

**Message #59****Mark 15:16-24**

We are living in a time when many are criticizing the police, especially when they must use deadly force. Most people doing the criticizing have no idea of the facts. They are armchair quarterbacks who just sit in their comfortable, safe environment and criticize. I wish they would go out on the streets with these police officers and face what they face. They would not be so quick to criticize.

When we were in Pocatello, I did that. We had some policemen in our church and I asked one of them if I could ride on patrol with him one night and he got permission. So one Sunday night after church, he picked me up at my house and I rode with him through the night. For the most part, it was a quiet night. But every now and then he would have to pull over a vehicle going too fast. He would hit his lights and pull in behind the car. He told me to stay in the car as he got out. As he walked toward that car at 2-3 in the morning, he had no idea what would happen. He had his vest on, but still when you walk to a car, those police have no clue as to what will happen. I got this sick queasy feeling in my stomach every time he did it. In fact, I asked him what do I do if they start shooting at you; he said grab that shotgun and do what you can. I wish loud-mouthed politicians could face what those officers face. You have a split second in some cases that determines whether you live or die.

We come now to a passage in which the law enforcement authorities did use deadly force against one totally and completely innocent. It wasn't a split second decision, this went on for hours. It was the murder of Jesus Christ.

This is the greatest misuse of force and power in history. The political world, the religious world, the military world and the law enforcement world put a target on the back of Jesus Christ that said, "Kill Him." They wanted Him gone and they wanted Him dead.

**JESUS CHRIST IS MOCKED, BEATEN BY THE ROMAN SOLDIERS AND PUBLICLY HUMILIATED AND TAKEN TO GOLGOTHA AND CRUCIFIED.**

All of this of course is part of the sovereign plan of God. All of this is controlled by God. Jesus Christ is letting these things happen to Him so He can save us from our sins. At any moment, He could have stopped this. He could have summoned legions of angels to attack those attacking Him. He could have had all the people drop dead right then and there. But He willingly allowed Himself to go through this because this was the only way we could be saved.

After Pilate scourged Christ, he handed him over to the soldiers to be crucified (15:15). What we see here is the process of getting Christ from Pilate to the cross. Now remember this all starts Thursday night and Christ won't be crucified until Friday morning at 9 AM (Mark 15:25). So, all of these things were happening late Thursday night and early Friday morning. There are fourteen specific humiliating steps in getting Christ on that cross:

**HUMILIATING STEP #1 – The soldiers took Christ into the Palace. 15:16a**

Notice how **verse 16** begins–“the soldiers took Him away.” Keep in mind who Jesus is. He is God. He is the One who is the creator and sustainer of all things. He is the One who allowed each one of these soldiers to be born. He sanctioned their very lives and now He is allowing them to put their dirty, sinful, rough hands on Him and take Him away.

The first thing they did was they took Him into the palace area, called the Praetorium. The noun Praetorium comes from a Latin word that refers to a governor’s headquarters area. Sometimes it was used to refer to a governor’s headquarters and other times to a military commander’s headquarters. **They are not taking Jesus into this area to honor Him. They are taking Him there to humiliate Him.**

Now the Roman soldiers would have been the ones who scourged Christ (15:15). A Roman scourging was horrible. Typically the victim was stripped of clothing and tied to a post with hands bound, and guards standing on either side of Him would beat him with a whip made out of leather and pieces of lead and bone in the ends. Jews would only allow 39 lashes, but the Romans had no such limit. So when we read in **verse 15** that Jesus was “scourged,” this was horrific.

You would think that would have been enough for those soldiers but it is not. It was not enough for them. They decided to take it to a whole different level. They now get their chance to actually mock and abuse Jesus Christ any way they want.

These were the tough rugged Roman soldiers, who are fighters. These were not the Jewish temple guards. This was a Gentile group of brutal military men who are going to do whatever they want to Jesus before they nail Him to a cross.

This was some large gathering area that could house a large number of soldiers. They would all get in on the fun of beating up Jesus Christ.

**HUMILIATING STEP #2 – The soldiers called together the whole Roman battalion. 15:16b**

A “cohort” was one tenth of a legion, which could be as many as 500 to 600 soldiers. The Greek word used here could refer to a number less than 600, but there were certainly a great number of soldiers getting in on this. Our Sunday morning services typically run between 500-600 people. So there could have been as many of the soldiers as there are of you.

The entire Roman military got together to mock and beat Jesus Christ. For them it was all a game; a sadistic game.

**HUMILIATING STEP #3** – The soldiers dressed Jesus up in purple. **15:17a**

The first thing they did because they thought it was funny was to dress Jesus up in a purple robe. This was the kind of color of a robe worn by royalty. Now the robe was probably some military garment that was purple so it resembled a purple robe of a King. This was all part of their fun and games. They are dressing up Jesus like He was a king.

**HUMILIATING STEP #4** – The soldiers twisted a crown of thorns and put it on Him. **15:17b**

To mimic royalty, He would need a crown so they made one. Crowns were worn by royalty, heroes, honored citizens and winning athletes. If Jesus is royalty He would need a crown. They weaved together a crown made of thorns and put it on Him. There is a wide variety of thorny plants in Israel. It is possible that this was a crown made of “palm spines.” There are sharp thorn plants that are in Palestine. These plants feature thorns on them as tough as barbed wire.

As they put that crown on Christ’s head, and pressed it into His scalp, He would have started to bleed. This would have been very painful.

**HUMILIATING STEP #5** – The soldiers began to mock Him as King of the Jews. **15:18**

The idea behind yelling “Hail, King of the Jews” is like yelling “Hail, Caesar Emperor.”

**HUMILIATING STEP #6** – The soldiers kept beating Him with a staff. **15:19a**

The noun staff can refer to a staff or a reed. The imperfect tense of the verb means they beat Him over and over again.

**HUMILIATING STEP #7-** The soldiers were spitting on Christ. **15:19b**

Spitting on people is the lowest of the low. They would walk up to Jesus and spit in His face. Each soldier took his turn and had his fun. They were spitting into the face of God. This is “hellish cruelty.”

**HUMILIATING STEP #8** – The soldiers were kneeling and bowing down before Him. **15:19c**

There will come a day when these same soldiers will bow again before Christ.

**HUMILIATING STEP #9** – The soldiers took off the robe and put back on His own clothes.  
**15:20a**

Their game was over. They had all had their fun. So they decided to dress Him again and lead Him to His crucifixion. Actually Romans were known for leading a person naked to crucifixion. As one commentator brought out, it may have been a concession the soldiers made for the Jews. But they put Christ’s clothes back on and led Him out.

**HUMILIATING STEP #10** – The soldiers led Him outside to crucify Him. **15:20b**

Executions were normally carried out outside of the city. According to Jewish law executions were to be carried out outside the city (Ex. 29:14; Lev. 4:12, 21; 9:11; 16:27; Num. 15:35; 19:3). Romans liked to crucify people near major roads so people could see it. When you saw someone hanging on a cross, your first reaction is you don't want to do something that would anger Rome.

**HUMILIATING STEP #11** – The soldiers pressed Simon into service to bear His cross. **15:21**

Jesus has been severely beaten and He would have been very weak from the physical trauma and loss of blood. Isaiah predicted that “His appearance was marred more than any man” (Is. 52:14). Jesus' body was a swollen, bloody mess. He didn't even look human.

He was carrying the cross beam of the cross, which weighed approximately 100 pounds. He was not able to physically do it so Simon was asked to help carry it.

Simon was from Cyrene, which is in North Africa. In fact, today the place is known as Tripoli. Nothing much is known about him except he had two sons, Alexander and Rufus. Rufus ended up being a key man in the church of Rome (Romans 16:13). Also the mother of Rufus, Simon's wife, had rendered some motherly service to Paul

**HUMILIATING STEP #12** – The soldiers brought Christ to Golgotha, the place of the Skull. **15:22**

**The word “Golgotha” means place of skull.** The name Golgotha is Aramaic. The Greek is a transliteration “golgotha” which means skull. **The Greek word used for skull is kranion from which we get our English word cranium. The Latin word for kranion is calvaria, from which we get our English word Calvary.**

The actual location has been debated. There is a place that features a “skull like” protrusion in the rocks that is known as Gordon's Calvary. It is located north of the city and just outside. It is a hill that protrudes and it looks kind of like a skull.

**HUMILIATING STEP #13** – The soldiers tried to give Christ wine mixed with myrrh. **15:23**

Myrrh was a sedative that when added to wine could numb some of the pain. It was like a narcotic like morphine. It would have relieved some of the pain. We are not sure who actually requested that Christ be given this; but He refused it.

There have been several reasons given why He refused:

- 1) He was under a Nazarite vow, not drinking wine until the new kingdom.
- 2) He refused to participate in anything they were doing because it was mocking Him and God.
- 3) He was only going to participate in the cup of suffering authorized by His Father and not a cup of some narcotic.
- 4) He needed to fully face this death with full awareness.

Fact is Jesus would not play their games. He was on a Divine mission and what they wanted Him to do had nothing to do with anything.

**HUMILIATING STEP #14 – The soldiers crucified Christ. 15:24**

There were three types of crosses: The “X” cross; the “T” cross with the beam at the top and the “I” Cross, with the beam below the top. The latter “I” was the type used to kill Christ because they were able to nail a sign above His head.

Crucifixion was the cruelest form of punishment known to man. It was so cruel that Roman citizens could not be crucified. Usually this type of execution was used against the worst kinds of crimes such as treason and also certain capital murder crimes.

Even the Roman historian Cicero called it “a cruel and disgusting penalty.” Josephus called it the worst kind of death.

Now Jesus was nailed to a cross with nails driven through His hands and feet (John 20:25; Luke 24:39). To die by crucifixion was horrible. First of all, there was bleeding from hands and feet. The second one was out exposed in the elements. Third, the person was totally exhausted and hanging on a cross would make it difficult to breathe. In fact, most who were crucified died by asphyxiation. Sometimes a cross had a foot rest which would enable one to raise up and breathe. But that would only extend the time of torture. Seneca said that suicide would be a much better alternative to this type of death.

As one was hanging on a cross, birds of prey and wild dogs would come to get what they could to eat. This is how Jesus Christ was murdered. He was crucified.

Now turn over to Isaiah 53:5-8, 10. There you have it. Jesus Christ did this all for us.