

Squandering the Eleventh Hour

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[0 : 00] Amen. And I'm trying to time my preaching through this book, trying to time it this time of the year so I can get to the resurrection on Easter Sunday.

So I think we'll be able to do that. And so our text for this morning is Luke chapter 23, starting with verse 26. And I'm going to read all the way through to verse 43.

43. 26 to 43, Luke 23. Now, as they led him away, they laid hold of a certain man, Simon of Cyrenian.

He was coming from the country, and on him they laid the cross that he might bear it after Jesus, to bear it for him. And a great multitude of the people followed him, and women who also mourned and lamented him.

But Jesus, turning to them, said, Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children.

[1 : 38] For indeed the days are coming in which they will say, Blessed are the barren, wombs that never bore, and breasts which never nursed.

Then they will begin to say to the mountains, Fall on us, and to the hills, cover us. For if they do these things in the green wood, what will be done in the dry?

There were also two other criminals led with him to be put to death. And when they had come to the place called Calvary, there they crucified him and the criminals, one on the right hand and the other on the left.

Then Jesus said, Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do. And they divided his garments and cast lots.

And the people stood looking on, but even the rulers with them sneered, saying, He saved others. Let him save himself, if he is the Christ, the chosen of God.

[2 : 42] The soldiers also mocked him, coming and offering him sour wine, and saying, If you are the king of the Jews, save yourself.

And an inscription also was written over him in letters of Greek, Latin, and Hebrew, This is the king of the Jews. Then one of the criminals who were hanged, blasphemed him, saying, If you are the Christ, save yourself and us.

But the other answering rebuked him, saying, Do you not even fear God, seeing you are under the same condemnation? We, indeed, justly, for we received the due reward of our deeds.

But this man has done nothing wrong. Then he said to Jesus, Lord, remember me when you come into your kingdom. And Jesus said to him, Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with me in paradise.

All right, familiar part of the story, of course. In fact, as we get to this part of the Gospel of Luke, or to the same part in the other Gospel writers, we're pretty much on familiar ground.

[4 : 00] We read this before, heard many sermons on it, and so we kind of have pretty good knowledge of this, memory of this. We know what's going on.

We might even, if we're well-versed in Scripture, might even remember some of the details that Luke does not include, but Matthew, Mark, and John do.

And so when you put it all together, you have this story. Kind of the way to the cross, and Jesus being crucified there at Calvary, or Golgotha, as one of the other writers says.

All right, so this is the 11th hour, isn't it? Right? In fact, I don't know if you noticed, but in just three more verses, the Bible is going to say, He breathed His last.

All right, so we're real close here, to the death of Christ. Jesus will breathe His last. In but a few moments, Jesus will be dead.

[5 : 03] And so this is the 11th hour for Jesus. Right? Well, it is in that sense. But also, it is the 11th hour for a lot of other people mentioned here in our story that I want us to focus on this morning.

People who squandered their 11th hour, you could say. Squandered it. Didn't take advantage of it. Didn't respond in the right way.

It's the 11th hour for them, and little do they realize that their judgment is about to be sealed. Forever.

And I guess you could say it is an oft-repeated thing down through history for the past couple of millennia because countless millions have squandered their opportunity to come to Christ over the past 2,000 years since Jesus died on that cross.

Now, looking at this passage, and I want to get right to it with very little introduction. Looking at this passage, I think we could divide the subject into two parts.

[6 : 16] Really two parts. And so my sermon this morning, uncharacteristically, has but two points. A two-point sermon. My homiletics teachers would be in horror if I were to stand here and preach a two-point sermon.

I have done that over the years, but not very often. But not to worry, my first point has six sub-points. Okay? So, all right. All right.

Doing them proud. But now the two main points of my sermon simply identify the two possible responses to Christ, to Jesus Christ.

The two possible responses that people can make, do make, have made to the Lord Jesus Christ. Christ in these responses are simply rejection or reception.

Rejection or reception. I mean, that's it. You can't say there's a third response. There are just two responses. People either reject Christ or they receive him.

[7 : 29] Reject him or receive him. And really what happens in our story, I think, is an accurate representation of mankind over the centuries. And what I mean is, far more people Jesus than receive him.

In fact, even Jesus said so in that famous passage in Matthew 7. The many and the few. Many take that way that leads to destruction and few there are who take the way that leads to life.

The many and the few. In fact, that kind of helps us identify these two reactions in the passage. And so let's just begin with the many. The many who rejected Christ.

That's point number one. The many who rejected Christ. All right now, remembering what we looked at last week as we looked at the passage just before this, we're now after the trial.

After Jesus' trial. And so after Jesus' what I would call mock trial before the Jewish leaders. A mock trial. Really a kangaroo court that really has decided he was guilty before they ever looked at the evidence.

[8 : 45] And then when they did look at the evidence, it didn't prove the thing they wanted to be proved. And so they made up the evidence. But it's a kangaroo court. So after the mock trial before the Jews, and then after Jesus' mob trial, I think we could call it that, before the fomented crowd there at Pilate's court.

And after Pilate, Luke tells us in verse 24, gave sentence that it should be as they, the mob requested.

After all of that, I mean, that's real justice, isn't it? In fact, verse 25, remember, says Pilate delivered Jesus to their will. Real justice.

All right, so after all of that, and so we get here at verse 26, and it opens with this. Now, as they led him away, and Matthew and Mark say to be crucified, they had to be crucified.

Of course, we know that's what's going on here. So they led him away to be crucified. In the old city of Jerusalem, there is a street named Via Dolorosa.

[9 : 57] Some of you have heard the song, and it's quite familiar, but there's actually a street named Via Dolorosa, and it's Latin meaning the way of suffering. All right, we already know that, don't we?

Because we know the song, we're familiar with the song. It's the way of suffering, the suffering of Christ. And this street today follows a winding route through the old city, some, they say, some 2,000 feet, so it's quite a long way, 2,000 feet.

It starts at the Fortress of Antonia and ends at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, at least today it does. And it was named Via Dolorosa sometime in the 4th century, I understand, 4th or 5th century, and though the route has changed a bit over the centuries, it is still today recognized by many

Christians as the route Jesus took, was forced to take, carrying his own cross, the Via Dolorosa, the way of suffering.

That's what John's Gospel tells us in John 19 and verse 16. And he, bearing his cross, carrying his cross, went out to a place called the place of the skull, which is called in the Hebrew, Gagoth. And so, verse 26, then, marks the beginning of, the official beginning of Jesus' Via Dolorosa, his way of suffering, though his suffering really started before this, obviously, at the hands of Pilate and the Roman soldiers that whipped him and beat him, and the way of suffering started before this.

[11:36] In fact, you could argue that his suffering started from his birth. But this is the Via Dolorosa and verse 27 says, and a great multitude of the people followed him and, and this is what I want you to see first of all, according to Luke, Luke is the only one who mentions this, and women who also mourned and lamented.

All right, so here is the first of the 11th hour people, all right, in our story, what I would call the sorrowful women. The sorrowful women who are mourning and weeping, and again, Luke is the only gospel writer who includes this bit of information in his account, in his gospel account, and so who were they?

These women. Well, I want you to know that they were not the women who followed Jesus and ministered to Jesus and his disciples all throughout his ministry. We're not talking about the several Marys and some of the others.

I'm talking about those women. Now, they were there, certainly, at the cross, many of them, most of them, even Mary, the mother of Jesus, was ultimately at the cross, and certainly they were weeping. But this is a different set of women.

And so who were they? Well, according to Josephus, the Jewish-Roman historian, very famous historian, they were a group of women who regularly attended crucifixions, mourning for the condemned, kind of professional mourners.

[13:10] But also, they were allowed, if allowed, if allowed by the Roman government, they would give a certain drink to the victims, to the condemned, a certain kind of mixture that would help them, help ease their pain, a kind of narcotic of some kind.

In fact, Matthew and Mark tell us about that. It's a mixture of wine and myrrh or frankincense, and it would kind of deaden the senses.

Matthew and Mark also tell us that Jesus refused it. So this is what these women would do. So I guess you could say that these women were professional mourners, or maybe they thought this was kind of their ministry, to minister to the condemned.

And so here they are, following along as Jesus makes his way to Golgotha, or Calvary, two different words for it in the scripture, his Via Dolorosa.

They're following along that way, that way of suffering, and they are literally beating their chests and wailing and weeping and crying bitter tears.

[14:21] They're professionals. They know what they're doing, and they're good at it. But the point here is how Jesus responds to them. And that comes in verse 28.

But Jesus, turning to them, said, Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children.

Now, I want you to know that Jesus is not speaking these words just to these women. He turns to them and says it to them, but he's speaking to them and beyond them because numerous times the Old Testament prophets would use this phrase, Daughters of Jerusalem or Daughters of Zion or sometimes Daughters of My People.

You'll find it a lot of times in the prophets. And it is a metaphor for all of Israel, for all the people of God.

And when you find it used by the prophets in the Old Testament, almost always that metaphor is connected in some way to Israel's rebellion, to their rebellion against God.

[15:38] And then, consequently, it's connected with judgment, God's subsequent judgment. For example, I'll just read one because it kind of connects with what's going on here in our passage.

In Jeremiah 8, verse 19, the Bible says, Behold the cry of the daughter of my people. Again, he's not talking about daughters or women. He's talking about God's people.

Israel, the daughter of my people from the length and breadth of the land. That is, throughout the entire land, they're weeping, they're crying. Why have you provoked me to anger with their carved images and with their foreign idols?

See, it's connected with rebellion and idolatry against God. And then, this phrase, the harvest is past, the summer has ended, and we are not saved.

You see the connection there. and when we get here to this passage and what Jesus says to these sorrowful women, these women who are weeping and mourning at his journey to the cross, he uses the same metaphor, again, in connection with judgment.

[16:55] With judgment. He says in verse 28, Don't weep for me, weep for yourselves and for your children, for your offspring. For indeed, the days are coming, he says.

The days are coming. Verse 29, the days are coming in which they will say, Blessed are the barren. That would be totally contrary to the Jewish way of thinking that, you know, barrenness was usually associated with judgment.

No woman wanted to be barren. It was a terrible curse. But he says, Blessed are, there's a day coming when you will say, Blessed are the barren. Wombs that never bore and breasts which never nursed.

And what is this? Well, it's a reference to something that Jesus has made reference to already in the Gospel of Luke. It's a reference to the destruction of Jerusalem that is coming very soon, some 30 or so years after the crucifixion of Christ.

You know about it when Titus, the Roman general, will besiege the city of Jerusalem. Rome has had enough with their rebellion and he seizes the city and eventually destroys the city and the temple and not one stone is left standing upon another.

[18:16] All right, this is what Jesus is pointing to and it's God's judgment. The destruction, not just of the physical city, but the people, many of the people as well.

And it's going to be so bad that everyone will flee. They will flee. They will run for their lives. But there will be certain people who are going to have difficulty running.

Women with child, pregnant women, and women with infants. You know, they're nursing them and they're not going to be physically be able to get away, many of them.

And the judgment that Jesus is referring to that is coming will be so severe he says in verse 30, they will begin to say to the mountains, fall on us and to the hills, cover us.

And so this is what he's telling you. It's a prediction that Jesus, a prophecy of Israel's judgment and destruction for what reason?

[19:23] For rejecting their Messiah. verse 31 says, for if they do these things in the green wood, what will be done in the dry?

That's strange, isn't it? What does that mean? Well, several, by the way, several different ideas about it. It's difficult. It's proverbial, of course. And I think we could say safely that the green wood is Jesus, the Messiah, the green wood, life.

do these things, those, they do, do these things, that's a reference to the carrying out of judgment. Destruction, affliction, judgment.

They, that is, they do these things, they is a reference to either the Romans or to God himself. I really think it's both.

God working his judgment through the Romans. the dry wood, well, that's Israel. That's Israel.

[20:32] And so really, here's the meaning, I think. If God has not spared his innocent son, the green wood, spared him from this judgment, the suffering and tribulation, if God has not spared his green wood, his son, by permitting him to be crucified, crucified, then, how much worse will it be for the sinful nation, the sinful nation of Israel, the dry wood, when God unleashes his righteous wrath upon it by permitting the Romans to invade and destroy Jerusalem.

Israel. See, Israel, it's like he's saying, Israel, you have squandered the eleventh hour, the sorrowful women.

Second, notice, the savage soldiers. Savage. So, Roman soldiers. Verse 33, and when they had come to the place called Calvary, there they crucified him and the criminals, one on the right hand and the other on the left.

Now, I don't know if you've ever thought about this, but isn't it striking how few words Luke uses to describe the crucifixion?

In fact, it's not really a description, is it? You know, describing anything. Matthew and Mark do the same. Matthew chapter 27 verse 35 says, when they had crucified him.

[22:14] That's it. That's all it says. When they had crucified him. Mark, in Mark 15, 24, Mark records, and they crucified him.

That's it. That's all you get. I mean, just the cold matter-of-factness of this most cruel form of execution. Crucifixion. Including the sudden excruciating pain of the nails being driven through the hands and through the feet, and the slow agonizing death that follows it. I mean, this is more than just execution. This is torture. Torture than execution. And all Luke says is they crucified him. in Matthew and Mark. That's all they say. Just the cold facts. Not really even any facts. Just this is it. We know a little bit about crucifixion though, don't we? [23 : 23] About what really took place there and kind of have a picture in our minds about what happened and the steps of it and all of that.

I want you to listen to one Bible commentator who kind of puts all this together. The three men have been condemned and stripped, beaten and forced to carry the heavy wooden crossbeam through the streets.

One of them is so weak that a bystander, one Simon of Cyrene, by name, is forced to help. Soon the strange procession arrives just outside the gates of the north of Jerusalem to an oddly shaped hill, the skull shaped hill, Golgotha, the place of the skull.

Exhausted, the men drop their terrible burdens as the crowds surround them finding the gruesome spectacle both revolting and entertaining.

Just then the grim faced and hardened soldiers set about their business with brutal efficiency. First swatting the heavy crossbeams into their uprights forming three rough hewn crosses, then strapping the condemned men's arms in place and without hesitation they drive nails into each hand and then bending their legs together they drive a single nail through their feet.

[25 : 04] Each of them is now pinned to his own cross. The screams of the victims now mingle with the jeering crowds as the crosses are hoisted up into place and with a dislocating jolt dropped into their stands.

You would almost expect Luke to give some kind of description like that. Or Matthew or Mark or John. We have to speculate upon this.

There's plenty of historical evidence to know that these were pretty much the facts. But you see, Matthew and Mark and Luke's kind of economy of words, I mean bare words here to describe this, really I think conveys, helps to convey the callous cruelty and really the senseless savagery of these Roman soldiers.

I mean, they carried out this gruesome task with cruel efficiency without even thinking about it. You wonder, did they even look at Jesus?

Did you look at him? You got wondered, did they ever look into his eyes as they're nailing him to the cross? I wonder if they paid any attention to what he was saying as they drove those nails into his hands and his feet.

[26 : 39] Luke tells us what he said. Verse 34, Jesus said, Father, forgive them for they do not know what to do.

Now, listen, I'm just thinking that in the many, of all the many crucifixions these Romans were involved in, I'm just thinking they never heard that before.

And what was their response to that? Well, verse 34, they divided his garments and cast lots through dices for his possessions, his few meager possessions, one of them being a robe of course, that he got from Herod.

They cast lots for it. Verse 36 says, Further, they mocked him, mocked him, offering him sour wine, which, by the way, I think really is a kind of a mock act of obeisance to Jesus.

Really, I think poking fun at his claim to be the king of the Jews. Offer him some wine. They mocked him. And they jokingly said, If you are the king of the Jews, save yourself.

[27 : 59] the savagery of these Roman soldiers. They did not believe. They squandered their eleventh hour.

The sorrowful women, the savage soldiers, and then third, the speechless people. The speechless people, verse 35, and the people stood looking on.

Love that phrase. They stood there. looking. They didn't say anything. At least not in Luke's account here.

They're just standing there. Staring at Jesus. But don't get the idea that their silence represented some kind of sympathy for Jesus.

Or maybe it was horror. What have we done? That's not it. not at all. Remember, this is the same crowd of people who just moments before were saying quite a lot actually.

[29 : 09] In fact, they were screaming. They were screaming to Pilate, away with this person. Crucify him, what they were saying.

They were saying quite a lot. And so, no, there's no remorse here. Don't read between the lines or read behind the lines, try to get into their minds and thinking and hearts and think, well, they're remorseful for what they have done.

No remorse here. No sympathy here. No regret. This silent, kind of silent vigil, so to speak, really, I think, reveals their disdain for Jesus.

their disgust for Jesus. He's getting what he deserves.

I think there was some grim satisfaction here as they're saying they're looking on. I mean, after all they're thinking Deuteronomy 21, 23 says, cursed is everyone who hangs upon a tree.

[30 : 18] And so, in their thinking, how do we have been so duped by this guy? How could we have been? He's no Messiah.

And the proof of it, he's right there hanging on the tree and cursed is everyone who hangs upon a tree. This would have never happened to the true Messiah, is what they're thinking.

And so they squandered the 11th hour. Squandered it. next notice the sneering rulers. The sneering rulers, verse 35, but even the rulers with them sneered, saying, he saved others, let him save himself, if he is the Christ.

And you put in parentheses, but he's not. if he is the Christ, but he's not the chosen of God. You see, to the Jewish leaders, this was victory.

This was victory. And not only victory, but vindication. This is vindication for not just what they have done, but how they have believed all along about this guy.

[31 : 38] They're vindicated for it here. They were looking for the Messiah, all Jews in that day had a messianic hope, and they were looking for and hoping and longing and yearning for the Messiah, but I really think for these Jewish leaders in their heart of hearts, they really were hoping he would not come, at least not yet, because, you know, they had it pretty good.

Jesus threatened their cushy way of life, their status among the people, their influence and power even with the Romans to some extent, and let's not forget their affluence, their wealth, it paid, paid well, and so Jesus was this constant irritant to them.

He was the bothersome thorn in their flesh, challenging their authority and undermining their traditions, most of which did not come from the Bible, and also making them look bad before the people, and that was probably the worst part of it for them.

Now, at last, they are rid of him. And so they are there. And so here he is, here's this Jesus, this self-acclaimed Messiah, Messiah, and they have nothing but contempt for him.

And the Bible says they mocked him. They mocked him very much like the soldiers did before. I don't know if they took their cue from what the soldiers said, but they said something similar.

[33 : 24] He saved others, let him save himself. If he is the Christ, which he is not, they're thinking, there's no way he could be, otherwise he would not be there hanging upon that cross.

And so they're thinking to themselves and really maybe even out loud to those around them, see, didn't we tell you, didn't we tell you all along that he's no Messiah?

None of that, but he's a blasphemer. And they squandered the eleventh hour. Sorrowful women, the savage soldiers, the speechless people, the sneering rulers of the people.

And fifth, the sarcastic Roman governor, that would be Pilate. Verse 38 says, and on and an inscription also was written over him in letters of Greek, Latin, and Hebrew, this is the king of the Jews, that's what it said, according to Luke's account.

John 19 and verse 19 tells us a little bit more. John records that Pilate wrote a title or an inscription and put it on the cross, had it put on the cross, and the writing was Jesus of Nazareth, the king of the Jews.

[34 : 47] Now, why'd Pilate do that? But listen, to Pilate and really to the Romans in general, Jesus was a joke. This is a joke.

It's foolish. foolish, idiot. He's a joke. And so this inscription is really Pilate laughing at him and really laughing at the entire Jewish nation.

J.C. Ryle put it like this. He said, here now are Gentiles adding their voices to the Jewish chorus so that the two parts of the ancient world, the whole world, unites in rejecting Jesus Christ.

Think about that. Jew and Gentile, the whole world, represented there in rejecting the Messiah. And then one more. The scornful criminal. The scornful criminal, verse 32 says, there were also two others, criminals, led with him to be put to death.

[36 : 03] And when they had come to the place called Calvary, there they crucified him. And the criminals, one on the right hand and the other on the left. So these guys who had the privilege of being executed the same day, same time that Jesus was executed, they were criminals.

perhaps they were, more specifically, revolutionaries, insurrectionists, people guilty of leading an uprising against the Roman government, Roman empire.

But verse 39 says, and only Luke includes this, then one of the criminals who were hanged blasphemed him, blasphemed him, saying, if you are the Christ, save yourself and us.

Now, what do you think about this? Here's this man, criminal, and he's been condemned to die, very shortly he's going to die.

And so he's nailed to a cross and he's hanging there upon that cross, excruciating pain, pulsing throughout his entire body, gasping, really, literally, gasping for every little breath of air as the weight of his body slowly constricts his lungs because, you see, it's too painful for him to push himself up to get another deep breath of air.

[37 : 37] That's what ultimately would kill them. Their lungs would collapse and fill up with fluid. And so he couldn't push himself up and get a huge breath of air because of the nails in his feet.

I mean, think of how painful that would be. And yet he endures the pain one last time, perhaps. And he does so in order to take a sufficient breath of air so that he can speak perhaps one more time.

Think about this. but not to speak words of remorse or repentance. Not even to speak words of sorrow and empathy for Jesus.

Oh, no. He pays the price, the high price of severe pain to get one last breath so that he can curse Jesus.

[38 : 47] Blaspheme him. Mock him. And in effect, he's saying some savior you are. That's what he's saying. You're a fraud.

With his dying breath, that's what he says. Think about it. He squandered the eleventh hour, didn't he? the many who rejected Christ.

And now very quickly, let's consider the few. The few who received Christ. We have at least two here in our story.

the first one is, of course, the other criminal crucified on the other side of Jesus. Right? And Jesus said to that criminal, ultimately, he said in verse 43, assuredly, I say to you today, you will be with me in paradise.

Wow. I mean, listen, this is amazing grace in action. even more so than maybe we can get just from Luke's account, because in Mark, in Mark 15, in verse 32, Mark makes it clear that both criminals were mocking and blaspheming Jesus.

[40 : 14] Both of them were. And yet, at some point, everything changed for this one criminal.

and it's grace. Grace of God. It touched his heart, changed his heart. And really, we can say, weren't we all by nature blasphemers before the grace of God changed our hearts and saved us and changed us?

But we need to pay attention to this man's words. I could really preach an entire sermon on this. In fact, I think at some point I did. Think about his words here because it's not the scholars with their brains we need to pay attention to or the soldiers with their brawn we need to pay attention to.

It's the sinners with their belief that we need to pay attention to. So just walk through these verses. Verse 40, but the other, the other criminal answering, rebuked him.

Rebuked the criminal that was blaspheming. He rebuked him. Saying, do you not even fear God? Do you not even fear God? That is, I think, really the idea here is that he's saying, I finally figured out who this guy is.

[41 : 36] I finally realized I know who this man is. Later, he even calls him Lord. And so he says, do you not even fear God seeing you are under the same condemnation, you're in the same predicament?

And we, he says, indeed, justly. We deserve to be here. I mean, that's an admission of his guilt, his sin.

Justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds. But this man, speaking of Jesus, has done nothing wrong.

He's done nothing wrong. sin. That is, really, this man is also under God's condemnation, and Jesus was there hanging upon the cross, under the judgment of God, but not for his own sin, but for the sins of others.

Your sin, my sin. The criminal is saying, for my sin, your sin. He's done nothing wrong. He is bearing our sin.

[42 : 54] And then he said to Jesus, Lord, remember me when you come into your kingdom. That is, save me. Save me, Lord.

You see, the condemned criminal received Jesus. He received Jesus. He was saved. He was saved that day in the 11th hour. He was saved.

Jesus said, you will be today. Today, you will be with me in paradise. That is heaven, dear people. And I cannot leave this passage without mentioning one other person. It's interesting, one other person here in the story was present with Jesus the whole time.

From the beginning of his Via Dolorosa all the way to Golgotha. And I believe stuck around and witnessed the crucifixion of Christ. He even carried Jesus' cross, remember?

[44 : 01] Luke tells us about him early on in this text. His name was Simon. Simon the Cyrenian, or Simon from Cyrene.

Verse 26 is where Luke introduces him. Cyrene was a city in North Africa. And so we can say at the very least that Simon was a pilgrim to Jerusalem at the Passover.

He traveled a long distance perhaps to be there for the Passover. Many did. Traveled great distances, many of them to observe the Passover week, the celebration of Passover.

And I guess, you know, Simon just happened to be in the right place at the wrong time. Right? He was in the right place, but just at the wrong time.

Because, you know, when Jesus was passing by, the procession was passing by, and Jesus could no longer carry his cross, a Roman soldier tapped Simon on the shoulder with the flat of his sword, thereby signifying that he was conscripted into temporary service.

[45 : 16] And the Romans could do that. Just tap him on the shoulder. You. Pick up this cross and carry it. In the right place, wrong time, terrible.

Poor Simon. And yet I think we can say, with all certainty, that Simon was not at the right place at the wrong time.

He was at the right place at the right time. And he could not have picked it on his own. Because long before the Roman soldier chose Simon, God chose him.

I think we should understand it. And I think we can assume that Simon was either saved that day as he witnessed the crucifixion of Jesus Christ.

And heard Jesus say, Father, forgive them. And heard everything else that he said. It's finished. You know, all that. I think it's safe to say he was saved that day or saved sometime shortly after.

[46 : 27] Father, how do we know that? I mean, how can we even think that it's true? Well, in Mark's gospel, Mark chapter 15, verse 21, Mark gives us a little bit more information.

And he says, they compelled a certain man, Simon, a Cyrenian. And then he adds this little bit of information. A father, the father of Alexander and Rufus.

Now, who are they? Well, we don't really know for sure. But Mark was writing to a Gentile audience who apparently would have known these guys.

Otherwise, why include their names? They would have been familiar with it. Now, are you ready for this? According to Paul, in Romans 16, verse 13, a certain Rufus, I believe Simon's son, Mark says Simon's son was named Rufus.

A certain Rufus became, in Paul's word, a choice servant of the Lord in the church in Rome. In Romans 16, 13. That same passage, Paul also mentions Rufus' mother, I think we can assume Simon's wife, as being like a mother to Paul.

[48 : 07] An interesting connection. And according to Acts chapter 11, verse 20, the church at Cyrene, I think Simon's church, he was from Cyrene, probably saved at the cross, went back home, maybe he was one of others, several others who started that church, I don't know, maybe it started with his family and then it grew to be a church.

Anyway, the Bible tells us in Acts 11, 20, that the church at Cyrene sent out missionaries to preach the gospel to the Gentiles at Antioch, very key place in Christian history.

They've gone to Antioch, these missionaries preached the gospel, and the Bible says, and a great number believed and turned to the Lord. So many that a church was planted there.

Great church in Christian history, a church that was a huge missionary sending church. You can disagree with me if you want, but I think Simon was one of those missionaries.

Sent out by the church of Cyrene to Antioch to share the gospel, Simon, I think, was one of them.

Because according to Acts 13, verse 1, a man by the name of Simeon, which is another spelling for Simon, who was called Niger, which very likely referenced to his dark complexion.

[49 : 48] And he was dark complected because he was from North Africa. I think from Cyrene.

Certain Simon, there at the church of Antioch, and another man by the name of Lucius, the Bible says there, of Cyrene, who were both pastors, the Bible says, of the church of Antioch, the Antiochian church.

And these two men were part of a larger group of spirit-filled men who were led by the Holy Spirit to lay hands upon Paul and Barnabas and send them out to be missionaries to the known world.

Interesting. Simon carries the cross for Jesus and he witnesses the crucifixion and it so profoundly impacted his heart that he believed in this Jesus, went home, led his family to Christ, instrumental possibly in planting a church in Cyrene that later sent him and some others to travel to Antioch to share the gospel where many believed in a great church was planted there and those in the church, the pastors because Simon became one of those pastors, laid hands upon Paul who became the greatest missionary perhaps that has ever lived.

All of this because Simon received Christ. One of the few who received Jesus. it was the 11th hour and he received Jesus Christ.

I guess this all really comes down to this. For perhaps some here today, I don't know. You have to wonder, is this your 11th hour?

[52 : 03] I mean, you don't know, do you? I don't know. will this be your final opportunity to trust in this Jesus, receive this Jesus?

I don't know. Neither did the people who were there that day, neither did they know. they squandered it.

What will you do? Thank you.