

REDISCOVER JESUS, PART 85: "THE GOSPEL OF JESUS CHRIST"

LUKE 23:13-49

Ps. Jeffrey Susila

Personal Introduction

Hi everyone. If you don't know me, I'm Jeff - one of the pastors at HMCC of Jakarta. And it's my privilege to be preaching the Word of God for us today during Good Friday.

Sermon Series Introduction

We're currently in Part 85 of our sermon series called "Rediscover Jesus," where we're going through the Gospel of Luke together.

Before we get started, let me pray for us again...

"Heavenly Father, we're so thankful for this special day where we're able to remember what you've done for us. Jesus, you sacrificially gave your life, so that we may have life. Holy Spirit, may you open our hearts, as we're reminded of your Gospel truths. We thank you, God. We love you. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen."

Sermon Introduction

What makes certain news... good news?

We may not always be aware of this, but there's so much news that many of us receive each day. But what makes us receive certain news as good news? (And not just neutral news).

Well... it's the fact that there's bad news... that we consider certain news as good news. Right? Otherwise, it'd all just be neutral news.

For example, I can say, "I arrived at my destination on time." That's just neutral news.

But what happens if I share the bad news first? "There was heavy rain, I had difficulties ordering Grab, some areas were flooded, roads were blocked, there was heavier traffic than usual, and I almost missed my flight at the airport. I could've been so late." But... "I arrived at my destination on time." Then... that news becomes good news!

Similarly, we can be tempted to see the Gospel (or the Good News) of Jesus Christ just as any other neutral news... and that's because we can forget that there's also bad news involved...

The bad news is that one day, there will be a day of judgment where we'll all be judged for all that we've done. And those who've sinned against God would be punished in Hell. So for us as sinners... that's bad news!

But the Good News is... Though there will be judgment, Jesus died in the place of sinners, so that those who believe in him will be saved.

The One Thing

***Though there will be judgment, Jesus died in the place of sinners,
so that those who believe in him will be saved.***

Scripture Introduction

If you have your Bibles with you, please turn to Luke 23:13-49.

For context - we're in the moments immediately before Jesus' crucifixion and death. And we saw how it's been a long night for Jesus:

- He was heartbreakingly... betrayed by one of his very own disciples.
- He was then arrested, and then blindfolded by the temple guards who then mocked him and beat him repeatedly.
- And then, at the crack of dawn, he was put on trial in front of the Jewish religious leaders who then accused him of blasphemy.
- And so they led Jesus to Pontius Pilate (the Roman authority over the province of Judea), and they accused Jesus of being a rival king (to Caesar) and that he's been misleading the Jewish people (and that he's leading a revolt).
 - But after examining Jesus, Pilate found him to be innocent - not guilty! But the people were not happy at all with Pilate's verdict!
- So when Pilate found out that Jesus was actually from Galilee, he sent him over to Herod (who's the Roman authority over the region of Galilee) - He's trying to pass the responsibility over to Herod... But then Herod also didn't find Jesus to be guilty.
 - And so Herod sent Jesus back to Pontius Pilate...

That's where we are in today's passage...

Scripture Reading

Let's read 23:13-49.

¹³ Pilate then called together the chief priests and the rulers and the people, ¹⁴ and said to them, "You brought me this man as one who was misleading the people. And after examining him before you, behold, I did not find this man guilty of any of your charges against him. ¹⁵ Neither did Herod, for he sent him back to us. Look, nothing deserving death has been done by him. ¹⁶ I will therefore punish and release him."

¹⁸ But they all cried out together, "Away with this man, and release to us Barabbas"— ¹⁹ a man who had been thrown into prison for an insurrection started in the city and for murder. ²⁰ Pilate addressed them once more, desiring to release Jesus, ²¹ but they kept shouting, "Crucify, crucify him!" ²² A third time he said to them, "Why? What evil has he done? I have found in him no guilt deserving death. I will therefore punish and release him." ²³ But they were urgent, demanding with loud cries that he should be crucified. And their voices prevailed. ²⁴ So Pilate decided that their demand should be granted. ²⁵ He released the man who had been thrown into prison for insurrection and murder, for whom they asked, but he delivered Jesus over to their will.

²⁶ And as they led him away, they seized one Simon of Cyrene, who was coming in from the country, and laid on him the cross, to carry it behind Jesus. ²⁷ And there followed him a great multitude of the people and of women who were mourning and lamenting for him. ²⁸ But turning to them Jesus said, "Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. ²⁹ For behold, the days are coming when they will say, 'Blessed are the barren and the wombs that never bore and the breasts that never nursed!' ³⁰ Then they will begin to say to the mountains, 'Fall on us,' and to the hills, 'Cover us.' ³¹ For if they do these things when the wood is green, what will happen when it is dry?"

³² Two others, who were criminals, were led away to be put to death with him. ³³ And when they came to the place that is called The Skull, there they crucified him, and the criminals, one on his right and one on his left. ³⁴ And Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." And they cast lots to divide his garments. ³⁵ And the people stood by, watching, but the rulers scoffed at him, saying, "He saved others; let him save himself, if he is the Christ of God, his Chosen One!" ³⁶ The soldiers also mocked him, coming up and offering him sour wine ³⁷ and saying, "If you are the King of the Jews, save yourself!" ³⁸ There was also an inscription over him, "This is the King of the Jews."

³⁹ One of the criminals who were hanged railed at him, saying, "Are you not the Christ? Save yourself and us!" ⁴⁰ But the other rebuked him, saying, "Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? ⁴¹ And we indeed justly, for we are receiving the due reward of our deeds; but this man has done nothing wrong." ⁴² And he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." ⁴³ And he said to him, "Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in paradise."

⁴⁴ It was now about the sixth hour, and there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour, ⁴⁵ while the sun's light failed. And the curtain of the temple was torn in two. ⁴⁶ Then Jesus, calling out with a loud voice, said, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit!" And having said this he breathed his last. ⁴⁷ Now when the centurion saw what had taken place, he praised God, saying, "Certainly this man was innocent!" ⁴⁸ And all the crowds that had assembled for this spectacle, when they saw what had taken place, returned home beating their breasts. ⁴⁹ And all his acquaintances and the women who had followed him from Galilee stood at a distance watching these things.

This is God's Word.

Overview

We'll take a look at this passage in 4 parts divided into 2 halves:

The bad news

- I. Our guilty state (vv. 13-25)
- II. Our deserved judgment (vv. 26-31)

The Good News

- III. Our substitute Savior (vv. 32-39)
- IV. Our proper response (vv. 40-49)

I. Our guilty state (vv. 13-25)

If we look back to what just happened - Herod just sent Jesus back to Pontius Pilate. And so Pilate knew that this meant that Herod also thought that Jesus was innocent (or else he wouldn't have been sent back, and would've been sentenced to death already).

Look at verse 13 - So Pilate called together all those who were accusing Jesus of insurrection - So he called the chief priests, the rulers, and the people to gather.

And he said to them, "After examining him before you, behold, I did not find this man guilty of any of your charges against him... Look, nothing deserving death has been done by him. I will therefore punish and release him."

- Now, from the other Gospel accounts, we know that Pilate knows what's actually going on here... He knew very well that the religious leaders had arrested Jesus merely out of envy (Matt. 27:18) - that Jesus was actually not a rebellious leader and that he's innocent. So he should be released.
- But... he also wanted to appease the crowd (who were against Jesus) - He doesn't want a revolt to happen during his watch. So he suggests that Jesus will still be punished - they'll still whip him (which is still brutal), but then afterwards Jesus would be released.
- He's trying to find the middle ground here...

And, at the time, there was a custom - that each year... during Passover... the Romans would release 1 prisoner (that's chosen by the people). So Pilate is suggesting that they should release Jesus (who he deems to be innocent).

But... the crowd was not having it!

Look at verse 18 - A mighty roar rose from the crowd, and with one voice they shouted, "Away with this man! (Kill him!) and release to us Barabbas!"

So at that same time, there was a man named Barabbas who was in prison for taking part in an insurrection against the government in Jerusalem. And not only is he in prison for the very crime that Jesus is being accused of, but he's also committed murder!

- But surprisingly, this is the person whom the people prefer to release instead of Jesus!

So Pilate argued with them - for a second time - he tried to persuade them to choose to release Jesus. But they kept shouting, "Crucify him! Crucify him!"

So for a third time, Pilate argued with them, "Why? What crime has he committed? I've found no reason to sentence him to death. So I'll have him whipped, and then I'll release him!" But the crowd (which is now turning into more of a mob) shouted louder and louder, "Crucify him! Crucify him!"

Imagine Pilate looking into a large crowd... everyone screaming at him. Imagine their shouts starting to crush Pilate... until he crumbled under the pressure, and the crowd's voices won out, and Pilate decided that their demand should be granted - he sentenced Jesus to die as they demanded.

Look at verse 25 - We then see an exchange taking place...

- Barabbas - who was in prison for insurrection and murder - was freed.
- Jesus - who was completely innocent - was condemned to death.

Now, we may be thinking: this is not fair! It should've been Barabbas crucified, not Jesus!

And you'd be right.

<pause>

Imagine a spectrum - on one end is true righteousness (pure innocence) and on the other end is guiltiness. If we're to put Jesus on one end of this spectrum, we'd put him all the way at the end that's innocent (because he's 100% righteous, and he's lived a life without sin). Now, if we're to put Barabbas on this spectrum, it'd probably be very close to the completely opposite end (as someone who's a rebel and a murderer).

So it's not fair that the guilty is freed, and the innocent is punished. Even with our limited understanding, we understand that the guilty should be the ones punished.

But... where would you put yourself on this spectrum? Maybe you'd put yourself somewhere in the middle (definitely not as righteous as Jesus, but definitely not as bad Barabbas either). Or maybe you'd put yourself somewhere closer to Jesus (you feel like you've done more good than bad).

But the truth is... we're significantly much much closer to Barabbas; we're more like him than we'd like to think. Because just like how Barabbas is a rebel. We're also rebels (perhaps not rebels against the government), but actually much much worse... because we're rebels against God.

<pause>

In the beginning, God created humanity in His own image. And we're to glorify Him, to fill the entire world with His glory / with His image. We're to worship our creator, and to worship Him alone.

- But instead... we've rebelled against Him (we've worshiped other things instead of Him)
 - For some of us, we've been worshiping ourselves as our own gods (either knowingly or unknowingly).
 - We try to build our own kingdom and legacy (not God's); we think that it's all about making a name for ourselves; that life is about our own happiness and pleasure... and about fulfilling all of our personal and worldly desires and ambitions (even above our desire to build God's Kingdom and to know Him more).
 - Or for some of us, we've worshiped other people as our gods.
 - Trying to receive recognition and approval from family members, friends, co-workers, or anyone (or everyone) else (trying to please man instead of God).
 - Even if that means following what the crowd says even when you know it's wrong (even when it dishonors God). [Teens, be careful of falling under peer pressure for the sake of gaining others' approval].

So you see... the way that we've rebelled against God may look different for each of us (it may not look like Barabbas). But though it may look different on the outside, it looks the same on the inside. Each of us have that heart of sinfulness inside of us - that heart of rebellion against God.

So the first part of the bad news is our guilty state. Next...

II. Our deserved judgment (vv. 26-31)

From the other Gospel accounts, we know that before Jesus was crucified... he was whipped (or scourged) with a lead-tipped whip (Mark 15:15) - This is a whip with pieces of metal at the end.

- This was designed to not only crush the body, but to tear off skin tissue, veins, and arteries.
- This ordeal would've left Jesus completely disfigured, even beyond human semblance (Isaiah 52:14).

That was the custom at the time - prisoners would be scourged before crucifixion. And some prisoners wouldn't even survive the scourging, they'd die even before they're crucified...

After Jesus was scourged, we know from the other Gospel accounts that he was made to carry his own cross. But Jesus' physical condition at this time most likely prevented him from being able to carry his own cross any further.

Look at verse 26 - the Roman soldiers seized a man named Simon, who's from Cyrene (which is present-day Libya in Northern Africa). They put the cross on him and made him carry it behind Jesus.

And following Jesus was also a great number of people and of women who were mourning and lamenting for him. After everything that they've seen Jesus go through it's not surprising that they'd be weeping for him...

But what's surprising is that at this time - when Jesus is disfigured, weak, and bleeding... he turns to them.

Look at verse 28 - and he said, "Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. For behold, the days are coming when they will say, 'Blessed are the barren [or the childless] and the wombs that never bore and the breasts that never nursed!' Then they will begin to say to the mountains, 'Fall on us,' and to the hills, 'Cover us' [or 'bury us'] For if they do these things when the wood is green, what will happen when it is dry?"

Jesus here shows his continuous care for others, and he shares with them a prophecy (a warning)...

There will be judgment upon Jerusalem... that days are coming... that in the future... there would be a time of suffering that's going to be so intense, that people would prefer to die than to live. That they'd wish that the mountains surrounding Jerusalem would fall on them and bury them. And that during this time... barrenness (or childlessness) - which would normally be seen as a curse... would be seen as a blessing.

For if they do these things when the wood is green, what will happen when it is dry?

- For if the Romans are doing these things to Jesus (who is green or innocent)... then how much more... would the suffering be to those who are dry or guilty?

Jesus is prophesying about the horror that's still to come when the city of Jerusalem would be destroyed, which would actually happen in the year 70 AD - when the Romans besieged the city of Jerusalem, surrounding it from all sides, blocking access to food, causing many to die from starvation and then killing the ones who were leftover. Countless Jewish lives would be lost.

But however horrific that day was, the judgment and destruction of Jerusalem would only be a small glimpse of a time further in the future of final judgment when all will be judged for what they've done...

<pause>

Friends, we have a huge problem ahead of us. Because what is the most fundamental problem that we all have as sinners?

The basic human problem is not that we're miserable or we need to be happy (even if those things are problems). It's not even that we're sinners, because as sinners we enjoy sin, right? (So technically, that's not a problem).

The most fundamental problem is that we're under God's wrath because of our sin. The most fundamental problem is that there's a penalty for our sin... there's a consequence... And the consequence of sinning/rebelling against the eternal God is eternal condemnation—eternal punishment in hell. That's our problem - that's the *hard truth* that we all need to face as humanity - we've sinned against the God who created us, and we rightfully deserve punishment.

This is the bad news! This is why Jesus says, "don't weep for me but weep for yourselves and for your children" (He can see the day in the future when those in Jerusalem - those who've rejected him will be judged and condemned).

- Again, Jerusalem's destruction in 70 AD (which, in our point of view, has already happened thousands of years ago), points or foreshadows another day - still in the future - of final judgment... A day we'd all need to face whether we like it or not.

Now, if the story ends here, this is extremely bad news for us! We might as well just do whatever we want with our lives to gain as much happiness and pleasure in this world now before we all have to die and then suffer forever in Hell!

But this is not the end of the story... There's Good News to come...

III. Our substitute Savior (vv. 32-39)

Look at verse 32 - When they finally reached the place called The Skull, they crucified Jesus - along with two criminals (one crucified on his left, and one on his right... with Jesus in the middle).

Notice how Luke's mention of Jesus' crucifixion is very brief. But however brief it may be, its horror should be obvious for the people reading Luke's account during those times...

- Crucifixion was seen as the worst death possible by both Jews and Romans.
- It was designed to produce a slow death with maximum pain and suffering.
 - The victim's now-disfigured and bleeding body would be thrown to the ground. And their hands would be nailed to the cross, so their bodies can hang on the cross as a display for everyone to see.
 - This was completely inhumane.

And even more so... as Jesus was dying on the cross... look at verses 32-39 - he continued to be abused verbally... mocked by 3 different groups of people: (1) the religious leaders, (2) the Roman soldiers, and (3) one of the criminals who's crucified.

First, the religious leaders mocked him, saying, "He saved others; let him save himself, if he is the Christ of God, his Chosen One!"

Then, second, the Roman soldiers mocked him, saying, "If you are the King of the Jews, save yourself!"

- And they also threw dice to see who would win Jesus' robe.
- And they offered him sour wine - in order to temporarily quench Jesus' thirst so that he'd live a bit longer in order to prolong his suffering.

And finally, even one of the criminals being crucified hurled insults at him, saying, "Are you not the Christ? Save yourself and us!"

<pause>

Notice how all 3 groups of people are mocking Jesus in similar ways, saying, "if you're truly the Christ, then you should be able to save yourself!"

To them, this was proof that Jesus was not the Christ. They're thinking that if he's truly the Christ then he'd be able to save himself!

But unfortunately, they've totally misunderstood who Christ is...

They had no idea that it's exactly because Jesus is truly the Christ (the Messiah; God's promised King)... it's exactly because of that... that he's there dying on the cross!

- For Jesus came - not to save his own life, but to give his life.
- Not to save his own life, but to save the lives of sinners.

Look at verse 34 - while Jesus was dying, he prayed, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

Isn't that amazing? As Jesus is dying, his heart and thoughts are not focused on himself, but on others. This prayer reveals the heart of Jesus, our Lord and Savior. It reveals the great compassion that God has for His people, even sinners who've wronged Him in unimaginable ways...

<pause>

Throughout Scripture - from the Old Testament times - God has promised His people that they'll be saved from judgment. Yet there's always been this mystery: how will God save His people?

- We now have a fuller picture of God's redemptive plan for His people, but for those who live during those times, they didn't have the full picture...

<pause>

Now, imagine for a second that you're a king or queen ruling a kingdom. You're a just, fair, merciful, and loving ruler. So you do not allow your people to steal - in fact, stealing is a crime punishable by death in your kingdom. But one day, your own family member is caught stealing. This creates a huge dilemma for you... If you're truly just and fair, then you need to punish your family member by sentencing them to death. But if you're truly merciful and loving then wouldn't you spare their lives? How can both be done? It doesn't seem possible...

This is the great mystery in the Old testament: How can God justly punish those who've sinned against Him... yet at the same time... How can he save His people who've fallen into sin?

The answer is found in Jesus Christ...

Because God is perfectly holy, good, and just... He needs to punish sin (if He doesn't punish sin then He's not truly a good and just God).

- But because He is good and just, He will punish sin - so that's why there will be a time of judgment when those who've sinned against the eternal God will receive eternal punishment in Hell. That's completely just.
 - Again, that means bad news for us as sinners; that's just the hard truth.

But here's the Good News. This is the Gospel of Jesus Christ...

God is not only holy, good, and just... but He's also compassionate, loving, merciful and gracious.

Because of His love for us, He chose to take our punishment Himself so that His people don't have to.

So the almighty, all-powerful God humbled Himself for our sake. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Word of God made flesh... fully God, and fully man... came from Heaven to earth for our sake... Not to save his own life, but to save ours.

- Jesus lived the perfect life that we could not (he's 100% righteous and innocent).
 - That means that when Jesus died, he died - not for his own sins (since he had none) - but he died for our sins.
 - God, by his mercy, chooses to forgive us because of Jesus' work on the cross.
 - And God - by His grace - chooses to count Jesus' righteousness as our own.
 - So not only are our sins forgiven, but now we've been justified - made right in the sight of God - because God chooses to count Jesus' righteousness as our own. So now when God sees us, He doesn't see our sin but He sees Jesus' righteousness covering us and we're counted as righteous.

For us sinners, this is Good News!

But... this doesn't mean that everyone everywhere are automatically saved. A response to this Gospel is needed...

IV. Our proper response (vv. 40-49)

Look at verse 40 - the other criminal then rebuked the criminal who was mocking Jesus. He said, "Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? And we indeed justly, for we are receiving the due reward of our deeds; but this man has done nothing wrong." And he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom."

And what does Jesus say?

Look at verse 43 - And [Jesus] said to him, "Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in paradise"

"Today, you will be with me in Heaven!"

<pause>

Is this what you expected?

Perhaps some of us would've said to this guy, "No! Too late! You've done all those bad things already! You've done too much!"

But that's not what Jesus says...

Jesus says that this crucified criminal will go to Heaven after he dies.

What we see here is that we're saved by our faith alone in Christ alone. This is the response to the Gospel that's needed. Not everyone will be saved automatically. Only those who place their faith in Jesus Christ will be saved from judgment.

- Their good works won't save them. Their accomplishments won't save them.
- Just look at this repentant criminal - it's clearly not his good works that saved him (because look at what he's done. He's a criminal).

His faith in Jesus saved him.

What does it mean to have faith in Jesus? Let's look at this repentant man...

This repentant man's request to Jesus is quite extraordinary. It reveals 5 things about him and his faith:

1. He acknowledges that he's a guilty sinner, deserving of punishment.
 - a. He said, "We indeed justly, for we are receiving the due reward of our deeds."
2. He proclaims that Jesus is King (because he referred to God's Kingdom as "your Kingdom" / "Jesus' Kingdom").
3. He believes that this Kingdom is not of this world. As he's about to die, he believes that there's a Heavenly Kingdom in the afterlife.
4. He believes that Jesus has control over who enters his Kingdom. He is the Lord of God's Kingdom, and this man asks Jesus to remember him.
5. Jesus alone is his Lord and Savior - as he's being crucified, he believes that there's no other way of salvation, except through Jesus alone. No one else and nothing else can save him now.

So what saved this repentant man? It's his faith that Jesus Christ alone is his Lord and Savior.

<pause>

So what does it mean for you to believe and have faith in Jesus? Acknowledge that you're a sinner deserving of punishment, repent of your sins, and turn to Jesus (and him alone) as your Lord and Savior.

If you haven't yet put your faith in Christ - don't think that it's too late for you to be saved. Don't think that you're less likely to be saved compared to this criminal on the cross.

- Don't believe the enemy's lies that are telling you that you've done too many bad things to be saved.
- And don't believe the enemy's lies telling you that you've done too many good things that you don't need to be saved.
- I invite you to know the God who loves you deeply and who died for the sins of His people. I urge you to repent of your sins and to place your faith in Christ.
 - So if that's you, and you're ready to make the decision to repent and follow Jesus now, please let someone know and we'd love to help you with your next steps.

<pause>

For those who have already placed our faith in Christ, this also means that it's not too late for others in your lives to be saved! Don't lose hope for your unbelieving loved ones. Keep praying for them, keep sharing your faith with them, keep engaging with them in spiritual conversation. And you never know how God will be working in their lives...

Look at verse 44 - It was now about the sixth hour (referring to the 6th hour after sunrise, which would be around noon). And there was darkness over the whole land for 3 hours - a supernatural display of God's judgment and grief.

Then Jesus called out with a loud voice, saying, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit!" And having said this, Jesus breathed his last - Jesus died.

- But this was no ordinary death by crucifixion. Normally the crucified would slowly lose unconsciousness. But Jesus remained completely in control till his very last breath. He willingly surrendered his soul to God the Father because he chose to do so!

From the other Gospel accounts, we know that the earth shook, rocks split apart (Matt. 27:50-51).

Look at verse 45 - And the curtain of the temple was torn in two (from top to bottom).

- This refers to the curtain in the temple leading from the Holy Place into the Most Holy Place.
 - Historically, this would divide the most holy area in the temple that would be filled with God's presence.
 - So the tearing of the curtain means that access to God is now made available to us through Jesus!

Because of Jesus' death, we're reconciled with God and His wrath has been appeased. We're now in right relationship with God. So those who believe in Christ will not be punished in Hell - separated from God - but will have eternal life in Heaven (in God's presence) forever...

The Gospel completely transforms our relationship with God!

This Good News cannot be ignored: we need to choose to receive it or reject it, but we need to do something with it.

We all need to respond to it!

Look at verses 47-49 - We see three different groups of people responding to Jesus' death: (1) the Centurion, (2) the crowd, and (3) Jesus' followers.

First, the Centurion (the Roman officer) - when he saw all that had taken place, he praised God saying "Certainly this man was innocent!"

The centurion (who'd the Jews would consider to be a pagan and an unbeliever)... he was able to praise God for what he saw and proclaimed that Jesus is innocent. Now we don't know if this Centurion ended up becoming a believer, but there's an account (in the book of Acts) of a Centurion (and his family) becoming believers!

- So again, for those of you who have not yet put your faith in Christ, I urge you to make a decision to respond to the Gospel!
 - If there's one thing you want to make sure you know, it's who Jesus is and what the Gospel is.
 - And you don't have to do this alone. Ask the person that you came here with or anyone around you (and we'd love to talk to you more about Jesus and study the Bible with you).

Look at verse 48 - the second group (the crowds) responded to Jesus' death - all the crowds that had assembled for this spectacle, when they saw what had taken place, returned home beating their breasts (as a sign of their grief).

- This group consisted of Jews - religious people who shouted for Jesus to be crucified.
- They thought they knew who God was, but now they're lamenting - perhaps rethinking what they just did and what they just witnessed...

Similar to them, perhaps some of you also consider yourself to be religious - perhaps you consider yourself to be Christian. But perhaps now you're unsure whether or not you fully understand the Gospel and unsure of what it truly means to have faith in Jesus. If that's you, don't be discouraged. What you're thinking about is a great first step. Don't just assume that you're Christian because your family is Christian or because you sometimes go to church, or because you think you know who God or Jesus is.

- I encourage you to take time to personally reflect and respond to the Gospel - it's better to assume that you don't fully understand it than to think that you understand it when you actually don't.
- And I encourage you to regularly attend a church gathering every Sunday (not only stopping by every Good Friday, Easter, and Christmas - though that's a good start).
- But be with God's people and ask for their help to help you understand and live out the Gospel.

And finally, look at verse 49 - all of Jesus' acquaintances [his followers; his friends] and the women who had followed him from Galilee stood at a distance watching these things.

- This is the group consisting of Jesus' followers who've followed him till the end.
- What they'll soon discover is that this is actually not the end... their grief will soon turn to joy when they celebrate Jesus' resurrection.

So for those of us who have already put our faith in Christ, as Jesus' followers... Let's take some time in our day to intentionally look at the cross; to remember the Gospel...

And allow the Gospel to fill you with hope, empowering you to recommit to your followership of Christ each day.

And as we commit to following Christ each day, let's also commit to take our sins seriously each day.

- And how seriously should we take our sins? Well, how seriously does God take our sins?
- Look at Jesus - mocked, beaten, scourged and disfigured, nailed to the cross... all because of our sins.
 - That's how seriously we should also view our sins.
 - So what sins have you been taking lightly this past week?
 - Perhaps you've struggled to extend mercy to someone else?
 - Pray for the Holy Spirit to work in your hearts; to help you forgive others and to show others mercy, just as God has shown you abundant mercy.

Let's commit to turn away from our sins, and let's commit to help keep each other accountable and help one another to live lives that honor Christ and his sacrifice.

So, once again, what's the bad news?

- We're guilty of sin, and our sin deserves judgment.

But what's the Good News?

- Jesus is our substitute.
- And those who respond to him - who believe in him, will be saved.

The Gospel is not only good news, but is the best news...

The One Thing

***Though there will be judgment, Jesus died in the place of sinners,
so that those who believe in him will be saved.***

Let's pray.