

Introduction

1. Sing “The Old Rugged Cross” in *Celebrating Grace* #185
2. Read Mk 15:21-32.

A. The Walk to the Cross (21-22)

1. A Helper (21)
 - a. As part of the softening-up process before crucifixion, the condemned man had to carry his own cross, at least the crossbeam, to the place of execution.
 - b. Jesus had been so severely beaten that He did not have enough strength to carry it all the way.
 - c. Simon of Cyrene was forced by the Romans to help Jesus.
 - 1) Simon was the “father of Alexander and Rufus”
 - a) In Ro 16:13 Paul says for the church at Rome to “Greet Rufus, chosen in the Lord, and his mother, who has been a mother to me, too.”
 - b) While Rufus was a fairly common name, the traditional view is that this Rufus was the son of Simon of Cyrene.
 - c) It is also tradition that Simon became a believer after carrying Jesus’ cross and led his family to faith as well.
 - d) This part of the crucifixion story would have added a personal connection for Mark’s Roman audience.
 - 2) Simon was “. . . on his way in from the country”
 - a) Simon was most likely a Jew on his way into Jerusalem for Passover.
 - b) Warren Wiersbe confirms, “Simon had come to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover (Acts 2:10; 6:9), and he ended up meeting the Passover Lamb! We have good reason to believe that Simon trusted the Savior and went home and led his two sons to the Lord. No doubt many of Mark’s Roman readers knew Alexander and Rufus (Rom. 16:13), and perhaps they had even known Simon” (Wiersbe, *Be Diligent*, 178).
 - 3) Cyrene is located in North Africa (cf., Acts 2:10). Simon may have been a pilgrim, or he may have lived nearby having moved to Palestine from Cyrene. There are also some traditions that he was a black, Jewish proselyte.
 - 4) The Romans “forced him to carry the cross.”
 - a) Remember Jesus’ gracious teaching about this type of forced labor that the Jews detested.
 - b) “If anyone forces you to go one mile, go with them two miles” (Mt 5:41).
2. The Place of Crucifixion (22)
 - a. Golgotha in Aramaic/Hebrew means “skull.”
 - b. This was believed to be a rocky hilltop resembling a human skull.
 - 1) There is a hill with these characteristics still visible in Jeruslaem today.
 - 2) It is known as Gordon’s Calvary and is located outside the Damascus gate on the north wall of the city.
 - 3) Currently, it can be found just above the main bus depot in Jerusalem.
 - c. Another more likely location for the crucifixion is inside the Church of the Holy Sepulcher which lay outside the second wall on the northwest side of Jerusalem in Jesus’ day.
 - d. Wiersbe notes, “We do not know the exact place where our Lord was crucified, nor is it important that we know. He was crucified outside the city walls, the place of rejection (Heb. 13:12-13), and He died for the sins of the world” (Wiersbe, 179).

B. The Crucifixion (23-26)

1. “Then they offered him wine mixed with myrrh, but he did not take it” (23)
 - a. The condemned prisoner was typically given a narcotic-like mixture to deaden some of the pain.
 - b. William Lane writes, “According to an old tradition, respected women of Jerusalem provided a narcotic drink to those condemned to death in order to decrease their sensitivity to the excruciating pain (TB *Sanhedrin* 43a). This human practice was begun in response to the biblical injunction of Prov. 31:6-7: ‘Give strong drink to him who is perishing, and wine to those in bitter distress; let them drink and forget their poverty, and remember their misery no more.’ . . . When Jesus arrived at Golgotha he was offered, presumably by the women since this was Jewish rather than a Roman custom, wine mixed with myrrh, but he refused it, choosing to endure with full consciousness the suffering appointed for him (cf., Ch. 10:38; 14:36)” (William Lane, *The Gospel of Mark*, 564).
 - c. Remember Jesus’ words at the Last Supper concerning wine, “I tell you, I will not drink from this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father’s kingdom” (Mt 26:29, Lk 22:18).
 - d. Jesus took no short-cuts and suffered the full force of the pain for our iniquities.
2. “And they crucified him” (24a)
 - a. We understand the horror and pain of crucifixion, but Mark provides no description other than to say Jesus was crucified.
 - b. Readers in that day would have understood what this meant without need of explanation.
 - c. James Brooks comments, “Unlike some modern sermons, no attempt is made to describe the physical sufferings of Jesus. Far more important for Mark was the significance of those sufferings” (James Brooks, *Mark*, 255).
3. “. . . Dividing up his clothes, they cast lots to see what each would get” (24b)
 - a. The Roman soldiers supplemented their pay with plunder taken from the condemned man.
 - b. “They divide my clothes among them and cast lots for my garment” (Ps 22:18).
4. “It was nine in the morning when they crucified him” (25) – Wiersbe notes, “Three specific hours are mentioned in this section of Mark: the third (Mark 15:25), the sixth (Mark 15:33), and the ninth (Mark 15:33-34). The Jews reckoned time from 6:00am to 6:00pm, so this means that the third hour was 9:00am, the sixth hour noon, and the ninth hour 3:00pm” (Wiersbe, 177-78).
5. “The written notice of the charge against him read: THE KING OF THE JEWS” (26)
 - a. The condemned man typically wore a placard/sign announcing his crime to on-lookers.
 - b. “Pilate had a notice prepared and fastened to the cross. It read: JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS. Many of the Jews read this sign, for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city, and the sign was written in Aramaic, Latin and Greek. The chief priests of the Jews protested to Pilate, ‘Do not write ‘The King of the Jews,’ but that this man claimed to be king of the Jews.’ Pilate answered, ‘What I have written, I have written’” (Jn 19:19-22).
 - c. Pilate stood his ground against the objection of the Jews on this point at least.

C. On the Cross (27-32)

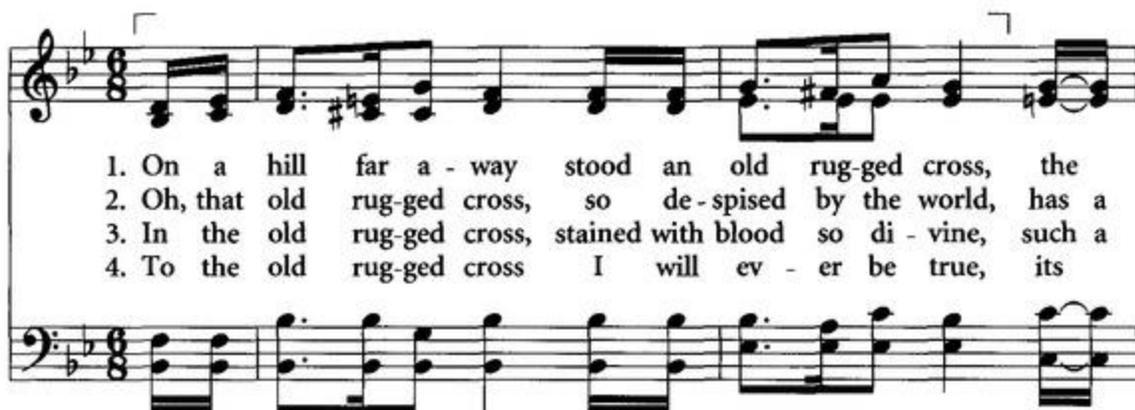
1. Those with Jesus
 - a. “They crucified two rebels with him.” (27)
 - 1) “rebel” (Gk., *lestas*) is used of one leading a rebellion or insurrection.
 - 2) Perhaps these men had been compatriots of Barabbas in his attempted uprising (cf., Mk 15:7), and Barabbas had been scheduled to be crucified where Jesus now hung.
 - 3) Jesus asked those who came to arrest Him if they thought he was leading a rebellion.
 - 4) “‘Am I leading a rebellion,’ said Jesus, ‘that you have come out with swords and clubs to capture me?’” (Mk 14:48).
 - b. One rebel was crucified on Jesus’ right and the other on His left.
 - 1) This is a fulfillment of Is 53:12: “Therefore I will give him a portion among the great, and he will divide the spoils with the strong, because he poured out his life unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors. For he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.”
 - 2) The places on the right and the left are normally places of honor which are to be filled with honorable men.

- 3) Remember that James and John's requested these places from Jesus. "Then James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came to him. 'Teacher,' they said, 'we want you to do for us whatever we ask.' 'What do you want me to do for you?' he asked. They replied, 'Let one of us sit at your right and the other at your left in your glory.' 'You don't know what you are asking,' Jesus said. 'Can you drink the cup I drink or be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with?'" (Mk 10:35-38)
 - 4) The places of honor in God's kingdom are places of sacrifice and suffering.
2. The Insults and Mocking
- a. Many travelers that happened by mocked Jesus.
 - 1) The crucifixion was done beside a public road as a disincentive to rebellion.
 - 2) "Those who passed by hurled insults (Gk., *eblasphemoun* – blasphemed) at him, shaking their heads and saying, 'So! You who are going to destroy the temple and build it in three days, come down from the cross and save yourself!'" (29b)
 - 3) Shaking heads was a sign of contempt (Isa 37:22, Jer 18:16).
 - 4) The one accused of blasphemy was blasphemed. Those accusing Jesus of blasphemy were the real blasphemers! Oh, the irony!
 - b. The chief priests and the teachers of the law mocked (Gk., *empaizontes*) Him as well.
 - 1) "He saved (Gk. *sozo*) others . . . but he can't save himself! Let this Messiah, this king of Israel, come down now from the cross, that we may see and believe" (31b-32a)
 - 2) They use of the Greek verb *sozo* points to Jesus' physical healing miracles, but the sense in which Mark uses this verb points to Jesus' ultimate spiritual healing ministry that was taking place on the cross.
 - 3) See Mk 14:61 – This follows that question.
 - 4) No other sign quote from Jesus in Mk 8:11-12. Faith not based on sight. Irony again!
 - 5) Perhaps a final temptation from Satan to give up suffering and take what was rightfully His against the Father's will.
 - 6) Jesus could have saved Himself, but he chose not to do so (cf., Mk 14:36).
 - c. "Those crucified with him also heaped insults on him" (32b) – One thief apparently had a change of heart per Lk 23:39-43. He moved from insult to trust.
 - d. "They mocked Him as Prophet (Mark 15:29), as Savior (Mark 15:31), and as King (Mark 15:32)" (Wiersbe, 180). Of course, Jesus was all of these!
 - e. Again the irony of the words of the mockers and the charge listed on the placard is revealed in Mark.

D. Questions/Thoughts for Reflection

1. We must take up our crosses with Jesus daily as we follow Him daily (cf., Mk 8:xx)/
2. We must help others when their burdens become too heavy not because we have to but because of the love of God within us.
3. We must not shirk our duties, take short-cuts, or find the easy way out when serving God.
4. We may not be saved from persecution and death, but we must endure it faithfully as the Father wills it.
5. It is never too late to come to faith up to the point of death, but why wait?
6. An Old Testament perspective on "The Old Rugged Cross": Read Psalm 22.

The Old Rugged Cross



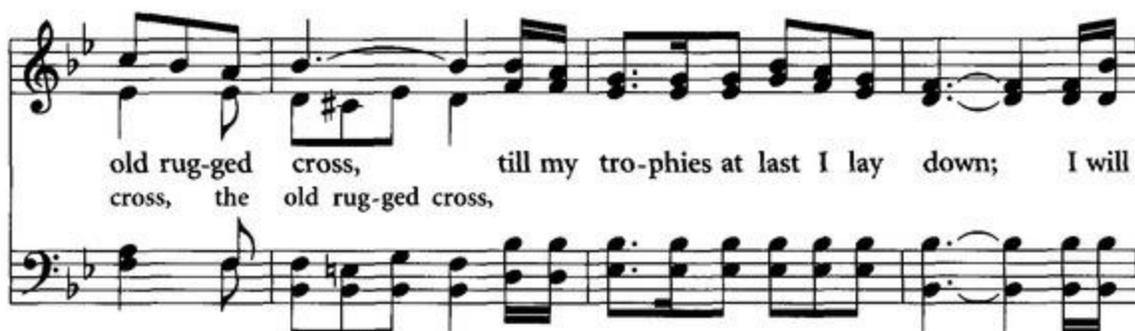
1. On a hill far a - way stood an old rug-ged cross, the
 2. Oh, that old rug-ged cross, so de-spised by the world, has a
 3. In the old rug-ged cross, stained with blood so di - vine, such a
 4. To the old rug-ged cross I will ev - er be true, its



em - blem of suf - fering and shame; and I love that old cross where the
 won - drous at - trac - tion for me; for the dear Lamb of God left His
 won - der - ful beau - ty I see; for 'twas on that old cross Je - sus
 shame and re - proach glad - ly bear; then He'll call me some day to my



dear - est and best for a world of lost sin - ners was slain.
 glo - ry a - bove, to bear it to dark Cal - va - ry. So I'll cher-ish the
 suf - fered and died, to par - don and sanc - ti - fy me.
 home far a - way, where His glo - ry for - ev - er I'll share.



old rug-ged cross, till my tro-phies at last I lay down; I will
 cross, the old rug-ged cross,

WORDS: George Bennard, 1912
 MUSIC: George Bennard, 1912

OLD RUGGED CROSS
 Irregular with refrain