



REFLECTIONS

April 3, 2022

“The centurion, seeing what had happened, praised God and said, ‘Surely this was a righteous man.’”

Luke 23:47

Beneath the Cross

Dark clouds lingered deep below the horizon. Soon they would roll in to symbolize the world’s darkest day. Meanwhile, a small but growing crowd made its way to a rocky hill called Golgotha. A group of soldiers waited there, duty bound, to crucify three criminals struggling to carry their crosses up its rugged slope.

While waiting, the soldiers entertained themselves with stories they had heard about the crimes the three alleged criminals committed, most notably by the man named Jesus. They sneered at his claim to be the Son of God, and how He would rebuild the temple in three days. Someone may have also told how “the governor's soldiers... stripped [Jesus] and put a scarlet robe on him, they spit on him, and took the staff and struck him on the head again and again. ...Then they led him away to crucify him.” (Matthew 27:29(a), 30, 31(b))

As the criminals reached the site, an artisan raced to place a sign on the cross above Jesus’ head as Pontius Pilate instructed. The sign read, THIS IS JESUS, THE KING OF THE JEWS.

From the cross, Jesus prayed, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.” (Luke 23:34) The crowd heard his compassion, but they saw a man beaten and humiliated, human spit drying on his face. Suffering, mocked, and naked. But beneath the cross a flurry of activity portrayed the divergent emotions of the witnesses. A few came to show their love for him; some came to chastise and demean him; and some were there to help crucify him.

Jesus’ disciples were not to be found at the scene; only John made his way near the cross. Also “Near the cross of Jesus stood his mother, his mother’s sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus saw his mother there, and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to his mother, ‘Dear woman, here is your son,’ and to the disciple, ‘Here is your mother.’ From that time on, this disciple took her into his home.” (John 19:25-27)

About the sixth hour, those dark clouds began to roll in, the sun stopped shining and darkness fell on the whole land. In the temple, the curtain was torn in two. Then Jesus cried in a loud voice, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit," and breathed his last. (See Luke 23:44-46)

From beneath the cross, “the centurion, seeing what had happened, praised God and said, ‘Surely this was a righteous man.’”

“You are the light of the world,”

Richard +

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