

Sermon Series: “The Darkness and the Dawn”—LOL, Westfield—3/12/2003

Title: “The Man Who Missed His Cross”

Text: Matthew 27: 15-26

Intro: *Someone else suffered for you*

Theme: In Jesus who took up the cross in our place, we learn that dying to our old sinful life actually becomes the way to eternal freedom for us through Him

Convicted inmates on death row getting a reprieve

- Barabbas was a death row inmate without a ghost of a chance
 1. Convicted of insurrection, murder, and thievery in a Roman world
 2. Waiting in the Praetorium for the death sentence to be carried out on a cross
- Not much unlike the eternal sentence hanging over each of us
 3. “The soul that sins it shall die” & “The wages of sin is death”
 4. Waiting for the death sentence to be carried out
- Unexpectedly, ***graciously***, Jesus slips into story and becomes the substitute
 5. Barabbas probably only heard “Barabbas ... Crucify” and then was let go
 6. “*God had Christ, who was sinless, take our sin so that we might receive God's approval through him.*” 2 Cor 5: 21
 7. In the dark moment of guilt—at the moment of our death when all around us is screaming “***guilty***”—in Jesus we hear the not guilty and the great exchange
 8. “*There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.*” Rom 8:1

Having dodged the bullet of the cross, we must die a death in Jesus

- Barabbas, forgotten by history, most likely found his way back to death row
 1. Had the name “Jesus, bar Abba”(Jesus son of the father)—a freedom fighter
 2. Probably never found Jesus, the Christ—the Liberator—because he never died to himself and his own self-willed, self saving efforts
 3. **Ills.: Unnecessary road kill —stubborn eagle in the road**
- If we are to find Jesus, the Liberator, we must experience his death in our life
 4. We must die to ourselves in order to be liberated from the death of sin within
 - “*For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin--because anyone who has died has been freed from sin. Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him.*” Rom 6: 6-8
 5. When we have found the cross which we missed, we find the life which we lost
 - “*I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.*” Gal 2: 20

Matthew 27:15-26

¹⁵Now it was the governor's custom at the Feast to release a prisoner chosen by the crowd. ¹⁶At that time they had a notorious prisoner, called Barabbas. ¹⁷So when the crowd had gathered, Pilate asked them, "Which one do you want me to release to you: Barabbas, or Jesus who is called Christ?" ¹⁸For he knew it was out of envy that they had handed Jesus over to him. ¹⁹While Pilate was sitting on the judge's seat, his wife sent him this message: "Don't have anything to do with that innocent man, for I have suffered a great deal today in a dream because of him." ²⁰But the chief priests and the elders persuaded the crowd to ask for Barabbas and to have Jesus executed. ²¹"Which of the two do you want me to release to you?" asked the governor.

"Barabbas," they answered. ²²"What shall I do, then, with Jesus who is called Christ?" Pilate asked. They all answered, "Crucify him!" ²³"Why? What crime has he committed?" asked Pilate. But they shouted all the louder, "Crucify him!" ²⁴When Pilate saw that he was getting nowhere, but that instead an uproar was starting, he took water and washed his hands in front of the crowd. "I am innocent of this man's blood," he said. "It is your responsibility!" ²⁵All the people answered, "Let his blood be on us and on our children!" ²⁶Then he released Barabbas to them. But he had Jesus flogged, and handed him over to be crucified.

Someone Else Suffered For You

In the spring of 2002, I left work early so I could have some uninterrupted study time before my final exam in the Youth Ministry class at Hannibal-LaGrange College in Missouri. When I got to class, everybody was doing their last-minute studying. The teacher came in and said he would review with us before the test. Most of his review came right from the study guide, but there were some things he was reviewing that I had never heard. When questioned about it, he said they were in the book and we were responsible for everything in the book. We couldn't argue with that. Finally it was time to take the test. "Leave them face down on the desk until everyone has one, and I'll tell you to start," our professor, Dr. Tom Hufty, instructed. When we turned them over, to my astonishment every answer on the test was filled in. My name was even written on the exam in red ink. The bottom of the last page said: "This is the end of the exam. All the answers on your test are correct. You will receive an A on the final exam. The reason you passed the test is because the creator of the test took it for you. All the work you did in preparation for this test did not help you get the A. You have just experienced 1/4 grace." Dr. Hufty then went around the room and asked each student individually, "What is your grade? Do you deserve the grade you are receiving? How much study time for this exam did you put in and would it help you achieve your final grade?" Then he said, "Some things you learn from lectures, some things you learn from research, but some things you can only learn from experience. You've just experienced grace. One hundred years from now, if you know Jesus Christ as your personal Savior, your name will be written down in a book, and you will have had nothing to do with writing it there. That will be the ultimate grace experience." *Denise Banderman, Hannibal, MO*