

THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW
Lesson 20– Study Questions
Matthew 27:32-66; 28:1-20

Review: *From your experience at the Cornerstone meeting last week, share something that helped build your faith.*

DAY ONE
Read Matthew 27:32-44

NOTE: Mark is the only gospel that records the time Jesus was placed on the cross: "It was nine o'clock in the morning when they crucified him (Mark 15:25)." *Agape*

1. We begin today after the Roman trial of Jesus has ended and he was being led to the site of his crucifixion. A passerby, Simon of Cyrene, was "pressed" or forced into helping Jesus carry his cross (verse 32). Have you ever been in a situation like Simon when a stranger was in need? Did you continue to pass by or did you respond with help?

NOTE: It is assumed that Simon of Cyrene became a believer in Jesus Christ as the Messiah. Mark names his two sons, Alexander and Rufus, who were presumably well known members of Mark's Christian community (Mark 15:21). Cyrenean Christians were important members of the community in Antioch (Syria) (see Acts 11:20, 13:1). *Agape*

2. For six hours, Jesus suffered on the cross. Select one of the abuses he endured during this time described in verses 33-37 and comment on how his suffering brings meaning to your own painful experiences.

they gave him wine mixed with gall to drink which he refused

they crucified him by nailing his hands and feet to the cross

they divided his garments by casting lots

the guards sat down and kept watch over him

they placed over his head the charge against him: This is Jesus, the King of the Jews

NOTE: The Latin translation of Golgotha is *calvaria*, hence our word "Calvary." *Sacra Pagina* Crucifixion was designed to facilitate a slow and tortuous death. Victims died from a combination of blood loss and asphyxiation. *Ignatius Study Bible*

3. Today we read that Jesus was nailed to the cross. The crucifix, a cross with a figure of Jesus on it, depicts the suffering and death of Jesus on the cross. Yet, crucifixes and crosses are displayed in our churches, homes and even used as jewelry. In your life, what meaning does the cross hold for you?

4. Jesus was crucified along with two revolutionaries and was forced to endure scornful remarks and angry taunts from the crowd. How did the following groups mock Jesus during this painful time as described in verses 39-44.

passersby

Jewish leaders

the revolutionaries crucified with him

NOTE: The word, revolutionaries, is used because the traditional wording of "thieves" does not go far enough in bringing out the probably "political" dimension connected with the term. Their presence with Jesus brings to fulfillment what was said about the Servant: "he was numbered with the transgressors" (Isaiah 53:12). *Sacra Pagina*
All four gospels agree that Jesus was crucified between two criminals but Luke records the change of heart of the man to the right of Jesus (Lk 23:39-43). *Agape*

5. CONNECTION: In today's readings, Simon was in the crowd watching Jesus suffer as he was carrying his cross. He was "pressed into service" by the soldiers to help Jesus when he was too weak to bear the burden of the cross alone. We too have crosses in our lives that are too heavy for us to bear alone and when we stumble, we need someone like Christ did to help us carry our burdens. God in his wisdom will provide just the right person to help us along the way. Who has been a Simon to you to in your time of need who surprised you with the help you needed to carry your cross?

Read and record Galatians 6:2 and pray today for those strangers in your life whom God has provided to help you and that you will be a willing Simon to help others carry their crosses.

DAY TWO

Read Matthew 27:45-56

NOTE: In Matthew 27:45 we read, "From noon onward, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon." Whether Matthew understood it to extend over the Jerusalem area or the whole land of Israel or over the whole world is not clear. The portent stands in line with Amos 8:9: "And on that day, says the Lord God, I will make the sun go down at noon and darken the earth in broad daylight." *Sacra Pagina*

6. In verse 46 Jesus prayed the first words from Psalms 22. He is a righteous sufferer, fully human, feeling "the full brunt of rejection" and great physical suffering. Yet, "he is confident that God will turn his misery into victory" (Ignatius Study Bible). Read and record verse 46. (Good memory verse)

THINK: Matthew 27: 47-49 describes a moment when people misinterpret Jesus' words. Some believe he is calling out for Elijah rather than his Father. Some show a lack of compassion (Commentary, page 141). Consider how abandoned Jesus felt as he suffered for the people he was called to redeem.

7. Our Commentary states, "Matthew portrays Jesus not as an unwilling victim but as a faithful Son of God who consciously returns to God" (page 141). In verse 50 we read that Jesus "gave up his spirit". He completely surrendered to the will of his Father. Why do you think it was important to establish he had completely died?

8. Four portents occurred following the death of Jesus: the veil of the sanctuary was torn in two from top to bottom; the earth quaked; the tombs were opened; and the bodies of many saints who had fallen asleep were raised (verses 51-53). What significance do you find in these supernatural events following Jesus' death?

NOTE: In Ezekiel 37:11-14, the prophet presents a vision of dry bones being restored to life. We see how important it was to Matthew that the Jewish people knew Jesus' death was fulfilling the Old Testament Scriptures.

9. In verse 54, we read that the centurion and soldiers said: "Truly, this was the Son of God! How can each of us feel that same conviction in our hearts?"

THINK: In verses 55-56, we read about the women that Jesus had known throughout his ministry who were present in the high and low times of Jesus' life. They were courageously faithful. We too must pray to stay steadfast in our commitment to Jesus. What work Jesus can accomplish through our 'yeses' to his call!

10. CONNECTION: Today we read how Jesus “yielded up his spirit.” He died for us. This is real. How does acknowledging his great sacrifice of love for you make a difference in your life? What are some ways you can keep his love alive and encourage others to draw closer to him?

Read and record Luke 23:46. Pray in thanksgiving for the gift of new eternal life that Jesus’ death provided for you personally.

DAY THREE

Read Matthew 27:57-66

NOTE: Mark includes the information that Joseph of Arimathea was a member of the Sanhedrin and that the day Jesus died was Preparation Day (Friday) for the coming Sabbath, a day of rest on which no work was permitted (Mark 15:42-43). *Agape*

11. After Jesus died, Joseph of Arimathea, a disciple of Jesus, asked Pilate for the body of Jesus for burial (verses 57-58). Describe how he prepared and buried the body of Jesus from verses 59-60.

NOTE: The body of Christ was wrapped in a clean linen shroud which many Christians believe is the Shroud of Turin. *Agape*

12. Two of the women who had been present at the foot of the cross, Mary Magdalene and "the other Mary" remained sitting at the tomb after it was sealed (verse 61). Do you visit the graves of your loved ones? Like the women at the tomb of Jesus, what draws you there?

13. The next day, the chief priests and the Pharisees asked Pilate that the grave be secured until the third day. Why do you think the many details in verses 62-66 about Jesus' tomb were so important?

14. There are traditionally fourteen Stations of the Cross, which conclude with numbers 13, Jesus' body is removed from the cross and 14, Jesus is laid in the tomb, that describe the events we read about today. How does praying the Stations help you to contemplate and enter into the mystery of Jesus' gift of himself?

NOTE: The Stations of the Cross, also known as the Way of the Cross or Via Crucis, commemorate Jesus' passion and death on the cross. There are 14 stations that each depict a moment on his journey to Calvary, usually through sacred art, prayers, and reflections. The practice began as pious pilgrims traced his path through Jerusalem on the Via Dolorosa. Later, for the many who wanted to pass along the same route, but could not make the trip to Jerusalem, a practice developed that eventually took the form of the fourteen stations currently found in almost every church throughout the world. *USCCB*

15. CONNECTION: Though everyone else had deserted Jesus, Mary Magdalen, Mary, the mother of James and Joseph, and the mother of the sons of Zebedee remained at the foot of the cross. In the Gospel of John, it is reported that Mary, the mother of Jesus, was also present when Jesus was crucified ([John 19:25](#)). While they may have been fearful, the public position of women in their culture was so low that no one would notice them. They remained as faithful witnesses to the crucifixion, death and entombment of Jesus. What can you learn from the women who stayed with Jesus until the very end?

The Psalmist prays, "The Lord is near to the brokenhearted, and saves the crushed in spirit" ([Psalm 34:19](#)). Consider the grief of the women, including the mother of Jesus, at this great sacrifice for us and write a prayer to the Blessed Mother who understands our grief.

DAY FOUR

Read Matthew 28:1-10

NOTE: The resurrection of Jesus which happened in the early hours of Sunday morning, the day following the Jewish Sabbath, is a fact which all the evangelists state clearly and unequivocally. To commemorate Christ's Resurrection, the early Christians called it the "Lord's Day" (Rev 1:10) and designated it a day for sacred assembly, eucharistic worship, and prayer (Acts 20:7; CCC 2174). *Ignatius Study Bible*

16. As the first day of the week began, Mary Magdalen and the "other" Mary went to the tomb. Briefly describe what happened there according to verses 1-7.

17. As they hurried to announce this great news to the disciples, Jesus met them on their way and greeted them again saying, "Do not be afraid" (verses 8-9). Why do you think they would have been told twice not to be afraid?

18. Jesus told the women to go and tell his disciples to meet him in Galilee (verse 10). Would you recognize Jesus if he met you "on your way"? How would you be able to identify him?

19. "The Resurrection of Christ is one of the basic dogmas of the Catholic faith. In fact, St. Paul said, "If Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain (1 Cor 15:14)." (Navarre) How does the fact that Jesus, who truly died and is alive, affect your faith and purpose?

NOTE: The word "Easter" comes from the Old English, meaning simply the "East." The sun which rises in the East, bringing light, warmth, and hope, is a symbol for the Christian of the rising Christ, who is the true Light of the world. *USCCB*

20. **CONNECTION:** We celebrate the Resurrection of Jesus Christ on the annual feast of Easter Sunday. Christians are traditionally greeted in song and prayer at Easter Mass with "Christ is risen, Alleluia!" Easter is the most important holiday of the Church year and is observed with various traditions of liturgy, music and family gatherings. What is one of your favorite Easter traditions that reminds you of the life saving gift of Christ's death and resurrection?

Read and record John 11:25-26 and write a prayer of gratitude for the everlasting hope you receive from the resurrection of Jesus.

DAY FIVE

Read Matthew 28:11-20

NOTE: In verses 11-15, Matthew has constructed an account that interprets the resurrection as the turning of the ages and shows the Jewish opposition to Jesus as continuing to the present in the claim that the resurrection is a deception perpetrated by the disciples who stole his body from the tomb. *NABRE*

21. How did the eleven disciples respond when they went to Galilee to the mountain where Jesus had ordered them (verses 16-17)?

22. "While Matthew has depicted the women as apostles who are commissioned in verses 7-10, he excludes them from the commission to preach to all nations" (Commentary). Why do you think that is?

23. Jesus told the apostles, "All power in heaven and on earth has been given to me" (verse 18) and then, with that power, gave them his instructions. As followers of Jesus, they are also our instructions. Which of his commands from verses 19-20 is most compelling in your life as a Christian and why?

Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations,

baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the holy Spirit,

teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you

NOTE: It will take a while before the eleven understand the full impact of Christ's words. They will need all the experiences that Luke outlines so well in the Acts of the Apostles. The Holy Spirit will come fifty days hence at Pentecost to spark the first flowering of their resolve. They will gradually move away from Jerusalem, up to Antioch. Then, through the dynamic leadership of Paul, the Gospel will flow out to the ends of the earth. *McBride*

24. With his final words, Jesus gives us a promise. Record his words in the final sentence of verse 20 and share a story of when you have been especially grateful for his presence in your life.

25. CONNECTION: "As the eleven gaze on Jesus, he commands them to evangelize the world, to tell everyone about the boundless love of God alive in every corner of the earth. They will proceed to organize a Church" (McBride). Jesus' final gift to us is his Church, a gift of love in the celebration of the Eucharist, the Mass and the sacraments. The authority of the Church comes directly from Jesus Christ. How have you seen Jesus at work in the Christian community today?

Read and record Acts 20:28. Pray today that you and the Church can better fulfill the commission to continue the work of Christ, teaching the truth about God and sharing with others the grace of the sacraments.

FINAL QUESTION for the WEEK

The passion and death of Jesus Christ as told in the Gospel of Matthew is a familiar story. Take a moment to reflect on a few key things the Lord may be teaching you in the readings and questions this week. What passages or themes in Matthew have led you to a fresh understanding of this familiar story and a fresh grasp of God's Word?

Read pages 139-147 in the *New Collegeville Bible Commentary: The Gospel According to Matthew* by Barbara E. Reid, O.P. The Cornerstone Catholic Scripture Study acknowledges that scripture quotations in this study are from the New American Bible, Revised Edition (NABRE) © 2010, 1991, 1970 Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, Inc., Washington, D.C. All Rights Reserved. Used by permission.

©Copyright 2024 The Cornerstone Catholic Scripture Study

thecornerstonescripturestudy.org