

The Centurion at the Cross

Scripture: Mark 15:33 – 39

Listen once more to Mark 15:39

*And when the centurion who stood facing Jesus, saw that he had breathed his last breath, the centurion said **'Truly this man was the Son of God'**.*

A centurion is defined as a Roman officer who was in charge of 100 men in the Roman army and there were 60 centurions to form a legion. So a Legion consist of 6,000 men and 60 Centurions.

So for us a centurion was like a colonel in the army, he was in charge of many men. A centurion was often the one who would decide success or failure in battle. The centurions were the backbone of the Roman army. Often centurions were detailed for special duty and on Good Friday we have such a situation. Some of the special duties that centurions preformed in the Bible were being put in charge of the scourging of Jesus and the taking of the Apostle Paul to Rome for trial. Today we look at the centurion who did a special duty on Good Friday of crucifying Jesus.

I would believe that this special duty was not one a centurion would volunteer for; in fact, I think the duty of escorting the prison to his execution by crucifixion on a cross was not a well like duty. I have often wondered if the centurion was assigned this duty as a punishment for something he had done.

We do not know the name of the centurion at the cross. Tradition has called him – Longinus. We know he preformed his duty well. He escorted Jesus through large crowds to Calvary. We know he keep the peace on Jesus long journey through Jerusalem and up the hill to Calvary. We know he ordered some help for Jesus on this journey when he instructed Simon of Cyrene to help Jesus. We know some things about the centurion but the remarkable thing we know about him is his confession of faith in Christ.

The centurion is the first gentile to make a confession to Christ's majesty. Think of that, the centurion is the first gentile to confess his faith in Christ. The centurion is the first of us!

After the long walk through Jerusalem and the pain and anguish he witnessed by Christ, he was the first gentile to profess his faith in Christ.

And when the centurion who stood facing Jesus, saw that he had breathed his last breath, the centurion said 'Truly this man was the Son of God'.

I have some questions for you to think about on this Good Friday. Had the centurion been a secret follower of Jesus prior to his trial and condemnation? Had he had a previous interest in Jesus? Was his statement a full conversion? Were his words a confession of faith?

It was likely that his words were a reaction to the shockingly weird phenomena taking place that day. It was likely a reaction to all that took place on the cross that day. Think of all that happen while Jesus was on the cross- there was the eerie darkness in the skies from noon to 3pm and there was the startling earthquake at the time of Christ's death.

The darkness and the earthquake were experienced far beyond Judea. The darkness and the earthquake are experienced here today during this service. How are we going to respond? How are we going to react to Jesus crucifixion? Are we going to make a bold proclamation of faith like the centurion - *'Truly Jesus is the Son of God'*. If so, let us say those words together - *'Truly Jesus is the Son of God'*.

Each person here today or viewing this Good Friday service on YouTube is a gentile like the centurion. How are you going to react to the darkness of this day we call Good Friday? Are you a secret follower of Jesus? Do you have an interest in Jesus? Have you made a statement of a full conversion? Have you confessed your faith in Christ?

Are your words just a reaction to the shockingly weird phenomena that take place that day? Is your profession of faith a reaction to all that took place on the cross that day? Think of all that happen while Jesus was on the cross- there was the eerie darkness in the skies from noon to 3pm and there was the startling earthquake at the time of Christ's death. Are you the present day centurion? Are these words on your lips today - ***'Truly Jesus is the Son of God'***. If so, will each of you say with me those words spoke by the centurion that - ***'Truly Jesus is the Son of God'***.

On this Good Friday, let us proclaim our faith in Jesus. Oh, this day is a dark and sad day for Christ but it is the beginning of a glorious day for us which just three days away. May God give each of us the grace to not only wait for days like this to proclaim our faith, but may God give us the strength to proclaim our faith in Christ always. May our lips always say - ***'Truly Jesus is the Son of God'***. Amen.