

SUNDAY, JANUARY 18, 2026

THE PATH TO THE CROSS

THE REVOLUTIONARY POWER OF JESUS CHRIST

LUKE 23:26-32,39-43

- Connection to Context
 - Today we come to the last scene in Luke's Gospel narrative before Jesus is crucified. In the big picture, we understand that the most significant and consequential Person the world has ever known is moving to the climax of His life.
 - Yet, on the way to the cross, there are details provided by Luke of Christ's final interactions that could be overshadowed by what comes next. However, there are no insignificant details in the life of Christ, and these scenes prove the point.
 - Along the way, they highlight the revolutionary power of Jesus Christ. A revolutionary is one that can make a complete and dramatic change in the life of another. Every exposure to Jesus Christ has the potential to revolutionize your life. Today we see that power at work as Christ takes His journey from Pilate's Hall to Calvary.
- Outline
 - A Compelled Stranger – Christ can alter generations
 - After Pilate's sentence of crucifixion is given, the most brutal of Christ's physical torments commenced. They are recorded in John 19:1-5 and explain why Christ was incapable of bearing His cross for the half mile trek to Calvary.
 - The soldiers, seeing Him struggle, violently grabbed what appears to be a random man, and force Him to carry Christ's cross.
 - He is from a country called Cyrene in North Africa. The city is in modern Libya and was founded by the Greeks in 630 BC, the Romans made it their capital for the region. A Jewish population grew there, which grew large, and often traveled back to Israel for the feasts. Their numbers grew to the extent that a synagogue was founded in Jerusalem known as "the Synagogue of the Libertines" (Acts 6:9) who opposed Stephen before He was martyred. A group of Cyrenians were also present at Pentecost for Peter's sermon.
 - The man compelled was named Simon and his family plays an important role in the growth and development of the Church. He appears to have been converted to faith in Christ as Savior, along with His family. Mark mentions his sons, Alexander and Rufus, (Mark 15:21) to his readers, meaning that those names would carry significance to them. Paul adds further light when concluding his letter to the Romans, He sends greetings to Rufus and his mother. Romans 16:15
 - Believers from Cyrene played a pivotal role in the founding of the Church of Antioch. After the persecution that arose around Stephen, led by Saul, Cyrenian believers in Jerusalem were scattered as far as Antioch (Acts 11:19-21) where they preached the Gospel to the Greeks resulting in the conversion of many. In response the Church of Jerusalem sent Barnabas to establish a church in Antioch. This became the first place where believers were called Christians.

- This was the place where the Holy Spirit called Paul out of to begin the 1st and 2nd missionary journeys. In fact, one of the elders in this church was named Lucius, from Cyrene.
- This all shows that even the most random of interactions with Christ can be used of the Lord to alter the lives and eternities of countless generations.
- The Professional Mourners – He can spare from the wrath of God
 - On the path to the cross, Luke mentions that there were women gathered, mourning and lamenting Christ. These are not the women who usually followed Him, but customary professional mourners that commonly followed the one headed to crucifixion. We saw this custom at work in Luke 7:11-17, where a group of women follow the casket of a mother's son before Jesus raised Him from the dead.
 - While they are carrying on, Christ stops the procession and gives them a command, "Don't weep for me, but for yourselves!" What follows is not an invitation, but a final warning of the destruction that awaits the people because of their unbelief. Jesus has given two warnings (13:34-35 & 19:41-44) of what awaits Jerusalem and here again He speaks of the danger God's wrath poses on those who reject Him.
 - He uses a common idiom to make His point. His reference to the green tree speaks of wet wood. Here He calls to memory the OT accounts of the Messiah as the Branch (Eze 20:46-47, Jer 23:5, 33:15) and the root out of dry ground (Isa 53:2) and His teaching on being the Vine (Jn 15:1,5). He means here, "If the wrath of God over sin has done this to me, the innocent, what will it do to the guilty."
 - Christ took the full fury of God's wrath over all sin (Isa 53:5-6, Rom 5:9, Gal 3:13, 1 Jn 2:2). He paid the most vicious price on behalf of the sinners, yet those who refuse Him will be overcome by a fire hot enough to burn thru "wet wood".
- The Criminal Companions – He accepts ANYONE on the grounds of repentant faith
 - The last detail provided is that Christ was crucified with to others, who were guilty of violent robbery (Mark 15:27). The other Gospel accounts tell us that both men began to mock Christ, yet one changed his tune. The one continued in his blasphemy for Christ, "if He was the Christ, to save Himself and them."
 - However, the other rebukes that criminal making acknowledgement of his sin and a faith filled request for Christ to remember him. Jesus, on account of the man's repentant faith, promises that this dying man will soon be with Him in Heaven.
 - This man found the ability of Christ to redeem Him was only of grace, and that grace was powerful enough to change his eternity.
- Application – How has Christ revolutionized you?
 - Salvation: Christ offers us all an escape from condemnation and eternal life. We must all respond in repentant faith if we are to avoid the wrath of God. Once we do, we live a life of peace with God thru His Son Jesus Christ.
 - Sanctification: Simon illustrates what happens when Christ becomes life's priority. Generations of believers will be in heaven thru the response of he and his family. Our task is to walk faithfully with Christ and experience the revolutionary transformation that He produces.