

Teaching Plan EXPLORE THE BIBLE

Date: April 21, 2019 (Easter)

Lesson Title: "Saves"

Lesson Passage: Mark 15:27-29 (31-32,37-39)

ABOUT THIS LESSON

Continuing our studies in Mark's Gospel, this lesson leads us into the shadow of the cross as we look at the story of the crucifixion, the necessary prelude to the glorious story of Jesus' resurrection. As we study Mark's account of the death of Jesus, we will examine the divergent attitudes of the onlookers who stood around the cross. (NOTE: We have added a few verses to the Lesson Passage, to include all the onlookers.)

TEACHING/LEARNING GOALS

(1) Describe the attitudes of the soldiers, the passersby, the chief priests, and the Roman centurion as they witnessed the crucifixion. (2) Differentiate between the religious and the political meanings of the inscription, "The King of the Jews."

BEGINNING THE LESSON

Observe that natural disasters (floods, tornadoes, earthquakes) produce varied reactions in people: Some see these catastrophic events as an opportunity for rendering services to others--admin-istering first-aid to the injured, providing shelter and food for the homeless, helping to pick up debris. But others see in such disasters opportunities to profit from the misfortune of others, looting their abandoned homes and stores, robbing those who have already lost so much. And some are neither helpful nor harmful. They are just idle spectators, driving through damaged neighborhoods, taking photo-graphs, satisfying their curiosity. Then make this point: The people at the scene of the crucifixion also responded in different ways to the tragedy of the cross. Some sympathized with Jesus, but some taunted him. And others looked on in cold indifference. And at least one onlooker was struck with awe. As we study this lesson, we'll take a closer look at some of those people around the cross.

TEACHING PROCEDURES

1. Identify four distinct kinds of persons, or groups of persons, mentioned in Mark's account of the crucifixion. As you read about each of these, jot their descriptions on the board: (1) The soldiers (Mk. 15:24). (2) The passersby (15:29-30). (3) The chief priests and scribes (15:31-32). (4) The centurion (15:37,39). Ask the class to suggest words or phrases describing the attitudes of each of these persons or groups of persons.

2. Comment on the attitude of the soldiers, sharing these thoughts: The words "callous" and "unfeeling" might describe the soldiers who actually carried out the crucifixion. Even though they treated Jesus cruelly, they were probably not motivated by personal malice or religious hatred. They were just doing their job. They probably had no idea who Jesus was; to them, he was just another criminal condemned to die. They had grown accustomed to seeing men die. APPLICATION: Even though we are not nearly so barbaric as those soldiers, do we

sometimes tend to regard the suffering of other human beings (the hungry, the homeless, the sin-ridden) with unfeeling indifference?

3. Describe the attitude exhibited by the passersby: There is something in human nature that sometimes finds it interesting to see other human beings suffer. How else can we explain the throngs who have gathered to witness executions throughout history--beheadings in medieval England, death by guillotine during the French Revolution, witch burnings in Colonial America, hangings in the old West. Those who passed by the cross of Jesus were no different. Their sadistic tendencies not quite satisfied, they added to Jesus' suffering by taunting him (v. 29). APPLICATION: Is it this same instinct that prompts some people to take delight in making fun of physically or mentally handicapped people?

5. Focus on the chief priests and scribes: They might best be described as spiritually blind. Consider the criticisms they hurled at Jesus: "He saved others; he cannot save himself" (v. 31). (How true! He did save others; more than these Jewish leaders ever knew. And, true, he could not save himself because his obedience to the will of God bound him to the cross.) Little did they understand that they were daring him (in v. 32) to do the very thing that would have doomed their world to eternal condemnation.

6. Finally, call attention to the centurion's reaction: On the lips of a pagan Gentile, the words "this man was the Son of God" could have meant "he was a son of a god" or, in the words of Luke, "this was a righteous man" (Lk. 23:47, KJV). It might be stretching the evidence too far to claim that the centurion was converted. But, at any rate, he was filled with awe as Jesus died. His attitude stood in sharp contrast to that of the Jews, the chief priests, the scribes, and the other soldiers.

CLOSING THE LESSON

Call attention to the inscription that was placed on the cross, "The King of the Jews" (v. 26), and point out that neither Pilate nor the chief priests knew how true the inscription was.

Observe that this truth is appropriately caught up in the words of the hymn, "All Hail the Power of Jesus' Name." (Let the class sing or read the first and third stanzas.)

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