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A WORD FROM PASTOR JIM



Mark 15:15-39

Witnesses: Roman Soldiers

Sunday, March 22, 2020

Rev. Jim Brookshire

Dogs surround me; a pack of evil people circle me like a lion - oh, my poor hands and feet! I can count all my bones! Meanwhile, they just stare at me, watching me. They divvy up my garments among themselves; they cast lots for my clothes. But you, Lord! Don't be far away! You are my strength! Come quick and help me!


Psalm 22:16-19 (CEB)



Something to Think About:

The Roman soldiers were just doing their jobs. Every Roman crucifixion called for a deployment of three or four Roman soldiers whose job it was to nail the victim to the cross, lift and drop the 200 pound cross (with its victim) into a pre-prepared hole, and then to do whatever else was necessary to strip the victim of any/all remaining dignity. This was their job; they did it well. It was no different with Jesus who was thought by most to be a common criminal—guilty of blasphemy and getting what he deserved. The soldiers were just doing their jobs...



 **Study Guide:** Read the text. Read it again more slowly this time. Write nothing. Simply pause and reflect emotionally and intellectually on what you've just read.

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In verse 15, Mark tells us that Jesus was flogged. Yet, he provides no details. Details were unnecessary because everyone in the ancient world (Mark's readers) knew precisely what a flogging was all about. Take the time to research "ancient Roman flogging" (Google is a good place to start) so you, too, can grasp the intensity of this punishment. Write your reflections below:

continued on page 3

Mark gives us lots of details regarding the soldiers' mock coronation of Jesus (verses 16-20). Why do you think Mark emphasizes this scene, and what does it say about us as human beings?

Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King once said, "*Darkness cannot drive out darkness: only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate: only love can do that.*" How do you interpret Dr. King's remarks...and where do you see a connection with Mark's telling of Jesus' crucifixion?

Matthew (27:35), Mark (15:24) and Luke (23:34) all agree that the soldiers gambled for Jesus' clothing. As they gambled, the Son of God was only a few feet away, laying down his life in the single greatest act in human history. What are the distractions in your life that keep you from seeing God at work in your midst? What can you do to eliminate those distractions and see God more clearly?





Sedgefield United Methodist Church

2830 Dorchester Place

Charlotte, NC 28209

704-523-0077

office@SedgefieldChurch.org

SedgefieldChurch.org



Pastor

Rev. Jim Brookshire

PastorJim@SedgefieldChurch.org

704-232-4878



Director of Children's Ministry

Mary Jo Bridges

marycbridges@yahoo.com

704-617-4056

