

Pastor Kenneth Mars

St. John's Lutheran Church – Kimball, NE

Lent IV – Midweek (members of Immanuel, Burns, Grace Pine Bluffs, Zion Grover also present)

April 2, 2014

Text: Judges 16:23–31; Matthew 27:27–31

The Mocked King¹

Grace be to you and peace from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Samson was the Superman of the OT. He had superhuman strength and did superhuman deeds. I use the resource from CPH, *100 Bible Stories*, for the first 2 years of youth catechism class. The drawing of Samson depicts him as someone who could just as easily been in a body building contest with bulging muscles. But the Philistines, those mortal enemies of Israel in general and Samson in particular have captured Superman, shaved off his hair, gouged out his eyes, and bound him in shackles. The Philistines sentenced his remaining days of blind existence to the hard labor of grinding wheat by constantly pushing a huge millstone. But a day came to offer a sacrifice to their god, Dagon. And so the Philistines wanted to add insult to injury by making a public mockery of Samson. While 3,000 looked on, the Philistines brought out Samson to entertain them. To be for them a bald, blind, dancing joke. And they mocked him.

But God is not mocked. So God saw to it that Samson was placed between two pillars of the building. And one last time God gave Samson supernatural strength. While pushing against the pillar on his right and on his left, the roof collapsed in upon the unsuspecting Philistines. Samson died too. But in his death, he won his greatest victory of all. He killed more on that day than during the 20 years of battles he had waged against the enemy of God's people.

God is not mocked. Or is He? Jesus, the God-man, God of God, light of light, very God of very God, is mocked in today's reading from Matthew 27. The Roman soldiers made a laughingstock, a public spectacle of our Lord. In cruel mockery, they strip Him, then clothe Him with a scarlet robe, the color of royalty, crown Him with thorns, and adorn Him with a pretend scepter.

¹ Adapted from the sermon Series "The Crucified King" published by Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis, Missouri, 2014.

“Hail, King of the Jews!” In derisive mockery, the soldiers make fun of Jesus as they kneel before Him. And when that grew tiresome, they resorted to verbal insult, spitting, and punching.

If Jesus were to follow Samson’s example, He would take some sort of subtle action that would lead to the deaths of His mocking foes. Our Lord certainly has the divine strength to avenge Himself on such insolence and poltroonery. But our Lord chooses a different path. St. Matthew simply records, “they put His own clothes on Him and led Him away to crucify Him” (27:31).

Jesus puts up no fight. In the face of all this mockery, He doesn’t flash His divine power and get revenge. He humbly submits to the insults. He doesn’t cry out or lash out at those who mock Him. And this is good news for all who have mocked God. And that means you too. In order to save sinners, Jesus must bear all of humanity’s disrespect, blasphemy and mockery. Imagine if He used His divine strength and got revenge every time we mocked God through our sinful thoughts and actions?

The Small Catechism teaches us how we’ve mocked God. The 2nd Commandment teaches us that “we should fear and love God so that we do not curse, swear, use satanic arts, lie, or deceive by God’s name but call upon it in every trouble, pray, praise and give thanks.” Have you misused God’s name? Spoken it lightly or profanely? Instead of Jesus’ name being a precious treasure, its bandied about like so much useless slang.

The 3rd Commandment teaches us that “we should fear and love God so that we do not despise preaching and His word but hold it sacred and gladly hear and learn it.” Have we inwardly yawned at another Scripture reading, another sermon, another Bible lesson? There’s plenty of mockery to go around in all of our hearts and minds. The season of Lent especially reminds us that our sinful nature is not something to take lightly. The apostle Paul teaches us that our sinful nature does not and cannot submit to God’s Word and will. Romans 8:5–8 , “For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh . . . For to set the mind on the flesh is death . . . For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God’s law; indeed, it cannot. Those who are in the flesh cannot please God.”

And yet Jesus bears our hostility and mockery willingly and silently. What is most obvious in Jesus’ Passion and Crucifixion is God’s supernatural love for sinners. Amazingly, God in the person of Jesus *is* mocked. He is willing to be mocked in order

to rescue you and all His people. He absorbs into His holy flesh all the mockery and all the disrespect and all the sin that the world can dish out, and takes it to the cross and grave to destroy it. And Jesus does what Samson could not do; He rises from the dead by means of His own divine strength and victory. The Lord's resurrection proclaims peace and reconciliation. Jesus willingly, joyously went to the cross and grave to destroy sin and spare you from the devil's eternal mocking.

Our blessed King Jesus is pleased to be crowned with ugly thorns and to atone for all your sins in order to crown you with His glory and honor. Our blessed King is pleased to be dressed up in a scarlet robe so that you might be baptized and adorned with royal garb that covers all your scarlet sins. Our blessed King is pleased to hold a pretend scepter in His hand and be mocked so that your pastor, sinner though he be, might give the body and blood of Christ and bestow on you God's forgiveness, life, and salvation and a Kingdom without end.

Jesus stretched out His right and His left hand at the cross and through His death brought down Satan and His power over you. "There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus" (Romans 8:1). Jesus, God in the flesh, was mocked on Good Friday. On Easter, mockery turned to eternal victory. There we find our victory; there we find our glory. Through Jesus, God the Father declares you to be His beloved children, great in His kingdom, heirs of an eternal future filled with honor, dignity, and everlasting joy. Glory be to King Jesus!!

✠ In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. ✠ Amen

Now the peace of God which surpasses all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus unto life everlasting. Amen.