

# THE FIRST 15

Wednesday, May 22, 2024

Today is Wednesday, May 22 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

***Finally Pilate handed him over to them to be crucified. So the soldiers took charge of Jesus. Carrying his own cross, he went out to the place of the Skull (which in Aramaic is called Golgotha). There they crucified him, and with him two others—one on each side and Jesus in the middle. Pilate had a notice prepared and fastened to the cross. It read: JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS. Many of the Jews read this sign, for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city, and the sign was written in Aramaic, Latin and Greek. The chief priests of the Jews protested to Pilate, “Do not write ‘The King of the Jews,’ but that this man claimed to be king of the Jews.” Pilate answered, “What I have written, I have written.” When the soldiers crucified Jesus, they took his clothes, dividing them into four shares, one for each of them, with the undergarment remaining. This garment was seamless, woven in one piece from top to bottom. “Let’s not tear it,” they said to one another. “Let’s decide by lot who will get it.” This happened that the scripture might be fulfilled that said, “They divided my clothes among them and cast lots for my garment.” So this is what the soldiers did. John 19:16-24***

## REFLECTION

After carrying the heavy weight of his own torture device to the place of the Skull, Jesus is nailed to the cross and it is hoisted into place by Roman soldiers. The focus is on Jesus, who occupies a central place among two crucified criminals flanking his cross on the right and the left. Jesus becomes the centerpiece of a trio of victims and given the ironically appropriate title, *The King of the Jews*, inscribed in three different languages. These are the chosen languages of the literate and cultured world of the Roman Empire. The kingship of Jesus is proclaimed universally and is visible to all who pass by the public execution site of Golgotha.

The prophetic words of Psalm 22 echo from the ancient texts. Psalm 22 is a song about a man in anguish who is scorned and despised. The people mock him, hurl insults and shake their heads. He is poured out like water, his heart melts within him, and his mouth is dry and thirsty. He is surrounded by villains who pierce his hands and feet. His bones are on display and people stare. His clothes are divided among his accusers and they cast lots for his garment. (Psalm 22:6-18). In each moment that passes, ancient Old Testament prophecies are fulfilled. The

promises God made long ago to redeem his people are happening in a most extraordinary and unexpected way through the brutal suffering and death of his beloved Son.

In ancient days in the book of Genesis, Abraham took wood for a sacrificial offering and placed it on the back of his small son Isaac. Isaac his only son, the son of the promise. Little Isaac didn't know he was actually intended to become the sacrifice. Just like Jesus carried the wood of the cross on his back, young Isaac carried the wood for his sacrifice up onto Mt. Moriah, the same place as the Temple Mount in Jerusalem and near what would centuries later be known as Golgotha. Before Abraham could complete the dreadful deed, the Angel of the Lord shouted loudly, "Do not lay a hand on that boy! Do not do anything to him!" God provided a substitute for the sacrifice. A ram caught in a thicket. (Genesis 22:1-14). A ram was provided, but where was the lamb for the offering? God would provide that centuries later - the sacrificial Lamb of God who came to take away the sins of the world. God's only Son, the son of the Promise.

**Ask:** How does walking through the events of the crucifixion capture my heart and stir my soul? What does God want me to know about the sacrifice of Jesus and what it means for me personally?

**Pause and Pray**

## **CLOSING PRAYER**

*Blessed and Holy Lord, thank you for your willingness to become a sacrificial offering for the salvation of my soul. When I pause to recognize the depths of your love for me, how your shed blood saved me, I am overwhelmed. You were pierced for my transgressions, you suffered for my iniquity, your sacrifice was my salvation. I could never have saved myself. I desperately need a Savior. Today I humble myself in awe and gratitude, and rejoice in your gracious good gift. Amen.*