

THE FIRST 15

Tuesday, May 21, 2024

Today is Tuesday, May 21 and we are studying the Gospel of John chapter nineteen.

OPENING PRAYER

Blessed Lord God, In the morning I come to this quiet place and draw near to your side. I calm my mind, slow my breathing and center myself completely on your holy presence. Open the scriptures to me and communicate the personal message you have for me today from the Gospel of John. Walk with me on this journey to the cross of Calvary and reveal your amazing grace and relentless love. Amen.

SCRIPTURE

“Where do you come from?” he asked Jesus, but Jesus gave him no answer. “Do you refuse to speak to me?” Pilate said. “Don’t you realize I have power either to free you or to crucify you?” Jesus answered, “You would have no power over me if it were not given to you from above. Therefore the one who handed me over to you is guilty of a greater sin.” From then on, Pilate tried to set Jesus free, but the Jewish leaders kept shouting, “If you let this man go, you are no friend of Caesar. Anyone who claims to be a king opposes Caesar.” When Pilate heard this, he brought Jesus out and sat down on the judge’s seat at a place known as the Stone Pavement (which in Aramaic is Gabbatha). It was the day of Preparation of the Passover; it was about noon. “Here is your king,” Pilate said to the Jews. But they shouted, “Take him away! Take him away! Crucify him!” “Shall I crucify your king?” Pilate asked. “We have no king but Caesar,” the chief priests answered. Finally Pilate handed him over to them to be crucified. John 19:9b-16a

REFLECTION

The crucifixion time clock is ticking. John beautifully records the smallest details of the day's horrific happenings. He clearly notes the hour. It is “about noon.” He clearly notes the day. It is the Day of Preparation for the Passover. He clearly notes the place. It is the Praetorium, the residence of the Roman Governor, Pontius Pilate. What is this Day of Preparation for the Jews? On the fourteenth day of the Jewish month of Nisan, male lambs without defect were to be slaughtered at twilight (See Exodus 12:5-6). Twilight was late in the afternoon, prior to the setting of the sun, because for Jews sunset is the beginning of the Passover and start of the feast. The lambs were slaughtered prior to the setting of the sun.

According to John’s timeline, the Lamb of God is heading to his own twilight-timed sacrificial death. Jesus will die on the cross as the Passover lambs are being slaughtered at the end of day on the fourteenth of Nisan. Jesus is the sacrificial Paschal Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.

When the Israelites were slaves in Egypt, on that first Passover, God provided a way to be both just and merciful at the same time. Salvation through substitution. God told them to take a lamb without blemish and on the night when death is about to claim all firstborn children in Egypt, kill the lamb. The innocent lamb will die and the life of the child will be saved. Apply the blood of the

lamb to your doorposts (Exodus 12:7), and when death sees the blood, it will *pass over* you (Exodus 12:13).

We also have salvation through substitution. We are saved by the blood of Jesus Christ. The perfect Lamb of God without sin and without blemish. Because the blood of Christ was shed, death will pass over us too. The blood of Jesus is placed on the doorframe of believers' hearts. Peter says we have been redeemed, "not with perishable things like silver and gold—but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot" (1 Peter 1:18-19). Paul calls Jesus Christ our Passover Lamb who has been sacrificed for us (1 Corinthians 5:7). Our eternal life and salvation comes through Jesus' willing sacrifice and substitution.

Ask: Have I invited the Lamb of God to take away my sins? What does it mean to me that his shed blood has covered my soul?

Pause and Pray

CLOSING PRAYER

Jesus Christ, Lamb of God, I come. I come to the Praetorium and see how you were beaten and mocked by the soldiers. I observe how the crown of thorns was forced upon your head drawing the first drops of precious blood. The noon hour begins the painful journey to the time of twilight and death. I walk the Via Dolorosa (Way of Suffering) this week, remembering your willing sacrifice for the forgiveness of my sins and the salvation of my soul. Amen.