

Resurrection Day 2021

Mark 15:24-31

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“He saved others; he cannot save Himself!” Mark 15:31

Jesus hung on the cross at Calvary for six hours. After a night of betrayal, beatings, and berating, His body bloodied, Jesus was nailed to a cross where He would slowly suffocate. With nails in His healing hands, and nails in the same feet that walked on water, and with tears in the same eyes that once wept for Lazarus and looked with compassion upon Israel, and with a head full of thoughts that once imagined a beloved community now sagging beneath the weight of a thorny crown, Jesus died.

Six hours He hung, suspended between heaven and earth.... Six hours He hung balancing justice and mercy on His right hand and His left. Six hours he hung, turning His very flesh into a bridge across the chasm that sin created between GOD and humanity. And like a good carpenter with nails in His hands, He built the foundation upon which a new Kingdom—a new community— would stand. This rejected and tried stone became the Chief Cornerstone of a spiritual building, so that you and I might become living stones with a living hope, by grace and through faith.

Six hours Jesus hung there dying on public display. He was lynched by the very ones He came to love and to save. Six hours he hung there—dying in solidarity with every suffering soul, with every innocent victim, with every abandoned, left-behind, oppressed, captive—with every suffering soul.

Six hours he hung there for every George Floyd, every Briana Taylor, every Ahmad Arbery, every Botham Jean, every Tamir Rice, every Sandra Bland, every Trayvon Martin, every victim of hatred. He hung there for six hours as a witness against a wicked and corrupt government and a temple that had become its tool.

But in those six hours, it was not only for the victims that he hung in solidarity, and not only as a witness against a wicked and corrupt government that He remained there. Jesus hung there dying to save the souls of those twisted by hatred and violence, human arrogance, and those blinded by bitterness and pride. He hung there suffering, dying for both the victims and the offenders, the falsely accused, and the wicked *deserving* judgment.

Jesus hung on the cross for six hours, on public display, lynched by the very ones He came to love and to save. He hung there in solidarity with the oppressed and in sorrow for the oppressors. He hung there as the witness against wicked and corrupt government. He hung there refusing to save Himself in order to save all of us.

Those who looked on assessed His situation, and some counted His circumstance as an indictment against Him. “He saved others; He would not save himself.” But like many of *our* views of things, people, and circumstances—their vision was obscured. Impaired vision caused them to draw a faulty conclusion about what they were witnessing. They were nearly correct in their assumption, but as with horseshoes and cigars, it almost doesn’t count.

Was the proclaimed Savior of humanity suffering? Yes. Was the healer and preacher from Galilee abandoned by His own disciples? Yes. Was Jesus, in this moment, alone in His suffering? Yes. Was He humiliated? Yes. They were almost right in their assumption.

Did He save others? Yes. The woman at the well. The demon possessed. Mary Magdalene. Lazarus, dead for four days. Zaccheaus the publican. The lame at Bethesda pool. The woman caught in adultery. The widow at Nain. The couple in Cana. Peter's mother-in-law. The sleeping maid. Blind Bartimaeus. The ten lepers. The withered hand. The sick with palsy. The deaf and mute. The loose woman. The drowning disciples. The hungry multitudes....Yes, Jesus saved others!

"He saved others, He cannot save himself...." This is where their assumptions veered off course. Yes, He saved others, but His aim was not just to save others, but also to save *them*—that is—to save those who condemned and crucified Him! Jesus saved others and desires to see all of humanity saved—even the very worst among us. And it is this determination that compelled Him to hang on that cross for 6 hours. You see, it was not that He "could not save himself," but rather that He "would not save himself" in order that He might save us all.

He died in order to pardon humanity her sin debt and reconcile us to the Father. He died, a willing sacrifice to save us from *our* sins, from ourselves. He died in order that death, which is the very penalty and power of sin, might die with Him! He died for all of us. He died to save us, even if it demanded that He *refuse* to save Himself.

And on this resurrection day, amid these turbulent times, I am glad that He would not come down from that cross. I am heart-broken and sorrowful at His suffering, but I am also overwhelmed by the magnitude of the love of GOD. I'm overwhelmed at the very thought of One who commends His love toward us while we were yet in our sins! Jesus died! He hung on the cross from 9 in the morning until 3 in the afternoon; 6 hours he hung there dying just to save us.

"He saved others; He cannot save himself....," they spoke. No, no, no, I say.... Yes, "He saved others, but He *would* not save himself...." They wanted Him to come down, but Jesus said I will come *through*! They wanted a momentary miracle, but Jesus was initiating a monumental movement! They wanted Him to come down for an outside show, but Jesus was determined to come *through* with a lasting change! Jesus overcame death's sting and snatched victory from the grave!

I am reminded of the old gospel song:

When Jesus hung on Calvary,
people came from miles to see.
they said, "If you be the Christ,
come down and save your life."
Oh, but Jesus, my sweet Jesus,
He never answered them,
for He knew that Satan was tempting Him.
If He had come down from the cross,
then my soul would still be lost.

He would not come down

from the cross just to save Himself.
He decided to die just to save me.

Donald Vails

I'm reminded of the song:

It wasn't the nails that held Him to the cross,
He could have come down,
But the whole world would be lost.
The ransom was so high,
Only He could pay the cost....
It wasn't the nails that held Him to the cross.

He was wounded for our transgressions,
Bruised for our iniquity.
By His stripes we were healed,
As He hung there at Calvary.
He was lifted up from the earth,
In order to draw all men.
It was love that held Him there
And that same love covers our sins.

Oh, it wasn't the nails that held Him to the cross,
He could have come down,
But the whole world would be lost.

He was wounded for our transgressions,
Bruised for our iniquity,
By His stripes we were healed,
As He hung there at Calvary.

Oh, it wasn't the nails that held Him to the cross,
He could have come down,
But the whole world would be lost.

For God so loved the world,
That He gave His only Son,
No greater love had been given to anyone.
The Son gave His life for the taking by men.
He had the power to lay it down,
He had the power to take it up again.

Oh, it wasn't the nails that held Him to the cross,
He could have come down,
But the whole world would be lost.
It wasn't the nails that held Him to the cross.

Jerry Mannery, Milton Ray Biggham

I don't know about you, but I'm glad that He died on that Friday. I'm glad that He lay in that borrowed tomb all Friday night and stayed there all Saturday night. I'm so glad that He didn't stay too long. The scripture declares that *early* on Sunday Morning, He got up with all power in His hands! He got up! He got up to justify us! He made us right with God the Father! We are at peace with God through Jesus Christ! Sin and death have no more dominion over us!

He lives, and you may ask "How do you know He lives?" I know He lives because He lives in me. When I was dead in my sins and couldn't stand myself, He loved me! When I was stained by my own poor decisions and drowning in a sea of despair, He lifted me! And He's been lifting, loving, leading, and saving me ever since I heard His gracious calling! He's been catching me when I fall, putting me back together when life breaks me down, restoring me when I've strayed from Him, and giving me another chance when I choose the wrong over the right!

Thank God for Jesus on this Resurrection Day. Thank God for a loving Savior who saved others, even if it meant He would not save himself! He died, but He lives forevermore, and because He lives...we can face tomorrow — pain, problems, pandemics, police brutality, and political unrest. Because He lives, we don't have to live in fear of the past, of present circumstances, or the possibilities of future problems. All fear is gone! We know He holds the future; this life, come what may, is worth living because He lives!

Yes, indeed, "He saved others, but He *would* not save Himself...."

Amen.