

Day 35 – 30th Mar 2015

马太福音 Matthew 27:38-44

Our Lord Jesus was made a mockery of on the cross that fateful day. Matthew does not draw a distinction between Jewish mockers from the Gentile mockers. In fact, the gentile Roman soldiers were the most vicious of all the mockers of Jesus in the narrative. Matthew does not portray the Jews negatively as “Jesus killers” or a totally positive view of the Gentiles, although such views were unfortunately prevalent in church history.

Matthew’s gospel tells us “the robbers who were crucified with him also reviled him in the same way.” To revile someone is to use abusive language against that person, or to ridicule someone vehemently. The two thieves insulted Jesus just as the crowd did. Some of you may be surprised, as this seems like a different picture of the two thieves we often hear about in church. The account of the two thieves as described in Matthew is relatively new to most Christians as the more famous one recorded in Luke often overshadows it. Matthew’s account is almost identical to the version in Mark 15:27-32. Luke’s account was uniquely different. Why are there two seemingly contrasting accounts of the two thieves? Whose account is more accurate? One commentator (Michael J. Wilkins) believes that Luke continues where Mark and Matthew leaves off. He believes that at the start, both thieves, together with the crowd, hurled insults and ridiculed Jesus from the cross. But soon after, one of them realizes his own failings and acknowledges Jesus’ innocence instead. This reformed bandit exhibits a form of repentance that Jesus declares that he will be with him in paradise that very day. The word “today” may not necessarily mean “that very day”. Instead, it is likely to mean “this day and age”.

The thieves reminds us of the promise proposed by the mother of James and John (the sons of Zebedee), who had asked Jesus to promise that her sons would sit on Jesus’ right and left when they are in his kingdom. Matt 20:22 Jesus answered, “You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I am to drink?” They said to him, “We are able.” 23He said to them, “You will drink my cup, but to sit at my right hand and at my left is not mine to grant, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared by my Father.”

我主耶稣在生命最后一刻仍被讥讽。马太并没有将犹太讥讽者和外邦讥讽者区分开来。事实上，在耶稣受难的记述中，外邦罗马兵丁是最恶毒的嘲弄者。马太并没有将犹太人描绘成“耶稣杀手”，也没有将外邦人刻画成完全正面的形象，虽然这种观点很不幸地在教会历史上曾经流行一时。

马太福音告诉我们“那和他同钉的强盗也是這樣的譏誚他”。谩骂是用侮辱的言语或猛烈的奚落攻击别人。那两个盗贼同众人所做的一样侮辱耶稣。有些人可能会感到奇怪，因为这同我们在教会中经常听到的是一幅不同的图像。马太福音对这两个盗贼的描述对多数基督徒来说是相对新颖的。因为大家对于路加的描述更加熟悉。马太的描述同马可福音 15 章 27-32 节的描述几乎相同。路加的描述则与其不同。那么为什么会有两种看似不同的对两个盗贼的描述？那一种描述更准确？一位解经家(Michael J. Wilkins)认为路加的描述是马可和马太所做描述的进一步延伸。他认为起初两个盗贼同众人一起在十字架上诅咒讥讽耶稣，但不久其中一个盗贼认识到自己的堕落，反而承认耶稣是无辜的。这一被感化的强盗表现出了一种悔改，使得耶稣宣告今天他就要和耶稣同在乐园了。“今天”在此不仅仅代表今日，而可能是指“今世”。

这两个在十字架上被钉死的强盗，使我们想起雅各和约翰（西庇太的儿子）的母亲对耶稣的请求，她要求耶稣承诺在主的国度里她的两个儿子分坐在耶稣的左右。马太福音 20 章 22 节：耶稣回答说：“你们不知道所求的是什么。我将要喝的杯，你们能喝吗？”他们说：“我们能。”²³ 耶稣说：“我所喝的杯，你们必要喝；只是坐在我的左右，不是我可以赐的，乃是我父为谁预备的，就赐给谁。”

Day 36 – 31st Mar 2015

马太福音 Matthew 27:38-44

Here at the cross, the two thieves were not sitting next to Jesus, but were crucified with him, one on his right and the other on his left. To call them thieves is really a misnomer. They were actually freedom fighters who stole from the rich to finance their political ambition and revolution. They were crucified for their political crime against the Roman Empire. The two thieves were more like revolutionaries, than robbers. Jesus, falsely accused of political crimes, was crucified on the cross, together with the two freedom fighters like rebels. But Jesus was a different kind of rebel. He fights against the sins of this world. "Many of us crucify ourselves between two thieves - regret for the past and fear of the future." Fulton Oursler

We wish we can change the past but at the same time, we fear changes in the future. We are never contented. Regrets and Fears are robbing us of our Present today. Sometimes, our past makes a mockery of our present. Maybe a failure in school, in life, in love, at work, has hindered our journey today. We have heard stories about how some of these past failures make us afraid to take the new steps in faith today. Sometimes, we question God's presence when He seems to be silent and absent in our past. Just like the crowd who did not understand that Jesus' failure on the cross was really God's success plan for the world, we fail to understand God's way is higher than our ways.

Like us, Jesus suffered much mockery and insult. Christians, somehow, are often made mockery of in this world. To the world, Jesus was a fool. To many, Christians are fools. (See 1 Corinthians 1:18-31) The Christian faith seems more and more ludicrous and untenable in today's age of science and atheism. What are we to do? Let us learn to be "Fools for God"! Not fools without understanding, but fools with a firm knowledge of our Lord and Savior. Let us be fools who seek God with all our hearts, our minds, and our soul. Fools who live for others and not for ourselves. Fools who would take up our own cross, sharing in the shame and suffering of Jesus. The "defeated" Jesus on the cross is the same Jesus who is "victorious" in his resurrection three days later. The One who is mocked on Good Friday will be vindicated on Easter Sunday.

在这十字架上的两个强盗，不是分坐耶稣左右，而是在耶稣左右被钉死在十字架上。事实上，他们（可谓）是自由斗士，打劫富人以资他们的政治野心和革命理想。他们是以对抗罗马皇帝的罪名被处死在十字架上。这两个强盗与其说是劫匪，其实更像是革命者。耶稣被恶意地指控为政治罪，与两个像是反叛者的自由斗士一道被钉死在十字架上。然而，耶稣是不同的反叛者，他反抗这个世界的罪恶。

富尔顿·奥斯勒说：“我们许多人也被钉死在两个强盗中间，他们两位就是“懊悔过去”和“惧怕未来”。我们希望可以改变过去，同时我们又害怕将来的变化。我们无法满足于现有，而‘懊悔’与‘恐惧’吞噬了我们。有时，我们的过往经历成为我们现今境况的嘲弄。或许是从前在学业，生活，爱情，工作上的失败经历阻碍了我们今天的前程。我们听到许多事例，由于过去的失败，导致我们今天不敢在信仰上前行。有时，当神好像沉默不语，或在我们过往生命中缺失的时候，我们就会质疑神自己的存在。就如同众人不明白上帝在十字架上的失败，其实是拯救世界的成功计划一样，我们也不明白上帝的道路（方式）高过我们的道路（方式）。

同我们一样，耶稣也受到嘲弄和侮辱的伤害。其实基督徒常常被世人取笑。对世界而言，耶稣是愚拙的。对许多人而言，基督徒是愚拙的。（林前 1：18 - 31）在当今科学和无神论的时代，基督徒的信仰愈发显得可笑和不可理喻。我们该如何做？让我们学做“神的愚拙人”！我们不做无知的愚拙人，乃是秉承我神救主坚定信仰的愚拙人。让我们成为全身心灵追求主的愚拙人。为他人而不是为自己而活的愚拙人。成为背起我们自己的十字架，与耶稣同受屈辱的愚拙人。在十字架上“失败”的耶稣，也就是三天之后从死里复活的得胜者。在受难日当天受嘲弄的耶稣，也必在复活主日向世人显明他的伟大。

Day 37 – 1st Apr 2015

马太福音 Matthew 27:45-56

Lent is about the suffering of Jesus. If we follow the accounts in the Gospels, we will observe that the majority of reasons for His death on the cross were caused by Jesus Himself through the words He spoke, the identity He claimed and the things He did. Jesus would not have been nailed on the cross if He did not say what He said and if He did not insist on his unique identity. Therefore as rational people, we have to go back to the reality of the matter to see why Jesus was crucified.

In Matthew 27:43: “for he said, ‘I am the Son of God’.” In Matthew 27:40: “You who are going to destroy the temple and build it in three days”. In verse 29, He admitted to be the King of Jews and was mocked by the soldiers. In fact, throughout His life, those who had short encounters with Him all discovered that He was different. Such an evaluation was not made by Jesus Himself, but by Pilate who sentenced Him to death and Pilate’s wife. In Mathew 27:19 and 27:24, Pilate said: I am innocent of this man’s blood... it is your responsibility!” Jesus Himself also continuously insisted on His unique identity in front of the chief priests and elders. In Matthew 27:11: “Jesus stood before the governor, and the governor asked him, ‘Are you the king of the Jews?’ ‘You have said so,’ Jesus replied.” And before that, in Matthew 26:64: Jesus revealed yet another unique identity of his: “you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven.” After hearing these words, the chief priests and elders were convinced they could convict Jesus without the need for witnesses.

With these words – the identity that was claimed, the father and son relationship between Jesus and the God of the Jews, the Messiah who was anointed by God and would be king of the Jews, the descendant of David, the righteous man without a single flaw in the eyes of the Gentiles, who at the same time would restore the temple for the Israelites – Jesus was crucified for His unique identity and all that He would carry out. Jesus performed a lot of miracles but the Jews did not worship Him as God because of these miracles, nor did they deny what He did. On the contrary, they questioned Jesus on the origins of the source of His power, and when Jesus hinted at the answer, they accused Him of casting out demons using power granted by the demon king. But they never denied the power that was demonstrated by Jesus.

大斋节是关于耶稣的受难，如果我们根据福音书的呈现法，将会有一个观察，耶稣之所以被挂在十字架上，是因为他说的话，坚持自己的身份，做了某些事情引发情绪，成为导火线。如果没有所发生的事件和宣认，耶稣不会被钉在十字架上。所以作为一个有理性的人，我们要回到事实本身看到主耶稣被钉死前后的缘由。

因为他曾说‘我是神的儿子’ (27:43)。因为他说可以把圣殿拆毁，三天重新建立起来(27:40)。他还自认是犹太人的王(27:29)，兵丁以此取笑他。他一生里接触过他的人都发现他的独特，这评论来自是判他死刑的彼拉多和彼拉多的妻子 (27:19)，彼拉多说“流这义人的血，罪不在我，你们承担吧！”(27:24) 而主耶稣在领袖面前，坚持他特殊的身份：耶稣站在巡抚面前，巡抚问他“你是犹太人的王吗？”耶稣回答“你说的是” (27:11)。耶稣还透露另一个特殊身份“你们要看见人子坐在全能者的右边，驾着天上的云降临”(26:64)，宗教领袖们听见就说不需要证人就可定他的罪。

耶稣的宣认里指出，他与上帝有父子的关系，他是上帝所膏的弥赛亚，要来做犹太人的王，他是大卫的子孙。在外邦人眼里他是一个没有过失的义人。他还要为犹太人重建圣殿。耶稣为着他要做的事、以及他的特殊身份而被钉死。耶稣行过许多神迹奇事，没有因此被犹太人当成神来膜拜。但犹太人没有否定他做的事，反倒问能力的来源；当耶稣给予暗示时，他们却说耶稣是靠鬼王的能力赶鬼。注意：他们未曾否定耶稣彰显出来的能力。

Day 38 – 2nd Apr 2015

马太福音 Matthew 27:45-56

Some people believe in miracles. They will believe if you show them miracles. However, even from the first century witnesses, the miracles performed by Jesus resulted in more who rejected Him. His disciples were by His side and they experienced these miracles but they did not understand why Jesus did not go a step further after performing the miracles. Here we have this man who had the power to perform miracles, who insisted that he held a different identity, but did not get any returns from the people and even got crucified.

There have been people who felt that the accounts of Jesus have been fabricated by those who believe in Him. In the face of such an accusation, let us be reminded that Jesus did not benefit from His work. In the end, Jesus was rejected by the people and crucified. If this were a fabrication, a better ending would have been created and not one filled with trial and punishment.

There are some who feel that people during Jesus' time were unscientific and worshipped gods easily, hence they believed that Jesus was God. If we review the reality recorded in the bible, this is what we find: If the words spoken by Jesus were not believable, then even if He could perform miracles, it would not be enough for people to accept Him as God and worship Him. On one hand, it was easy to believe in gods in those times as such beliefs were prevalent then and people even believed in many gods. The Romans then even worshipped their living emperor as a god. On the other hand, the Jews also believed there was a god, but Jesus was unable to benefit from an environment of such beliefs through the things He did and the identity He claimed. He was rejected and died because of these.

Conclusion: The bible gives us a true account of things. To the Jews, it was impossible to accept this Jesus who spoke nonsense. It was impossible to accept him, even if unique phenomena occurred with him, and in the end he was rejected. I hope this truth leads you to rethink and realise that Jesus was not fabricated by the church. Things are not that simple. On the contrary, it shows us something more paradoxical. The more He claimed to be different, the more it resulted in rejection and crucifixion.

有些人信神迹，说如果有神迹，他们就信。从第一世纪的见证人，我们认识到耶稣行神迹非但没有让他加分，反而遭到排斥。跟随他的门徒看见、经历过这些神迹，只是他们不明白为何耶稣能行神迹，却没有进一步的诉求。然后这个有能力行神迹的，又坚持他的某些身份，最终在人群中没有得到拥戴，反而被钉死。

曾经有人认为耶稣的记载，是信耶稣的人所捏造出来的。面对这样的攻击，让我们来澄清，耶稣没有从他的服事得任何好处，到头来耶稣反而是被众人弃绝、被钉。要编故事，也应该编一个好一些的结局，而不是一个经历审讯和悲惨行刑的故事。

有些人认为当时的人不科学，所以容易拜神，也就信了耶稣是神。让我们来检验圣经提供我们真实的记录。我们发现的是：如果耶稣说的话不可信，那么就算他能够行神奇的事，这也不足以让人接受他是神，然后来拜他。一方面，当时人们信有神的确不是很困难的事。其实当时全部人都信有神，也可能信很多位的神。尤其是罗马人连活的皇帝都当着神来拜。这样的事情都做得出来，都能接受。另一方面，犹太人虽也是信有神的，但是耶稣在他们那里竟然得不到一点好处。尤其他所做出来的事和他所说的特殊身份，却因着这一些被拒绝被钉死。

结论是：圣经给我们一个很真实的记录。对犹太人，耶稣的胡说八道不能接受。纵然真的有很特殊的现象在他身上发生，就是不能接受，而被拒绝。这样的事实该让你重新考虑，看到耶稣绝不是教会捏造出来的事。没那么简单。反而这里让我们看到非常矛盾的事。当他越讲他是不凡的身份时候，他的结局就是被拒绝，被钉死。

Day 39 – 3rd Apr 2015

马太福音 Matthew 27:45-56

While on the cross Jesus cried out: “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” Why did Jesus cry out? The reason is simple – because He was abandoned by God. These words were taken from Psalms 22, and although He only used the first phrase, we believe He applied the whole Psalm on Himself. As a God-fearing Jew, we can also believe Jesus also applied Psalms 150 on Himself. The word “forsaken” appears a few times in the book of Psalms. Psalms 74 talks about God forsaking his people, Psalms 78 talks about God forsaking his temple, Psalms 89 talks about God forsaking his anointed one, Psalms 22 and 27 talk about God forsaking the righteous. The psalmist in Psalms 130 and 138 pleads with God not to abandon his creation. In this cry from Jesus, what does being forsaken mean? Let’s first see how we express God’s presence in our daily lives. When we talk about God with us, there is peace in our hearts and there is a feeling of being close to God. However, in the Old Testament, when there is mention of God with his people, it is not about a person’s feelings, rather it is about the immediate effect brought about by God’s presence. In Psalms 22, why did the Psalmist cry out “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” It was because he was suffering, persecuted and wronged, and this plight did not stop or disappear, so he talked about God forsaking him because his situation would be different if God was with him. After God told Moses that he would be with him, Moses’ actions and deeds were changed. In the wilderness after God told his people that he would be with them, it did not mean that they would be at peace at all times in the desert, rather that God would handle for them all the dangers that they would face in the desert. Therefore when Jesus was crucified, bystanders hurled insults at Him: “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!” Truly, God has forsaken Him! God did not lift a finger nor had any reaction, and this is the reality. Matthew wanted his readers to accept this reality.

在十字架上的时候，耶稣大声呼喊“我的上帝，我的上帝，为什么离弃我？！”（27:46）为什么耶稣要这样呼喊？理由很简单，因为他被上帝遗弃。他这句话是引用诗篇 22 篇，虽然他只引用 22:1，但是我们相信他就如一般犹太人，背第一句表明背诵全篇，并且应用在自己身上。作为一个敬虔的犹太人，我们可以相信他把诗篇 150 篇都用在他身上。从诗篇来讲“离弃”：74 篇讲上帝离弃他的百姓。78 篇上帝离弃他的圣所。89 篇上帝离弃他的受膏者。22 篇与 27 篇讲上帝离弃义人。130 篇和 138 篇诗人请上帝不要离弃他所造的。

什么叫‘离弃’？让我们先看我们平日怎么表达神同在。当我们讲‘上帝与我同在’，往往是讲心里感到很平安，感觉与主很亲密。但是在旧约里讲‘上帝与人同在’的时候，不是表达那个人心里的感受，他们在意的是神同在带来即刻的果效。诗篇 22 篇诗人表达“我的上帝，我的上帝，为什么离弃我！”因为他在受苦、受逼迫、有委屈，而情况继续存在，没有消失。所以他说上帝离弃他，因为他认为如果上帝与他同在，他的情况是会改变的！

当上帝告诉摩西一定会与他同在，摩西接下来的行事就不一样。当上帝跟在旷野的百姓同在，这不是说他们在旷野每天心灵平安，而是指生活在旷野所面对的种种危险，都有上帝替他们担当与保护。所以主耶稣被钉在十字架上，旁人会讽刺说“你不是上帝的儿子吗？你不是那三天把圣殿建起来的吗？为什么现在连三根钉都胜不过？”真的，上帝离弃他了！神不动员天使天军来保护他，免他受这个苦，事实确是如此。马太很显然是刻意表达，并要读者接受这个事实。

Day 40 – 4th Apr 2015

马太福音 Matthew 27:45-56

What special meaning does Jesus' cry hold? It was the cry of someone who was dying, doesn't it show His weakness? Why did Matthew record Jesus' cry in the Gospel? At the beginning of the Gospel of Matthew, it is recorded that Jesus is also called Emmanuel, which means God with us. When is God with us? Throughout our lives, the scariest experiences would be when we have grievances, and the ultimate blow is death. Can this God really be with us? If Jesus really used his power to triumph over the situation by coming down from the cross as suggested by the soldiers, then we would not be able to say that Jesus understands the weakness of man. And in the weakest and most helpless stages of humanity, we would not be able to say with confidence that God is with us. We can only wait in faith that God would help us with his power. We can only persevere in faith, yet how many of us have such an abundant amount of faith?

If this were the case, many of us would be without hope. However, we find that things did not happen this way. Jesus cried out: "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" He truly experienced the abandonment and rejection suffered by man. From then on, we can boldly tell those who are suffering in similar situations that "God is with you!" Regardless of whether your faith is sufficient, the fact is that God is already with you. Jesus entered the direst state of rejection because of us, so that we know that God truly can enter into the weakest, most vulnerable and darkest areas of humanity and even into death; three days later He resurrected and become the most secure promise for us.

We are thankful to Jesus. With His last breath, the words He spoke have such meaning for us. Today, all those who are wronged or persecuted, who cry out to the heavens "what do I do?" have hope from Jesus' cry. We know that we are not helpless or devastated, because we know that Jesus is already with us through our weakest and hardest moments.

耶稣的呼喊有什么特别意义？一个即将死去的人的呼喊，不就是代表了他的脆弱吗？为什么马太要把耶稣的呼喊写下，留在福音书里？首先让我们记得马太福音第一章说到耶稣的名字叫‘以马内利’，意思是上帝与人同在。人一生当中，最不甘心的经历就是委屈与冤屈，最凄惨的就是冤屈到死。如果耶稣真的照兵丁的话说“如果你是上帝的儿子，就从十字架下来吧”，然后耶稣真的自我解救，那么我们从此不敢放胆的说“上帝是能够知道人最脆弱的部分”，也没有把握说上帝在人最脆弱无助的时候跟人同在。我们充其量只能叫人用信心等候，或者上帝以他的大能来帮助你。然后这个人需要能坚持下去。但，试问我们有多少人能有这么大的信心？

可是耶稣呼喊“我的上帝，我的上帝，为什么离弃我！”他真的进入跟人一样感受到被遗弃，被抛弃拒绝。从此以后，我们向任何进入这种境况的人可以毫不犹豫的说“上帝与你同在！”哪怕你信心不够，事实摆明上帝已经与你同在。为了我们的缘故，耶稣进入最恶劣、被弃绝的情景，从此我们知道上帝真的能进入人性最软弱、败坏、黑暗的一切，甚至也进入死，三天后他活过来，成为真正扎实的盼望。

感谢耶稣，主耶稣连最后一口气所说的话都对我们那么有意义。今天凡是受委屈、受逼迫、望着天喊‘怎么办？’的人，都可以从耶稣的呼喊那里看到希望，因为他们不是超级绝望无助的---在他们生命最脆弱与艰难的时候，上帝已经同在了。