



We reached the moment of Jesus' death this Sunday. We noted that for Jesus' enemies this must have seemed like game over: their enemy was about to be crushed. However, this was far from the case Matthew reveals. We focused in the sermon upon 3 things that people say in this passage:

1 – A cry of forsakenness (v46)

Quoting Psalm 22, Jesus calls out to God in his forsakenness. This cry is...

- real: It is neither factually wrong nor redundant (although Jesus knew why he was dying). Nor should we take it out of the story (although we know how Psalm 22 ends). This is a real cry of agony. It is a deep and personal expression of the horror Jesus was experiencing.
- revelatory: Though Jesus addresses God personally, "my God" is a far more distant address than his typical "Father". At the cross the Father abandoned his Son. Jesus, who had always known perfect communion in the Trinity, was now alone. This is what our sin cost him.

2 – A testimony of power (v54)

Matthew records Jesus' death briefly and simply (v50). He spends longer describing the aftermath of Jesus' death: the temple curtain is torn in two (the barrier between human beings and God is removed) (v51); there is an earthquake (v51); and dead believers are raised to life and after the resurrection appear to people in Jerusalem (v53-53). Though this final scene is obscure and may feel hard to believe, in it we see a glorious whisper of what is to come... resurrection!

The centurion and his fellow soldiers respond in fear and by proclaiming: "Surely he was the Son of God!". We can be sure neither exactly which things they saw nor what they meant by their use of this term, but that they used a term that had

so viciously been used against this now-dead 'villain' is astonishing. These Gentiles spoken better than any of the Jews. They spoke better than they knew. It is in Jesus' death, it turns out, that we truly see who he is.

3 – The fear of deception (v64)

Matthew emphasises Jesus' burial in his account. Unusually for a crucifixion victim, Jesus' corpse is claimed (by Joseph of Arimathea) and at great expense buried in a new tomb (v57-60). But that's not the end of the story. Again, Matthew places the theme of resurrection before us, with the Jewish leaders (of all people!) quoting Jesus' resurrection prophecies and begging Pilate to secure the tomb (v62-64). They fear that through his foolish disciples this "deceiver" (v63) will deceive people (again) into believing that he has risen. Pilate consents, and Jesus' grave is secured (v65-66).

We finish the passage with the scene set. Though the 12 are nowhere to be seen, Jesus has been buried by a believer, and a group of faithful women have been there throughout it turns out (v55-56, 61), and are in just the right place to be the first witnesses to the extraordinary events that will take place a few verses later...

Here are a few questions you might want to use with your group...

1. How do you think the Jewish leaders would have been feeling at the beginning of this passage and why?
→ What thoughts and hopes might have been running through their heads?
→ What groups in society today might feel that they have vanquished Jesus?
2. What does Jesus' cry from the cross mean?
→ How might we be tempted to dismiss it?
→ What does it show us about what happened at the cross?
→ How does it tug on our hearts?
3. What happened as and after Jesus' died?
→ What did the centurion say in response and why do you think he said that?
4. How does Matthew sneak the resurrection into his account of Jesus' death?
5. Why were the Jewish leaders so scared later in the passage?
→ What did they get right in their fear? What did they get wrong?
→ In what ways might, do and should we fear and risk being taken for fools?