

John 19 - Condemned and Crucified¹

Before the Lesson: Prepare the handout of the Suffering Servant passage for the information session. It also has the lyrics to the hymn “Man of Sorrows, What a Name” to be used for the Transformational Exercise. Prepare a video or other recording of this hymn. One example is here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VOERAakDs5M&t=68s>

Fellowship question: (Use *one* of these to break the ice, to begin some discussion, and to lead into the study):

- a. Do you wear a cross? If so, is there a story behind this? (Was it a gift? Does it remind you of a special location? etc.)
- b. Do you have a cross hanging in your home or office? Is there a story behind this? (Was it a gift? Does it remind you of a special location? etc.)

Information

Last week, we saw the tit-for-tat argument between Pilate and the Jewish leaders. That story continues today.

- Have a class member read John 19:1-3

“By making Jesus look ridiculous and impotent, Pilate is both showing that he is no political threat and mocking the seriousness with which the Jewish leaders take him.”²

- Have a class member read John 19:4-8

Why was Pilate “more afraid than ever”?

“Pilate’s fear may be inspired not only by recognizing the wider implications for himself if the chief priests, his allies in ruling this province, vehemently persist in staking their whole law-centered identity and the relationship with him on this demand. His fear may also be due to the impact of the presence of Jesus before him.”³

- Have a class member read John 19:9-12

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² David F. Ford, *The Gospel of John: A Theological Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2021), 370.

³ Ford, 371.

What dynamics of “power” do you see in this passage?

Jesus “has” power, but he is “releasing” that power to fulfill God’s plan.

The earliest Christian hymn we have is found in one of Paul’s letters. It refers to this “power-releasing” humility that Jesus demonstrated.

- Have a class member read Philippians 2:5-8.

Pilate “has power to release and power to crucify,” but he does not have the courage to “release” Jesus from this trial.

- Have a class member read John 19:13-16a

“The place is the seat of Roman power, the time is one of the holiest of the Jewish year. On this ‘day,’ it is about ‘noon’ (the Greek uses the key term ‘hour’) the Passover lambs are being killed.”⁴

“Their answer, ‘We have no king but the emperor,’ is their final rejection, not only of Jesus, but of the very belief in a messianic king or in God as king. In their moment of victory in persuading Pilate to crucify Jesus, they also capitulate to him and the emperor he represents.”⁵

The earliest Christians were Jews. Part of their scripture was the book of Isaiah, which has several Suffering Servant Songs in Isaiah, including one in chapters 52 and 53.

- Have a class member read Isaiah 52:13-53:12.

The Jews saw themselves as this suffering servant.

“Israel is in this literature exactly *the humiliated (exiled) people* who by the powerful intervention of Yahweh is about to become *the exalted (restored) people of Zion*. Thus the drama is the drama of Israel and more specifically of Jerusalem.”⁶

Christians read this passage and cannot help but think it is a prophecy about Jesus.

There is a sense in which it is both: “Both Jews and Christians have seen, in quite particular ways, the capacity and willingness of this God *to do something new through suffering*...Newness

⁴ Ford, 373.

⁵ Ford, 374.

⁶ Walter Brueggeman, *Isaiah 40-66* (Louisville: Westminster Bible Companion, 1998), 143.

through suffering is the gospel that attests to *the power of God* at work *through human weakness* to bring to fruition God's intention for the world."⁷

"This very one - this marred, dismissed nobody - took on himself disabilities and diseases, hurts caused by sin, punishments. By taking all this on, this servant was wounded, crushed, and bruised - and 'we' were healed! The poetry cannot be reduced to a rational formula. It must remain poetry that glides over rational reservation. We are not told how hurt and guilt can be reassigned and redeployed from one to another. We are not told how the suffering of one makes healing possible for another. But it is so here; 'we' have thus been healed and made whole. We are in this pastorally delicate transaction that is at the core of salvific faith, a mystery with which Christian faith has endlessly struggled through competing theories of atonement. This poet offers no such theory. Instead, the poem offers a confession, an admission, a dazzlement, and an acknowledgement. It is this deeply Jewish affirmation that has been transposed for us into the mystery of new life in Christ."⁸

Transformational Exercise

To conclude our lesson, I will read the rest of John 19, the story of Jesus' crucifixion, death, and burial. Then, we will listen together to the hymn, "Man of Sorrow, What a Name." You may follow along with the lyrics at the bottom of your Suffering Servant handout.

- Read John 19:16b-42.

Following the reading, play the song, "Man of Sorrows, What A Name." There are several versions on YouTube. I like this one:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VOERAakDs5M&t=68s>

After the hymn, close in a prayer: *God, you sent Jesus to live with us, to love us, and to save us. The world rejected Jesus. We are still tempted to choose darkness over light. Forgive us. Save us. Change us. Amen.*

⁷ Brueggeman, 144.

⁸ Brueggeman, 145f.

Isaiah 52: The Suffering Servant (NRSVUE)

13 See, my servant shall prosper;
 he shall be exalted and lifted up
 and shall be very high.
14 Just as there were many who were astonished at him
 —so marred was his appearance, beyond human semblance,
 and his form beyond that of mortals—
15 so he shall startle many nations;
 kings shall shut their mouths because of him,
for that which had not been told them they shall see,
 and that which they had not heard they shall contemplate.

53:1 Who has believed what we have heard?
 And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?
2 For he grew up before him like a young plant
 and like a root out of dry ground;
he had no form or majesty that we should look at him,
 nothing in his appearance that we should desire him.
3 He was despised and rejected by others;
 a man of suffering and acquainted with infirmity,
and as one from whom others hide their faces
 he was despised, and we held him of no account.

4 Surely he has borne our infirmities
 and carried our diseases,
yet we accounted him stricken,
 struck down by God, and afflicted.
5 But he was wounded for our transgressions,
 crushed for our iniquities;
upon him was the punishment that made us whole,
 and by his bruises we are healed.
6 All we like sheep have gone astray;
 we have all turned to our own way,
and the Lord has laid on him
 the iniquity of us all.

7 He was oppressed, and he was afflicted,
 yet he did not open his mouth;
like a lamb that is led to the slaughter
 and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent,
 so he did not open his mouth.
8 By a perversion of justice he was taken away.
 Who could have imagined his future?
For he was cut off from the land of the living,
 stricken for the transgression of my people.
9 They made his grave with the wicked

and his tomb with the rich,
although he had done no violence,
and there was no deceit in his mouth.

10 Yet it was the will of the Lord to crush him with affliction.
When you make his life an offering for sin,
he shall see his offspring and shall prolong his days;
through him the will of the Lord shall prosper.

11 Out of his anguish he shall see;
he shall find satisfaction through his knowledge.
The righteous one, my servant, shall make many righteous,
and he shall bear their iniquities.

12 Therefore I will allot him a portion with the great,
and he shall divide the spoil with the strong,
because he poured out himself to death
and was numbered with the transgressors,
yet he bore the sin of many
and made intercession for the transgressors.

Man of sorrows, what a name
for the Son of God, who came
ruined sinners to reclaim:
Hallelujah, what a Savior!

Bearing shame and scoffing rude,
in my place condemned he stood,
sealed my pardon with his blood:
Hallelujah, what a Savior!

Guilty, helpless, lost were we;
blameless Lamb of God was he,
sacrificed to set us free:
Hallelujah, what a Savior!

He was lifted up to die;
"It is finished" was his cry;
now in heaven exalted high:
Hallelujah, what a Savior!

When he comes, our glorious King,
all his ransomed home to bring,
then anew this song we'll sing:
Hallelujah, what a Savior!