

## **The Torture and Humiliation of the King**

**Prayer:** Lord Jesus, it's hard to read about your torment. I want to turn my eyes away. But you said you still suffer when children are hungry or hurting, when people lack adequate shelter, when hurts go unhealed, or when even one person is treated unjustly. Often I want to turn my eyes away from those realities, too. Give me even a small portion of your courage. Show me how I can join in your healing, helping work. Amen.

### **The Flogging**

#### **MONDAY**

#### **John 19:1**

The Romans used flogging before a crucifixion to utterly dehumanize and shame the prisoner. Jesus had told the disciples he would be flogged in Jerusalem (Matthew 20:19, Mark 10:34, Luke 18:33). In Matthew 10:17 and Mark 13:9 he warned his followers that some of them, too, would face flogging.

- In *40 Days of Reflection*, Pastor Hamilton points to Isaiah 53:5: "He was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed." In what ways does it speak to your heart that Jesus chose to bear a penalty that was rightfully ours? What limitations (if any) do you see in that image of the meaning of Jesus' suffering and death?
- Jesus' prophecy that his followers would be flogged came true (see Acts 5:40, 16:23; 2 Corinthians 11:23-24). What do you as Christ's follower in the 21<sup>st</sup> century face that, in your mind, is hard for you in ways akin to what the early Christians faced?

### **The Humiliation of the King**

#### **TUESDAY**

#### **Mark 15:16-19**

In Mark 14:65, the religious leaders spit on Jesus and struck him with their fists. The Roman soldiers had more practice abusing prisoners. They added a crown of thorns, a purple robe, and mocking shouts of "Hail, King of the Jews!" between blows. They didn't limit the "fun" to just the soldiers on duty—they called out the whole company to join in.

- As Pastor Hamilton's day 30 devotional notes, "God knows what it means to feel small, to be attacked mentally and emotionally, and to be physically abused." When have you faced abuse that made you feel helpless or small? How can it be healing to realize that Jesus shared that painful experience with you?
- Jesus had not insulted or threatened the Roman soldiers. Their cruelty toward him was casual. Do you see any parallel between their actions and the jeering at others that goes on around business rivalries, political issues or even sports (it is "March Madness" time)? Is that "just fun," or have you ever seen (or felt) it turn cruel?

### **They Compelled Simon to Carry His Cross**

#### **WEDNESDAY**

#### **Mark 15:21**

After all of the flogging and abuse, it's no shock Jesus couldn't carry the heavy cross beam all the way to Golgotha. Simon was likely a Passover pilgrim (Cyrene was in what is Libya today). Being forced to carry the cross no doubt felt like being "in the wrong place at the wrong time." But that bit of "bad luck" seems to have forever changed his life for the better.

- Mark named Simon's sons. That only made sense if his Christian readers knew them. In Romans 16:13 Paul greeted a Christian named "Rufus," likely Simon's son. (William Barclay also notes that in Acts 13:1 the Christian leaders in Antioch included "Simeon called Niger." Simeon is a form of Simon, and "Niger" a term used to mean persons from Africa. This may well have been

Simon of Cyrene.) As Pastor Hamilton concludes, “in that frightening and burdensome interruption of Good Friday, Simon’s life would forever be changed.” What interruptions or accidents have had positive results in your life? How do you watch for God in the unexpected?

## **The Crucifixion**

### **THURSDAY                      Mark 15:25-26**

Crosses didn’t tower against the skyline, Pastor Hamilton notes. They were only eight or nine feet high. Rome wanted people to see, clearly and close-up, what happened if they defied the Empire. So Mark didn’t need to offer any gory details about Jesus’ crucifixion. His readers knew exactly what crucifixions were like—and shuddered.

- John 12:23-24 quotes Jesus: “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.... unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds.” What do you think Jesus meant in saying the horror of a crucifixion would “glorify” him? What glory do you see in his death on a cross?
- In 1 Corinthians 1, the apostle Paul said the message of Christ crucified was “a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles.” In what ways are those words true of the way many people today react to the Christian message? What would you tell a friend who asked, “Why do you believe that stuff about Jesus’ death saving the world?”

## **Father, Forgive Them**

### **FRIDAY                              Matthew 27:38-44; Luke 23:34**

Jesus’ enemies had stalked him for most of three years. Their ugly glee at seeing him on a cross mirrors with eerie precision the words of Psalm 22:7-8. Without meaning to, they “preached” a spiritual truth: “He saved others, but he can’t save himself!” Even in extreme pain of body and mind, Jesus asked God to forgive his tormentors’ ignorance.

- Jesus taught, “Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.” How can you do this without “stuffing” valid feelings of pain and hurt? What enemy can you pray for today?
- In their seeming triumph, Jesus’ enemies chose an odd criticism. They admitted he’d saved others (which a bad man couldn’t have done). They couldn’t imagine having power, but not using it for yourself. When have hatred, fear or other emotions clouded your power to see a situation (or your own words and actions) clearly?

## **Behold Your Mother**

### **SATURDAY                         John 19:25-27**

A widow with no son or other male relative to protect her had few legal rights and little social status in Jesus’ day. Jesus had showed compassion to such a woman in Luke 7:11-15. He would do no less for his mother. He could not just give her back the son she had borne, as he did for the widow in Nain. So, suffering as he was, he provided for his mother by asking one of his most faithful followers to care for her.

- We often tell one another that we’ll “be there” for each other. In what ways was Mary “there” for Jesus during the years of his earthly life? What price did she have to pay in order to “be there” as he was crucified? How was Jesus “there” for Mary, in spite of the suffering he was going through? How confident are you that Jesus will be there for you when you face difficult times?

**Family Activity:** Jesus taught His followers to “Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.” Ask each family member to name one person who

sometimes makes life hard, and share what that person does to make life difficult. Discuss how Jesus wants us to forgive others, and also to love and pray for them. Ask family members how they feel about Jesus' teaching. Have your family choose a number between 1 and 9. On each day of the month that includes that number, spend time praying for those "enemies." Also on those days, share how you are finding those prayers answered. Remember to ask God and others for forgiveness when you are hurtful. Thank God for the gift of forgiveness through Jesus Christ.