

Sermon

#173

Luke Sermons

Title: **BEHOLDING THESE THINGS**

Text: Luke 23:24-49

Subject: *The Crucifixion*

Date: Sunday Evening — July 9, 2006

Tape # Z-02b

Introduction:

LUKE 23:24-49

“24 And Pilate gave sentence that it should be as they required. 25 And he released unto them him that for sedition and murder was cast into prison, whom they had desired; but he delivered Jesus to their will.”

“26 ¶ And as they led him away, they laid hold upon one Simon, a Cyrenian, coming out of the country, and on him they laid the cross, that he might bear *it* after Jesus. 27 And there followed him a great company of people, and of women, which also bewailed and lamented him. 28 But Jesus turning unto them said, Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children. 29 For, behold, the days are coming, in the which they shall say, Blessed *are* the barren, and the wombs that never bare, and the paps which never gave suck. 30 Then shall they begin to say to the mountains, Fall on us; and to the hills, Cover us. 31 For if they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?”

“32 ¶ And there were also two other, malefactors, led with him to be put to death. 33 And when they were come to the place, which is called Calvary, there they crucified him, and the malefactors, one on the right hand, and the other on the left. 34 Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do. And they parted his raiment, and cast lots. 35 And the people stood beholding. And the rulers also with them derided *him*, saying, He saved others; let him save himself, if he be Christ, the chosen of God. 36 And the soldiers also mocked him, coming to him, and offering him vinegar, 37 And saying, If thou be the king of the Jews, save thyself. 38 And a superscription also was written over him in letters of Greek, and Latin, and Hebrew, THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS. 39 And one of the malefactors which were hanged railed on him, saying, If thou be Christ, save thyself and us. 40 But the other answering rebuked him, saying, Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? 41 And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss. 42 And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom. 43 And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in paradise.”

“44 ¶ And it was about the sixth hour, and there was a darkness over all the earth until the ninth hour. 45 And the sun was darkened, and the veil of the temple was rent in the midst. 46 And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, he said, Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit: and having said thus, he gave up the ghost. 47 Now when the centurion saw what was done, he glorified God, saying, Certainly this was a righteous man. 48 And all the people that came together to that sight, beholding the things which were done, smote their breasts, and returned. 49 And all his acquaintance, and the women that followed him from Galilee, stood afar off, beholding these things.”

These verses describe the sufferings of our Lord Jesus Christ when he was hanged upon the cursed tree, bearing our sin in his own body and made sin for us. I want us to take our place tonight with all his acquaintances and the women who followed him from Galilee, “*beholding these things.*” We have before us an amazing, marvelous record. It is amazing and marvelous in our eyes when we remember...

- **Who suffered these things.** — The great Sufferer before us is the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Lamb of God, the only truly holy and good man ever to live in this world.
- **For whom he suffered.**

(Romans 5:6-8) “For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. (7) For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. (8) But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.”

- **Why he suffered.** — The cause of his great sorrow and agony of body, soul and spirit was the fact that the Son of God suffered for sin, as the sin-bearer. “*Christ died for our sins!*”

THE SORROW IN GETHSEMANE

We have seen our Savior’s sorrow in Gethsemane, when he prayed three times, “*O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt.*” Such was the shock of his holy soul at the thought and prospect of being made sin that our holy Redeemer broke out into a sweat of blood. Luke describes it in these words...

(Luke 22:44) “Being in an agony he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground.”

THE SCOURGING OF GABBATHA

We have seen the scourging of Gabbatha too. Our Lord was condemned in a mockery of justice at Pilate’s judgment hall, called Gabbatha (John 19:13). There he was delivered into the hands of cruel, barbaric Roman soldiers to be scourged. They took him into the common judgment hall, where they gathered an entire band of soldiers, between five and twelve hundred of them, to scourge our Savior.

- They stripped him!
- They mercilessly whipped him with a Roman scourge!
- They mocked him!
- The Scarlet Robe!
- The Crown of Thorns!
- The Reed Scepter!
- The Spitting!
- The Beating!

“Then they led him away to crucify him!” We have read Luke’s inspired narrative of the crucifixion at Mt. Calvary. May God the Holy Spirit who gave us this record now fill our hearts with reverence as we meditate upon it and seek to worship the Lamb who was there sacrificed for our sins. The verses before us this evening describe...

THE SLAUGHTER AT GOLGOTHA

(Luke 23:33) “And when they were come to the place, which is called Calvary, there they crucified him, and the malefactors, one on the right hand, and the other on the left.”

Matthew wrote, *“And when they were come unto a place called Golgotha, that is to say, a place of a skull.”* “*Golgotha*” means “*place of a skull.*” Golgotha was just another name for Calvary. It was called Golgotha because in this place of slaughter, people who were stoned to death or crucified were simply covered over with a little dirt. Consequently, in a matter of time skulls and bones were everywhere.

GOD’S SOVEREIGNTY

In this scene of slaughter at Golgotha the Holy Spirit shows us a tremendous display of God’s glorious sovereignty in three things:

First, we see here the fulfillment of Scripture by men who had no regard for the Scriptures. The soldiers who tormented our Lord had no more regard for the Scriptures than hogs have for diamonds. Yet, they did exactly what God ordained that they would do and said that they would do (Acts 4:27-28; 13:27-29). The Lord God made even those men who murdered his Son to be his witnesses!

(Acts 4:27-28) “For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together, (28) For to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done.”

(Acts 13:27-29) “For they that dwell at Jerusalem, and their rulers, because they knew him not, nor yet the voices of the prophets which are read every sabbath day, they have fulfilled *them* in condemning *him*. (28) And though they found no cause of death *in him*, yet desired they Pilate that he should be slain. (29) And when they had fulfilled all that was written of him, they took *him* down from the tree, and laid *him* in a sepulchre.”

The soldiers who mocked him, gave him vinegar to drink.

(Luke 23:36-37) “And the soldiers also mocked him, coming to him, and offering him vinegar, (37) And saying, If thou be the king of the Jews, save thyself.”

(Matthew 27:34) “They gave him vinegar to drink mingled with gall: and when he had tasted thereof, he would not drink.”

This mixture of vinegar (flat wine that had gone sour and bitter) mixed with gall was thought to be a mixture that would prolong one’s life. It was given by the soldiers because they must, according to God’s decree, fulfill the prophecy of **Psalm 69:21**. — *“They gave me also gall for my meat; and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink.”*

John Gill wrote, “This potion of vinegar with gall, was an aggravating circumstance in our Lord’s sufferings, being given to him when he had a violent thirst upon him; and was an emblem of the bitter cup of God’s wrath, he had already tasted of in the garden, and was about to drink up”

“When he had tasted thereof, he would not drink.” — Our Lord refused to drink of the mixture because he was determined to suffer the wrath of God for us without any distraction or intoxication of mind. And he refused to drink of it because he would make all to know that he would do nothing to prolong his life, but was willing to die now that his hour, the fullness of time, had come.

Matthew tells us that they parted his garments, casting lots for his vesture.

(Matthew 27:35) “And they crucified him, and parted his garments, casting lots: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, They parted my garments among them, and upon my vesture did they cast lots.”

Again, we are reminded that the Lord God Almighty was in total control of all the affairs of this day of infamy. The barbaric soldiers did nothing except what God had long before said they would do. This parting of our Lord’s garments was a fulfillment of **Psalm 22:18**. — *“They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture.”*

Then, like the women and his acquaintances who followed him, Matthew tells us, “sitting down they watched him there” (Mat. 27:36). After they had scourged him, mocked him, beat him and crucified him, these hardened men sat down to watch the Lamb of God die. Like little boys cruelly throw a worm into a fire just to watch it wiggle, squirm and die, they watched the Son of God; but to their utter astonishment, there was no wiggling, no squirming, and no dying until he gave up the ghost by his own sovereign will!

Notice also that our Lord was crucified between two thieves, as the prophet Isaiah declared he must be. — *“He was numbered with the transgressors”* (Isa. 53:12).

(Luke 23:32) “And there were also two other, malefactors, led with him to be put to death.”

(Matthew 27:38) “Then were there two thieves crucified with him, one on the right hand, and another on the left.”

That brings me to the *second* thing I want you to see here. **These two thieves also give us a display of God’s sovereign, distinguishing grace in salvation.** You do not need me to remind you that one of these thieves was plucked as a firebrand from the burning out of the very jaws of hell by God’s sovereign grace, while the other was left to suffer the just consequences of his sin. **Let it never be forgotten by us that if we are saved, we are saved because God did it.** The only distinction between you and me and the damned in hell is the distinction that grace has made (1 Cor. 4:7; 15:10; Rom. 9:16).

(1 Corinthians 4:7) “For who maketh thee to differ *from another?* and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? now if thou didst receive *it*, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received *it?*”

(1 Corinthians 15:10) “But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which *was bestowed* upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.”

(Romans 9:16) “So then *it is* not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy.”

Third, here at Calvary we see a great display of God’s sovereignty in causing reprobate, unbelieving men to declare his truth, to declare the very essence of the gospel, though they never knew it themselves. I do not know, but it may be that it was the testimony of spineless Pilate, the testimony of these wicked, taunting, jeering Jews, and the testimony of the mocking chief priests, scribes and elders that became the instruments by which God taught that elect thief the gospel and brought him to faith in Christ. Hear now the testimony that he heard.

Pilate declared, “This is Jesus” (Matt. 27:37). — **“Jesus of Nazareth”** (John 19:19). **“The King of the Jews”** (v. 38). — This proclamation was made in Hebrew the language of religion, in Greek, the language of philosophy, and in Latin, the language of science. That was no accident! There is no true religion, no true philosophy, and no true science that does not begin with the acknowledgment and confession that Jesus Christ is King!

The priests, scribes, elders, and people, danced in a drunken, hellish party around Immanuel’s cross, and in their blasphemy spoke the truth of God as distinctly as inspired apostles. — **“Thou that destroyest the temple and buildest it in three days”** (Matt. 27:40). Though they knew it not, those religious ritualists proclaimed the fact of our Lord’s death and resurrection.

- He destroyed the temple of his body in death.
- He raised it up again in three days!

Mockingly they cried, — “*He saved others; himself he cannot save*” (Matt. 27:42). That is the very essence of the gospel! The Son of God died as our Substitute. Because he saved us he had to sacrifice himself!

Then, they jeered, — “*He trusted in God*” (Matt. 27:43). Our Lord Jesus Christ, as a man, lived by faith, in all things trusting God his Father. Thus he taught us how to honor, obey, and live for God in this world — BY FAITH! But there is more. The Holy Spirit tells us repeatedly that we are saved and justified “*by the faith of Jesus Christ.*”

After that, our they jeered again. — “*He said, I am the Son of God*” (Matt. 27:43). Our modern infidels choose to ignore it, but these people heard his doctrine plainly. Jesus Christ of Nazareth openly, publicly declared himself to be the Son of God. And that is who he is! He is God and man in one glorious Person — THE GODMAN! The Godman...

- In Mary’s Womb!
- In Obedience for Us!
- Dying Upon The Tree!
- Exalted to Save!

And the hellish crowd declared, in Luke 23:35, that he who saved others, but could not save himself is “*the Christ, the chosen of God.*”

(Luke 23:35) “And the people stood beholding. And the rulers also with them derided *him*, saying, He saved others; let him save himself, if he be Christ, the chosen of God.”

(Psalms 89:19) “Then thou spakest in vision to thy holy one, and saidst, I have laid help upon *one that is* mighty; I have exalted *one* chosen out of the people.”

(Isaiah 42:1) “Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, *in whom* my soul delighteth; I have put my spirit upon him: he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles.”

(Isaiah 43:10) “Ye *are* my witnesses, saith the LORD, and my servant whom I have chosen: that ye may know and believe me, and understand that I *am* he: before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me.”

(1 Peter 2:3-5) “If so be ye have tasted that the Lord *is* gracious. (4) To whom coming, *as unto* a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, *and* precious, (5) Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.”

SCENE OF GUILT

But there is more, much more, that I see as I stand before my dying Savior, “*beholding these things.*” **Calvary is a scene of great guilt, guilt that deserved death.** — “*There were also two other malefactors led with him to be put to death*” (v. 32). The Lord Jesus was crucified between these two murderous malefactors, as if he were the greatest of the three. — “*He was numbered with the transgressors*” (Isa. 53:12). He was “*reckoned among the transgressors*” (Luke 22:37).

And in a very real sense, he was made the greatest of transgressors, for he who knew no sin was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him! And when he was made sin, he was made a curse for us, and made to die under the wrath of God in our place. He did not merely bear the curse for us. He was made a curse for us (Gal. 3:13), because our guilt was made his guilt.

(Psalms 40:12) “For innumerable evils have compassed me about: mine iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up; they are more than the hairs of mine head: therefore my heart faileth me.”

(Psalms 69:5) “O God, thou knowest my foolishness (perversity); and my sins (guiltiness) are not hid from thee.”

PLACE OF INFINITE LOVE

Calvary is the place of infinite, indescribable love, eternal love, enduring love, self-denying love, saving love, everlasting love, divine love. Hear love welling up in the breaking heart of the Son of God, our crucified Substitute, as it prays (v. 34).

(Luke 23:34) “Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do. And they parted his raiment, and cast lots.”

(John 13:1) “Now before the feast of the passover, when Jesus knew that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end.”

(1 John 3:16) “Hereby perceive we the love *of God*, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down *our* lives for the brethren.”

(1 John 4:9-10) “In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. (10) Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son *to be* the propitiation for our sins.”

(Romans 5:6-8) “For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. (7) For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. (8) But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.”

(2 Corinthians 8:9) “For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.”

GRACE AND SALVATION

“*Beholding these things,*” I have before my eye a scene of abounding grace in the salvation of sinners.

(Luke 23:32-34) “And there were also two other, malefactors, led with him to be put to death. (33) And when they were come to the place, which is called Calvary, there they crucified him, and the malefactors, one on the right hand, and the other on the left. (34) Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do. And they parted his raiment, and cast lots.”

(Luke 23:39-43) “And one of the malefactors which were hanged railed on him, saying, If thou be Christ, save thyself and us. (40) But the other answering rebuked him, saying, Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? (41) And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss. (42) And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom. (43) And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in paradise.”

Upon the basis of his blood atonement, the Lord Jesus prayed for the forgiveness of the very people who mocked him and crucified him; and he obtained it. That forgiveness he obtained is made manifest in the saving operations of his grace upon the dying thief. The Savior said to him, “*Today shalt thou be with me in Paradise!*” Here we have a portrait of God’s sovereign saving grace that is full of instruction and of consolation.

- **The whole of salvation is summed up in the two word spoken by our Lord to the thief** — “*with me.*” He was with him in the covenant, with him in his obedience and with him in his death, and now he is with him in Paradise. — “*With me*” is all the thief wanted. — “*With me*” is heaven. — “*With me*” is salvation!
- **None are beyond the reach of omnipotent mercy.** — The Lord Jesus Christ is able to save to the uttermost all who come to God by him.
- **Our great God and Savior is as willing to save as he is able to save.**
- **Salvation is by grace alone, without works.** — This man was justified, sanctified, washed clean, and glorified in one great, single stroke of mercy!
- Learn this too. — **Those saints nearest death are nearest glory!** — To be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord!

JUDGMENT AND MERCY

“*Beholding these things,*” I see both great judgment and great mercy.

(Luke 23:44-45) “And it was about the sixth hour, and there was a darkness over all the earth until the ninth hour. (45) And the sun was darkened, and the veil of the temple was rent in the midst.”

- The three hours of darkness over all the earth seems to me to be a declaration of God's great wrath and judgment against sin. All who are without Christ are in great darkness; and darkness shall be your portion forever if you die without my Savior!
- But the rent veil is a declaration of God's infinite goodness and mercy. The blood of Christ has opened the way for poor sinners like you and me to come to God (Heb. 10:19-22).

(Hebrews 10:19-22) "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, (20) By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; (21) And *having* an high priest over the house of God; (22) Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water."

DEATH ACCOMPLISHED

Once more, "*beholding these things,*" I see death accomplished (v.46).

(Luke 23:46) "And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, he said, Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit: and having said thus, he gave up the ghost."

Our Savior came here to die; and he accomplished his mission. He was obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. His accomplished death has brought life and immortality to us, and gives us peace. Like those described in verse 48, I smite my breast in repentance, "*beholding these things.*" — Blessed be his name, his death is the death of death for this poor sinner! Believing on the Son of God, I shall never die. — "*Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ!*"

Amen.