

Matthew 27:32-66
Sermon Outline

The brief (and strange) incidents of verses 51-54 can deepen our understanding of the significance of what happened when Jesus died on the cross:

1. The curtain of the temple is torn in two (v51)
 - the curtain reminds us of the barrier between God and humanity
 - therefore God is misunderstood – Jesus announces God’s salvation and makes Him known, but is rejected – evidence of misunderstanding: vv39-44, 46-50
 - Jesus dies with a basic human question on his lips: why? (v48)
2. The bodies of dead saints appear (vv52-53)
 - this strange event is a picture that Jesus’ death marked a radical change in history
 - the “saints” hoped in God without really knowing themselves how God would fulfill His promises (they had types and shadows of the reality)
3. The centurion (and those with him) confess Jesus as Son of God (v54)
 - what was expected to be an ordinary day in the empire (vv32-38) proves to be extraordinary (vv45, 51, 54)
 - as the curtain between God and mankind is torn, the wall dividing humanity is broken

Questions for reflection:

1. In what ways do you experience the divide that exists between God and humanity? What do you struggle to understand, experience, believe?
2. Jesus suffered in many ways in this chapter – physically, temptation, mockery and humiliation, the sense of abandonment, etc. When you experience difficulties in life, what assurance do you have that if you turn to Jesus with them you will meet with someone who understands your struggles? What challenges are there for you in leaning on Jesus in those times?
3. The bodies of many saints who hoped in God appeared after Jesus was raised, showing their hope was not in vain – yet, they had faith without fully knowing what they hoped in. How do you move forward, trusting in God, when you still have questions and are aware you don’t understand many things?
4. Sin is dealt with by Jesus on the cross, and the curtain between God and man is torn, and the wall between people (Jews and Gentiles) is broken down – if you are trusting Jesus for the forgiveness of your sins, how should your life look different in regards to Jesus’ commands to love God and your neighbor?
5. Next Sunday is Easter. As we anticipate the great joy of the resurrection, how can meditating on the sufferings of Christ prepare you to better grasp the powerful message of Easter? What can you think about this week, and what can you do, to draw nearer to God?