

The Horrors of a Crucifixion (27:27-44)

Turn with me to [Matthew 27](#). Last January, a piece of Princess Diana's jewelry collection was sold at auction. The item was an [amethyst and diamond cross pendant \(this one\)](#). The purchaser was none other than Kim Kardashian. The final price was \$197,453. It is believed to be the highest price ever paid for jewelry in the shape of a cross.¹ But I'm not gonna lie: when I heard it was \$197K, I honestly felt like that was *low*, right? I figured it'd be higher than that. For somebody like Kim Kardashian, that's a *bargain*.

And truth told, Kim Kardashian is [not the only one](#) into cross jewelry lately. [At the Grammys last February](#), the following people were rocking one form of cross jewelry or another: [Sam Smith](#), [Kim Petras](#), [Lizzo](#) (who sported a Dolce & Gabbana *crystal cross*), [Machine Gun Kelly](#) (who now I'm pretty sure is just going by "the Machine," so 'the artist formerly known as Machine Gun Kelly), [Harry Styles](#), and [Lourdes](#)—who, for those not keeping up at home, is [Madonna's daughter](#). That's quite a few people wearing crosses at the Grammys.

If you hadn't noticed, [cross jewelry is having a bit of a moment](#) right now. I, to be honest, *hadn't* noticed—our Teaching Team pointed most of that out to me, so props to them. But cross jewelry is indeed having a moment. Now, I'm personally agnostic on the idea of wearing cross jewelry. I don't know if you've noticed this about me, but I'm not really much of a jewelry buff myself—so I don't have much skin in the game.

But at the same time, [the history](#) of the cross being worn as jewelry is somewhat *interesting* to me. Because, best we can tell, the cross didn't show up in in that format until around the second century—which was also around the time that at least *some* Christians in the world ceased to be persecuted by way of crucifixion. Cross jewelry didn't become *widespread* until the *fourth* century—which is when the emperor [Constantine](#) came to power, allegedly converted to Christianity, and subsequently *abolished* the cross as a form of capital punishment within the Roman empire. It was only *then* that the cross began to show up in volume on people's clothing and accessories.

And we could [look at that one of two ways](#). If we're giving Christians back then the benefit of the doubt, maybe they started wearing crosses because they didn't want to *forget* the centrality of the cross to their faith. They didn't want to *forget*, even if crucifixions weren't a thing anymore, that their savior died *on* a cross. That's one possible explanation. If we want to view it somewhat more *cynically* (and perhaps more

¹ According to jeweler Kristian Spofforth, as quoted [here](#).

realistically), it *could* be that many people felt more comfortable *wearing* the cross as an accessory once they didn't have to witness the brutal realities *of* the cross on a regular basis. (I think it's probably that one.)

But **either way you look at it, that was around the time that the cross became more of a *symbol* than it was a *reality***. And I've got mixed feelings about *that*. I love that the cross isn't being *forgotten*—my conviction is that the cross is quite possibly the most important thing to ever happen in the history of the world, so I love that it at least hasn't *fallen out* of the public consciousness. But at the same time, I do wonder if sometimes the *prevalence* of the cross on jewelry, and all over our church buildings, in our design and clothing and accessories—I wonder if all of that has almost *emptied* the cross of some of its profound, brutal nature. I wonder if all that stuff has actually *sanitized* our understanding of the cross in some unhelpful ways.

So today, I want to **see if we can *change*** some of that. This morning, we're going to take a long, hard *look* at the *cross* of Jesus. And the events leading *up* to it. Because I think there's some stuff *about* the cross that we need to see and understand. I think there are some things that we need so badly to witness, and grapple with, about what happened that day outside Jerusalem. And I say that because I think there's some stuff that we won't understand about *God*, and about *ourselves*, until we *understand* the cross. *But*, if we *can* wrap our minds around the *cross*, I think there's some stuff we might understand a little *better* as a result. So today, we're going to attempt *that*.

Now, just **as a heads up**, that does mean there's not going to be a *lot* of lightheartedness in the teaching this morning. That whole thing about Dolce & Gabbana crosses at the beginning is pretty much all you get—sorry 'bout that. But as I've just mentioned, the reality of the cross is honestly something that's pretty difficult to take lightly. There's not a whole lot of *lightheartedness* about it. So today, we're going to wade through it all to see what we can learn together. So I'm gonna *pray*, and then we'll dive in. **[Pray]**

--

So before we start working through the passage, let me just give you some quick context for **where we are in the story**. Jesus has just been arrested, and then given a false trial by the religious leaders of his day. *They* then in turn release him to the Roman government for execution. *Pilate*, who is the Roman *governor* in Jerusalem, has confirmed with the Jewish people that they do indeed want Jesus *crucified* (much to *Pilate's confusion*, since from *his* perspective, Jesus doesn't seem to have committed any crime). But as Colton mentioned last week, because Pilate wants to make sure he doesn't have a *riot* on his hands, and because he wants to keep his job, he reluctantly agrees to have Jesus executed by crucifixion.

That's where our passage today *begins*. So pick it up with me in chapter 27, starting in v. 27:

[27] Then the governor's *soldiers* took Jesus into the *Praetorium* and gathered the whole *company* of soldiers around him.

The *Praetorium* was sort of an external hallway in or near the governor's mansion. They take Jesus there, where he is surrounded by a "whole company" of soldiers. "Whole company" would generally indicate around 600 armed soldiers. Depending on what time of day and what time of year this happened, it could've been *less* than that. But it likely was at least a hundred. The point, it would seem, is that Jesus does not stand a chance against them, even if he had planned on resisting.

Roman soldiers also **generally did a lot of standing around** and patrolling on a daily basis—it was easy for them to get *bored*, which meant they were always looking for ways to pass the time. To "*help*" with that, they would often make *sport* of torturing the people who were headed for crucifixion—it was essentially *entertainment* for them. Which is exactly what happens here, v. 28:

[28] They *stripped* him (Jesus) and put a *scarlet robe* on him, [29] and then twisted together a crown of *thorns* and set it on his head. They put a *staff* in his right hand. Then they *knelt* in front of him and *mocked* him. "*Hail, king of the Jews!*" they said. [30] They spit on him, and took the staff and struck him on the head again and again.

So remember: **in last week's passage**, Pilate asked Jesus if Jesus was the "king of the Jews," to which Jesus more or less confirms that he *was*.² So *here*, the Roman soldiers are going to take that confirmation by Jesus and run with it, building a whole twisted mockery out of it. Everything they do is meant to ridicule the concept of a Jewish king. As a reminder, at this point in history, the Jewish people were under Roman occupation—so the idea that a conquered nation would have their own "king" was already a somewhat laughable idea, and here, they're going to demonstrate just how laughable they believe that idea to be. They're going to show the Jewish people exactly what they think a "king of the Jews" is deserving of.

So **first, they put a scarlet robe** on Jesus, much like a king would wear. But only after they've stripped him naked otherwise. All of that would obviously be shameful and embarrassing for anyone, but even more so in an honor/shame culture like *this* one.

² Matthew 27:11

Jesus is most likely either restrained with his hands tied behind his back, or tied to a post, while all of this is happening. They then fashion a *crown* made out of sharp thorns, and press it down on Jesus' head, ensuring that it pierces his flesh—likely causing streams of blood to stream down his face. They find or fashion a *staff*, and place it in his hand, as his king-like scepter. After doing all of this, they begin to kneel before him in mockery and say, sarcastically, “hail, king of the Jews.” No doubt laughing sadistically at the irony as they do all of this.

They then **begin to spit on** Jesus, a universal sign of disrespect. They take the **staff out** of his hand and swing it, repeatedly, at his head, like you would a baseball bat. Constant, repeated, blunt force trauma to the head. Before all of *this* happened, Jesus was **flogged**.³ This happened with what was called a “cat of nine tails.” There was a *handle*, that had a number of leather strips attached to the top of it. At the end of each leather strip was a piece of metal or bone. Those pieces had sharp edges on them; they were designed to grip the skin with every flick of the wrist, latch onto the person's skin from underneath, and then pull flesh out upon their return. The idea was to tenderize and expose the person's raw flesh so that everything happening to them from that point on hurt even more, as a result.

And *all* of this is **happening in a public setting** out in the city, where *crowds* have gathered to watch it. Some people are joining in with sadistic *cheers* at what is happening: other people are surely looking *on* and looking *away* in *horror*. But remember: a crowd of people have just been shouting, over and over again, “crucify him!”⁴ **At least a lot of them, for whatever reason, want this to happen to Jesus.** And now they're watching with *satisfaction* as it all plays out. Jesus is beaten, bloodied, bruised, and entirely *exposed* in front of the crowds who want him dead, all for no particular reason at all.

/ Now, as we read last week, **Pilate didn't even think Jesus was guilty** of the crimes he was accused of. **So you might wonder, why here** does he have his soldiers treat Jesus so *horrifically*? / And the answer is that it really had more to do with Rome's *general* posture towards *any* perceived *threat* to their empire. The Roman government wanted to be sure that the Jews (or any other people groups they had conquered) didn't get any ideas about facing off against Rome, overthrowing Rome—anything like that. They wanted to squash that thought in people's minds before it even became an *attempt*. **Anyone who claimed to be a king, other than Caesar, had to be dealt with swiftly.**

³ Matthew 27:26

⁴ Matthew 27:22-23

And remember: **in many ways, that is what people thought** the *Messiah* was going to do. He was going to be the *liberating* king of God's people. Which, to most people at that *time*, meant that he was probably going to *face off* against Roman oppression and overthrow the Roman government. So despite the fact that Jesus hasn't really done anything along those lines, and doesn't seem to be *interested* in doing that, he *has* repeatedly claimed to *be* the Messiah. So **the Romans see this as an opportunity to make an example out of Jesus in front of everyone. Even if Jesus isn't a threat, doing all this to him will help discourage future threats.** It's preemptive crowd control. The Romans want to show the Jewish people in Jerusalem what sort of treatment awaits *anyone* who claims to be *any* type of "liberating king."

So they **put him on a kingly robe**, they put a crown of thorns on his head, and a scepter in his hand—all while he stands naked, beaten and bloodied by violence and abuse. It's a way of the Roman soldiers saying to the Jewish people, "here is your liberating king. Here's what will happen to anyone who sets themselves *against* the mighty, Roman empire." Verse 31:

[31] After they had mocked him, they took off the robe and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him away to crucify him.

Now, **what's interesting** is that Matthew, the author, gives us a lot of specific detail about the things that happen *around* Jesus' crucifixion: things that happen before, after, and during it. Like, a *surprising* amount of detail. But in nearly *all* of the gospels, the authors don't give us much detail at all about the crucifixion *itself*. They just say, over and over again, "they *crucified* him."

And there are **a couple reasons for that lack of detail.** *One*, because **any first century Jew living in Jerusalem knew exactly what a crucifixion was.** As bizarre as it might seem to *us*, crucifixions were actually quite *common* in their world. It wouldn't be unusual at all to be walking through the city, or outside the city, and walk *by* a cross, or even a person *being* crucified. Romans set it up that way intentionally as a sort of constant *warning* to anyone who was thinking about trying anything. They had people crucified *publicly*, where people could see it. People *knew* what a crucifixion was; it didn't *have* to be explained to them.

But I also think we aren't given much detail about crucifixion...because the details were **fairly tough to stomach.** **Crucifixion was specifically engineered to be the most gruesome, painful, embarrassing, shameful way to die.** **Such that the Romans wouldn't even allow Roman citizens, no matter *what* they did, to be crucified. It was**

thought that it was too shameful of a death for even the *worst* Roman citizen to die. So they reserved crucifixion for *foreigners*, such as Jesus.

So I want to just give you a little background on what crucifixion was. And my point here isn't to be gratuitous; it's simply to make us familiar with that Matthew's audience would've already *been* familiar with. // Crucifixion **originated with the Persian** empire, before the Romans. With *them*, it was basically *impalement*. A person would be impaled by a rod or wooden spike in the ground and then left out in the conditions to eventually die. **The Romans were fans** of that idea—but they felt like the *death* happened too *fast* that way. The person being executed didn't have to *suffer* enough. The Romans wanted to draw the punishment out and have it take as long as *possible*, and as much *pain* as possible, before the person died. So they *borrowed* the method from the Persians and *tweaked* it a little.

For the Romans' approach, there were generally *two* wooden beams. One was called a *stipe*, which was the pole or beam set permanently in the ground. There was also a *crossbar*, that was generally carried *with* the person being crucified to the site of the execution. Which is what Jesus is carrying when we read *this* from v. 32:

[32] As they were going out, they met a man from Cyrene, named Simon, and they forced him to carry the cross.

Now again: why do we get **this particular detail?** We don't know anything about this guy, he doesn't come up at all in any of the accounts *following* this moment—so why do we need to know that he carried Jesus' cross? Partly, I think, it's **so that we understand Matthew is describing a historical event here**. This isn't a made-up story, it's not a *legend*, it's not a metaphor about suffering—it is a verified, historical event. **Historians today virtually all agree that a guy named Jesus from Nazareth existed, and that he was crucified. They can't agree on much of anything else when it comes to Jesus, but they do all agree there.** That much seems virtually indisputable from a historical standpoint. And that's likely *one* reason we get this detail in the story: Matthew is saying there was a guy from Cyrene, who carried Jesus' cross.

But I think **literarily, Matthew has another reason** for including this detail. He's trying to *remind* us of something. At this point in the story, all of Jesus' disciples have abandoned him. The *same* disciples whom Jesus told, *repeatedly*, "if anyone wants to be my disciple, they must pick up their cross, and follow me."⁵ Despite that instruction, all of *them*, in the moment when Jesus needed someone to carry a cross, are nowhere to be

⁵ Matthew 10:38, Matthew 16:24, Luke 9:23; Luke 14:27, et al.

found. Such that the soldiers have to pick a random man from the crowd to carry Jesus' cross instead. **I think this is Matthew's way of reminding us just how abandoned Jesus had been at this point in his life. Such that a total stranger is doing the thing his disciples *should've* been present to do.** How *tragic* to be abandoned in the moment of your greatest need. Verse 33:

[33] They came to a place called *Golgotha* (which means "the place of the skull").

There at Golgotha, there were likely **several of the large vertical poles** already in the ground. So once the crossbar *Simon* carried was mounted to the pole in the *ground*, Jesus' body would be nailed *to* the cross with the equivalent of railroad spikes, generally driven through the hands and the feet, some of the most sensitive nerve endings in the body.

Contrary to some depictions, **crosses were generally close to eye level**—they weren't *elevated*, way up in the air. The idea was that people walking by would be able to *look* at you at eye level, and you would be able to *see them* at eye level, as you hung there, dying. You were close enough to the ground that it felt within reach for relief, but with literally no way for you to reach it. The nails would hold you to the cross as you fought to breathe. In fact, the most common cause of death at a crucifixion was either *asphyxiation* (essentially, slowly suffocating), or cardiac arrest (a heart attack from the amount of stress and physical trauma your body went through). Which partially explains the next line, v. 34:

[34] There they offered Jesus *wine* to drink, mixed with *gall*; but after tasting it, he refused to drink it.

Because of the unbelievable amount of pain people would have to endure, sometimes, **in a rare moment of compassion**, Roman soldiers would offer them "wine mixed with gall." The alcohol, combined with the herbs in it, would act as a mild sedative—giving the person being crucified at least a small amount of relief from the pain. Jesus, who is likely parched at this point from everything he's been through, *tastes* the wine, but refuses to drink it once he realizes what it is. Jesus, as bad a shape as he's in, has no desire to numb himself or escape from what he is enduring on the cross.

[35] When they had crucified him, they divided up his clothes by casting lots (a fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy)⁶. **[36] And sitting down, they kept watch over him there.**

⁶ Psalm 22:18

Part of **the job of the Roman soldiers** was to make sure nobody came to get Jesus down, that no one offered him relief, and that no one *stole* the body once he died. Their other job was to ensure that he was in fact *dead* before *they* took his body down off the cross to be buried—which is precisely what they do with *Jesus’* body.⁷ But for now, they just sit down and keep watch as Jesus slowly, painfully dies in front of them. Verse 37:

[37] Above his head they placed the written charge against him: this is Jesus, the king of the Jews.

Generally, there was **a placard of sorts** above the person’s head that indicated what particular crime they were being crucified *for*. In *Jesus’* case, it’s simply a sarcastic inscription calling him the “king of the Jews.” Matthew calls *attention* to this, however, because even though it’s meant to *mock* Jesus, it’s ironically a true statement: he *was* and *is* the king of the Jews. In fact, according to the Scriptures, he is king of the entire *world*. / But *here*, that king hangs, moments from death, on a Roman cross. Verse 38:

[38] Two rebels were crucified with him, one on his right and one on his left. (This would make sense, logically, because crucifixion was so common. It was especially common for “rebels”—those who threatened or attempted rebellions against Rome. *That* day, there was a rebel to Jesus’ *right*, and another to his *left*. Verse 39...) **[39] Those who passed by hurled insults at him, shaking their heads [40] and saying, “You who are going to destroy the temple and build it in three days, save yourself! Come down from the cross, if you are the Son of God!” [41] In the same way the chief priests, the teachers of the law and the elders mocked him. [42] “He saved others,” they said, “but he can’t save himself! He’s the king of Israel! Let him come down now from the cross, and we will believe in him. [43] He trusts in God. Let God rescue him now if he wants him, for he said, ‘I am the Son of God.’” [44] In the same way the rebels who were crucified with him also heaped insults on him.**

So **nearly everyone** that day mocks and insults and ridicules Jesus as he dies. Now, notice that in everything they say, there is **an assumption being made**. The assumption goes something like this: **if Jesus truly is who he claims to be—if he’s the “son of God”—then surely he could miraculously get himself down from the cross.** If he’s the healer, the *savior*, *surely* he can figure out a way to save *himself*. And if he *can’t* do that, at least in their minds, there’s no way he is truly who he claims to be. And their *logic*, at least on the surface, makes sense.

⁷ See John 19:32-33

But here's **what they're all failing to understand**. **The death he is currently dying is the means by which he saves**. The cross is the *proof* that he *is* the son of God. Their words are meant sarcastically, but some of them are *exactly true*: because Jesus desires to save others, he *can't* save himself. In other words, to take himself off of the cross would mean Jesus *not* saving. Would mean him *not* healing. So does Jesus have the *ability* to get down off the cross? *Sure* he does. He's going to come back from the *dead* in a few days. **He can stop all of this...but he won't**. Because the cross was the whole point. The cross was where his saving, healing, and restoring would be made possible. Last week, Colton brought up the passage in **Isaiah 53** that actually clues us in to how all of this works. There, it says it this way:

Surely he took up our pain and bore our suffering, yet we considered him punished by God, stricken by him, and afflicted. But 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. We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to our own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.⁸

So this is the prophet Isaiah, **about 700 years before Jesus' crucifixion**, describing what the cross would be all about. *Why* it happened the way it did. And the way he explains it is that all of the pain, suffering, torment, and ultimately, *death*, Jesus experienced on the cross was actually *for* us. It was on our behalf. Or to put it even more directly, it was *because* of us. Specifically, because of our sin. Isaiah says *he* was pierced for *our* transgressions, *he* was crushed for *our* iniquities. And then finally, that the Lord has "laid on him the *iniquity* of us all." **So let me see if I can unpack this briefly.**

One of the things the Scriptures teach, from beginning to end, is that **sin always has consequences**. *Sin*—essentially, *rejecting* God and choosing other things instead of him—doing *that* always has consequences. The way the book of Romans says it is that the "wages of sin is *death*."⁹ The ultimate consequence of sin is *death*. Both *literal* death (as in death exists because sin entered the human story), but also *figurative* death. Because you and I sin, we are constantly unleashing *death* into our world. In the famous words of Proverbs, "**there is a way that seems right to a man but its end is the way to death.**"¹⁰ When we live the way we want to live, without regard to the wisdom of God via the Scriptures, what we do is *create death*, as a direct result.

⁸ Isaiah 53:4-6

⁹ Romans 6:23

¹⁰ Proverbs 14:12; Proverbs 16:25

Our **selfishness creates death**. Our *pride* and our *self-righteousness* create death. Our *sexual sin* creates death. Our *greed* and *materialism* create death. Our *bitterness* and *resentment* create death. *Hate* in all its forms—*sexism, racism, you name it*—creates death. *Hyper-individualism* in our relationships with others creates death. Our *objectification* and *dehumanization* of other people creates death. And the list goes on for days. **When we choose sin—in any and all of its forms—the consequences of that is unleashing death into our world. Our world is the terrible way that it is because of the death that we’ve collectively released into it.** It’s *that way, because* of us.

And I fully *realize* that most of us don’t **think our sin is that bad**. Short of the Holy Spirit convicting us and showing us, we don’t inherently think it’s that big of a deal. That’s at least in *part* because of what sin *does* in us: it causes us to downplay the *reality* of our *sinfulness*. And the *severity* of our *sinfulness*. It causes us to see ourselves inaccurately, as better than we actually are. More *innocent* than we actually are. We don’t *think* our sin really hurts that many people or causes that many negative consequences. *We don’t think* we’re responsible for the brokenness in our world. **But as the saying goes, “no singular raindrop ever feels responsible for the flood.”** Make no mistake about it: sin—*all* sin—unleashes death on God’s good world.

So listen to me: **what we deserve is for God to simply allow that death to run its natural course.** To swallow us up. We *deserve* to experience the full consequences of our sin. We *deserve* to *live* in a world that is chock full of *death*—the death we created. And what we’re witnessing in the cross of Jesus—and the moments leading up to it—is the cumulative effects of that death. We’re witnessing both the collective *consequences* of our sin, and the righteous *anger* of God *towards* our sin. [...] **In the cross of Jesus, we get a long, hard look at all of that.**

Except in the cross, all of that doesn’t pile up on *us*; it gets piled on *Jesus*. “Surely,” Isaiah says, “he took up *our* pain, and bore *our* suffering.” “...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.” Do you see it? **The cross of Jesus is the moment when God considered what we deserved, and gave us something better.** The cross is when Jesus chose to stand in the way of the *death* we created. Where he chose to intercept what you and I unleashed into the world, instead of us. He considered the full *consequences* of a world that *chose* death—and then chose to take that death into himself.

The reason that Jesus’ crucifixion (and the events leading up to it) **were so horrific**, is because it was our horror he was taking onto himself. It was our sin, our transgressions,

our iniquities, and our death. And not just yours and mine *individually*—but the whole *world's*. Turns out when a world's worth of rebellion is gathered and bottled up together—and then poured out—it does indeed look pretty horrific. But Jesus took all of *our* horror, onto himself. He who knew no sin, *became sin* for us, that *we* might become the righteousness of God.¹¹

Just a little later in Isaiah 53, there's this line where it says that this suffering servant (Jesus) was “numbered among the transgressors.”¹² He was *numbered among the transgressors*—what does that mean, exactly? Well, once we read this story, we realize that at least part of that is meant *literally*—it means that Jesus was literally hung on a cross between two rebels, as a rebel *himself*—he was “numbered among the transgressors.” Part of how the Jewish leaders were able to convince the Romans to crucify Jesus was by insisting that he was claiming to be a rival king. So they *hung Jesus as if he was a rebel*, between two other rebels. He was “numbered among the transgressors.” ‘Here hangs Jesus, the king of the Jews.’ Jesus was tried, beaten, mocked, and killed as a *transgressor; a rebel*.

But at the same time, the *real* reason he died, was to save rebels. Not rebels against Caesar—but rebels against the one *true* king: against God himself. *And that's us: we're the rebels. We're the criminals. We're the ones who took from God life and breath and goodness and truth and beauty...and chose to make it all about us. We turned it all inwards, as if we were the kings and queens. We rejected God's rule, God's reign—despite how good and gracious it was—and insisted that life would be better if we ruled. If we reigned. And because we've done all of that, we've made an absolute mess of the place.*

But *the cross is where* God took all of that mess, and laid it on Jesus. God laid on *him*, the iniquity of us all. He was numbered *among* the transgressors. And **because he was numbered among the transgressors, you and I can be numbered among the righteous.** Among the *accepted*, the *forgiven*, the *restored*—the sons and daughters of the one true king. That's what the horrors of the crucifixion were all about: they were about making *that* possible.

So my final question for you this morning ~~as the band comes up~~, as we close, is this: **where do you want to be numbered?** Where *are* you numbered this morning? Are you numbered among the transgressors? Are you numbered among the people who want to insist that life is all about them? That *they're* the kings and queens, that *they're* the

¹¹ 2 Corinthians 5:21

¹² Isaiah 53:12

masters of their fate, the controllers of their own destiny? Are you numbered among those who continue to wreak havoc on themselves, and others, and our world? Is that where you want to be numbered?

Or, do you want to be numbered among the *righteous*? Are you numbered among those who say “I’m no good as a king. I’m no good as the one that gets to call all the shots, because all I do is unleash *death* when I do that. So I’m giving up, I’m bailing on running my *own* kingdom—and I’m instead putting myself under the gracious rule of the one *true* king. I want *his* death to count for *me*. I want *his* death to cover *mine*. I want his cross to stand in the way of the death I’ve created, and I want to receive his *life* instead.” I don’t know about you, but *that’s* where *I* want to be numbered.

So this morning, all of us who want to be numbered *there* are going to **go to the tables** and participate in the bread and the cup. Those two things are the symbols God gave us to remember the moment when *Jesus* was “numbered among the transgressors.” To remember when he *became* sin for us, so that we might become the *righteousness* of God. The apostle Paul actually says that every time we eat of this bread and drink of this cup, we “proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.” So this morning, we’ll gather around the table to do just that. If you’re a follower of Jesus, you’re invited to participate. If you’re *not* a follower of Jesus, but *want* to be, there are people on our Prayer Team up front that would love to walk you through that.

But this morning, we’re all going to celebrate the death of Jesus, and all that it meant, for us.

Let’s pray.