

# **FORGIVE US WHEN WE DESPISE**

## **YOUR GREAT SALVATION!**

**The Mob in Pilate's Court**  
Matthew 27:15-26

**Midweek 3**

“Let his blood be on us and on our children!” There is no doubt that wicked men through the ages have used this single phrase to justify many and vicious attacks on generations of Jewish people. There is no doubt that many have misused this phrase, but the question remains: how could they have said it in the first place? How could that mob have taken upon itself and its descendants the responsibility for the blood of Jesus?

It appears that they weren't much concerned about it. They were convinced that the guilt was not theirs but the Nazarene carpenter's, who had dared to pretend to be their Messiah. When they looked at him, they saw a pathetic figure wearing a crown of thorns. They believed that they had been cheated by a fraud who deserved everything that the Romans could dish out. They felt Jesus had betrayed them; crucifixion was too good for him!

They didn't want the salvation he came to bring. Have we ever been tempted to join in with that unholy crowd? Are we ever tempted to demand something from God that he never promised or to reject that which his Son died to offer? If so, then we must pray:

### **Forgive Us When We Despise Your Great Salvation!**

- 1. When we demand earthly blessings that have not been promised.*
- 2. Fix our eyes on the needs of our souls.*

#### **1.**

“Let his blood be on us and on our children!” How could they shout such a thing? To find the answer, we have to look at the world in the way those people in the mob did. All their lives they had been waiting for the Messiah. From little on, their heads and their imaginations were filled with him. They wanted him to come, and waited eagerly for him.

Their hearts would soar at Sabbath worship when one of the prophecies of the Messiah was read. From the first book of Moses to the final book, that of Malachi, the Holy Scriptures set forth the promises again and again. They told of the place where he would be born. They spoke of the wonders he would bring about. They spoke of triumph after suffering, of an eternal crown that would adorn the head of the heir of great King David.

And the Israelites wanted this—but, perhaps, not in quite the same way the writers of the Old Testament had meant it. They had the desire for salvation, but not the same salvation that was promised in the words of the prophets. The Israelites were under the thumb of an occupying power, the Roman Empire. That was a blow to their national pride. It was a slap in the face for the chosen people of God. A Savior from sin and death could wait; first the Israelites wanted a

Savior from Rome.

And so they imagined his coming: the King Messiah would appear in the skies over Jerusalem and slowly and majestically descend into the courts of the great temple. He would raise his voice, and armies would flock to his call. They would go out from the Holy City as a mighty army to bring vengeance on the Romans and on all the enemies of the Jews. The King Messiah would rule. Jerusalem would become the greatest city in the world, and all people would finally acknowledge the greatness of the people of Israel and of their glorious Messiah-King.

For a while it seemed that Jesus of Nazareth might be that Messiah. Many thought as the Pharisee Nicodemus: **“No one could perform the miraculous signs you are doing if God were not with him”** (Jn 3:2). Some asked, **“When the Christ [the Messiah] comes, will he do more miraculous signs than this man?”** (Jn 7:31).

When Jesus fed the five thousand, they were ready to crown him their king. They had been so enthusiastic for it that Jesus could barely send them away while he went into the hills to pray. And the next day, they had searched and searched for him, confident that the days of the Messiah were at hand.

On the Sunday before the Passover, they heard the rumors that he had raised a dead man to life. They watched and cheered as he rode into Jerusalem on a donkey as the Old Testament had predicted. They shouted: **“Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!”** (Mt 21:9).

And then came Friday. Everyone assembled in the courtyard outside the Roman Praetorium. Then Pilate brought Jesus out and said, “Here is the man!” (Jn 19:5). And what did the people see? A man beaten and scourged and bleeding. He hardly had the strength to stand. They had wrapped him in a red cloak as a royal robe and had woven a crown of thorns to put on his head. The Romans were laughing at him—and, through him, at all of Israel. Here’s your King! Here’s your Messiah! Here is the man who was going to conquer Rome; by Rome he is conquered.

And the mob erupted in anger at Jesus. In their eyes he had betrayed his promise to them. He was no conquering king, no Messiah like they had wanted all their lives. And they were angry with him! Let him die! Let him die by the cruelest torture imaginable! Crucify him! Let the notorious Barabbas go free if that’s what it takes.

It’s hard for us to imagine joining the mob in shouting for Christ’s crucifixion, but we too can fall into the trap of thinking that, somehow, the Lord is not living up to his promises, even if they are promises that he never actually made us.

How often don’t we find Christians who believe that once you become a Christian, the Lord ought to smooth out your path through life? Don’t we sometimes expect that when we live as Christians, everything else ought to take care of itself?

And then things get difficult. Troubles mount up, and we pray and we pray and things still don’t seem to get better, while we look around and see the unbelievers in this world doing quite comfortably—and we begin to wonder. We ask why he lets us get so sick. Why does he let us have all these money troubles? Why do we have trouble making good friends? Why are we the ones who are depressed? Why are we the ones who can’t seem to get on top in life? Why can’t God make things a little easier for us?

Do you see how that poison attacks our faith? What Jesus came to bring us through his death

suddenly doesn't seem as important as the list of things we wish he would do for us in the here and now. And somehow we feel betrayed by him, as if he had promised us that life and then had refused to deliver. And those thoughts and feelings fit in all too well with the angry Jerusalem mob.

## 2.

God had never promised them a hero to save the Jews from Rome. He had promised to send a Messiah to take away their sins and to save them from the devil. Many of them died in their sins and their unbelief. They traded their souls for a dream that could not come true.

That's what is so amazing about the grace of God. That's what is so amazing about the sacrifice that Jesus made. He died for the sins of the world. Jesus went to the cross for the very people who sent him to the cross. He went to the cross even for the people who fall into the temptation of despising his salvation.

That is the greatest blessing God gives us. That is the blessing that he promised through the ages and throughout the Bible: the salvation of our souls through Jesus Christ. **"We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all"** (Isa 53:6). **"By his wounds we are healed"** (Isa 53:5).

God hasn't promised that our lives will be a walk through the roses. Before he went to the cross, Jesus asked his Father not to take us out of the world with all its troubles but to keep us safe in him while we are in the world. When the hardships come that he already has warned us about, we can respond as Job did: **"The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away; may the name of the LORD be praised"** (Job 1:21).

To paraphrase our Lord, what good would it do us if he gave us everything we wanted in this world but neglected our greatest need: the atoning sacrifice for our sins? Who could enjoy the greatest blessings of this world knowing that, at the end, there would be a terrible price to pay for our sins?

But for us, the Lord has done the opposite. As the apostle says, our light and momentary troubles in this world are not worth comparing with the joys that await us, the joys bought for us by the blood of Jesus Christ. What a high price he paid to make you a child of God! On that account, value this gift more highly than any other. Pray for the other blessings, sure. And be thankful when God gives them! But whether we suffer for a while or we enjoy life for a while, let us fix our eyes on the blessing that will never be taken away: our Savior Jesus Christ.

Father, as we come to you in prayer, depending on your mercy and grace, let us never demand blessings you have not promised and let us never feel mistreated when, in your wisdom, you say no to our prayers, reserving for us greater blessings elsewhere. Fix our eyes upon Jesus Christ, our Savior from sin, death, and the devil. May we honor his love and his sacrifice by gratefully claiming him as our Lord and our God. Amen.