

2009

Campbell Chapel Free
Will Baptist Church

Bob Bradley

Look to the Cross

CAMPBELL CHAPEL FWBC - SERMON

Look to the Cross

Wednesday, October 7, 2009

Bob Bradley

John 3:14 & 15

14 And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up:

15 That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.

We have been studying in the book of Mark and we are going to read some in just a few moments from the fifteenth chapter.

Jesus and His discussions with Nicodemus a good while before these events that we are going to read about tonight are going to take place; He had told Nicodemus... We know Nicodemus was Pharisee. We know that he was a very educated fellow. We know that Nicodemus was on the Sanhedrin, which was the governing council or the Supreme Court in the land of Israel. We know that he was a very smart individual and a well known individual.

He came to Jesus one night and he asked Jesus a question. He started talking to Jesus and he made a statement about Jesus. He said, "Jesus, no man could do what you do except was with you." He understood. Nicodemus had watched and saw what Jesus had done: the healings, the raising of the dead and the walking on the water and all that had happened; Nicodemus had seen that. The thing about Nicodemus is, I think, a remarkable thing or a great thing is that Nicodemus looked at the evidence and made his decision based upon evidence. Many times we don't do that. Many times we look at the evidence of things and make decisions just opposite of that. Nicodemus had looked at what Jesus had done. He saw the great authority and power that Jesus had and he understood that the power of Almighty God, Jesus had to have to be able to do what He has done.

That really did something for him and got him to thinking about where he was at. It is wonderful when we see God do things. When we see the power of God demonstrated in people's lives, we come to church and people sing by the spirit of God and they testify in the spirit of God, or preach, teach or whatever it is then people see that and they can make a determination, or decision based upon a lot of things they see. Not only that but also it is a great thing when things are done and power is demonstrated of the Holy Spirit of God, then the Spirit of God draws people and reveals unto people who Jesus Christ really is.

This is what happens to Nicodemus. In the conversation, Nicodemus says, "We know that God is with you. We know that no man could do what you are doing except God be with you." Jesus basically said, "Nicodemus, if you want to go to heaven, if you want to have eternal life then you must be born again." Even though Nicodemus was a very smart individual, he did not understand everything that was going here. He said, "Lord, how can I do that? How can that be? I am an old man. Can I enter the second time into my mother's womb and be born again?" Jesus said, "No Nicodemus that is not what I am

talking about.” You see, many times when we look at what the Bible says about things, we look at it from the natural side of things when in reality, many times, we need to look at things from the spiritual side. Nicodemus didn’t see that. He just saw the face that he was old. How could he be born again? Jesus made the statement, “Nicodemus that which is born of the flesh is flesh. Nicodemus, you were born of the flesh, but if you want to go to heaven, you have to be born of the Spirit. You have to be born from above.” Nicodemus did not understand that. He thought about that. In his discussions down here, he talks about “God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son...” He told him that and a lot of different things. However, what I read to you here tonight, Jesus told Nicodemus, “...as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up. Whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have eternal life.”

When the children of Israel were traveling in the wilderness, we know they sinned against Almighty God and God sent snakes. He sent fiery serpents among the people. They began to bite the people and people began to die. The people went to Moses and said “Do something about these snakes.” We know that Moses prayed to God and God said, “Moses, do this. Take a serpent of brass, make a brass serpent and put it on a pole in the middle of camp. If people would just come by and look at that serpent then whosoever will look at that serpent will live. Jesus was telling Nicodemus here, “Just as Moses lifted up a serpent on a pole, way back yonder, many hundreds and thousands of years ago...I the Son of Man is going to be lifted up on a pole.”

The great thing is this. Jesus was going to die. Not the suffering and all that He went through, that is not great. That is not what I am talking about. The folks, when they were traveling in the wilderness; all they had to do when they got bit by a snake were just come by and look up and the serpent on the pole; that is all they had to do. They did not have to take any potions. They did not have to take any antidotes. They did not have to go to a doctor. They did not have to pay any money. They did not have to do anything. All they had to do was just come by and look up at the snake on the pole and they could live. That would save them from dying.

Jesus is saying the same thing. As the serpent saved them from physical death; today when we look at Jesus Christ hanging on the cross then that will save us from spiritual death.

The scriptures that we are going to read tonight are leading up to where He is going to be put on the cross. We have been talking about his last days and the day that we are going to read about here is His last day here upon planet earth before He dies.

What we are going to read here is early on Friday morning. They are going to put him on the cross about nine o’ clock in the morning and He is going to be there until about three o’clock in the afternoon. Then about three o’clock in the afternoon he is going to die.

What we are going to read here... This is happening on Friday morning, early in the morning.

Mark 15:16-22

16 And the soldiers led him away into the hall, called Praetorium; and they call together the whole band.

17 And they clothed him with purple, and plaited a crown of thorns, and put it about his head,

18 And began to salute him, Hail, King of the Jews!

19 And they smote him on the head with a reed, and did spit upon him, and bowing their knees worshiped him.

20 And when they had mocked him, they took off the purple from him, and put his own clothes on him, and led him out to crucify him.

21 And they compel one Simon a Cyrenian, who passed by, coming out of the country, the father of Alexander and Rufus, to bear his cross.

22 And they bring him unto the place Golgotha, which is, being interpreted, The place of a skull.

As we have been talking about last week, we know they came and got Jesus in the garden. It was probably somewhere around midnight or so. They took Him from there, after they arrested Him; they took Him to Annas' house. They took Him from Annas to Caiaphas. They switched Him back around there inside the city that night. We know that the things happening here now are happening sometime after six o'clock in the morning because they have already taken Him to Pilate here and Pilate has already condemned Him to die. Pilate questioned Him. Pilate could not find any fault in Him. They brought their false witnesses in as we talked about last week. They could not even agree on what He supposedly did.

Finally, the charge is blasphemy. They also convinced people that He was some kind of a traitor and that He was about to cause an uproar, insight a riot, or commit insurrection against the Roman government. That really is what the final thing is here. When they brought Him to Pilate, he couldn't find anything against Him. Do you know why? It was because He had not done anything wrong. Everything that Jesus ever did was good. He helped people. He saved people. He rescued people. That's all He ever did.

Do you know what He did not do? He did not put up with religionists. He did not put up with people who were hypocrites. He looked them straight in the face and said "You guys are a bunch of hypocrites. You guys are a bunch of snakes." That kind of today doesn't get you very far in the religious world. He is talking about people being hypocrites or snakes and people don't like that.

I know that we need to weigh our words a lot of times, but listen; when somebody is putting on a show, or an act then I don't have much use for them. You may have, that's your business. However, someone tells me they are a Christian then they need to act like a Christian. When someone tells me they are a Christian, when someone belongs to this church, or any church around here then they need to act like a Christian should act. We don't need to drink, lie, cheat and do all this stuff. That's being hypocritical. That is saying one thing and doing something

else. We have too many folks around like that today. If you are like that then straighten up. We don't need to act like that and God expects more out of us than that.

You don't find this in the reading of Mark's gospel, but as you read the other gospels; when Pilate hears that Jesus is from Galilee, we know that Pilate is the governor of Judea, when he hears about Herod and he hears about Galilee so then he is trying to 'pass the buck.' He is thinking "If He is from up the road here then I'll send Him up here to Herod and let Herod deal with Him." That's what he did and we know that he sent Him up there to Herod. It really pleased Herod when he sent Him up here because Herod had wanted to see some of the miracles. He wanted Jesus to do some kind of a miracle. However, as he questioned Jesus, do you know what Jesus didn't do? Jesus didn't do any miracles. He didn't have anything to say to him. Do you know what? Herod shifts Him back here to Pilate.

Now Pilate is condemning Him to die.

They were going to release Barabbas. They have scourged Jesus already. They have tied Him to a pole, put His hands together upon a pole and stripped His upper garment off of Him. Here He's beaten with what we would call a whip. They have whipped Him and now they are going to crucify Him.

16 And the soldiers led him away into the hall, called Praetorium; and they call together the whole band.

When you look at this word "Praetorium" it reminds me (for some of you who have been in the army) of army barracks. When I read this and how it is explained, it would be a huge army barracks where the soldiers stayed inside the city, where they slept at or stayed at. This is where they took Jesus to.

The Bible says when they got Him there that they called together the whole band.

16 And the soldiers led him away into the hall, called Praetorium; and they call together the whole band.

There were probably 500 or 600 soldiers here. They take Jesus into the big barracks that they have; their big hall that they have and the whole band is here. He is standing in here. He has already been scourged. He has probably got blood running out of His face and out of His back. He looked like raw meat. They bring Him in and here Jesus stands all alone among several hundred soldiers, all by Himself.

These soldiers, when they look at Jesus, they see a fellow who has been condemned to die. There are many things that these soldiers did not know. The only thing that they knew about this guy standing before them is what they have been told. They had been told "He's an insurrectionist. He's trying to overthrow the Roman government. He says He is the king of the Jews. Therefore, when the soldiers looked at Him they saw a criminal. They saw someone that they felt, without any reservations that he was to die because that is what Pilate. He needs to die. He's guilty.

We had better be very careful who we throw our hat in the ring with because not everything that we hear, and not all the instruction that we get a lot of times is truth. We had better be very careful. That is why I've told you many times, don't take what I say. Read the Bible for yourself. Read it and look at it

and know what it says. If you will do that nobody will ever deceive you. Nobody will ever misread you. There are all kinds of voices in this world today and there are all kinds of people misleading other people today. However, when you know the truth, when you know what red is, when you know what color red is then you cannot be convinced that red is blue. When you know what truth is that's the same thing. When you know what the Bible says then you will not be misled. Truth?! Now we can grow in our relationship with God, absolutely. Our understanding can be increased. When we know that Jesus died for our sins and He rose again then it doesn't matter what anybody says, I'm not going to change my mind about that. Are you? I'm not going to argue with anybody about that because I know that's truth. If you don't want to believe that then I'm sorry. I feel sorry for you; you're lost. You don't believe that. Truth!

Anyway, they have Him in the judgment hall, this particular hall, this big barracks, this big room and the whole crowd is here; all these soldiers are here. Please keep in mind that the only they are doing is what they have been told. This guy is guilty as far as they are concerned. They didn't know much about Him. They may have heard some things about Him but they are carrying out orders. Their boss has said, "Hey, He needs to die. We are going to kill Him." They are going to have some fun here before they kill Him. Even though they may not have understood who Jesus was; even the worst criminals, they are humans.

I feel strongly that if you break the law then you need to pay for your crime. The Bible teaches that. However, even in doing some of these things, we need to be human about it.

These guys were going to have some fun. Sometimes, in a lot of ways, we look at people who less fortunate than we are and we want to poke fun at them. Don't do that. The Bible says they got the whole band together.

17 And they clothed him with purple, and plaited a crown of thorns, and put it about his head,

Here's what they did. Jesus has said that He is the King of the Jews. What they are going to do is mock Him. They have an old piece of purple cloth that has been lying around here somewhere. It's hard to tell what they may have used it for, but they have an old piece of purple here. Purple is the color of royalty. When Jesus said that He was the King of the Jews they are going to put a robe of purple upon Him and they are going to mock Him. They are going to make fun of Him. An old faded piece of purple cloth, they drape it over Him. Somebody says, "Hey, if He's got a purple robe on then He needs to have a crown. He needs to have a crown. Therefore, they go out here in a thorn bush in that part of the country it would have been something very easy to find. They were thorn bushes everywhere. Somebody goes out and gets a bunch of thorny limbs and weaves a crown then they come back in and put it down on the head of our Savior.

You might think that when Jesus died that what He went through was just a walk in the park, but if you think that then you are missing what the Bible teaches us. You are missing what Jesus Christ went through so that you could be saved and so that I could be saved. This wasn't a walk in the park, my friend. He's already been beaten with a scourge. No doubt, they have slapped Him. They have done all these things. They have brought Him in here. They have been pushing Him around and shoving Him.

He's all by himself. Now they are putting a piece of old purple upon Him and took thorns and pushed it down upon His head.

I don't know if you have been stuck with a thorn bush or not but it hurts. It wasn't little thorns like we see on roses around here. As I read, if I understand things correctly, the thorn bushes they had over there had thorns on them probably a half inch long and when it went in, they hurt. Here is Jesus with this old piece of purple on and now they have a crown of thorns upon His head.

18 And began to salute him, Hail, King of the Jews!

Here He is with the purple on Him, the crown of thorns on His head and now they are walking by making fun of Him. They were mocking Him as they walked by. They look at Him with the robe on and with the crown on saying "Hail, King of the Jews!" Saying that in a disgusting way, in a way of mocking; what they were really saying is "If you are really a King, you wouldn't be here." They were making fun of Him, mocking Him. However, when you read Isaiah 53, it says they were going to do that. These that were happening are fulfilling what the Bible says was going to happen and now it is happening.

19 And they smote him on the head with a reed, and did spit upon him, and bowing their knees worshiped him.

Do you know what they are doing here? A reed is a weed or stick. They begin to beat Him on the head with it. No doubt, they had taken a reed and made a scepter out of it. In other words, a scepter that the King would carry, or a stick that the King carried; they had made one out of a reed. Here He is with a reed that He is holding as His scepter. He has a crown of thorns on His head and has purple on and they are walking by saluting Him, spitting in His face, they are slapping Him and now they have taken the scepter that they made from a reed and are beating Him over the head with it. That is not a pleasant place, my friend. That would not have been a pleasant place to be.

Get this. As I read this and as we talk about this, I want you to think about how much Jesus Christ really loved you, you, and you and me and all of us. That is the reason that He is allowing them to spit in His face, to beat Him over the head, to put this crown of thorns on His head, to walk by and mock Him and do all that they are doing. He is doing this because He loved me and He loved you. Do you know what He could have done at any time? He could have put a stop to it at anytime. He had the power and the authority that He could have put a stop to this thing anytime. (23:49) However, it could not be done if you and I were going to be saved; He couldn't put a stop to it. God the Father had already determined before the foundation of the world was ever laid that Jesus Christ had to die for the sin of mankind. God said that. God the Father determined that. If mankind was going to be saved, Jesus Christ had to die. Mankind to be reconciled or to fall back into a right relationship with God the Father—Jesus Christ had to die. Does everyone get that?

Jesus Christ is the Creator. The Bible says that. In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was God; the same was in the beginning with God all things were created by Him and for Him and without was not made anything that was made...and so forth...in John chapter one. We understand that, don't we? We know that Jesus Christ is the Word. We know that He is the Creator. We know that He created all. He

could have put a stop to this anytime that He chose, but since His love for us and mankind outweighed all the suffering that He was going through; He chose to suffer so that you and I could live.

If that doesn't touch your heart then I don't know what would. If that don't make you think about how much God loves us then I don't know what would.

The Bible says here that they beat Him in the head, they spit in His face, and they bowed their knees and worshiped Him. They would walk by and no doubt, here He is with spittle all over Him. This old purple piece of garment that they had is probably blood soaked by now. Not only with the blood that has been on His upper body where they have wrapped it around Him but also from the blood that is running out of His face where they beat Him and where the thorns had went into His face. This old piece of purple is probably blood-soaked. Here they walked by, some are beating Him over the head, some are hitting Him with their fists, some are spitting in His face, and some walk by and kneels down as though they are worshiping they are worshiping a King. He was and He is the King. They did not see it. They may not have understood it, but there will be a day that they will understand who He is and who He was. There will be a day for those who beat Him on the head will see Him face to face one day. They are going to see Him face to face one day and they are going to understand that the One they spit on the face of is God Almighty. The one they beat in the head with the stick; He is Almighty God. The One that they thrust thorns in His head are going to understand that He is Almighty God. It is going to be too late for them. They are not going to be saved but they are going to understand what they did and it is not going to be a good day.

20 And when they had mocked him, they took off the purple from him, and put his own clothes on him, and led him out to crucify him.

Here is what they did. I didn't really think too much about this until I studied a little bit this week. They are in their big barracks where they sleep and maybe eat. This is where they are having their fun. Before they leave from where they are to take Him over and out to Golgotha, they are going to be parading Him through the street but before they do that they take off this purple robe. They put His clothes back on Him. They take off the purple robe. I thought how cruel these guys really were. He wasn't even worthy, according to them, for an old blood-soaked piece of purple wore out cloth. He wasn't even worthy of that in their eyes. They wanted to put His clothes back on Him. This old rag that they had Him wrapped in was going to be something now that was blood-soaked. It wasn't going to be good for anything now. However, they did not want Jesus to appear like He was a King or like He was royalty. They took it off of Him now and they were going to put His own clothes back on Him.

Listen. You may not think Jesus is worthy. You may not think He is worthy to be your Savior. You may not think that He worthy of your worship or your praise. You may not think He is worthy of all that, but He is. These soldiers have mistreated Him, mocked Him, ridiculed Him and have done all this down here and now they have taken the robe back off of Him now. They put His clothes back on Him. Now they are going to lead Him outside the city to a place called Calvary.

20 And when they had mocked him, they took off the purple from him, and put his own clothes on him, and led him out to crucify him.

They have had their fun. They have mocked Him. They spit in His face. They beat Him with their fists. They have done all this and had their fun. Now they are going to take Him out and crucify Him.

21 And they compel one Simon a Cyrenian, who passed by, coming out of the country, the father of Alexander and Rufus, to bear his cross.

It tells us something here that I want us to look at. As you read the other accounts they strap the cross on Him or the beam. Here He is carrying this. He is carrying not only the weight of the cross but also the weight of all mankind's sin. As He is carrying this toward Calvary, I don't think they felt sorry for Him; I think they felt like that He wasn't going to be able to get it there. Therefore, they compelled Simon here. It doesn't tell us much about Simon. It tells about his two sons and who they are but it doesn't say much about Simon. Wouldn't it have been an awesome place to be as Jesus walked by about to collapse under the weight of the cross for you to be able to come over and take the cross and be able to carry it on? Wouldn't that have been a noble thing to do? It would have been a great thing to do. There are many things that we don't know about Simon. We do know one thing and that is that he is carrying the cross of Jesus.

I was thinking today and looking at some different things; that is one thing that we should want to do. The Bible says that if we will deny self, take up our cross and follow Him; that is what the Bible tells us to do. If we are going to be disciples then that's what we have to do. If we are going to be students of Jesus then we have to deny ourselves and take up His cross and follow Him. That's a good question that we need to ask ourselves. Are we really disciples? Are we really students? Are we really following Him? Or are we just following some doctrine, following somebody's teaching; what are we following? Who are we following? Everybody is following something because we are all traveling. We are traveling somewhere. We are either going to heaven or we are going to hell. We are on our way somewhere.

22 And they bring him unto the place Golgotha, which is, being interpreted, The place of a skull.

I don't really know for sure how far it is that He traveled here, but they bring Him outside the city. They were not going to kill Him inside the city. Golgotha when you look at this place looked like a skull. If you look at a picture of where they crucified Him at now; it is still yet today resembles a skull. When you think about a skull; what do you think about? You think about death. You think about dying. Jesus was going to a place to die. He was going to a place where they executed people/criminals. He's going here to die and He's not guilty. The Bible tells here they bring Him to the place called Golgotha, which is, being interpreted, The place of a skull.

23 And they gave him to drink wine mingled with myrrh: but he received it not.

When they get Him here, there is no doubt that they could see the pain that He has and the pain that He's in. In the wine and the mixture that they wanted Him to drink would deaden His senses some but it also prolonged life. In other words they didn't want this execution to be over in a few hours. When you read about crucifixion, it would go on for 2 to 4 days. They had a big party and they gambled and got drunk. It was a big bash is really what it was when they crucified somebody. This is why they were giving Him the wine mingled with myrrh. It was a drug. It was that but it would deaden His senses

probably to some of the pain that he would be having, but it also prolonged life. They didn't want Him to die quickly. They wanted to have some fun while He was hanging there. Do you know what the Bible says here?

23 And they gave him to drink wine mingled with myrrh: but he received it not.

Jesus was not going to take anything or do anything that was going to change the plan of Almighty God. God was not going to allow His Son to be drugged up or in a drugged state to die for our sins. He was dying there with His senses and being able to feel pain just like you and I do.

24 And when they had crucified him, they parted his garments, casting lots upon them, what every man should take.

The clothes that He had on, they took them off when they nailed Him and put Him on the tree. The Bible says they parted his garments, casting lots upon them. That is gambling, actually. They were gambling. This was a form of gambling. They were gambling for His clothes. His mother is there. His friends are there. His family is there. However, they don't care.

If you think this world cares about you today or Jesus Christ today; the majority doesn't care not one thing about it. If you mention Jesus Christ in most public outings or public arenas you will get labeled a fanatic or labeled as crazy. It usually makes someone begin to curse and do all kinds of wicked and mean stuff when you mention the name of Jesus. I'm glad of something today. I'm glad that Jesus Christ did not stop this process. He goes through. Lord willing, next week we will continue on with this.

They are crucifying Him now. They are gambling for His clothes. They are walking around by the cross and making all kinds of fun of Him now. They are mocking Him and saying all kinds of things while He is hanging between heaven and earth. While He has been lifted up—just as I read to you—as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up. Just as Moses put the snake on the pole, now they have hung Jesus Christ on a pole. They put Him on a cross. Just as those folks back there just had to look at the serpent and live. Likewise, all those that were around there if they would just look to the cross and see Him and believe Him then they could live.

That has not changed any today. There is only one way that a man, woman, boy or girl will ever be born again. It is like He told Nicodemus, "Ye must be born again. Ye must be born again from above." Jesus Christ can change your life. Jesus Christ can save you tonight. You may have no hope in this world at all. You may have never been saved. You may have never been born again. You may know nothing about going to heaven. But know one thing. If you ever get there it will be because that you have looked to the cross and recognized that there is life in the cross. Why is there life in the cross? There is life in the cross because God says there is life in the cross.