

5.10.24 evening service

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Date: 05 October 2024

Preacher: Reverend David Strain

- [0 : 00] Psalm 23, Psalm 23 to the tune Arlington, Psalm 23 to the tune Arlington and we'll stand to sing in just a moment. Let's stand to sing.
- The Lord's my shepherd, I'll not want. He makes me come to life.
- In pasture stream, he leadeth me. In pasture stream, he leadeth me. The quiet waters high.
- My soul he doth restore again, and he to walk the gate.
- Within the paths of righteousness. Within the paths of righteousness.
- [1 : 29] Him for his own name's sake. Yet though I walk in dead star-failed, Yet will I fear not ill, For thou art with me and I walk, For thou art with me and I walk, And stop me come for sale.
- My deeper love has furnished, In presence of my foes, My head thou dost with oil anoint, My head thou dost with oil anoint, And my cup overflows.
- Goodness and mercy all my life, Shall surely follow me, And in God's house forevermore, And in God's house forevermore, My dwelling place shall be.
- Wonderful to be with you all again this evening.
- Take your Bibles in hand, And turn with me, if you would, To the gospel according to Matthew. Matthew's gospel, chapter 27, Verses 32, Through 44.
- [4 : 25] If you were with us last night, You'll know we began to look at the various groups That the gospel writers tell us Gathered around the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.
- We considered the lessons that the brutality of the soldiers Who crucified Jesus and gambled for his clothing Had to teach us.
- And tonight, We come back to the same scene To look at another group. We're thinking about the mockers, The scoffers, Who respond to the spectacle of a crucified Christ With disdain, And cynicism, And jeers and taunts.
- And yet, As we'll see, Their mockery Actually says far more Than they intend. Their mockery Proclaims the very truths about Jesus That their spiritual blindness Has missed.
- We're going to look at the teaching of our passage Under two very simple headings. First of all, We'll look at the mockers themselves, And then we'll consider their mockery.
- [5 : 38] So the mockers, And then their mockery. Before we do that, And read God's word together, Would you bow your heads with me once more? As we seek the help of the Lord With his holy word, Let us pray.
- O Lord, We are like those Greeks Who came to the disciples And said, Sir, We would see Jesus As your word is read And preached, Grant that now By the mighty working of the Holy Spirit You would give us eyes To see our Savior, Ears to hear his voice, And grace to respond to his call In repentance And in faith And in new obedience For we ask it in his holy name.

Amen. Matthew 27 At verse 32, This is the word of God. As they went out, They found a man of Cyrene, Simon by name, And they compelled this man To carry his cross.

And when they came to a place Called Golgotha, Which means place of a skull, They offered him, Jesus, Wine to drink, Mixed with gall.

But when he tasted it, He would not drink it. And when they had crucified him, They divided his garments among them By casting lots.

[7 : 22] Then they sat down And kept watch over him there. And over his head, They put the charge against him, Which read, This is Jesus, The King of the Jews.

Then two robbers were crucified with him, One on the right and one on the left. And those who passed by Derided him, Wagging their heads, And saying, You who would destroy the temple And rebuild it in three days, Save yourself.

If you are the Son of God, Come down from the cross. So also the chief priests, With the scribes and elders, Mocked him, Saying, He saved others.

He cannot save himself. He is the King of Israel. Let him come down now from the cross, And we will believe in him.

He trusts in God. Let God deliver him now, If he desires him. For he said, I am the Son of God. And the robbers, Who were crucified with him, Also reviled him, In the same way.

[8 : 46] Amen. And we bless God, That he has spoken, In his holy word. Let's think, For a moment, About the mockers, Who gathered at the foot of Jesus' cross.

First of all, Matthew divides them, Into three groups, Doesn't he? You see them in the text, First in verse 39, There are those who passed by, Who derided him, Wagging their heads.

You will remember, That Jerusalem, Jerusalem, Was bustling, With crowds, Visiting, For Passover, At this point.

Golgotha, Where Jesus was crucified, Is just outside the city walls. It is intentionally, Located, Where people, Will be sure to see, The public example, That the Roman, Justice system, Such as it was, Sought to make, Of its three latest victims.

And so, These are, The ordinary, Citizenry, Busying themselves, With the demands, Of each day's routine.

[10 : 01] Pausing, At the foot of the cross, On their way into, Or out from, The city, To shake their heads, And laugh, At how misguided, Jesus must have been, To land himself, In this dreadful predicament.

So there are, The ordinary citizens. There is another group, In verse 41. So also, The chief priests, And the scribes, And the elders, Mocked him.

So now here, On the other hand, So you have the ordinary citizens, But here on the other hand now, Are the elites, Of Jewish society. The members, Of the Sanhedrin, The Jewish ruling, Council.

These are the ones, Who have, Tried Jesus. They put him on trial, Their mock trial, Or at least, Their mockery of a trial, Back in, Chapter 26, And, As verse 1 of chapter 27, Tells us, When morning came, All the chief priests, And the elders of the people, Took counsel together, Against Jesus, To put him to death.

And they bound him, And led him away, And delivered him over, To Pilate the governor. And so they, Here they are now, In all likelihood, Some of the very same people, Who have tried, Jesus, And struck, Jesus, And spat, In the face, Of our Lord Jesus, Before leading him off, To Pilate, For sentencing.

[11 : 35] And here they are now, Come, To gloat, At the success, Of their plot, To be rid of Jesus, Once and for all.

But there is a third group, Of mockers, Who joined the taunts, Of the crowd, Who have gathered, At the base, Of the Roman cross. Matthew does not record, For us their words, He simply says, They participated, Quote, In the same way.

But they took up, The taunts of the crowds, And the mockery of the priests, He is talking this time, About the two robbers, Who were crucified, On either side, Of our Savior.

These are, Convicted criminals, The word Matthew uses, Robber, You could translate it, Insurrectionist, Or revolutionary. Or it could simply refer, To thieves, Or bandits, Armed, Criminals, Thugs, Gangsters, Robbing people, On the highway.

But whatever the precise nature, Of their crime exactly, The men beside Jesus, On either side of Jesus, Being executed that day, They represent now, The very bottom, Of the heap.

[12 : 58] The dregs, Of Jewish society. And now you see, What Matthew is doing, Here, Don't you? He is cataloging, For us, A representative slice, Of human society.

Donald MacLeod wrote, The whole, Of humanity, Is here. The common people are here, Stripped of the romance, That attributes, Special insight, To an unsophisticated peasantry.

They see no sign, Of kingship, In the crucified one. The world's, Power, Learning, And religion, Are equally blind. And at the other end, Of the scale, Stand his co-condemned.

However, Death concentrated, Their minds, They had no compunction, About adding, To the torment, Of their fellow sufferer. There was nothing, About him, Which could enable, Mere human insight, At any point, On the social, Academic, Or religious scale, To recognize Jesus, For who he was.

So, Let me, Boil it down for you. Do not think, If you'd been there, You would have seen, In the shame, And the sorrow, And the suffering, Of the cross, The son of God, Incarnate.

[14 : 28] Or that I would have seen, Through, The veil of his agonies, The Lord of glory. Or that we would have, Bowed down there, Together to adore him, Instead of, Lifting our own voice, Along with all the others, To sneer at him.

We sang it last night, I quoted it last night, In the sermon. But it's true again, Here, Nevertheless, Behold the man, Upon the cross, My sin upon his shoulders, Ashamed I hear, My mocking voice, Mine, Call out among the scoffers.

Matthew's point is, That the wise and the learned, Are here, Not to adore him, But to, Denounce him, Condemn him, Sneer, With contempt at him, The wise and the learned, And the average and the ordinary, They're here too, Folks like us.

Even the criminal underclass, Are here. The bible scholar, And the political power broker, They're here.

The street smart, The street smart working man, With calluses on his hand, And oil under his nails. These men are here. The outcasts, And the insiders, They're here.

[15 : 58] All of them. They all come. And take their place, At the foot of the cross, And not one of them, Looked at the bloodied face, Of Jesus Christ, And saw anything other, Than an object of contempt, And disdain.

This is how the world, Matthew wants us to see, This is how the world, Habitually responds, To Jesus Christ. The apostle Paul says, The word of the cross, Is folly, To those who are perishing.

Jews demand signs, Greeks seek wisdom, But we preach Christ crucified, A stumbling block to Jews, And folly to Greeks.

That's how people respond, By nature, To the cross. And it's helpful, For those of us, Who are followers, Of the Lord Jesus, Who trust in him, And who long, For the people around us, Who do not yet know him, To come and bend their knee to him, It's helpful for us, To be reminded of that.

This is how a dying world, Answers the gospel, So get ready. If you want to live for Christ, You live for him, In a world like this.

[17 : 17] A world that rejects him, And denies and refuses him. This is where, You are called, To serve your master, Who says, To his disciples, If they hated me, They will hate you also.

Some of you, Can remember all the years, You heard the gospel message, Over and over and over, You heard it, Sunday by Sunday, You heard it, And it never touched your heart, Do you remember those years?

It never moved you, Maybe you were just indifferent, And you shrugged, To hear about your savior's sufferings, And looked, Perplexed at others, Weeping, Under the sense of their sin, Or, In wonder, And gratitude, And love, That Christ, Would die for them, It was a mystery to you, And you went on, With your life, Maybe for years, Altogether, Unperturbed, Undisturbed, By the cross, Maybe you found, The exclusive claims of Jesus, Who says, He is the only way to God, No one comes to the Father, But by me, Maybe you found that, To be narrow minded, Bigoted, Maybe you felt repentance, Beneath your dignity, Trust in a crucified Christ, Defended your pride, Until, You remember those years?

Years, Keeping Jesus at arm's length, Until one day, When God in his great mercy, Took a hold of you, And by his word and spirit, He opened your blind eyes, And the veil was lifted, And you saw, Now at last, In the wretched agonies, Of the man of Calvary, Not the object, Of your contempt, Any longer, But of your trust, And of your love, And you bent your knee to him, And surrendered, That is, The call of Jesus Christ, But Matthew wants you to understand, It is the work of God, By his grace, And it's not something, That any of us, However desperately, We wish it for you, Can manufacture, That you ever took your place,

I ever took my place, Among those who gathered, In the shadow of Calvary, To heap scorn, On the Lord Jesus, Is a source, Isn't it a source of sorrow, As we look back on those days, Of regret, But unhappy, As the memory might be, It is helpful, To look back on those days, And remind ourselves, That we were in the crowds, At the base of the cross, Scorning, Scorning, The Lord Jesus Christ, We were, And the Lord saved us, He saved us, And that means, That the people around you, That you think are lost causes, Are not such lost causes, After all, If he can do it for us, He can do it for them too, If he can do it for us, He can do it for you, Even the most cynical, Opponent of the cross, The mockers, Who say, Of Jesus,

[20 : 57] That he is a laughing stock, Not a savior, Even they, Can be brought out of darkness, And into his, Marvelous light, So the mockers, Matthew wants us to see the mockers, To see, Ourselves in them, Remember that, We who follow the Lord Jesus, As we're once among them, And he saved us, To encourage us, To continue to pray on, For those who still stand, In these groups, Keeping Jesus at a distance, Seeking God, That he would do it, In their lives, Also, The mockers, Then think secondly, About the mockery, Matthew gives us, Two lists, Of insults, That are aimed at Jesus, Can you see them in the text, Two different lists, Of insults, The first you'll find, In verses 39 and 40, On the lips of the passersby, And the second, In 42 and 43, On the lips of the chief priests, And the scribes, And the elders, And I think we're meant to understand,

As we read their mockery, We're meant to understand, Their words on three levels, First of course, Their straightforward expressions, Of contempt, And derision, But then on a deeper level, Secondly, Behind the mockery of the crowd, Stands something much darker, Not only are these, Expressions of derision, They're also expressions, Of satanic temptation, But there's a third level, Even deeper still, Despite themselves, Despite Satan's malice, Each of the scoffers, In the end, Actually become instruments, Of gospel proclamation, Saying far more than they realize, About Jesus and his cross, So here are the three levels, At which we need to understand, The words of mockery here, They are words of derision, Words of temptation, And words of proclamation,

These are words of undisguised derision, First of all, The passersby were told in verse 39, Derided him, The Greek verb is blasphemeo, We get the English word blasphemy, From that verb, Now that word can sometimes, Sometimes simply mean to mock, Or to deride in general, But probably Matthew intends it here, In its full theological significance, To blaspheme against the God-man, These are words full of venom, Aimed to inflict a wound, Designed to hurt, Assaulting, The divine human person, Of the Lord Jesus Christ, They were a terrible blasphemy, And don't miss the sarcasm, Lacing their words, Do you see it in verse 40, You who would destroy the temple, And rebuild it in three days, Save yourself,

If you think you could do something, So great, As destroy and rebuild the temple, Well then surely you can do something, So urgent, As save yourself from the cross, They are actually echoing the charge, The trumped up charge, Brought against Jesus, During his trial, Before Caiaphas, Chapter 26, Verse 61, Perhaps they had been spectators, On that occasion, Or maybe some of the false witnesses, Who had been brought in, To testify against Jesus, During his interrogation, Now they are here, At the cross, And they are hurling, Their testimony, Back in Jesus face, As a taunt, And an accusation, Or look down at the words, Of the chief priests, And the scribes, And the elders, In 42 and 43, Interestingly, And interestingly this time, They don't speak to Jesus at all, Do you see that?

The passersby hurl their insults at Jesus, The chief priests, And the elders, Prefer to announce their contempt for Christ, To one another, Presumably, So that everyone can overhear, Especially so that Jesus can overhear, And we all know, Don't we, That sometimes the cruelest barbs, Are the ones that aren't addressed to us, They're the ones addressed to somebody else about us, That we overhear, They sting like nothing else, It is vital that we remember, That no small part of the agony of our Savior, Came in the wounding words, Of the people to whom he was sent, The trauma of the cross can't be described, Only in physical terms, The bodily pain of the cross, Must have been unspeakable, But a large part of the sufferings of Jesus,

[26 : 06] Involved the mental anguish, Caused by his own beloved people, And their hostility, And their rejection of him, These words were as piercing, As any nail, Driven into his flesh, You may have discovered, By painful personal experience, That living openly for Christ, In these days, Can be a costly thing, Have you found that out?

It can be a costly thing, If your family, Or your colleagues, Or your classmates, Know that you follow Jesus, You might find yourself excluded, Or marginalized, Or made fun of, Or judged, Or ignored, And if you should stumble, If you compromise, If you fail to live up, To the lofty moral standards, To which God calls you, Well then they're all ready to pounce, Aren't they?

Calling you a hypocrite, And dismissing your commitment to Christ, As fake, And worthless, And insincere, And in those moments, And there will be moments like that, If you are a follower of Jesus Christ, In those moments, You need to remember, That Jesus calls you, To walk in his steps, And to go with him, To the place of crucifixion, This is the cost of discipleship, Do not forget, Your Lord has walked, Through this dark valley before you, He knows the acute sting, Of derision, And mockery, He is a great high priest, Who has been touched, With the feeling, Of our infirmities, He knows what it feels like, And he has endured it all, Before you, Ahead of you, So that if you would go to him, He will sustain you,

When your path takes you through trials, That bear at least something of an echo of his, So there's derision, That's one level at which to understand these words, Words calculated to wound, But there's a deeper level, A second level at which we must understand, These words, They're more than just barbs, More than just derision, They're also actually, Satanic temptations, The language here, Echoes very carefully, The wilderness temptations, With which Jesus began, His public ministry, Back in Matthew chapter 4, Do you remember what the devil said, To the Lord Jesus back then, If you are the son of God, If you are the son of God, Command these stones to become bread, If you are the son of God, Throw yourself down from the pinnacle of the temple, All these kingdoms of the world I will give you, He told the Lord Jesus,

If you will fall down and worship me, He questioned Jesus' identity, If you are the son of God, He questioned his willingness to endure suffering, Throw yourself down, And angels will bear you up, So that you don't strike even your foot against the stone, He questioned Jesus' path to kingship, Based on his trust in and commitment to God, His father alone, I can give you these kingdoms, You just need to worship me, Turn from trusting your father, And worship me, And now here, At the other end of his earthly ministry, At the climax of his public work, In the words of the scoffers, Gathered under his cross, The same temptations, Precisely the same temptations, Are hurled back at him, Once again, His identity is questioned, If you are the son of God, Come down from the cross, The rightness of his sufferings, Are questioned, He saved others,

[30 : 13] Himself he cannot save, Come down now, From the cross, His path to kingship, Based on his trust and commitment to his father, Is questioned, He's the king of Israel, Let him come down now from the cross, And we will believe in him, He trusts in God, Let God deliver him now, If he desires him, For he said, I am the son of God, His work, Saving others, By dying in our place, His office as king, And savior, His identity, As son of God, They are assailed, By the evil one, And yet in the face of all of this, You'll notice, How does Jesus respond?

He's silent, Isn't that remarkable? The prophet Isaiah says, He was oppressed, And he was afflicted, Yet he opened not his mouth, Like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, And like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, So he opened not his mouth, Under this tidal wave, This tsunami of satanic temptation, Crashing down on his head, Inciting him, To abandon the cross, Summon legions of angels, Go another way, Relieve your agony, In all of it, Our Lord was silent, And meekly compliant, Under the afflicting hand of God, Who poured out the fury, Of his righteous, White hot judgment, That our sin deserves, Upon the head of his son, Peter puts it like this,

In his first letter, He committed no sin, Neither was deceit found in his mouth, When he was reviled, He did not revile in return, When he suffered, He did not threaten, But continued entrusting himself, To him who judges justly, He himself bore our sins, In his body on the tree, That we might die to sin, And live to righteousness, By his wounds, You have been healed, And so, Just as we see behind, The derision of the crowds, There's actually the malice, And accusation, And temptations of the devil, So we should also see, Behind the quiet, Meek, Silence, Of our suffering Savior, His perfect obedience, Not simply to set us an example, As we endure temptation, But to secure our deliverance, When we fall,

Under the onslaught of temptation, Satan comes against you, He tempts you, You stumble, You fall, You see your unworthiness, Perhaps this is the principal weapon, He has been using you, In your life, To keep you from coming, To the Lord's table, You trust your Savior, You love him, You know how urgently, You need him, You cry out to him, You love his word, You love his people, You love his praise, You're his, And yet you look at your heart, And Satan again and again says, See here, And here, And here, And here, Call yourself a Christian, And he holds you in a terrible, A terrible bondage, Of fear, And reluctance, What do you, What do you do under the onslaught, Under the barrage, Of satanic assault, You run to Christ, Who has endured it all,

He has endured it all, And was silent, And steadfast under it, And did not waver, From the course set before him, To secure for you, Pardon when you fall, And power to stand firm, You come to Christ, He will give you the victory, And that brings me to the last layer, That we need to see in the mockery of the crowds, So there's derision, There's the devil's temptations, But there's also, A glorious irony, In their slanderous accusations, Because despite their intentions, They are actually, Proclaiming good news, They're preaching the gospel, All unbeknown to themselves, The words, The words, Of their, Insults, Bear testimony, To the very truths, They reject,

[34 : 57] C.S. C.S. Lewis, C.S. Lewis, When he talked about, His own conversion, Said, I was at this time, Living like so many atheists, Or anti-theists, In a whirl of contradiction, I maintained, I maintained that God did not exist, And I was also very angry with God, For not existing, These people here, Are also in a whirl of contradiction, They're unable to avoid, Giving testimony, To the very truth, They hate, And reject, Look again at what they say, Verse 40, They're actually quoting a version, Of John 2, 19, Where Jesus did in fact, Actually say, Destroy this temple, And in three days, I will raise it up again, But they've completely misunderstood, His point when he said that, He wasn't talking about, The stone temple, In Jerusalem, Where the priests, And the sacrifices, Were, As John actually explains, In John 2, Jesus was speaking about, The temple of his body,

Destroy the body, That God has given to me, And I will raise it up again, And so now, While, His accusers remind him, Of what they thought, Was his failure, To do what he said he would do, And destroy the, The temple in Jerusalem, Here he was actually, Keeping his promise, From John chapter 2, Here it is, His body being destroyed, That he might raise it up again, The temple of his body, Being torn down, To be raised on the third day, Or, Look down at the chief priest's words, They confess in verse 40, He saved others, Himself he cannot save, Isn't it interesting, For all their hatred, Of Jesus Christ, They confess, He saved, Others, What they don't understand,

Is that he's only able, To save others, Precisely because, He would not save himself, They said, Let him come down, From the cross, And we will believe in him, But if Jesus had come down, From the cross, Then their faith in him, Would have been futile, And meaningless, And left them still, Under the judgment, And curse of God, Because no payment for sin, Would then have been made, No salvation, Would then have been secured, Faith in Jesus, Actually only has meaning, If the Jesus we trust, Is the Jesus who dies, Condemned in our place, Not with his own sin, But under the weight of ours, That by faith in him, We might receive, His righteousness, Here's the gospel,

Do you see it? Beautiful, Clear, In the gloom of Golgotha, Shining crystal clear, Jesus can save others, Which is to say, Jesus can save you, That's what it means, There's nobody in this room, Nobody in this town, Nobody on these islands, Nobody in our country, There is nobody, He can't save, But he can only do it, By not saving himself, He gives himself, He dies, That you might live, And all you must do, Is trust him, Believe in him, Believe in a crucified Christ, Who bore in his body, On the tree, The judgment of God, I deserve it, I deserve it, You deserve it,

And he took it, He took it, That you might live, He was condemned, So you could be pardoned, And you've fallen, You've fallen into temptation, The devil has come against you, And he's trapped you, And snared you, And over and again, You've fallen, But Christ triumphed, He triumphed, He triumphed, So that over the filthy robes of your sin, He might drape the righteous garments, Of his perfect obedience, This is the Savior, Our hearts need, I wonder if you can see him here, Amongst the mockery, And the spitting, And the catcalls, And the jeers of the crowd, The Savior, Your heart needs, Go, Go to Jesus,

[40 : 04] Go to Jesus, He gave himself for you, Let's pray together, Lord Jesus, They, Beat you, And, Flogged you, And spat on you, And, Nailed you to the tree, And there they laughed at you, And the evil one, Twisted the knife, In your heart, Assailing you, With temptation upon temptation, To turn from the course, To go some other way, And all along, You bore it,

And more, Not just the contempt of the world, Or the temptations of the devil, But the wrath and curse of God, You bore it, Like a lamb to the slaughter, The truth is, Lord Jesus, We all of us, Like sheep, Have gone astray, And turned aside, Every one of us, To our own way, How we bless our God, That he has laid upon you, The iniquity of us all, Grant that we may come back to you now, Some of us have wandered very far away, We want to come back now, There are others in our lives, That we love, That don't know you, That have run far from you, That keep you at arm's length, Oh God, Break into their hearts, And save them, Some of us have stumbled,

And fallen, Again, And again, Lord Jesus, We bless you, That your blood is able, To make the foulest clean, And your blood avails for me, Help us, Lord Jesus, To take what your nail-pierced hands, Hold out to us, And offer to us, To receive it in simple, Childlike, Humble faith, To take you as our own, You are all that we need, You are all that we need, And we come to you now, Have mercy we pray, In your name, Amen, Amen, We're going to, Conclude, By singing once again, Praise, 458, Man of sorrows, What a name, Amen.

Sinners to declare, hallelujah, what a sinner.

Bitting shame, unsovereign good, in my place, strong and peace stood.

[43 : 57] Seal my garden with his blood, hallelujah, what a Savior.

Guilty, my hand, helpless me, songless crown of God was he.

Full at all, let count it be, hallelujah, what a Savior.

Lifted up was he to die, his finish was his cry.

Man in heaven, exalted high, hallelujah, what a Savior.

[45 : 02] Then he comes, the glorious King, all his crowns are called to bring.

Then I knew his song we'll sing, hallelujah, what a Savior.

And now may grace, mercy and peace from almighty God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit be with you all. Now and forevermore. Amen.

Amen.