

They Laid on Him the Cross to Bear Behind Jesus; Good Friday, 2023
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If you think about all the best adventure stories, particularly the fantasy adventure type stories, all of them seem to revolve around some kind of a journey. Most, most often, it's a journey on foot. Think about some of the great adventure stories like the Lord of the Ring Series. All of them are a journey on foot or Chronicles of Narnia, revolve around mini journeys or even some modern-day adventure.

Stories such as Wingfeather Saga will revolve around journeys that are most often taken on foot because a journey is the best context. A journey is the perfect canvas for the artist who is the storyteller to paint his picture of the story upon this context of a journey. Because a journey offers the storyteller so, many tools at his disposal or her disposal with which to integrate into the story.

Uh, tools such as people that they might meet on the journey. Uh, obstacles on the journey, getting lost on the journey, finding their way again, and all of this working toward a certain destination. So, a journey fits in so, well with an adventure story. But, you know, all of that really harkens us back to Christ and his life because Jesus's life really was a journey.

It was a journey that began in Bethlehem. It began in that manger. As so, many times, we think of that famous painting, I don't know who did it, but this painting in which it's a depiction of a manger and across the manger is this shadow of a cross that's falling across the manger. And that really does tell a true story because the manger represented the beginning of a journey that would culminate at the cross.

The, the manger was the beginning of that journey, and all of Jesus' life really was a journey to the cross. It was a journey that took some detours, especially at the beginning. Some detours, d detours down to Egypt. And then back up to Nazareth, and Jesus would live most of his life in Galilee, and then we know that most of his ministry there was in Galilee.

But there came a point, all four gospels will tell us of a point that that Jesus reached in his ministry in which he turned his face to Jerusalem and then he began that journey to Jerusalem because that was why the manger was, that was why Jesus was here, is he tells us in Mark 10, verse 45, the son of man came to give his life as ransom.

So, his life was all about getting to Golgotha. In fact, the journey didn't just begin in the manger. The journey really began in eternity, because in eternity was when Jesus truly set his face to go Gotha. As we studied some time ago in Ephesians chapter one. We were told that we were chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world, which speaks to us very powerfully of the fact that when God chose his people before time began, they were chosen in the context of the Messiah Christ who would suffer for them.

So, God's people have always been a people that were atoned for and redeemed out of sinfulness. And so, Christ, before time began, Christ was on this journey to Golgotha. And all of his life was, was a trek to Golgotha, in which he met people. He met enemies and religious leaders that were opposed to him, demons he met along the way.

He healed many people along the way, but then he sets his face to Jerusalem and he makes his way to Jerusalem. And so, what we look at tonight is really the final leg of that journey to Golgotha that

short little journey from what we know of as the Roman praetorium, where the sentencing took place, the conviction happened.

The flogging happened. And then from that, he takes this short journey from there to the actual site of his execution known as Golgotha or Calvary. So, that short little journey would only be just a few steps. We don't know exactly where it was, but it was a short distance. We know that it was a short distance from not only the praetorium, but it was a very, very short distance from the very temple, the very steps of the temple where Jesus has taught all week long.

It was just a short distance from that same temple that Jesus, when he was eight years old, would be taken to that temple and the prophets, Simeon and the prophetess, Anna would declare, this is the Messiah for whom we have been waiting. This is the one for whom we've been waiting. He's here. And this same temple would be the same place that Jesus, when he was 12 would, would stay behind and his parents would come for him as earthly parents would come for him.

And he would say, Uh, did you not know that I would be in my father's house? That very same temple will, will only be just a matter of steps from the hill known as Golgotha or Calvary from the Latin Calva. So, this journey from the pre auditorium to the place's execution, it's where we'll turn our thoughts tonight.

And I want to see on this journey a number of things, three things specifically that Jesus will encounter on this short little journey. But this journey really isn't all that short. In a real way, this journey is very much a long one. It's long because even though the distance between the, the sight of Jesus's conviction and his actual execution is a short distance, the Romans, of course, would, were, they would not, uh, lose any of the value of this.

So, they, they were all, the Romans were all about maximizing an execution for all of the value that they could squeeze out of it. So, the journey, even though you could go straight to the place of execution in just a short time, it was really we're told by historians, really just a, like a parade around the city of Jerusalem.

So, Jesus' journey to Calvary will, will take twists and turns through the streets of Jerusalem. They'll go down this alley and down this street and down this street over here. For all these crowds will be told in our passages, all these crowds will be called a great multitude of people. And they will be gawking and they will be Jing and they will be ridiculing all along the way.

And we, we think to this time of year in Jerusalem, and we remember that this is the, the end of the rainy season. And so, so, this would not have been dry, dusty streets who have been more like muddy, wet streaks. And through these muddy, wet, hostile streets, Jesus will be paraded through the city of Jerusalem on his way, which could have been just a few short steps to the hill, will actually be a longer journey.

I'm thinking right now of another short journey that really took a long time. That was Israel's journey through the wilderness. A journey of just a few weeks that took 40 years. Jesus' journey of just a few minutes really took several hours, but really it's even longer than that because this leg of the journey, in a real sense, is the hardest and the most arduous of his journey because this is the final steps that he will take to his place of execution.

So, that's what we'll turn our thoughts to tonight. And so, tonight, instead of looking at one text, I thought tonight we would look really at a conglomeration of two texts. We'll look at Luke's account of this and we'll look at Mark's account of this because each of them have aspects that I think are helpful to tie in together and just, uh, the time that we're going to spend thinking about this short journey.

So, for your convenience, both of these texts are printed on your sermon notes there in the pew, so, you can just, uh, not even turn. It be can turn if you like, but you don't need to. You can just follow along in your sermon notes. We'll be looking at Luke TW chapter 23, and we'll also be looking at March chapter 15.

So, let's begin by reading. Both of these texts and then we'll begin looking to this short journey of Jesus. So, from verse 26, and as they led him away, they seized one Simon of CRE who was coming in from the country and laid on him the cross to carry it behind Jesus. And there followed him a great multitude of the people and of women who were mourning and lamenting for him.

But turning to them, Jesus said, daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. For behold, the days are coming. When they will say, blessed are the Barron and the wombs that never bore in the breasts, that never nursed, then they will begin to say to the mountains, fall on us until the hills cover us for if they do these things.

When the wood is green, what will happen when it is dry? And from Mark's account from verse 21, chapter 15, and they comp compelled a passerby Simon of Cyrene, who is coming in from the country, the father of Alexander and Rufus, to carry his cross. They brought him to the place called Go Gotha, which means place of a skull.

And they offered him wine mixed with myrrh, but he did not take it. So, those are the two accounts of Jesus's short journey. They both begin with him being led away, led out from the place of sentencing, the place, the uh, place that heard the cries of the people shouting out nearly in unison. Don't give us this murderer and this insurrectionist known as Barabbas, or, or, you know, don't give us Jesus.

Instead, give us this murderer and this insurrectionist known as Barabbas. And this man here, this man who's done nothing since he's been on the earth except love people and heal and restore sight to the blind, and adhering to the, to the those without hearing and casting out demons and cleansing lepers and calming storms and teaching and loving this man who's done nothing but that.

Take him and nail him to a tree until he is dead. We don't want to see him again. We want his blood. His blood can be on us. We just want his blood shed. So, with that chorus still ringing, they led him out because all executions would take place outside of the city, both on the account of the Romans and the Jews.

Neither the Romans nor the Jews would execute inside the city. The Romans would do it by custom, but the Jews would do it by commandment of God. Many times in the Old Testament, God speaks of taking outside the city to stone, the one who has been convicted of a capital offense. And so, we read of taking people outside of the city, the writer to the Hebrews and Hebrews 13 will pick up on this theme and say, just as Christ suffered outside the gate.

So, also we go outside the gate of the city to take up his shame as well. So, being taken outside of the city on this journey, as we spoke of before, this journey now to the place of execution, we read here that as they led him away from Mark's account, as they led him away, they seized one Simon of Cyrene in order to force upon him to carry the cross.

He was coming, we're told from the. Mark tells us from verse 21 that they compelled this passer by Simon of Cyrene to carry his cross. So, they compelled him. Luke being the word smith, that he chooses the strongest, most forceful word that he can choose one that's stronger than Matthew's word and Mark's word, one that's rightly translated seized.

So, they seize upon this man's Simon of Cyrene to carry the cross of Jesus and seize would've been the right descriptive term. So, don't think of the Roman soldiers coming to Simon here and saying, listen, we need you to come over here and carry this cross, but think of rough. Roman soldier hands grabbing him by the, by grabbing him by the back of his shirt or grabbing him by his arms and, and roughhousing him over here and forcing him down to pick up this cross and carry it for Jesus.

So, this would've been a lawful order for them to issue to Simon, to, to carry the cross of Christ, because by law, any Roman soldier could compel any person under their jurisdiction, under their authority to carry any burden of theirs that they wanted, whether it be some military gear or some other type of, of burden that they might have.

At any time, any Roman soldier could seize upon or compel upon any citizen to carry their burden for them, we think of Jesus' words towards the end there of Matthew chapter five and the Sermon of the Mount when he turns this into a teaching. And he'll say, when you are compel. To carry something for a mile, go ahead and carry it two miles.

So, Jesus turns that into a teaching, uh, in this, this teaching that sprung from a reality of everyday life for the Jewish citizen, especially the citizen in Jerusalem. Uh, the reality that any moment you could be called upon to be a beast of burden, so, to speak, to carry a burden for this Roman soldier. So, as this man's Simon of Cyrene is seized upon to carry, to carry the cross of Christ, so, they seize upon this one Simon of Cyrene.

So, we're told here some information about him, and as we think about this man, Simon, we'll think about more, a little bit more about him and who he was in just a moment. But we can't mistake the fact that it's, it's called Simon of Cyrene. Cyrene here speaks of a town in, uh, what's now known of as li. It's not the siren that you might think of as a on a police car, but siren located in Libya near what we might know of today as Tripoli.

So, this would make Simon a North African, so, he is seized upon this man from Cyrene. And the, the, the place known as Cyrene is going to be a place that becomes much more known to the reader of the New Testament as we traverse through our New Testaments. Because Cyrene was a place that not only had a large Jewish population, uh, so, large in fact, that in Jerusalem was located a synagogue that was known as the synagogue for the Cian, so, that when they were in Jerusalem they had their own synagogue.

That that's the size of the Jewish population in this place, now known as Libya. But not only that, but we are also told that this place Cyrene is going to play, is going to be a place in which the gospel roots are going to take a deep foundation. Because we are going to be told of not only, uh, those

who are from Cyrene who are present there in Acts chapter two, when the Spirit falls upon the church and the church is born, there will be people there from Cyrene.

But that gospel will take such a root and such a powerful, powerful effect upon these people from Cyrene. That if we go to, say, Acts chapter 11 or Acts chapter 13, and we look to the church known as the Church of Antioch. Where they were first called Christians. We will find leaders in the Church of Antioch that are called people of Cyrene.

And then in Acts chapter 13, when Paul and Barnabas are sent out on this missionary journey, there will be people there from Cyrene who are the ones commissioning Paul and Barnabas to be sent out. We're told that there are prophets there from Cyrene and the Church of Antioch. So, this place seems to be a place at which the gospel roots seem to take particular effect.

This is the place that Simon is said to have been from. So, he, we are told that they, they, um, seized upon this Simon of Cyrene who is coming from the country. They laid him on, laid, laid on him, the cross to carry it behind Jesus. Or in Mark's words, Mark says that they, they compelled this passerby, Simon of Cyrene, to carry his cross.

So, the question that we must, I think face first of all is who carried the cross of Jesus? And why was someone other than Jesus carrying his cross? I don't know if you've ever thought about this, but it's a rather perplexing question. Why was Simon compelled to carry the cross of Christ and doesn't it seem almost, I don't know, anti-climatic, the one who has taught us that we must deny ourselves and carry our own cross.

We're told that someone else has to carry his cross to the place of execution. So, it's a little bit puzzling that this man, Simon is seized upon to carry his cross. We know that Jesus, at the very minimum, carried his cross for part of the journey. And the reason we know that is because John was specific in John chapter 19 to tell us that he left carrying his own cross.

But it appears that. Maybe at some point or not, maybe earlier or later some point in the journey, this man Simon was seized upon to carry the cross of Christ. So, how are we to understand Simon's being compelled to carry the cross of Christ when we're told that Jesus left carrying his cross? And then furthermore, doesn't it just seem, I don't know if, if we were writing this, I don't think we would've written it this way.

I don't think we would've written a story in which the Messiah who bore our cross couldn't carry his own literal cross. If indeed it was a case in which Jesus, as most people would think as Jesus was unable to finish the job of carrying his cross. So, let's think about this for just a few moments as we think this through.

One of the things that we're going to encounter in Simon is, is the fact that we know a few things about him. But there are many things that we don't know that we just simply don't know. And one of those is this matter of the cross. So, what was the cross that Jesus would have been carrying? What was the shape of the cross?

Uh, historian theologians have debated this topic for a long time. What was the shape of the cross? Was it more like a X or was it more like a capital T or was it more like a lowercase t? I think it's probably, we could have a, a bit of confidence to think that it was the more, like a lowercase team, more like the traditional shape of a cross.

And the reason that we would, I think, come to that conclusion is simply from the fact that we're told that Pilate took this charge of Jesus, that he's the king of the Jews and wrote it out and then we're specifically told, put it over his head, so, that leads at least me to believe that the X would be out and probably the capital T would be out.

And so, that leads for me, the, the traditional sort of lowercase T type of a. Which then tells us that historians will tell us that, that there was this two-piece, kind of a cross, the cross piece and the upright piece. So, which of those two was Jesus carrying or was he carrying both? Would, would the condemned criminal carry the entire cross, or would the condemned criminal carry just the, the cross piece?

And we don't know. So, if he was carrying just the cross piece, we're told that that cross piece most often would've been made from a very heavy, solid, large block of wood weighing up to about a hundred pounds in itself. If he's carrying the whole cross, obviously it's even heavier than that. So, most would say that, that the most likely explanation here is that Jesus left carrying his own cross, but just couldn't do the entire journey with the cross himself.

As we said earlier, this wasn't just a straight line from the praetorium to the, to the hill known as Golgotha. It was a meandering parade around the city. Jesus already weakened by a night of no sleep, no food all night long, standing these six different trials. Then he's flogged and beaten and crown of thorns and all of this, and then he's forced to carry this and, and so, it makes sense that he wouldn't be able to carry it the whole way.

And so, he perhaps needed some help along the way. That's what most people would believe, and that's quite possible that that was the case, that he needed help to get there. So, in seizing upon this man, Simon, to pick up the cross and carry it, what was going on here? Was this an act of compassion on the hand of the, of the Roman soldiers?

Did they see Jesus struggling and say, well have some compassion on this man and, and call upon this other Simon person to help? Was it an act of kindness or was it maybe just an act of cruelty? Some speculate that perhaps the, the soldiers who were experts at executions recognize the fact that Jesus just might not make it their lives.

And so, they certainly didn't want him to die on the way because that would spoil some of the fun. They wanted to nail him to the cross, and so, in order to make sure he got there alive, they seized upon Simon to carry the cross so, that he would, uh, make it there before expiring. Some have speculated that others think that no, maybe it was just a matter of expediency that Jesus had become so, slow, the flogging, the beating, the beatings that he had endured.

Now, this heavy cross and the long meandering path to Golgotha, maybe the, it was just a matter of expediency. They were just ready to get there. That sort of had the fun on the streets. They were ready to nail 'em on the cross and move on to the next thing. Which of those it might have been? We don't know.

Maybe a combination of them. Maybe none of them, because another way to consider this is that perhaps Jesus only carrying the crosspiece that the piece laid upon Simon was the upright piece or perhaps vice versa. And what might lend some credulity to that was that we're told specifically in Luke's gospel that he carried it behind Jesus.

So, either way, we don't know. It's just speculation. But one thing that we need to be careful about, particularly in this story, is to remind ourselves if we did need to know it, God would've told us He didn't. We are told simply that Simon was seized upon to carry the cross of Christ. Jesus carried his cross at least part of the way or all of the way, and Simon carried at least part of the cross as well.

So, we're told that he, uh, was sent out. He was carrying his own cross from John chapter 19. Of course, this, this harkens us back to the foreshadowing of this that occurred way back in Genesis chapter 22. If you think to the story of the sacrifice of Isaac, remember that story, that story that so, powerfully foreshadowed the sacrifice of God's son when he asked Abraham to sacrifice his son.

Teaching us of course, of the sacrifice that God would spare of Abraham, he would not spare of himself. In that story, we're told that this son, Isaac, the son of promise who will be a burnt offering, that the wood to burn him was, we are told, laid Abraham, laid it upon the back of Isaac. His son, of course, foreshadowing Jesus himself, carrying his own cross to the place of the skull.

So, this man, Simon, we talked briefly here just about the fact that we don't know what the cross was he was carrying. We don't know whether it was just from exhaustion on Jesus' part, if it was from exhaustion on Jesus' part that makes no le, that makes his bearing his own cross no less meaningful, but perhaps it wasn't on the part of exhaustion.

I tend to lean in that direction and, and for a couple reasons. One, we're going to see in the text a little bit later that Jesus is going to have some very stern words to say to people on the way, which leads me to believe that he wasn't that exhausted. And then secondly, from the cross, we are told that he's going to speak with a loud voice before he gives up his spirit.

So, I don't think Jesus was so, exhausted here that he's on the verge of death and he cannot carry the cross any longer. I tend to think that both he and Simon were carrying parts of the cross together. But whatever the case may be, we don't know. But here's what we do know about Simon. First of all, we know his name.

We're told his name is Simon of Cyrene. Now Simon is a Jewish name, so, we, we know that his name is Simon. That was a very common name of the day, and he's always called in all three gospels. He's called Simon the Siren, to differentiate him from the many other Simons in scripture. So, we know his name. We also know that he's from Cyrene, which puts him in North Africa.

As an African, that would've meant, meant that probably his skin was darker than the other, uh, Israelites around him. That meant that, uh, being from North Africa, sometimes I've, I've heard people describe him as an African in the sense of a sub, a Sahara African particularly, uh, in terms of here is this, uh, quote unquote black man who is seized upon to help Jesus carry the cross because he's African.

I don't think he would've been dark in the sense that we would think of as a black man, but he would've been probably of darker skin than the other, than the Israelites around him being from Africa there. So, we know that his name is Simon. We know that he was a Jew. We know that he is a foreigner.

Furthermore, Mark tells us that he's the father of Rufus and Alexander. Now, the reason Mark tells us that scholars are, are nearly unanimous, that the reason he tells us that is because Rufus and Alexander would've been known to the Roman church. Remember, Mark is writing his gospel to the Roman Christians.

And at the end of Paul's letter to the Roman Church, chapter six, verse 13, Paul is going to make mention of this man named Rufus, who's a leader of the church there in Rome. He's going to say, greet Rufus. So, scholars are almost completely agreed that the reason Mark tells us that Simon is the father of Alexander and Rufus.

The reason Mark tells us that is because his readers who were Roman Christians would've known Rufus and probably Alexander too. And they would've said, oh yeah, that, oh yeah, that's Rufus dad. Furthermore, Paul also mentions Rufus mother, who Paul says is like a mother to me. So, Rufus and probably Alexander and their mother would've been known to the Roman Church, which leads us to believe it's not, not hard to speculate here.

It leads us to believe that this experience that Simon had on this journey here, perhaps led to a conversion for he and perhaps his family, and they somehow ended up in Rome as members of the Roman Church and in fact leaders of the Roman church there. That's, that makes a lot of sense. So, we know that he was a foreigner.

We know his name was Simon. We know he was a Jew. We know he was compelled to carry the cross, and we know he was the father of Alexander and Rufus, and that's really all that we know. We can speculate some other things. It's, I think it's a, a fair assumption for us to say that Simon was in Jerusalem visiting.

We don't know that for sure because he could have been said to have been a Galilean, yet he has moved to Judea. So, that's certainly possible. But the way that both Mark and Luke phrased it, that he had just come in from the countryside, I think leads me to the conclusion that he most likely is a visitor to Jerusalem.

Now being a visitor to Jerusalem, why was he in Jerusalem? Well, this Passover. So, perhaps being a Jew, perhaps this is, there's certainly a story behind this and we don't know what the story is, but whatever it is probably a good one. Maybe the story of Simon is this. Maybe he's been a faithful Jew all of his life and it's been his lifelong dream to one day, make that long journey, oversee to Jerusalem for Passover, to be there for the temple worship and the temple sacrifices, and observe the Passover in Jerusalem.

Maybe that's been a dream of his for years, and he finally has made it, and he finally comes to Jerusalem for his first Passover. So, excited to take part in the sacrifices and the Passover and all this sort of thing, and he gets there only to learn. Well, all of that's been done away with. All of that is dead now.

All of that has been fulfilled in this man, Jesus, whom. Who's cross? I'm Carrie. Maybe that's his story, his backstory, or maybe it's something entirely different altogether. Maybe Simon is at the end of his rope. Maybe his marriage is falling apart. He and his wife aren't getting along. He and his kids aren't getting along, and he had his big fight with his wife and he left and he has left his wife and he's gone to find a new life somewhere, and he's ended up in Jerusalem on this day.

He arrives here in Jerusalem on this day only to be snatched and have a cross thrust upon him, and then his life has changed after that. His marriage is healed, his family, they all come to Christ. They end up in the church and Ru. Maybe that's the story we don't know. We'll know it one day. I'll be excited to hear it, but there's a backstory to Simon.

Whatever the backstory is, I feel like that we can make a pretty good, a pretty safe assumption that he's visiting Jerusalem, which would've meant most likely that he'd never heard of this man. Jesus coming from North Africa, Jesus has. Has had his ministry on the opposite end of the northern part of Israel.

And so, it's very likely, I would say that if Simon is just now showing up in Jerusalem for Passover, he's never heard of this man. Jesus. He's not heard of his miracles. He's not heard of his teaching, he's not heard of him casting out demons. He's, he's not heard of the antagonism between Jesus and the religious leaders.

He's just here for Passover and then boom hearings with a cross shoved onto his shoulders. Whatever the case, he probably knows nothing of this man Jesus before he encounters him. Beyond that, we really don't know a whole lot about this man, Simon or how and why he's carrying the cross, but he's seized upon.

He has this cross thrust upon him, but here's what we do know about Simon. We do know that he's important. The reason we know he's important is because all three gospels include him, or all three synoptic gospels, I should say include him. Matthew, mark and Luke all have Simon. They all call him Simon the Siren.

And they all tell basically the same story of him being compelled to carry the cross of Christ. So, if all three gospels are going to include this detail, we can conclude from that. God thinks this is important for us. Now, nothing about Simon's story gives us any interpretive clues, any commentary, no commentary is given about, uh, about him to help us to know what the significance of Simon Carrying has crossed, why we're to study this and what we're to gather from this.

We're not given any clues for that. So, never, but nevertheless, we know that it's here because it's, it's important for us. So, what about this man Simon, and what are we to gather from Simon? I think that what we are to gather from Simon, first of all is this. We are to gather from Simon that he is, he serves for us.

I think, I think. A model for us, first of all, of the makeup of the church. It's ironic to me that the man who's called upon to help Jesus in this way would've been a foreigner, and I think that speaks something to us about the makeup of the church that's going to be birthed in just a few short weeks. If you think about it, throughout Jesus's life, so, few times, has he been, has he called upon somebody to help him?

So, few instances, has somebody assisted Jesus in some way? There was the boy who gave Jesus his lunch. There was the disciples who loaned him his boat. There were a few instances here or there, but really there's been a just an absolute infrequency of instances in which Jesus was helped by someone. Even the Samaritan woman at the well didn't want to draw water for him.

And so, here Jesus is helped and not just helped in any way. He has helped, and I think what is arguably the most significant way possible to carry the cross of Jesus to the place at which he will make atonement. I don't know of a more significant way of helping Jesus in his earthly life that could have taken place.

And here it is, a foreigner is asked to do that. I think that's saying something to us of the makeup of the church that's going to be birthed out of his atonement. So, I think that's the first thing that that says to us. But I really think that the, the main point that Simon is here for is to show, for us an example, an illustration of powerful illustration of a disciple.

This is, this is a disciple. This is what a disciple looks like. One who in the words of Jesus will pick up his cross and follow Jesus and carry now. Now, the reason we pick up on this, I think is for two reasons. Both Mark and Luke will give us strong indications that Simon is the model disciple, and they'll each do it in their own individual way.

So, Mark does it by connecting together this idea of passing by. So, in Mark's gospel, we've already studied this in chapter one. In Chapter two, the first four disciples that were called to follow, Jesus, Simon and his brother, Andrew, James, and John, in both instances were told that Jesus was passing by.

Then, Mark in this account now says that Simon was passing. So, I think Mark wants us to make a connection. This passing by Jesus passes by calls disciples to follow him. Now, Simon is passing by, but Luke I think makes his cl his, uh, connection even clearer because Luke will tell us back in chapter nine, Luke will say these words in, in from the lips of Jesus.

Jesus will say, if anyone would come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross daily and follow me. And it is Luke and Luke alone that tells us that Simon carried the cross behind Jesus. So, I think Luke is inviting us to make a connection there between the Christ who said, take up your cross and come after me and follow.

Now Luke tells us, here's Simon who has taken up the cross and is following behind the Christ. So, I, I think that what Simon is here for is to show for us a model and example of one who's disciple. So, here, here's, I think really the takeaway for us to, to take and take home with us tonight is this. Think for just a moment about Simon's experience.

Simon. I think that this, this instance in which he was forced to carry the cross of Jesus probably was the occasion for at least the beginning of his conversion. The, the, the instance in which his conversion really started to take shape, maybe from Simon's encounter with Jesus. He was so, struck by the person, the man, and how he bore this cross and how he died.

And then after his death, he asked others about his teaching and who he was and what he was about. And then he hears of the resurrected Christ and, and then maybe his conversion was complete. But this instance here, I think is a sharp focus upon an event that God in, let me put it this way, invaded the life of Simon.

God invades the life of Simon with this from Simon's perspective, this utterly unexpected, this sudden completely, we would say coincidental occurrence. When out of the blue Simon's life is forever changed. Think of this from Simon's perspective. We don't know if his family was with him and as he's being taken away with the cross, his family's calling to him.

Dad, dad come back. Where will we find you? We don't know if, if, or maybe he was here alone. But in either case, the suddenness. The seeming randomness of the thing really just takes your breath away. Here's Simon one minute. Coming into Jerusalem after a long journey over the Mediterranean Sea, to all of a sudden just, it seems like within moments now he's carrying the cross of the savior of the world.

Now, we would might call that random or think of that as something random or coincidental, but of course we're reminded that that God had this plan from eternity past there. There's nothing coincidental. There's nothing random about this from God's perspective, but in just a blink of an eye, his life has changed.

Reminds me of Saul on the road to Damascus in the blink of an eye. His life has changed. So, for some of us, that's how conversion may have happened. But I think the bigger takeaway is that that is just how life often is. That literally. So, often through the course of life in the blink of an eye, this idea of taking up a cross and following Jesus can go in in just an instant from theory to reality, just like it did for Simon.

Carrying across can go from something theoretical to the reality of life. In an instance, a phone call can change that idea that that we must suffer for Christ, and through many tribulations, we enter the kingdom of God and God works through suffering in our life. One phone call can take that from a theory to reality.

One car missing the red light can take that from theory to reality. Just like for Simon in just a moment, God intervened in his life. In a radical sh could, could we say violent sort of way, impacting his life for eternity, taking his life from something that maybe he's here to offer up some dead works.

Righteousness. Sacrifices, to now he's carrying the cross of the savior of the world. That says something to us about the necessity for preparedness, the necessity for maintaining the attitude that at any moment God's plan for our life can impact us suddenly and radically, and things can go from normal to carrying across just like that.

So, I think that's a great takeaway from Simon here. But let's quickly move on and we'll move on now to the second encounter that Jesus will have from Luke's gospel. Let's look from verse 27. And there followed him a great multitude of the people and of women who are mourning and lamenting for him. But turning to them, Jesus said, daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children.

For behold, the days are coming. When they will say, blessed are the Barron in the wombs that never bore in the breasts, that never nursed. Then they will begin to say to the mountains, fall on us into the hills. Cover us for if they do these things, when the wood is green, what will happen when it is dry?

So, Jesus encounters these people who are mourning and lamenting through him for, for him as he's making his meandering sort of sad parade, we could say through the streets of Jerusalem. So, as he count, as he encounters these people who are mourning and lamenting for him, for him, I ask myself, well, who are these people?

Because I don't see the crowd. This Mark calls it. Um, I'm sorry. Uh, Luke calls it a great multitude. Matthew calls it a great multitude also. So, it's a lot of people. This, this is a flock of people. This, the streets of Jerusalem were packed from Passover. And this is just added to the excitement. There's people upon people upon people.

So, what among this crowd would mean would mean that some people are lamenting and mourning for him. Because I remind myself that literally just about an hour ago, this is the same crowd that was crying. We want his blood crucify this man. So, I don't find it very convincing that there were people among the crowd who, who were just emotionally sad over this and were torn and lamenting what was about to happen to Jesus, thinking that this was just this big mistake.

I see the hand of God, God, the Spirit has worked in this crowd to stir them up, to call for Jesus' blood because God was the one who wanted his son on the cross. This wasn't the work of Satan. This was the work of God to call for the death of his son. Because it was his plan to crush his son. So, this crowd that just literally minutes ago was crying for his blood, I don't now see them crying and lamenting for him instead.

This is most likely what we would think of as professional mourners. That was a thing in Jesus' day. There were these professional mourners or professional lament. So, when there was a funeral or, or uh, someone had died or someone was really sick, one thing that you didn't want is if you were a person of any sort of importance.

You didn't want your funeral to be sort of this quiet, somber affair. You wanted people overcome with. And so, there were these people called professional mourners. We come across them in the story of J's daughter. You remember the story of J's daughter Jesus is on the way, doesn't get there in time supposedly.

And when Jesus gets there, there's already the professional lamentors, the professional lamentors who are in the words of Matthew making a big ruckus, making a huge loud noise over the wailing and crying that they're doing over the girl that has died. Now, certainly they were sad. Certainly there was a lot of sadness, but that's a picture of, of a profession of that day.

I don't know if it was a full-time profession or just maybe a sideline gig, but there were these people that were paid mourners, and they were paid mourners because apparently, they cried really well. So, I don't know if that's a thing today. But if you can cry really well, maybe it is a thing today, and you could have a sideline gig of being a professional mourn, but it was a thing in Jesus's day.

So, most likely these were professional lament. Now, why would there have been professional lament leading up to Jesus' execution? They were most likely under the pay of the temple. Now, why would the temple want to pay people to mourn for Jesus? Because it was the, the temple and the leadership of the temple, the religious, religious leadership that brought all this about, they wanted nevertheless to put on a certain appearance because this was still a tragedy for Israel.

For an Israelite, a Jewish man to be executed by Rome was still a tragedy, even though they wanted it to happen. So, there was a certain appearance that needed to be maintained. A Jewish man was about to be executed at the hands of Gentiles and Jews needed to be mourning for that. So, there was these mourners I, I feel like that they were most likely not genuine, but they were paid mourners.

But either way, there are these laments and these cries being lifted up, these whales being lifted up because Jesus and apparently these other two men are being led to the place a crucifixion. And notice Jesus' words here returning to them. Jesus said, daughters of Jerusalem. Now don't take that to mean that Jesus somehow was expressing some sort of commonality with them, some sort of connection as though they are people of his family.

Daughters of Jerusalem was just a common phrase of the day that just refer to women of Israel, daughters of Jerusalem and notice this rebuke Jesus will rebuke them in the sternest fashion. Do not weep from me. But weep for yourselves and for your children, for behold, the days are coming when they will say, blessed are the Barron and the wombs that never bore, and the breasts that never nursed, then they will begin to say to the mountains, follow in us under the hills, cover us.

So, Jesus quotes there from Jose 10 verse eight. The context of Jose 10 in verse eight is, the prophet is speaking of the wrath of God. That's about to be poured out upon Samaria. The Assyrians will soon come and they will devastate Samaria. All of this is part of the wrath of God because of the wickedness of the northern kingdom of Israel.

And the prophet is saying, when all that happens, you will say, it would be better for mountains to fall on us than this. It would be better for the hills to consume us than for what's happening to us now. So, Jesus speaks those words and, and these words of rebuke and the words of rebuke are, don't weep for me.

Weep for yourselves. And then he references the coming wrath of God upon Rome in about four decades. When the Romans sack the city and Jesus compares it to the days of, in which he's going to say, in that time, you are also going to say, it'd be better for mountains to fall on us than for what's happening to us now.

So, he's referencing that, but he's also referencing the long view of this prophecy, the L, the long application, so, to speak, which is to say this, I'm not the one that you need to be weeping for. You need to be weeping for yourself because the Messiah is literally walking right past you to make atonement for your sins.

And all you can think about is crying for the death of a man. Remember back in chapter 19 of Luke, when Jesus makes that entry into the city. You remember his words there, his piercing words. You did not see the day of your visitation. When he pronounces that the, the stones will cry out in your rebuke, in your condemnation because you did not realize the day of your visitation, meaning Messiah has come and you didn't know it.

In a similar way, Jesus is saying to these women, you're weeping because a man's going to die A man you don't even know. You really need to be weeping because you're about to die in your sins and an eternity awaits you of torment. That's what you really need to be weeping for. You need to be weeping because you're a sinner without repentance.

And then it goes on to tell this proverb, if they do this when the wood is green and what will they do when it's dry, meaning, If, if these things happen when things are good, or to put it another way, if you are rejecting Messiah, when Messiah is here, what are you going to do when I'm gone? And then the rebuke gets even sterner.

Jesus says, in those days, you'll say, blessed are the barren who, the who, uh, have the wombs that never bore the breasts, that never nursed. Do you know what the greatest curse for an Israelite woman was? Barrenness. Think of Elizabeth or, or think of Leah, or think of Sarah. And just the, the scorn. The scourge in which an Israelite woman considered it to be the greatest curse from God to be barren.

And Jesus says, you will wish for that instead of what's. This is the sternest possible rebuke that Jesus could have given to her. Now, what is this about? What this is really getting at is I believe a mis focus or a mis emphasis on what's happening. They are lamenting, they are mourning that a man is about to suffer in his body and die.

And Jesus's rebuke for them is to say, you are completely misunderstanding what you need to be mourning and weeping for. And the last thing that you need to weep for is me.

You see what this shines a light on, I think is something that's very, very common this time of year in the church, and that is an inappropriate and a wrong focus on Good Friday. Which is to say a focus on Jesus's physical suffering. We've all seen this. I have sat under sermons, which the whole, basically the whole sermon was about the physical suffering of Jesus.

Most of us in the room have watched movies like Passion of the Christ and which is just physical suffering. And that physical suffering can, in a sense, it can sort of grab our attention and draw us in, and it's something that is really prevalent, say in the Roman Catholic Church to focus on the physical suffering of Christ.

Within the Roman Catholic Church, there's, there is a, an extreme focus on his physical suffering. That's why you see the, the Roman Catholic crucifix with the Jesus still on it, or all the artwork and the statues of Mary holding the dead limp body of Jesus. You can Google it. And you can find just image after image of all these paintings and artwork and statues of the dead body of Jesus arm flopping down, head flopping to the side.

What those images do is they invite you, and here's the important part. They invite you to pity Jesus. And Jesus says, do not pity me. Your pity be damned. I am not an object of your pity. Jesus is not one to be pitied. He is going to this cross in victory. He is going to this cross to achieve what he and the father have planned for eon.

He is going to this cross as the writer of the Hebrews will say in Hebrews chapter 12, verse two, with joy, despising the shame. Yes, Jesus was crucified in shame, but his desire is not for us to look upon his shame and just focus on the shame and the physical suffering and the physical torment, all of that, those sorts of thoughts and those images, they invite your heart to pity Jesus.

And Jesus most emphatically rejects your pity. Jesus is not an object of pity. You know what thoughts of pity stir within us? Thoughts of p. Necessarily bring about in our mind thoughts of Victor and victim. And if there's a victim, there has to be a victor. And if Jesus is the victim, he's not the victim.

Jesus is not a victim. And this is why this woman's pity, whether it be genuine or paid for. This is why this woman's pity is so, offensive to Jesus because you know, it's, it can be hard to distinguish between pity and condescension because those things that you pity is just a short step from that to condescension.

We desecrate the cross of Christ when we pity him for his suffering. Now, does this mean that we are to ignore the physical suffering of Jesus? Absolutely not. But all heresy begins, we've said this before, all heresy begins with a improper emphasis emphasizing what the scriptures do not emphasize, and failing to emphasize what the scriptures do, emphasize and do know that every single gospel, all four gospels, all four gospels describe Jesus's execution in the same terms.

All four gospels will say things like, and there they crucified him and move on. All four gospels will say things like, and then they flogged him and move on. All four gospels will treat the physical suffering of Jesus in the identical way, which is to say an absolute economy of words. An absolute paucity of words that just simply narrate the event and move on.

And they focus on everything, but that they focus on the betrayal. They focus on the teaching. They focus on on the trial. They focus on pilot. They focus on everything except the physical suffering. Jesus suffered more intensely in his body than any of us can imagine. But when we make that to be central, we despise the cross and we make it an object of pity.

We make Jesus into a victim, and Jesus was a victor, not a victim. And this woman who's to offer to him this fake pity, this fake sympathy, Jesus says, let me tell you who you should pity. You should pity yourself. Because unless you repent, you will die in your sins. I'm headed to victory. I'm secure in my father.

As, as we're told, Jesus continued to entrust himself to his father. He was secure in what he was doing. He is going there in joy, and he is going there in glory. We are, we are taught by the New Testament that the cross is the glory of Christ. Jesus will say on, in the upper room, he'll say to the father, father, restore to me the glory which we had.

This is the glory of the cross. We talked about in Ephesians one, as we went through that long section of Ephesians, Ephesians one, how all of that was about the glory of Christ through the cross. So, take care residents and si sisters not to allow in your heart an emotion, a sense of of pity to arise for the physical suffering of Christ.

His spiritual suffering infinitely outweighs his physical suffering and the spiritual activity of taking upon himself, the sin of his people was far more excruciating. And that is the focus of scripture. So, now lastly, let's look at the last component, and that is the component of the wine that was offered to him.

We see this in Mark's gospel, chapter 15, verse 23, and they offered him wine mixed with Mer, but he did not take it. So, what's the deal with the wine? Who's offering it? Why didn't he take it and why did they spike it with Mer? So, the, they offered him wine. We're not told who the they is. It's either the soldiers or the women who are crying in.

So, I think that most likely what's happening here is that this was a custom, this was, this was what was done in accordance. I think with, for example, Proverbs chapter 31 and verse six, where we're told, uh, you'll recognize, of course Proverbs 31, that chapter there, Proverbs 31, tells us, give strong dream to the one who is perishing and wine to those in bitter distress.

So, I think that what was happening here are these women who are the lament, the mourners also had prepared this wine mixed with Mer to give to the execution victims on their way to the cross.

So, wine mixed with Mer would have formed a type of narcotic A, a powerful for Jesus' day, a powerful, not certainly not in comparison to the drugs of today, but for Jesus' time it would've been a powerful pain reliever or powerful mind numbing sort of agent.

So, they offer it to Jesus. This wine mixed with MER as an opportunity to. Give him some sort of sensory dulling, some sort of mind dulling before the events of the cross. So, how was it that these women, if it was the women, how are they able to offer to Jesus this wine mixed with Murray? Isn't he surrounded by soldiers?

I think that probably the soldiers were most likely cooperating with, and that that's why the they, they offered in wine could have also been the soldiers. Either the soldiers or the women could have offered Jesus wine. Why would the soldiers want Jesus to have this mind-numbing drug? Didn't they want to inflict as much pain as possible?

Well, the soldiers would've been experts at what they were doing. They would've been experienced executioners. An ex, an experienced executioner would've quickly told you that no matter how weak a man appears to be, no matter how close to the edge of death a man appears to be, when the moment of death comes.

They can turn into a wildcat. That's just the way that we're made. When that moment of death comes, there can be a strength that you didn't know was there. And so, by experience, the soldiers have learned that in that moment when the nails are about to go in, it can be hard to get it done because even though the person is weakened and has been flogged even, even, so,, it can still be a struggle to get that done.

So, the experienced executioner would have allowed and even maybe been the ones giving of the wine to facilitate, to make it something that wasn't going to be such a struggle to get him on the cross. Once he's on the cross, the wine will wear off. So, that was probably what that was all about. Just, just this.

Maybe it was an effort of compassion on the part of the women, or maybe it was just a matter of expediency on the part of the soldiers. Either way, it was to have the same effect, which is to dull the senses and dull the mind. And Jesus refuses it. And that's the takeaway here. Jesus is not going to go to sleep on the cross, like the disciples who went to sleep when they were supposed to be praying.

Jesus will not go to sleep on the cross. He will be wide awake through the whole experience. And this is, I think, something that's incredibly comforting for us, incredibly encouraging and comforting that the one who was about to become our sin, two Corinthians 5 21, he became our sin on that cross. The one who was about to become our sin will say to us, no, I will do this with.

Total perception. I will do this with perfect apprehension of what I am about to become. Our Messiah needed no gulling of his senses or weakening of his mind in order to embrace the sin that he would become in order to save his people. And isn't that encouraging, isn't that encouraging? That Messiah became our sin with perfect apprehension, with perfect perception of what he was becoming, how discouraging it would've been for Christ to have been made to be our sin under some sort of effect of, of some type of.

And then the chemical wears off. How discouraging that would that have been? But Jesus becomes our sin with complete and perfect apprehension, with complete, perfect perception of who it is that he would become, of what it is that he would be made to be. Romans five in verse eight. God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

When the iniquity of us all, Isaiah 53 was laid upon him, it was laid upon one who had complete understanding of what he was becoming, how encouraging that is brothers and sisters, that he gave himself up for us. That the risk of sounding irreverent, I don't want to sound irreverent, but at the risk of sounding a tad bit irreverent, there were no beer goggles on the cross.

Jesus knew exactly what he was taking upon himself, and he needed no mind-altering substances in order for him to do that.