

ELEMENTS

"TREE"

MARK 15:21-32

This Week's Core Competency

Humanity – I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior. John 3:16, *For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.*

I need a hero! And not just any hero—he or she or it must be a superhero! The comic book superhero craze of adolescence has taken over major motion pictures in the US and is maintaining a steady stream of all things super. Major movie studios have scheduled over 36 multi-million dollar superhero themed films to be released over the next five years. This craze recently exploded into a whopping 13 superhero movies released in 2011 alone. The mania has come back to a "sane" six to eight superhero movies per year from now until 2020.

And who can keep track of the number of superheroes now on our collective entertainment palate! Many estimate that DC and Marvel Comics easily have over 5,000 superheroes each in their arsenals and this estimate does not count sidekicks or villains. Solo superhero performances are now rare with the advent of superhero films featuring teams or leagues of superheroes. If the superhero combo movie is not enough, producers are now showcasing superheroes fighting each other, with good guys versus good guys.

*He is despised and rejected by men,
a Man of sorrows and acquainted
with grief.*

— Isaiah 53:3 NKJV

Superhero civil wars are aplenty. Perhaps most popular today are superhero parodies. The anti-superhero is the good guy who is really a bad guy, who despite all of his negative traits and disdain for other superheroes, saves the day in spite of himself. This Hollywood superhero mania plays out like a bad polytheism. Too many gods make the heavens too mundane. Super becomes "whatever" with too much superhero saturation.

Our cultural fixation with superheroes reveals an irrefutable inner truth—we all need a savior. Even with the assent of science and the rapid advancements of technology, our culture still yearns for someone to "save the day." Ordinary fails to slake our hero-thirst. Super, mutant, radioactive, intergalactic—something or someone beyond the natural is the leap of faith made by even the most ardent of scientific materialists.

Enter Jesus. He was historical, meaning He is not from an imaginary planet or mythical galaxy. He was human, meaning He was born, He lived and He died. You can visit the places where He lived. He was miraculous, displaying many powers over disease, demons and the elements of bread, water and waves. He even raised people from the dead. Yet in spite of all of His "superness" He predicted that he would die a cruel death at the hands of people less powerful than Himself. Jesus dying submissively on a Roman cross is the extreme antithesis of all things superhero. Logically we expect someone like Jesus to win. His death on a cross defies such superhero reasoning. Jesus' death on a cross refutes the claim that He was merely a legendary fiction created by human authors.

cont. pg. 2

Yet, within Jesus' crucifixion we see that He was most superior. He refused to fight or resist the pain, humiliation, contempt, mockery and shame of the cross. His own claims to power as Messiah seem logically to demand His triumphal escape from such a humiliating execution-based misery. He refused to fly. He refused to resist. He refused to call for reinforcements. He refused even the stupefaction of a sedative. His embrace of the cross is something only a real superhero could do.

Even His powerful resurrection is predicated upon the powerlessness of His cross. No rising victorious is possible without dying crucified. As you consider Jesus this Passion season, consider how heroic Jesus was by embracing the cross. His submission and obedience to a shameful death gave Him the power to save much more than just "the day."

day 1 ENCOUNTER – read God's word to put yourself in touch with him.

Mark 15:21-32

21 A certain man from Cyrene, Simon, the father of Alexander and Rufus, was passing by on his way in from the country, and they forced him to carry the cross. 22 They brought Jesus to the place called Golgotha (which means "the place of the skull"). 23 Then they offered him wine mixed with myrrh, but he did not take it. 24 And they crucified him. Dividing up his clothes, they cast lots to see what each would get.

25 It was nine in the morning when they crucified him. 26 The written notice of the charge against him

read: THE KING OF THE JEWS. 27 They crucified two rebels with him, one on his right and one on his left. 29 Those who passed by hurled insults at him, shaking their heads and saying, "So! You who are going to destroy the temple and build it in three days, 30 come down from the cross and save yourself!"

31 In the same way the chief priests and the teachers of the law mocked him among themselves. "He saved others," they said, "but he can't save himself! 32 Let this Messiah, this king of Israel, come down now from the cross, that we may see and believe." Those crucified with him also heaped insults on him.

EXAMINE – what the passage says before you decide what it means.

- *Attempt to place a sequential number above each character found in this passage (1, 2, 3 etc.).
- *Circle similar words in v. 21 and v. 29 and draw a line between them.
- *Highlight the only occurrence of the word "cross" in this passage.
- *Draw a line from "cross" to the person who carried this for Jesus.
- *Draw a box around each occurrence of "they" in the passage and connect them with a line.
- *Underline each action of the "they" in the passage.

- *Double underline the word "he" in the passage and the action performed by this person.
- *Place an asterisk beside the written offense of Jesus.
- *Draw a line between the same characters found in Mark v. 27 and v. 32.
- *Underline the phrase in both insults that is the same in v. 30 and v. 32.
- *Double underline the way in which insults were delivered in v. 29 and v. 32.
- *Connect with a line the words "save" in v. 30 and v. 31.

day 2

EXPLORE – the answer to these questions to better understand what the passage means.

Consult the explanation of the message and the notes to follow if you need help.

1. Who is the "they" found repeatedly in Mark 15:21-27?
2. Why are a man and his sons named in this passage?
3. What is the general disposition of the men who actually crucified Jesus (see also Mark 15:16-20)?
4. What is *ironic* about the written charge against Jesus?
5. Who most likely were the ones "who passed by" hurling insults?
6. How were the insults around the cross delivered? What does this say about those at the crucifixion?
7. Those who mocked Jesus (Mark 15:29-32) were excessively insulting. What was so scandalous about their mocking?
8. In Mark 15:21-32 who is absent? Why?
9. What does Jesus' solitary action in Mark 15:21-32 say about His disposition during his crucifixion?
10. What is *ironic* about the last sentence of Mark 15:32?

day 3

EXAMINE – an explanation of the message to better understand the meaning of the passage.

The Gospel of Mark presents Jesus in two main stripes. First, Jesus was presented as the authoritative Messiah. Mark 1:1 states "The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ . . ." highlighting the power and authority of the promised Jewish Deliverer. For nine chapters Jesus performed miracles, preached sermons, cast out demons, and amazed many with his power and authority. Peter declared, "You are the Christ" (Mark 8:29) and soon will see Jesus transfigured with the glory of God (Mark 9:2-7). All signs of Jesus in his Galilean ministry pointed to a powerful and authoritative Jewish Messiah.

Immediately upon Peter's foundational pronouncement, Jesus began to teach His disciples the other side of His purpose for coming. The Gospel of Mark shows the other stripe of Jesus' mission was to serve as a Suffering Servant. In Mark 8:31-38 Jesus began his repeated teachings about His suffering. Three times, as Jesus made His way to Jerusalem, He reminded His followers that the authoritative Messiah must be handed over to His enemies and be killed (Mark 8:31-38; 9:30-32; 10:32-34). He did mention that He would rise again, but His disciples were so shocked by this prediction of suffering and death they did not understand what could be meant by a resurrection (Mark 9:32).

Jesus said very clearly that "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." (Mark 10:45) Jesus came to do more than do miracles or to defeat oppressors. He came to "give His life." In the Upper Room at the Last Supper, Jesus told His disciples that He was going to be betrayed and that all would abandon Him. As He broke bread and blessed the cup, He reminded His followers that His body would soon be broken and His blood would soon be shed. Jesus was not surprised by His death. He was preparing His followers for its inevitability.

After trials with religious leaders and then with Pilate, Jesus was given His death sentence. He was to be crucified. The words for "crucified" and "cross" in Mark comes from the same word. *Stauron* means a vertical pole or stake upon which non-Roman capital and treasonous criminals were to be executed. The word "crucify" is a verbalized form of this instrument of death.

As Jesus was crucified (Mark 15:21-32), He encountered those who hung Him upon the cross (Mark 15:21-28) and those who harangued Him while He suffered upon the cross (Mark 15:29-32). With both sets of people Jesus was silent. He did not argue or scold. He did not defend Himself or seek to escape. The

only action of Jesus in these verses was the refusal of a sedative. This lack of action from Jesus while on the cross is amazing. His embrace of His suffering was the fulfillment of His predictions.

The Roman soldiers were the active agents of Jesus' death. They finished their scourging and mockery in the Prætorium and then led Jesus outside the city to be crucified. On the way, they conscripted a random spectator into carrying the cross for Jesus. This minor detail in the story is a vivid illustration of Jesus' teaching regarding cross-bearing disciples (Mark 8:34-38). That this spectator was named is curious. Even more curious is the naming of this man's sons. That these men were named most likely indicated they later became disciples of Jesus and would be known to the Roman audience to whom Mark was most likely writing (Romans 15:13).

The description of the crucifixion is minimalistic and discreet. As violent and visceral as this death was, Mark summarized the details into the simple idea that the Roman soldiers "crucified" Him. He was lead out to be crucified (15:20), His was offered a sedative and his clothes were divided and He was crucified (15:24). In the third hour (nine in the morning) He was crucified (15:25). He was described as being crucified between two rebels. This repetition without play-by-play details suggests that Roman readers were well acquainted with the horrors of this type of execution and needed little to remind them of how painful and shameful this death was. Jesus' silence while being crucified speaks of His submission. The quote from Isaiah 53 certainly fits here as a description of the Suffering Servant, even if some New Testament manuscripts suggest it is a later insertion.

Also, curiously missing from this crucifixion scene are any followers of Jesus. Other Gospel accounts have others with Jesus at the cross. But here in Mark, disciples are not mentioned. Jesus is alone. This desertion was predicted (Mark 14:27) and fulfilled (Mark 14:50), but was felt by Jesus most deeply at the cross. Women are mentioned as present (Mark 15:40) but even they are at a distance. We see someone finally speak on Jesus' behalf (Mark 15:39) but only after He dies. Jesus has no one to comfort Him as he suffers alone.

Add to this suffering solitude a number of antagonists. First, Pilate, the Roman leader is present in the form of an inscription. The official pronouncement of Pilate and the official sentence of guilt from Rome is that Jesus is the King of the Jews. This inscription mocks an innocent Jesus who claimed that His kingdom is not in conflict with Rome (Mark 12:17; 15:1-15). Pilate even blames the Jewish leadership for the claim

that Jesus is King of the Jews (Mark 15:12). In a back-handed way, Pilate is showing what he thinks of the Jews by killing this man officially using their name. The sign also signifies that the charges against Jesus are false and fraudulent.

Two different groups of opponents of Jewish leaders came to the cross to ridicule Jesus and increase the torment of his execution. The first were called "those who pass by." They speak directly to Jesus and visibly display their displeasure. Their accusation echoes the trial before the Sanhedrin the night before. Because nowhere else in Mark is there a claim made by Jesus to destroy a temple or to rebuild in three days other than at the Sanhedrin trial (Mark 14:57-58), it is thought these "by-passers" were members of the Sanhedrin or at least sympathizers with the chief priests. Their taunts challenged the power of the claim to Messiah. "A heaven-sent Messiah would certainly be more powerful than a cross bound criminal" was their line of thinking. Mark uses the word "blaspheme" to describe the taunts of this group. This is the same word used by the High Priest in his accusations against Jesus in Mark 14:29. With a twist of irony, Mark is stating that these passers-by are the ones truly guilty of blasphemy against God as they insult Jesus.

The second group present at the cross were the chief priests and official teachers of the law. Their presence outside of the temple and in the presence of dying criminals speaks of their hypocritical failure to

keep the law. Priests at a death camp outside the city belied all concerns about ceremonial uncleanness. Yet the chief priests who sought to kill Jesus are on site making sure their plan is completed. The chief priests and teachers do not talk to Jesus, but instead mock Him by speaking among themselves. They too claim a valid Messiah would not remain upon a Roman cross.

Both groups claim they would believe only if Jesus would come down from the cross. It is ironic that belief today regarding Jesus Christ is the belief that He, as the Messiah and the Son of God, had to die on the cross.

The final group to torment Jesus were the two rebels, crucified on either side of Him (Mk 15:32). Mark records that they both insult Jesus. How ironic that even criminals reject Jesus. The leaders, chief priests and teachers of the law all agree. Jesus is to be rejected.

Jesus is crucified on a cross. He anticipated and predicted this. He did not resist or escape this. We do not have a faith, a church, a salvation or a future without this. Jesus did not save Himself from the cross. By embracing the cross He has saved others. Has he saved you? Do you believe or do you mock? Do you hide or do you follow publically? Jesus being crucified on the cross forces a choice from us all. For Him, against Him, afraid to be identified with Him—where do you stand with Him?

The Messages of the Passage

While Jesus is cruelly crucified, He is mocked excessively. Though He could have saved Himself, He chose to suffer and die to save others instead of Himself. Believe this for yourself and live this for others.

day **4** **EMBRACE** – how God spoke to you in his word.

Our desire is to not be merely hearers of the word, but doers of the word as James suggests in James 1:22. Try some of the challenges below to apply what you have learned this week.

• **Journal your answers to the following living questions:**

–How is God making himself known to you?

–How does God want to change you?

–How is God calling you to change your world?

notes **N** STUDY – the commentaries to answer the questions.

- v. 21 **Simon** "Mark mentions Simon's sons most likely because the Christians in Rome knew may have known them (cf. Rom. 16:13). Coming from Cyrene, Simon is thought to have been North African. He may have been a Jewish man who had come to Jerusalem for the Passover season. Later he is thought to have become a believer" (D. Edmond Hiebert, *Mark: A Portrait of the Servant*, 389).
- v. 22 **Golgotha** "Jesus is brought to a place called Golgotha (Aram. *gulgoltah*), meaning 'skull.' ('Calvary' comes from the Latin *calvus*, meaning 'scalp,' or 'bald head'). The reference to Golgotha as a 'place' and the translation of the name indicate that Mark's readers are unfamiliar with the site and Hebrew name, which makes sense if he is writing to Romans. In the nineteenth century Otto Thenius of Dresden proposed as Golgotha a hill with a distinct skull appearance outside the present city walls . . . But from a historical perspective, the Church of the Holy Sepulchre has much greater claim to be the actual site of the crucifixion . . . the Church of the Holy Sepulchre was already erected in A.D. 335, has been venerated as the site of Jesus' crucifixion. Excavations from 1961 to 1980 under the Church of the Holy Sepulchre have added further support to the site as the Golgotha of the Gospels" (James R. Edwards Jr., *The Gospel According to Mark*, PNTC, 471).
- v.23 **myrrh** "According to an old tradition, respected women of Jerusalem provided a narcotic drink to those condemned to death in order to decrease their sensitivity to the excruciating pain (*TB Sanhedrin* 43a). . . When Jesus arrived at Golgotha he was offered, presumably by the women since this was a Jewish rather than a Roman custom, wine mixed with myrrh, but he refused it, choosing to endure with full consciousness the sufferings appointed for him (cf. Ch. 10:38; 14:36)" (William L. Lane, *The Gospel of Mark*, 564).
- v. 24 **crucified** The Greek word "*staurow*" in verbal form means "to crucify." In its noun form the word is translated "cross" (Mark 15:21). "*Stauros*" in the NT "was a pole sunk into the ground with a cross-bar fasted to it giving it a 'T' shape. Often the word 'cross' referred only to the cross bar. Death by crucifixion originated somewhere in the East. Alexander the Great seems to have learned of it from the Persians. Rome borrowed the idea from the Phoenicians through Carthage and perfected it as a means of capital punishment. The Romans reserved crucifixion, however, for slaves, robbers, assassins and the like, or for rebellious provincials" (G. F. Hawthorne, *Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia the Bible*, 1038).
- v. 24 **lots** "The dividing of Jesus's garments by the soldiers seems to be an allusion to Ps. 22:18 . . . It is referred to in all four Gospels and was apparently customary . . . It is uncertain whether 'casting lots' meant that one of the soldiers brought a dice box to the crucifixion or that the soldiers played a game in which they guessed the number of outstretched fingers in another's hidden hand" (Robert Stein, *Mark*, BECNT, 712).
- v. 25 **nine** Actual words are "third hour." "Nine in the morning" is a translator's interpretation introducing more precision into the account than may be warranted. Such a precise time designation may introduce problems with claims made by John (John 19:9).
- v. 26 **notice** "This ironical and no doubt sarcastic wooden identification-tag nailed to the cross was Pilate's last revenge on those who had forced him into such a difficult position. To the disciples, it was no irony, but God's own vindication of His Son, even in the hour of His death" (R. Alan Cole, *The Gospel According to Mark*, 317).
- v. 27 **rebels** "The cross upon which Jesus hung was situated between the crosses of two other men. The crime for which they had been convicted and executed may also have been high treason. Roman law distinguished between theft (*furium*) and robbery (*rapina*, theft combined with violence) but neither of these crimes was regarded as a capital offense. The term used by Mark to describe them can legitimately be translated 'robbers' (Ch. 14:48), but it is more probable that it designates men guilty of insurrection (as in Jn. 18:40)" (Lane, 568).
- v. 29 **hurled insults** I.e., "blasphemed" in its simplest translation.
- v. 29 **temple** "The crucifixion attracted a large crowd, a part of which indulged in derisive remarks to the crucified Messiah. The scornful allusion to the words of Jesus concerning the destruction of the Temple which had been introduced by witnesses in the proceedings at Caiaphas' palace (see Ch. 14:58) serves to identify the first group of mockers as members of the Sanhedrin or court attendants who may have been privileged to sit in on the hearings" (Lane, 569).
- v. 31 **chief priests** "The religious leaders will believe only if they see, if they have empirical proof. The very demand for a sign is here, as in 8:11-13, evidence of unbelief" (Edwards, 572).
-

Family Time

We are celebrating Easter all month long! What a privilege this season gives us to talk about the Risen Savior. Here's how to make your own Resurrection Eggs to share with your family and friends. Save an egg carton to use for your Resurrection Eggs. Use 12 plastic Easter eggs and fill each one with the following objects that symbolize a component of the Easter story. (1) A small cracker—Passover meal that Jesus shared with his disciples (Mt 26:26). (2) Silver Coin—Judas agreed to betray Jesus for money (Mt 26:15). (3) Purple fabric—They put a purple robe on Jesus (Mt 27:28). (4) A thorn—a crown of thorns was placed on His head (Mt 27:29). (5) Rope—Jesus was beaten with a whip (Mk 15:15). (6) Cross—Jesus carried His cross to Golgotha (Jn 19:17). (7) Nail—He was nailed to the cross between two thieves (Jn 19:18). (8) Dice—The guards rolled dice for His clothes (Jn 19:24). (9) Sponge—They gave Him a sponge soaked in vinegar to drink (Mt 27:48). (10) Piece of cloth—Jesus body was wrapped in cloth and laid in the tomb (Mk: 15:46). (11) Rock—A large rock was rolled at the opening of the tomb (Mt 27:60). (12) Empty—He is not here! He is risen! (Mt 28:6). Have fun telling the story of Jesus' resurrection using your eggs.

What Does The Bible Say

Weekly Verse: Read Mk 15:21-32

1. What was on the sign above Jesus as He was on the cross?
2. What did they offer Jesus but He refused?
3. How did the people treat Jesus?

What Do You Think

1. How does it make you feel when you read about Jesus' dying on the cross?
2. How does it make you feel to know that He did it so we can be friends with God forever?

What R U Going To Do

Make your Resurrection Eggs or a make a small book that tells the Easter story. Tell it in your own words and add pictures. Pray for an opportunity to share it with someone this month! God may use you to change someone's life!

Core Comp

Trinity - I believe the God of the Bible is the only true God—Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Memory Verse

Ro 5:8 - *But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*

KIDPIX COUPON

I memorized my verse _____, completed *Scrolls* _____, brought Bible _____, brought a friend _____.

Series Discipleship Challenge located in KidPix Store.

Child's name _____ Grade ____ Parent's signature _____

Earn 1 token by completing the PantegoKids Bible study and another token by reciting the memory verse.

Questions: Kids@pantego.org

30 CORE COMPETENCIES

10 CORE BELIEFS

Trinity *2 Corinthians 13:14*

I believe the God of the Bible is the only true God - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Salvation By Grace *Ephesians 2:8-9*

I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.

Authority of the Bible *2 Timothy 3:16-17*

I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.

Personal God *Psalms 121:1-2*

I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.

Identity in Christ *John 1:12*

I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.

Church *Ephesians 4:15-16*

I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.

Humanity *John 3:16*

I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Compassion *Psalms 82:3-4*

I believe God calls all Christians to show compassion to those in need.

Eternity *John 14:1-4*

I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.

Stewardship *1 Timothy 6:17-19*

I believe that everything I am or own belongs to God.

10 CORE PRACTICES

Worship *Psalms 95:1-7*

I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.

Prayer *Psalms 66:16-20*

I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.

Bible Study *Hebrews 4:12*

I read the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.

Single-mindedness *Matthew 6:33*

I focus on God and His priorities for my life.

Spiritual Gifts *Romans 12:4-6*

I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.

Biblical Community *Acts 2:44-47*

I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world.

Giving Away My Time *Colossians 3:17*

I give away my time to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Money

2 Corinthians 8:7

I give away my money to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Faith *Ephesians*

6:19-20

I give away my faith to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Life *Romans 12:1*

I give away my life to fulfill God's purposes.

10 CORE VIRTUES

Joy *John 15:11*

I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.

Peace *Philippians 4:6-7*

I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself, and others.

Faithfulness *Proverbs 3:3-4*

I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to those relationships.

Self-Control *Titus 2:11-13*

I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.

Humility *Philippians 2:3, 4*

I choose to esteem others above myself.

Love *1 John 4:10-12*

I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.

Patience *Proverbs 14:29*

I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.

Kindness/Goodness *1 Thess. 5:15*

I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others.

Gentleness *Philippians 4:5*

I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.

Hope *Hebrews 6:19-20*

I can cope with the hardships of life and with death because of the hope I have in Jesus Christ.

About the Authors

Tom Bulick (M.A. in Educational Leadership, Eastern Michigan University, Th.M. in Old Testament, and Ph.D. in Bible Exposition, Dallas Theological Seminary). For more than forty years, Tom has served as pastor, faculty member, and administrator. Tom was Vice President for Student Life and Associate Professor of Religious Studies at Trinity Western University (Vancouver, B.C.) for twelve years before accepting the position of Spiritual Formation Pastor at Pantego Bible Church. He and his wife Ruth have been married forty-seven years and have one son, Zach.

Wendy Hollabaugh (B.S.W. University of Texas at Arlington) is the Children's Minister at Pantego Bible Church. Wendy has over ten years of experience in Children's Ministry. She has a passion for leading families to connect with God and each other. She enjoys creating compelling environments where kids fall in love with God and His Truth. Wendy and her husband, Greg, are also involved in their own personal youth ministry as they are training their three teenagers, Hannah, Aaron and Noah.

Eric Wright (Th.M. Dallas Theological Seminary) guest author.



8001 Anderson Blvd.
Ft. Worth, TX 76120
1-866-PANTEGO
Fax 817-275-6403
www.pantego.org

The mission of THE SCROLLS is to help you develop the beliefs, practices, and virtues of a follower of Jesus Christ called The 30 Core Competencies through your own active reading of the Bible. Send any questions or comments you may have about this lesson to Tom Bulick. His e-mail address is tbulick@pantego.org.