

29) And those who passed by blasphemed Him, wagging their heads and saying, "Aha! You who destroy the temple and build it in three days, 30) save yourself, and come down from the cross!" 31) Likewise the chief priests also, together with the scribes, mocked and said among themselves, "He saved others; Himself He cannot save. 32) Let the Christ, the King of Israel, descend now from the cross, that we may see and believe." And those who were crucified with Him reviled Him.

INTRO: Chief priests and scribes and elders – even those who were crucified with Him – are specifically named as mockers at Golgatha; place of a skull; near city, outside (old) walls; logical location for public exposure of crucifixions. But also 'those who passed by' are mentioned; ordinary people? Residents? Pilgrims? Who were these who passed by the cross of Jesus and mocked Him? Their words of mockery indicated that they knew some of the details of His accusation, trial. What were they doing at Golgatha, and why?

I. WERE THE PASSERS-BY SINNING?

A. v.29 'blasphemed' = a sin of speaking; the tongue

1. mocking

a. definition = mimic in attitude of contempt; ridicule

b. v.32 – Let the Christ now descend from the cross

2. deriding

a. definition = ridicule or laugh at in contempt

b. v.31 – He saved others; Himself He cannot save

3. taunting/teasing/tempting

a. definition = insulting; sarcastic approach

b. tempted to save Himself instead of the world

c. v.30 – save Yourself and come down... (cp. Satan vis-à-vis stones/bread)

4. blaspheming

a. definition = speak evil against God, or anything about God

b. v.29 – You who would destroy the **sanctuary** in three days...come down

c. He was **fulfilling** what they were mocking!

B. Passersby were joining in the same sins as others at Golgatha

1. chief priests, scribes, elders, soldiers, thieves, passersby (anybody else?)

2. shameful conduct, esp. for spiritual leaders; God's chosen people

3. 'everybody's doing it' is not an acceptable excuse

4. even if the others are spiritual leaders, or God's chosen people

C. Passersby sins differ little from some of ours

1. Matt.25 –if done to least of brethren, it's also done to Jesus
2. e.g. make fun of president; pastor; goofy U.S. representative
3. why, there are people who make a career of it; Don Rickels, late-night TV
4. and we watch, repeat or retweet it
5. how about someone at work or at school?
6. behind his back; like Jesus, seemingly helpless to retaliate

II. WHY DO PEOPLE COMMIT SUCH SINS?!

A. Majority go along with the crowd, not daring to be different

1. if you don't join in, you might **get** mocked
2. it can be contagious; getting into the spirit of things
3. even the (disciplined) Roman soldiers joined in; they're not even **Jews**

B. It shows my cleverness; impresses others with my warped wit

1. meanness of one, sharpens the wit of another sinner
2. a contest over who can be the most biting, insulting

C. Mock that which I do not understand

1. the one who dresses, looks, talks differently, y'all
2. whose lifestyle or manners differ from mine
3. or whose faith and values differ
4. disagree, debate; but don't ridicule (ad hominem attacks: racist!)

D. Unbridled inner emotions motivate such sins

1. deep-seated prejudices or fears or hatred
2. Golgatha priests: most likely jealousy and envy (whole world...)
3. Soldiers' possible attitude of superiority
4. Pharisee pride in self, often misplaced and unjustified
5. God expects us to control and direct our emotions
6. Am I dwelling too long on sins?

III. WHAT IS THE SOLUTION TO THIS SIN?

A. Same solution as with every other sin

1. realize it; listen to self (Jim Grady's tape recorder)

2. speak out to next guy (I've failed to object to another's profanity or boasting about lawbreaking)
3. in a word: repent (Why we have Lent)
4. come to our senses like malefactor (Luke 23:39-42)
5. confess (General or private) and listen to absolution

B. And, having been forgiven...

1. Luther on 8th commandment (false witness), offers a positive side
2. defend him, speak well of him, and put the best construction on...
3. don't gossip about one sick or in prison; go and visit instead
4. at a minimum, remember to pray for him; esp. him with a cross
5. admonish a sinner; forgive a penitent
6. if he's being 'dissed'; say something nice, it may be contagious

CONCLUSION: "So, the tongue is a little member and boasts of great things.

How great a forest is set ablaze by a small fire." So wrote James, the half-brother of Jesus. (3:5) Our words can sinfully harm another and earn God's wrath upon us. But God's word also brings forgiveness; even forgiveness for sins of the tongue. On this last Wednesday of Lent we remember again the message of repentance, confession, and forgiveness from Jesus, Who was on that cross for us. Amen