

Title: ENCOUNTERS ON THE WAY TO THE CROSS, LUKE 23:26-43
(Chatham, NJ; 11/24/13, AM) [Pd – Reflections on Narrative]

Theme: We gain insights from the people that Jesus encounters on the way to crucifixion, and those encounters become experiences that we can benefit from.

Purpose: To get the audience to reflect on these encounters that they might grow from them.

Introduction:

1. You are a pilgrim on a journey.
2. Your pilgrimage has taken you to the noisy streets of Jerusalem.
3. A gruesome event is about to take place, and you fall in with the crowd.
4. We are not there simply to ascertain facts about the event.
5. We are observers; how do these things affect us?

I. Simon of Cyrene, 26

A. Information

1. Cyrene: in North Africa, Libya today
2. Do the soldiers recruit Simon because Jesus is so weak from the flogging?
3. Normally the victim must carry the cross himself.
4. This must have affected Simon deeply; did they speak to one another?
5. Mk. 15:21 – father of Alexander and Rufus; the church must have known Simon later to insert this detail after the fact
6. He must have been affected by the event to later be a part of the church
7. How are you affected by what you see and experience?

B. Inspiration

1. Jesus says his yoke is easy and his burden is light, Mt. 11:28-30
2. 1 John 5:3 asserts that Jesus' commandments are not burdensome
3. Simon must carry it but Jesus is the one who suffered the real burden of carrying our sins and guilt
4. How might you have felt watching the soldiers recruit Simon? Watching him carry it all the way to Golgotha?
5. What do you gain from thinking about it now?
6. Is Jesus' burden light? Do you find rest for your soul?

II. Jesus and the grieving women, 27-31

A. Information

1. A great crowd is following and among them are women lamenting
2. Who are these women? "Daughters of Jerusalem"
3. Had they been disciples? Are they seeing their dreams collapse? Are there many who are wailing because of the anguish of death and oppression?
4. The commotion and crying affects you; it is a grievous occasion, filled with death and anxiety
5. You may or may not have heard Jesus predict the destruction of Jerusalem
6. We'll use that information today to get the context

B. Inspiration

1. You hear Jesus address the crowd
2. He bears no anguish for himself: don't weep for me
3. "Weep for yourselves and your children"
4. How is he able to deflect his own fear of death?
5. What gives a man the strength to stare death in the face and suggest that people should grieve for themselves?

6. He references the judgment coming upon them, 29-30
7. Can we see what he sees? Do we recognize the judgment of God? Do we prepare for that day? Are we ready to meet God?

III. Two Criminals, One Repentant Spirit

A. Information

1. He was numbered with "criminals"
2. You hear the crowd taunting him, 35-38
3. One criminal joins the crowds taunts, 39
4. One recognizes the truth of his sins, 40-42
5. The theological issue of baptism is raised by this: yes, we still need it!
6. As you observe, this has not an issue yet
7. Set that aside for the time being and think about other things

B. Inspiration

1. Think about the deeper issue: we are receiving the due reward for our deeds, 41
2. We deserve God's judgment against us; we are the criminals (Col. 1:21 – evil and hostile in mind)
3. Is it perplexing that Jesus offers forgiveness for those doing this to him, 34?
4. Does it move you that he offers paradise to the repentant thief?
5. How moved are you to see a man in the throes of death still have enough composure to extend such kindnesses?
6. Can you experience the grace of God through this criminal?

Conclusions:

1. Think about the cross that we, like Simon, are called to bear.
2. Ponder the fate of the world that is under a cloud of God's judgment.
3. Reflect on which criminal you are: do you rail against God or do you beseech him humbly?
4. Christ came that we might think about all these things, and seeing them we might accept the Gospel for the forgiveness of our sins.
5. Reflect on that with thanks this week.