

The Throne of the King

John 19:16b–24

Introduction

There are so many ways to think about the cross on Good Friday. There is the service of the Veneration of the Cross, the Seven Words from the Cross, which makes up our circuit Tre Ore service. We sing songs like “The Old Rugged Cross,” “When I Survey the Wondrous Cross,” and “In the Cross of Christ I Glory.” The cross of Christ was so much more than an instrument of torture and death. It was the throne of the King.

Carrying the Cross

John says: *and He went out, bearing His own cross, to the place called The Place of the Skull* (John 19:17). This was something all condemned criminals did, carry their cross to the place where they were executed. In Mel Gibson’s *Passion of the Christ*, one of the things the soldiers did to mock Jesus was to shout at Him while He struggled with the weight of His cross, “Why are you embracing your cross? Do you love it that much? Do you want to die that badly?” Truthfully, it could be said that Jesus was embracing His cross because that is the reason He came. His cross was His mission. He was embracing His mission. But there was more.

The Sign

Many times, the Romans would hang a sign on top of a cross, identifying the criminal and the crime he was being executed for. The sign over Jesus read: *Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews* (v. 19). There were many people from other countries in Jerusalem since it was Passover. So, the inscription was written in Latin, Aramaic, and Greek, to make sure all could read it. It also showed His death was universal.

The King of the Jews

Did Pilate know what he was writing? He wasn’t the first person to unwittingly confess who Jesus was. Earlier, Caiaphas *had advised the Jews that it would be expedient that one man should die for the people* (John 18:14). That’s why Jesus came. He came *to save His people from their sins* (Matthew 1:21). The way He would accomplish that was to die. While he meant it as a slur, the inscription let the world know that Pilate thought Jesus was the King of the Jews. He wouldn’t change the inscription to read, *“This man said, ‘I am the King of the Jews’”* (John 19:21). But what does the inscription communicate?

Jesus

According to David Chytraeus, 16th Century German Lutheran professor, theologian, and biblical exegete, *“Jesus” means the Savior, liberating His people from their sins.*

Of Nazareth

“Of Nazareth” means not only was He raised in Nazareth, but that He was set apart from the whole human race and consecrated to God, so that He might sanctify us.

King

“King” means the victor over the devil, sin, and death, the defender of the church, the One who restores righteousness and eternal life.

Of the Jews

“Of the Jews” means of those who are circumcised in heart and spirit, not merely according to the letter. Iudaei [Latin for Jews] means “those who confess.”

Glorified on the Cross

John tells us ahead of time how Jesus viewed His cross in **chapter 12** (Read **John 12:27–33**). Some think that Jesus was glorified in His resurrection. Humanly speaking, the cross was a place of shame, the empty tomb was a place of glory. For there the shame of the cross was vindicated. But the cross is the place of glory, it is His throne, because there He defeated the devil, death, and sin.

“When I Am Lifted Up”

John reinforces this when Jesus talks about *being lifted up and drawing all people to Himself* (v. **32**). John tells us: *He said this to show by what kind of death He was going to die* (v. **33**). Tonight, we pay homage to the cross, Jesus’ throne on this earth, where He defeated the devil, death, and sin, and won our salvation.

*And the peace of God,
Which surpasses all understanding,
Will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.*
