

Intro to Mark 15:21

Sunday, April 2, 2017
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Most of us like to be in control. Whether consciously or subconsciously, we tend to want things to go a certain way in our lives and unexpected events are usually unwelcome. Unless the unexpected events are something akin to winning the lottery, they most likely bring with them feelings of frustration, sadness, or pain. But what if we began to understand all things as coming from the hand of God? What if, instead of the cruel, cruel world being the impersonal force behind all things, what if it was the personal, loving, compassionate God, who only wants what is best for us?

In Mark 15, we encounter a man named Simon. Simon was just one of many people in Jerusalem for the Passover festival 2,000 years ago. Things could have gone according to plan for him (as they probably did for most other people at the festival that year and every other year), but God had other plans. In the moment, the unexpected events were forced, unwelcomed, and probably brought a great deal of shame and humiliation with them. Yet it seems as though God brought about great good for Simon and his family.

Context

Simon of Cyrene is mentioned in all four Gospels. Although most often when people are mentioned in multiple Gospels, Mark shares the least about them, in this case, Mark shares the most about Simon! It seems compelling that the mention of Simon as being the father of Alexander and Rufus is linked to their family's later connections with the churches in Antioch (Acts 13:1) and Rome (Romans 16:13). If that is true, it provides a more substantial historical context to understanding his role in all four Gospels.

Read and Reflect *(Use this section to write down any thoughts you had on the sermon. Make sure to note any questions you had about something in the passage or in the sermon.)*

Read Mark 15:21

“I Didn’t Sign Up for This!”

I. It was a providential moment

- Proverbs 16:9
- God is at work in all the events of life.

II. It was an unwelcomed moment

- Forced
- Humiliation... irritation
- Matthew 5:41

III. It was a life-changing moment

- Mark’s Gospel was written to Rome
- Romans 16:13 *Rufus... his mother*

Discuss

- 1) What are some unexpected events that have taken place in your life? Have you been able to think of that event or those events as providential?

- 2) Read Proverbs 16:9. Is this verse a comfort to you or does it bring frustration or anxiety? Why?

- 3) Read Genesis 50:20. Joseph was someone who had been sold into slavery by his own brothers, then betrayed again in Egypt to suffer further injustice in an Egyptian prison. Like Simon of Cyrene, these events were not part of his plan for his life. But Joseph spoke these words to his brothers many years after he was betrayed by them. What must have been true of Joseph to allow him to say something like that?

- 4) Simon of Cyrene bore Jesus' actual cross, something which none of us can do. Yet Jesus Himself reminded His followers, at a critical moment earlier in Mark's Gospel, that they would be required to "take up" their own crosses (perhaps in a figurative way) and follow Him (Mark 8:34-38). What He meant by this was that Christians would face suffering and shame from the world if they committed to following Him. What does it look like for you to "take up your cross"? And what does it look like for you to keep the goodness and sovereignty of God in mind as you do?

- 5) Read Romans 8:28-39. How does this passage, related to the suffering of God's people, give us hope amid our own unexpected trials? And how can we share that hope with others (Christian and non-Christian)?