

More About Jesus, Week 14: Jesus did not engage in self-pity

(Luke 23:27-30)

by Paul Hammons

In Luke 23, we read the story of Jesus' trial and crucifixion. It is the culmination of a night that began with betrayal, continued with a humiliating and illegal examination by the Jewish leaders, and led to official trials that morning in front of the Sanhedrin and later Pilate, where the people demanded that a murderer be released and that Jesus be put to death.

In v. 27, we get the first indication that not everyone in the crowd approved of his treatment. We read about a crowd of people following him as he carried his cross to Golgotha, with women mourning and weeping as they walked.

Certainly, no one has had as much right to self-pity as Jesus had in that moment. He was falsely accused and condemned not because the charges against him were believed, but because of the weakness and injustice of human rulers. And while others have suffered similar injustices throughout human history, none of them could say they were fully and completely innocent.

Unlike every other human being that has ever lived, Jesus truly had done nothing worthy of death. As Isaiah 53 says:

All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all. - Is 53:6 (ESV)

And yet as Jesus was carrying his cross, hearing the women mourn, he turned to them and said:

“Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. For behold, the days are coming when they will say, ‘Blessed are the barren and the wombs that never bore and the breasts that never nursed!’ Then they will begin to say to the mountains, ‘Fall on us,’ and to the hills, ‘Cover us.’” - Lk 23:28–30

Jesus didn't see himself as the one that needed to be pitied or rescued in that moment. Jesus was where he had chosen to be, giving himself as a ransom for many through his death (**Mat. 20:28**).

Jesus was only hours away from shouting triumphantly from the cross, *“It is finished”* (**John 19:30**). Instead of thinking of his own pain and anguish in that moment, he thought about the horrific scenes that would take place in Jerusalem years later. And he told the people, *“I'm not the one you ought to feel sorry for!”*

Jesus didn't engage in self-pity. No one has given up more than he did, emptying himself of the glory of his eternal divine nature to take on the form of a servant (**Phil. 2:7**). The nature of his mission required that he put the needs of others above his own, and he showed that attitude continually in his life.

As Hebrews 12:2, tells us, Jesus *“for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame...”* (**Heb 12:2**). The word for “despise” indicates an attitude that disregards something, considering it unworthy of concern. In other words, Jesus didn't care about the shame that he had to undergo, because his focus was on the joy in fulfilling God's will and bringing salvation to all who believe (**Rom. 3:22**).

Luke brings this out clearly in his crucifixion account. As Jesus was nailed to the cross and lifted into place, we read that he was saying *“Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.”*

When one of the criminals hanging next to him stopped mocking him and started asking for mercy, Jesus granted it freely, telling him *“Today you will be with me in paradise.”*

Jesus underwent every bit of the indignity of the cross without complaint. As he said in **John 12:27**: *“Now is my soul troubled. And what shall I say? ‘Father, save me from this hour’? But for this purpose I have come to this hour.”*

Jesus stands as our example of willingly, joyfully taking on whatever burden the Father lays on us, not wallowing in self-pity or bitterness, but like the apostles who followed his example, *“rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name”* (**Ac 5:41**).

Instead of complaining and worrying about how our situation could be better, Christ's example calls us to focus on the good that God has done and will do for us as we serve in His kingdom.

Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. – Phil. 4:6–7