

LENT 2021 - Who Do You Say That I Am? "A Different Kind of Coronation"

March 28, 2021

Overarching theme: John 20:21, Jesus said to them again, 'Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.' In 2021, as DISCIPLES, we are SENT with the peace of Christ to share with others!

Instructions: When using this material as teacher, feel free to pick and choose the point you want to emphasize in the lesson. The format of the curriculum is designed to have an abundance of information in which to refer as desired.

Core Passages:

Mark 14:50-51 ⁵⁰ *All of them deserted him and fled.* ⁵¹ *A certain young man was following him, wearing nothing but a linen cloth. They caught hold of him,* ⁵² *but he left the linen cloth and ran off naked.*

Mark 15:25-39 ²⁵ *It was nine o'clock in the morning when they crucified him.* ²⁶ *The inscription of the charge against him read, "The King of the Jews."* ²⁷ *And with him they crucified two bandits, one on his right and one on his left.* ²⁹ *Those who passed by derided him, shaking their heads and saying, "Aha! You who would destroy the temple and build it in three days,* ³⁰ *save yourself, and come down from the cross!"* ³¹ *In the same way the chief priests, along with the scribes, were also mocking him among themselves and saying, "He saved others; he cannot save himself.* ³² *Let the Messiah, the King of Israel, come down from the cross now, so that we may see and believe."* Those who were crucified with him also taunted him ³³ *When it was noon, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon.* ³⁴ *At three o'clock Jesus cried out with a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?" which means, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"* ³⁵ *When some of the bystanders heard it, they said, "Listen, he is calling for Elijah."* ³⁶ *And someone ran, filled a sponge with sour wine, put it on a stick, and gave it to him to drink, saying, "Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to take him down."* ³⁷ *Then Jesus gave a loud cry and breathed his last.* ³⁸ *And the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom.* ³⁹ *Now when the centurion, who stood facing him, saw that in this way he breathed his last, he said, "Truly this man was God's Son!"*

Commentary: The only surprise in the crucifixion scene is the dramatic confession by the centurion, whose life has been dedicated to defending the empire and Caesar ('son of God' declared by the Roman Senate). All of the other characters in the episode continue to act as they have from the beginning of the passion account. The mockery scene appears especially cruel, as every disappointed hope is thrown back in Jesus' face. Yet the story is not without its hints of God's presence. The lament Psalm 22 moves through the agony of abandonment to confidence in God's saving power. Darkness silences those who are looking at the cross and taunting Jesus by making it impossible for them to see. Signs in the heaven herald the approach of God. Although the centurion represents the enemy who is forced to acknowledge the superiority of the oppressed, his confession supplies the real title that should be written on the cross: "Son of God." The fact that the centurion's confession stands at the end of Mark suggests that the whole story of Jesus must be heard, the crucifixion must be seen, through the lens of this confession "This is the Son of God." Ancient biography was very attentive to how a 'great person' died. Certainly the way Jesus died made an enormous impression on the centurion.

- adapted from the New Interpreter's Bible, Vol VIII p. 724

Questions to Ponder for accountability in the group:

1. What do you make of the statement, "*they all deserted him and fled?*" Why the curious detail about the certain young man? (v. 51). What do these statements say about the wavering commitment of Jesus' followers?
2. Consider the responses by "those who passed by" (v. 29), the religious leaders (31), and those crucified with him (v.32). Why the unrelenting taunts and cruelty?
3. How do you interpret the Jesus' loud, provocative prayer (v.34), a quote from Psalm 22, a psalm that moves from an initial anguished sense of abandonment to a confidence in God's saving power?
4. What might the Centurion have observed as he stood facing Jesus as he took his last breath (v.39)? What do you think would lead him to make the provocative statement - "*Truly this man was God's Son!*"?
5. After reflecting on the theme of this lesson, what is most compelling to you about Jesus? How will that impact your life this Holy Week?

Activity for the life of a disciple:

1. Remember to find encouragement for the day by reading the daily devotional and spend time pondering and meditating on the challenge.
2. Ponder and pray on this scripture this week: Mark 15:39
³⁹ Now when the centurion, who stood facing him, saw that in this way he breathed his last, he said, "Truly this man was God's Son!"
3. Consider Jesus' question from Mark 8:29 each day during Holy Week: "Who do you say that I am?" Consider how your answer impacts your daily life.