

**The Story**  
**THE HOUR OF DARKNESS**  
**Matthew 27:45-50**  
**April 13, 2014**

**INTRODUCTION**

a. **Today is Palm Sunday**, the day when Jesus entered Jerusalem and was greeted by the people with shouts of Hosanna, Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord.

b. **It is the start of a full week where Jesus reveals who He is and why He came – You might recall from last week’s message that:**

1. **On Monday** He Curses the fig tree and cleanses the Temple

a. The resolve of the Pharisees to get rid of Jesus stiffens

2. **On Tuesday** He debates and embarrasses the Pharisees and Sadducees

a. Their resolve stiffens even more

3. Nothing is recorded in Scripture on Wednesday

4. **On Thursday** Jesus celebrates the Passover with the disciples, prays in the Garden and is betrayed by Judas and Arrested - That night He begins the journey through seven trials that end on Friday with a Scourging, His Death by Crucifixion and burial in a borrowed grave

c. **Mark’s gospel tells us that the crucifixion began at the third hour and continues until the ninth hour. That is from 9:00am until 3:00pm**

1. Max Lucado has written a good book titled “Six Hours One Friday” that I would recommend to you.

d. Just what was happening during those six hours? What does this lower story teach us about God’s Upper Story?

**I. GOD’S ATTRIBUTES COLLIDE**

a. **The cross is the result of the collision of God’s Holiness and God’s Love**

1. Each of these are perfect and absolute

2. One cannot be expressed at the expense of the other

b. **Because of His holiness God cannot ignore or turn a blind eye to our sin. Because of His love God has to provide a way for our sin to be forgiven**

1. If God were only holy, we would be destroyed; if God were only love, a lack of discipline and correction would destroy us

c. **God’s holiness and love combine to do something unimaginable: God becomes a human being!**

1. God as human leads a sinless life.

2. God as human dies on the sinners’ place.

d. **On the cross we see God’s stern holiness operating out of God’s infinite love**

e. To satisfy his holiness God in his love had his Son pay the price (death) for our sins so that our relationship with God might be restored

**II. THREE CROSSES THAT DAY**

a. I want to explore with you the meaning of the three crosses

1. **On each cross a man died** - each died in some relation to sin

2. Much significance and meaning have been given to the middle cross - We must also look at the other two

b. **Let's revisit these three crosses**

1. **The first is the cross of the "rejecting thief" He chose to "die in his sin**

a. How could anyone so close to Christ (an arm's length away) with Christ ready to forgive, choose to die in their sin?

b. My question is, **“How can you do the same?”** - for if you were to die right now without Christ you would surely die in your sin

c. **All people die in their sins for the same reasons**

1. **Not trusting in Christ** (Luke 23:39)

a. "If you are the Christ," but I doubt it, "save yourself and us"

b. **Unbelief rejects Christ's saving power**

1. This thief was saying, "I don't believe you have any more power than an ordinary man to forgive and save"
2. We would never say that - but many by their actions are living it by not giving ourselves to Christ in faith
3. We may say He is the Savior but do not believe it enough to let Him be our personal Savior

2. **Because of a disrespect for God**

a. This thief "hurled insults" at Jesus - open contempt

1. I would never do that - I respect Christ

b. **Respect is obedient** - Jesus asks you to repent

d. You will die the way you live - When you choose to live in sin you choose to die in sin

2. **The second or believing thief that day chose to die to sin** rather than in it

a. How does this happen - How can one be forgiven or saved. **Death to sin**

comes:

1. Because of a **acknowledgment of personal guilt**

a. This thief openly admitted his guilt and the punishment

b. This is the first step to faith in Christ

2. Because of a **belief in Jesus Christ**

a. Belief accepts Christ at face value and responds

1. Illustration of Fireman rescuing you from an inferno – You don't ask to see his credentials – You just let him carry you to safety

2. Interestingly Jesus revealed his credentials for all to see –

You do not need to be in the dark

3. **On the third and most famous cross a man died FOR sin**

a. **Because there is no other way - Christ died for sin**

1. Remember the garden prayer - if there is any other way

2. There was not so Jesus died for sin

3. There is no other way for God to be both just and merciful, holy and

loving

a. God could not ignore his righteousness and justice but neither could he ignore his love so he was true to both by sending his Son, the sinless one to die in our place

b. That's what God did through Jesus

c. We were guilty - God laid down the robe of His pre-incarnate glory, stepped down to this earth - stood beside us and paid the fine

b. **Because of his Love he died for us**

1. **Romans 5:8 (NIV)** *But God demonstrates his own love for us in this:*

*While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*

3. **Because it was the purpose of his life**

1. That's why He came - He was taunted to leave the cross but He didn't because it is why He came

c. **There were three men who died that day**

1. One In Sin

2. One To Sin

3. One For Sin

d. **But there is more going on in this scene**

### III. THE HOUR OF DARKNESS

a. **A supernatural darkness hung over the land from the sixth to the ninth hour, again in our time from noon to 3 p.m.**

1. **Think for a moment.** Who it was hanging on the cross...

a. God's only Son

2. **What He was doing there on the cross...**

a. Bearing the sins of all men.

b. Bearing the judgment and wrath of God against sin for all men.

c. Doing all that was necessary to free men from sin, death, and judgment so that they might live forever.

b. **In contrast to his birth when the brightness of the star lit the night sky, here at his death it is dark at noon**

c. **That darkness reveals**

1. The darkness of sin

2. The depth of God's anger at sin

3. The darkest day in history when the Son of God was put to death for the sins of mankind

d. **It is interesting that during these three hours there is no record of any jeering or taunting of Jesus.** I imagine the people were simply terrified by this supernatural darkness

e. Let's read Matthew's account of these hours.

1. **Matthew 27:45-50 (NIV)** *From the sixth hour until the ninth hour darkness came over all the land. About the ninth hour Jesus cried out in a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?"-- which means, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" When some of those standing there heard this, they said, "He's calling Elijah." Immediately one of them ran and got a sponge. He filled it with wine vinegar, put it on a stick, and offered it to Jesus to drink. The rest said, "Now leave him alone. Let's see if Elijah comes to save him." And when Jesus had cried out again in a loud voice, he gave up his spirit.*

f. John records that Jesus cried out "It is finished," and then gave up his spirit. Can you hear the words "**It is Finished**"

1. "It is finished" – all He had been sent to do was complete

2. He had done all the Father had sent Him to do

3. **With His work complete** and God's Justice and Holiness satisfied Jesus can now die

4. **But that is not all he said in those words**

a. The Greek word "*tetelestai*," which in our version of the Scripture is translated, "*It is finished.*" Archaeologists have repeatedly found its Latin equivalent, *consummatum est*, scrawled across tax receipts used in those days, indicating it also meant "**paid,**" – "**paid in full**"

b. On that day many standing near the cross probably interpreted the Savior's words as having that connotation. With sin's account settled, our debt of guilt was indeed wiped out!

5. **What wonderful words to hear** – "Your sin debt is paid in full" the price has been paid for you when Christ died

6. **Hear the words again – "It is finished – Paid in full"**

a. Hang on to this moment. Don't quickly push it aside as something done and of yesterday. **Don't be in too big a rush to race ahead to Easter Sunday.** Don't cheapen the significance of what our Lord did by abandoning it too quickly.

b. The cross is not the final chapter that is for sure and we will get to that chapter next week but be certain of this: **The victory over sin was won on the cross. It is the blood of Jesus that covers our sin.**

g. **One thing we have learned from The Story is that God never does anything by accident but always by design.**

1. The Cross was God's design and way for you and me to be made right with God.

2. On the cross Jesus was our sacrifice

h. Think about this for a moment:

1. **Jesus died at the ninth hour, that is, three p.m.** This was the very hour when the priests began to make the evening sacrifice of the Passover Lamb.

2. One commentator indicated that the priest would blow the shofar so all could hear it. People would stop what they were doing when the sacrifice was being made on their behalf.

3. While the priests were going about sacrificing the symbolic lamb for the people, the true Lamb of God was being sacrificed for the people's sins outside the city walls

i. **The words, "It is finished" are for you**

1. There were three men who died that day

a. One In Sin

b. One To Sin

c. One For Sin

2. We will die as one of the first two

3. When we die to sin we begin to live in Christ

**How will you choose to die?**

BOW WITH ME IN PRAYER

8:30 #188 "AT THE CROSS"

11:00 "THE WONDERFUL CROSS"