



ENCOUNTER

Toward Sacrifice
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Discussion Notes
The Crossing Church
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OPENING

We are making a transition on our journey through the Gospel of Mark. While the first half of Mark centers on Identity - Who Jesus Is, the second half is about His Purpose. Jesus' ultimate purpose is to give His life on the cross. We are getting up close and personal with the life of Christ on this path that has the potential to change our lives. God is offering us hope, change and life. As we conclude the Encounter series, remember, the closer we get to Him, the more our lives will change.

SCRIPTURE¹

Acts 8:26-35 Now an angel of the Lord said to Philip, "Go south to the road – the desert road – that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza." So he started out, and on his way he met an Ethiopian eunuch, an important official in charge of all the treasury of the Kandake. This man had gone to Jerusalem to worship, and on his way home was sitting in his chariot reading the Book of Isaiah the prophet. The Spirit told Philip, "Go to that chariot and stay near it." Then Philip ran up to the chariot and heard the man reading Isaiah the prophet. "Do you understand what you are reading?" Philip asked. "How can I," he said, "unless someone explains it to me?" So he invited Philip to come up and sit with him. This is the passage of Scripture the eunuch was reading: "He was led like a sheep to the slaughter, and as a lamb before its shearer is silent, so he did not open his mouth. In his humiliation he was deprived of justice. Who can speak of his descendants? For his life was taken from the earth." "Tell me, please, who is the prophet talking about, himself or someone else?" Then Philip began with that very passage of Scripture and told him the good news about Jesus.

Isaiah 42:1-4 "Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen one in whom I delight; I will put my Spirit on him and he will bring justice to the nations. He will not shout or cry out, or raise his voice in the streets. A bruised reed he will not break, a smoldering wick he will not snuff out. In faithfulness he will bring forth justice; he will not falter or be discouraged till he establishes justice on earth, in his teaching the islands will put their hope."

Mark 15:32-47 "Let this Christ, this King of Israel, come down now from the cross, that we may see and believe." Those crucified with him also heaped insults on him. At the sixth hour darkness came over the whole land until the ninth hour. And at the ninth hour Jesus cried out in a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?" – which means, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" When some of those standing near heard this they said, "Listen, he's calling Elijah." One man ran, filled a sponge with wine vinegar, put it on a stick, and offered it to Jesus to drink. "Now leave him alone. Let's see if Elijah comes to take him down," he said. With a loud cry, Jesus breathed his last. The curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. And when the centurion, who stood there in front of Jesus, heard his cry and saw how he died, he said, "Surely this man was the Son of God!" ... It was Preparation Day, (that is the day before the Sabbath). So as evening approached, Joseph of Arimathea, a prominent member of the Council, who was himself waiting for the kingdom of God, went boldly to Pilate and asked for Jesus' body. Pilate was surprised to hear that he was already dead. Summoning the centurion, he asked him if Jesus had already died. When he learned from the centurion that it was so, he gave the body to Joseph. So Joseph brought some linen cloth, took down the body, wrapped it in the linen, and placed it in a tomb cut out of rock. Then he rolled a stone against the entrance of the tomb.

¹ All scripture is NIV unless otherwise noted.



OBSERVATION

God has sent Philip to witness to an Ethiopian eunuch who was in the bondage of disability and inferiority. He had traveled to Jerusalem in search of God, but was turned away from the Temple because he was "unclean". Philip recognized his confusion and explained Isaiah 42 and 53 which contained prophecies about the Messiah of Israel. The magnificence and impact of these prophecies are understood when we realize that they were written 750 years before the actual event, yet they accurately describe the passion, death and purpose of our Savior. He died on a cross, in ignominy. Yet it was His great victory! This divine appointment changed the life of the Ethiopian as his spiritual eyes were opened to the reality of Jesus' work of redemption.

Question: Tell us about a time when you suffered a disability. How did Jesus help you to change your perspective of it?

APPLICATION

Our scriptures this week describe the obedient evangelism of Philip, the bondage of a man seeking Jesus yet suffering from feelings of unworthiness and inferiority, and it answers the question: Who is Jesus?

Question: So what is the answer to the question: Who is Jesus to you? This question involves introspection and an evaluation of how you relate and respond to Him.

Question: When you first heard Pastor Lee ask you "On a scale of 1-100, how good a person are you?" What was your initial reaction? Why?

The death of Jesus is at the heart of true Christianity and the one universal symbol of our faith is the cross. It is its substance and significance that bear its life-changing power. The cross is why Jesus came. It is where our sins were forgiven and Satan was defeated for eternity. Jesus' heel was bruised by as the stake went through His heels, but Satan's head was crushed by the cross.

Question: In what ways are you able to overcome evil with good?

Question: In what ways do you plan to put others' needs ahead of your own?

So, we have discovered Jesus' true identity and His true purpose. The cross is God's unexpected answer to the question of Who He really is and how His grace really wins. When we realize the length to which God went in experiencing a voluntary, violent death in order to forgive our sin, we have no alternative but to identify Him as our Messiah whose purpose was to save the world.

Question: As this study of the Gospel of Mark ends, we understand Jesus' identity and purpose, but what are your identity and purpose?

We are not inferior or superior, we are all equally children of God. Jesus is calling us to put others ahead of ourselves, just as He submitted to the cross when He put us ahead of Himself.

Question: In what ways are you planning to love an enemy in your life?

Question: Specifically, in what ways are you going to serve and sacrifice for others?

Paul says in **Colossians 2:13-14**: When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, having cancelled the charge of our legal indebtedness, which stood against us and condemned us; he has taken it away, nailing it to the cross.

PRAYER Heavenly Father, when we realize the identity of Jesus and His true purpose in coming into our world, we have no alternative but to bow in worship and thanksgiving. Help us to turn our gratitude, our time and efforts to serving You. In Jesus' name. Amen.