

Session Five

Questions for Discussion

- Why do you think the Gospels say very little about the flogging of Jesus? How do you account for the various placements of the flogging in the four Gospel accounts?
- How do you imagine the scene in which Jesus was mocked? In your mind, how did Jesus respond to this kind of cruelty?
- During the final twenty-four hours of Jesus' life, we see Judas' betrayal, Peter's denial, the disciple's abandonment, the Sanhedrin's jealousy, the crowd's rage, Pilate's acquiescence, and the soldier's cruelty. What do these sights teach us about what we need saving from?
- What does the example of Simon of Cyrene teach us about discipleship?
 - What particular Christian practices can help us guard against losing our humanity and supporting actions, attitudes, and policies that we should reject?
 - What is it that helps you to make sense of the humiliation, suffering, and death of Jesus?
 - What examples of sacrificial love inspire you to greater service in the name of Christ?

Bible Study and Discussion

Mark 15:16 Then the soldiers led him into the courtyard of the palace (that is, the governor's headquarters); and they called together the whole cohort.

In this verse, Mark uses "cohort," a term that originally meant one of the ten subdivisions of a Roman legion, several hundred strong. What do you think Mark is trying to emphasize by giving us an image of Jesus surrounded by not just a few, but hundreds of brutal, mocking soldiers?

Matthew 2:11 On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother; and they knelt down and paid him homage. Then, opening their treasure chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

Mark 15:23 And they offered him wine mixed with myrrh; but he did not take it.

Myrrh is mentioned twice in the Gospels: once in Matthew's account of Jesus' birth and again in Mark's account of Jesus' crucifixion. What connection do you see between these two offerings?

Luke 23:26 As they led him away, they seized a man, Simon of Cyrene, who was coming from the country, and they laid the cross on him, and made him carry it behind Jesus.

Matthew 27:32 As they went out, they came upon a man from Cyrene named Simon; they compelled this man to carry his cross.

Mark 15:21 They compelled a passer-by, who was coming in from the country, to carry his cross; it was Simon of Cyrene, the father of Alexander and Rufus.

Only Luke mentions that Simon of Cyrene carried Jesus' cross "behind Jesus." What insights into the Passion narrative does that detail provide?

Romans 5:6 For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. ⁷ Indeed, rarely will anyone die for a righteous person-- though perhaps for a good person someone might actually dare to die. ⁸ But God proves his love for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us. ⁹ Much more surely then, now that we have been justified by his blood, will we be saved through him from the wrath of God. ¹⁰ For if while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, much more surely, having been reconciled, will we be saved by his life. ¹¹ But more than that, we even boast in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

Why does Paul think it so crucial that Jesus' death proves God's love for us?

In Perspective

Along the Via Dolorosa

The path that Jesus traveled from the palace of Pontius Pilate to the cross has come to be called the Via Dolorosa ("the way of suffering"). This path has been, for many centuries, a traditional pilgrimage for Christians. Take that journey in your imagination. Put yourself somewhere in the crowd, trailing the struggling Christ who bears his own crossbeam. What do you see? What do you hear? What do you feel?

Inside the heart of Simon of Cyrene

Some of the Roman soldiers have just grabbed you from the crowd of people who have been following Jesus. The soldiers force you to your knees. You can see other soldiers approaching you with the crossbeam that Jesus has been carrying. They want you to carry it! At first you struggle to resist, but then...what?