

Sermon Notes: Christ on the Road to Calvary

Text: Luke 23

Theme: Jesus, the sinless Son of God, willingly endured rejection, humiliation, and death so that condemned sinners could be saved.

Introduction

Luke 23 brings us face to face with the suffering of Christ as He moves toward Calvary. This chapter is full of injustice, false accusation, cowardice, mockery, and brutality. Yet through it all, Jesus remains exactly who He has always been: the spotless, sinless Son of God, moving in perfect obedience toward the cross. These verses remind us that without His suffering, we would have no Savior.

Peter had just denied the Lord three times, and that denial brought deep remorse. In the same way, our own sin against Christ ought to grieve us. Yet the focus now shifts to Jesus Himself and all He endured for us.

1. Jesus Was Falsely Accused by Men

Luke 23:1–3

The religious leaders brought Jesus before Pilate with accusations:

- that He was perverting the nation,
- forbidding tribute to Caesar,
- and claiming to be Christ a King.

These accusations were twisted and dishonest.

Key truths:

- Jesus was **not** turning people from right to wrong; He was turning them from wrong to right.
- He did **not** forbid tribute to Caesar.
- It **was true** that He was Christ the King.

The enemies of Christ often mix lies with fragments of truth in order to distort who He really is.

Application:

People still accuse Jesus falsely today. They reject Him not because He is guilty, but because His truth challenges their sin and their power.

2. Pilate Found No Fault in Jesus

Luke 23:4

Pilate plainly declared, **“I find no fault in this man.”**

This is one of the great testimonies in the chapter. Even a Roman governor, after examination, could not find any justifiable fault in Christ.

Key truths:

- Jesus is absolutely sinless.
- No legitimate accusation could stand against Him.
- He was not dying for His own crimes, but for ours.

Application:

The only “reason” Jesus went to the cross was His love and obedience to the Father’s will. He suffered not because He deserved judgment, but because we did.

3. Men Kept Passing Jesus Off

Luke 23:5–12

When Pilate heard that Jesus was associated with Galilee, he sent Him to Herod. Pilate was trying to pass responsibility to someone else.

This shows a pattern:

- Peter denied Him,
- the religious leaders wanted Him dead,
- Pilate tried to hand Him off,
- Herod treated Him like entertainment.

Spiritual lesson:

Everyone must do something with Jesus.
You cannot simply pass Him off as someone else’s concern.

Application:

Many still do this today. They postpone, dismiss, or hand off thoughts of Christ. But Jesus is not someone to ignore. He is the Savior who must be personally faced.

4. Herod Wanted Entertainment, Not Truth

Luke 23:8–9

Herod was glad to see Jesus because he hoped to see a miracle. He wanted a show, not a Savior.

But Jesus answered him nothing.

Key truths:

- Jesus is not a spectacle.
- Miracles were never for amusement; they were signs confirming truth.
- Christ did not come to entertain sinners, but to save them.

Application:

Some people want religion only if it impresses them, excites them, or benefits them. But Jesus is Lord, not a performer. He demands repentance and faith.

5. Christ Endured Mockery and Humiliation for Us

Luke 23:10–11

Herod and his soldiers mocked Jesus, despised Him, and arrayed Him in a gorgeous robe before sending Him back to Pilate.

Key truths:

- Jesus was humiliated publicly.
- He endured shame willingly.
- The condemned were condemning the only sinless man.

This is one of the great ironies of the cross:

the truly righteous One was condemned by condemned sinners so that condemned sinners could be set free.

Application:

Every insult, every false charge, every humiliation was part of the road He walked for our redemption.

6. Rejecting Christ Has Severe Consequences

Luke 23:27–31

As Jesus was led away, women bewailed and lamented Him. But Jesus told them not to weep for Him, but for themselves and their children.

His words pointed ahead to coming judgment.

Key truths:

- Israel's rejection of their Messiah would bring consequences.
- If such things were done when the "tree is green," what would happen when it was dry?
- To reject Christ is never a small thing.

Application:

A nation, a people, or a person cannot reject the Son of God without consequence. Judgment follows persistent unbelief.

7. Barabbas Was Released, and Jesus Was Condemned

Luke 23:13–25

Pilate repeatedly declared that neither he nor Herod had found Jesus worthy of death. Yet the crowd demanded:

"Crucify him, crucify him."

Instead of Jesus, they asked for Barabbas:

- a man guilty of sedition,
- a man guilty of murder.

Key truths:

- The guilty man went free.

- The innocent man was condemned.
- This is a picture of the gospel.

Barabbas deserved death, but Jesus took the place of the guilty. That is what Christ does for sinners.

Application:

We are Barabbas. Guilty, condemned, deserving judgment. Yet Christ took our place.

8. Simon Bore the Cross Behind Jesus

Luke 23:26

Simon of Cyrene was compelled to bear the cross after Jesus.

Key truth:

Jesus had been so beaten and weakened that another man was made to carry the crossbeam.

Application:

The suffering of Christ was real, physical, and severe. He truly endured agony on the way to Calvary.

9. Jesus Prayed for His Enemies

Luke 23:33–34

At Calvary, Jesus said:

“Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.”

Key truths:

- Even in agony, Jesus showed mercy.
- His enemies were acting in blindness and deception.
- Satanic deception is powerful, and sinners often do not understand the full horror of their rebellion.

Application:

Christ's compassion is astonishing. Even while being crucified, He interceded for sinners. That should deepen our gratitude and move us to pray for the lost.

10. The World Mocked Him, But He Stayed on the Cross

Luke 23:35–38

The rulers, soldiers, and others mocked Him:

- “He saved others; let him save himself.”
- “If thou be the king of the Jews, save thyself.”

They thought His refusal to come down proved weakness. In reality, it proved His mission.

Key truth:

He did not come off the cross because staying on the cross was the only way to save us.

Application:

He could have come down. But had He done so, we would have been lost forever. His staying was not weakness; it was love.

11. One Thief Rejected Christ, the Other Received Him

Luke 23:39–43

One malefactor joined in the mocking:

“If thou be Christ, save thyself and us.”

But the other rebuked him and confessed:

- their own guilt,
- Christ's innocence,
- and Christ's kingdom.

Then he said:

“Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom.”

Jesus answered:

“Today shalt thou be with me in paradise.”

Key truths:

- One man died in unbelief.
- One man died in faith.
- Salvation came by grace through faith alone.

Important doctrinal note:

The thief was not baptized, did not join a church, and did not perform works. Yet Jesus saved him immediately.

Application:

Salvation is through faith in Christ alone. A repentant heart and believing faith are enough, because Jesus is enough.

12. Jesus Gave His Life, and the Veil Was Torn

Luke 23:44–46

From the sixth hour to the ninth hour, darkness covered the land. Then Jesus cried:
“Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit.”

And He gave up the ghost.

At the same time, the veil of the temple was torn in the midst.

Key truths:

- Christ’s death was voluntary.
- He was offering Himself as the sacrifice for sin.
- The torn veil signified open access to God through Christ.

No longer would sinners need an earthly priesthood to approach God. We now have a heavenly High Priest.

Application:

Because Jesus died, the way to God is open. Access to the Father is through Christ alone.

13. Even the Centurion Recognized His Righteousness

Luke 23:47

The centurion said:

“Certainly this was a righteous man.”

Key truth:

A sincere look at Christ leads to the conclusion that He is righteous.

Application:

Those who honestly consider Jesus cannot rightly dismiss Him. The evidence of His righteousness is overwhelming.

14. Faithful Followers Remained, Even in Sorrow

Luke 23:48–56

Though many rejected Christ, not all did. Some stood afar off beholding these things. Joseph of Arimathea, a good and just man, sought the body of Jesus and laid Him in a new tomb.

Key truths:

- God still had faithful witnesses.
- Jesus truly died and was truly buried.
- The burial confirms the reality of His death.

Application:

The story was not over at the tomb. The burial sets the stage for the resurrection.

Major Lessons from the Chapter

1. Jesus is absolutely sinless

Pilate, Herod, the repentant thief, the centurion, and the entire testimony of Scripture all point to the same truth: Christ had done nothing amiss.

2. Men reject Jesus for sinful reasons

The religious leaders were driven by envy, power, pride, and hatred.

3. Deception is powerful

The crowd, the rulers, the soldiers, and one thief all echoed the same blindness. Deception remains one of Satan's strongest tools.

4. Salvation required the suffering of Christ

Without His suffering, humiliation, crucifixion, and death, there would be no salvation.

5. Every person must respond to Jesus

Pilate tried to avoid the issue. Herod mocked. One thief rejected. One thief believed. Every person must decide what to do with Christ.

Gospel Emphasis

Luke 23 shows us that:

- we are the guilty ones,
- Jesus is the innocent One,
- He took the place of sinners,
- and those who turn to Him in faith are saved.

The cry of the thief should be the cry of every sinner:
"Lord, remember me."

And Christ still saves all who come to Him by faith.