**Matthew 27:27-31 March 29-30, 2022**

**The Wounds of Mockery**

Grace to you and peace from God our Father, and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

 When a pastor writes a sermon we do our best to think of ways to apply the text to every day life, to reference something that pertains to the main theme or point in which we are making so best to apply the text to your life as well as to inform you of what is being said and the theological implications of it rather than just report on it like any other piece of information. Just a few days ago, actor Will Smith walked onto the stage at the Academy Awards and slapped comedian Chris Rock in the face because he was telling jokes and mocking his wife’s hair. Whether you watched it or not, and my guess is you didn’t I’m not sure of many who do watch the Academy Awards live, this particular event on that night has taken the world by storm. People were outraged and appalled to see such violence over something as seemingly insignificant as mockery, mockery that wasn’t as harsh as it could have possibly been when we think of comedians who say outrageous things. But the truth is, as we see tonight, in the Passion of Jesus Christ, as we’ve focused on wounds that were inflicted upon him for our sake and on account of our sin, wounds don’t need to be physical to hurt. To be betrayed twice was painful, to be denied and betrayed and treated with apathy hurts, but mockery hurts as much as physical blows in our own lives. Mockery led a man, in front of the entire world, at the risk of his career, to slap another man in the face. Mockery is the wound that Jesus faces tonight, at the hands of men who see him as nothing more than a false king, and this wound was something that Jesus willingly gave himself up to, a wound he willingly took, for us his children, so that we would not die eternally to sin.

Jokes are meant to be funny, that’s why we tell them, but some can hurt. We all like to laugh at jokes, but we don’t enjoy being the butt of jokes. The soldiers thought it was funny, this Peasant pretending to be a king. They decided to have some fun with His apparent delusion. They began by taking His clothing. He had to stand there naked as they mocked Him. Then they found a scarlet robe and draped it over His shoulders. **“There; now He is beginning to look like a king,”** they joked. **“But something is missing. He needs a crown!”** And so, another joke, a sadistic, violent, and horrendously painful one, but a joke in their eyes nonetheless, one of them thought up a crown for this peasant King from Galilee, a crown to teach Him a thing or two about His foolish dreams: a crown of entwining thorns. Hear the distant echo of those words of judgment God spoke to Adam in the Garden: *“Thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you.”* They smashed the crown down upon His head, and the thorns drew blood. It’s the inverse of what we see in our world, the mockery of others is done without thinking there would be a response, but their mockery is leading for Jesus to curse them as so many probably did before him who were treated so scornfully by these Roman guards. But his response was not what they had hoped for. He was silent to their taunts, the mockery, and the jeers.

Then someone came up with another joke, another insult, another missing item: **“A king needs a scepter!”** They scrounged around and found a reed, and put it in His hand. They stepped back to admire the finished product: blood running down His face from the thorns piercing His brow, His naked body barely covered with the scarlet robe, and a flimsy reed that flopped this way and that in His hand. **“Behold, the man who would be king,”** they said. Laughing with scorn, they fell on their knees. *“Hail, King of the Jews,”* they cried. Still, He looked on in silence as their mockery turned vicious. He would not play along with them, so He would pay. They began to spit on Him to show their utter contempt for Him. They took His scepter and whipped His head with it. **“Some scepter. Some kingdom. You are nothing. You are about to die, King of the Jews!”**

As He looked at them, these men missed the depth of His pity for them, for those who wounded Him with mockery, who tried to shame Him, who prepared to torture and murder Him. It’s not fun and games if someone isn’t going along with gentle teasing or ribbing, if someone is hurt and you are hoping to make them feel bad that’s when it turns to mockery and abuse. Look into His eyes, though, and you will see a depth of pity and love that will shake you to your core. It is a mere human trait, common to all of fallen humanity, to love your friends and to seek to do them good. But to love your enemies? To have nothing but pity and compassion for those who taunt you and are preparing to kill you? That is the mark of the heavenly Friend, our Lord Jesus Christ.

Hear the words of the specific verse we highlight tonight from “O Sacred Head Now Wounded”, **What language shall I borrow** **To thank Thee, dearest Friend,
For this Thy dying sorrow, Thy pity without end?** There is no end to His love, His pity for them. The pity from the mocked King extends not only to those who tortured Him, but also to the entire human race, all of whom are complicit in His death on account of our own sins. Only a few hours later, He would say: *“Father forgive them, for they know not what they do.”*

Of course, the truth beyond all truths is that Jesus actually was King. Yes, Jesus was the long awaited Son of David. But even more, He was also the King of Gentiles and their Ruler. He is the One to whom the entire universe belongs. Every one of us, including those who mocked and shamed Him, owe our existence only to His will that we exist. You will never ponder the Passion correctly until you remember that a single thought from Jesus in his omnipotent power could have undone all those who sought His death; a single act could have destroyed us all. What a fine joke that would be, that these supposed powerful men who were beating up an innocent prisoner would get their what they deserved, to have crowns of thorns on their heads, to have a legion of angels come and destroy them for their insolence, their brutality, their violence and mockery. All it would take is one thought! But all He returns is love, pity, and mercy. That is what fills Him. That is who Jesus is. And that is how He reigns as King. He rules in love: a love that hatred cannot conquer.

Jesus was determined to share fully in the lot we have chosen for ourselves. We were destined to lives of glory and majesty; that was what God wanted for us. But we threw all of that away and embraced instead the path of suffering and death. But He would not have that be our end. He came to walk that path as King so that, through His suffering, all that we lost might be restored to us again. Jesus was stripped of His clothing that our naked sinfulness might be clothed in the robe of His righteousness. He wore the crown of thorns, that we might wear the crown of eternal life. He was beaten and mocked, that we might be welcomed and treasured. The love of Christ overcomes all hatred and mockery, and remains love, so that a way would be opened for us to return from this misery of sin and death to the kingdom the Father planned for us from the beginning.

Jesus walked that suffering road in kingly fashion. None of the mockery can take from Him His majesty, His glory, His peace. He carries out every act of His Passion in burning love for the fallen race of men so that we might be restored. He chooses to lay down His life that we might live in Him. Such love on His part creates love on ours. That is why we sing:

**O make me Thine forever! And should I fainting be, Lord, let me never, never, Outlive my love for Thee.** Behold your King! Behold, beneath the blood and the blows, the eyes that look upon you with tender compassion. He does this for you, in undeserved love, that you would live with Him forever. The final joke, the last bit of mockery that comes from Satan’s lips is that we would ever be saved, but it is God who gets the last laugh. The final scene of triumph, the judgment upon evil and Satan and death when Christ rises from the dead. That Christ dies for the sins of the men who mock him, and dies for our sins as well. There is no greater victory than that. Amen.

The peace of God which surpasses all human understanding keep our hearts and minds through faith in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Amen.