twisted and used against Him. Jesus could have saved Himself. He could have called it quits at any point and destroyed His scoffers, but He didn’t. If He had, the bridge would have been incomplete. It would have been a bridge whose construction was halted before completion. To be our bridge, Jesus had to remain on the cross and die.

Now let’s look at what took place as Jesus breathed His last breath. What actions do you observe in these final moments of Jesus’s life?

Read: Mark 15:33-39

³³ When it was noon, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon. ³⁴ And at three Jesus cried out with a loud voice, “Eloi, Eloi, lemá’ ‘sabachtháni?” which is translated, “My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?” ³⁵ When some of those standing there heard this, they said, “See, he’s calling for Elijah.” ³⁶ Someone ran and filled a sponge with sour wine, fixed it on a stick, offered him a drink, and said, “Let’s see if Elijah comes to take him down.” ³⁷ Jesus let out a loud cry and breathed his last. ³⁸ Then the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. ³⁹ When the centurion, who was standing opposite him, saw the way he breathed his last, he said, “Truly this man was the Son of God!”

Guide:

- What were the actions you observed? How do you suppose this Roman soldier gained the insight He demonstrated when He confessed that Jesus truly was God’s Son?
- Imagine God the Father, looking down and observing all that is happening to His Son.
 - o How do you think He felt?
 - o What do you think He would have wanted to do to those who mocked His Son?
 - o What do you think He wanted to do when Jesus cried out to Him?
 - o How do you think He felt when the Roman soldier confessed that Jesus was the Son of God?

While Mark only says Jesus let out a loud cry, the apostle John in John 19:30 fills in the gap by identifying Jesus’s final words as “It is finished.” The victory over sin is complete.

Jesus suffered a temporary separation from the Father without giving up any of His divine nature. He had been mocked by the crowd, the religious leaders, and the soldiers. He had been forsaken by His disciples and now by His Father, but there was more. We can’t forget that there were some final things that took place that demonstrated Jesus’s power over sin and death – it was His resurrection.

LOOK OUT: LIVING OUT THE TARGET

The bridge Jesus built was not a bridge to nowhere; neither was it a bridge to just anywhere.

- The bridge Jesus built was a bridge to somewhere, a specific destination, and was built with one specific purpose.
- Jesus was the ONLY One who could build that bridge, and it is the ONLY bridge that is built that gives us access to a relationship with God and the promise of eternal life with Him.
- Jesus stated very clearly, Jesus told him, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me. If you know Me, you will also know My Father.” (John 14:6-7 CSB)

Challenge:

- Who in your circle of relationships needs to respond to Jesus’s invitation for salvation? What can you do to help them hear the message of salvation?
- Have you personally responded to Jesus as God’s Son? Have you come to the realization the Roman soldier demonstrated when he confessed that Jesus was God’s Son, or do you still struggle with doubt? (Encourage those who might struggle to talk with you following the group time.)