**Study for GOOD FRIDAY**

 **\*People passing by shook their heads and hurled insults at Jesus: “You were going to tear down the Temple and build it up again in three days! Save yourself if you are God’s Son! Come on down from the cross!”**

**In the same way, the chief priests and the teachers of the Law and the elders jeered at him: “He saved others, but he cannot save himself! Isn’t he the king of Israel? If he comes down off the cross now, we will believe in him! He trusts in God and claims to be God’s Son. Well, then, let us see if God wants to save him now!”** *(Matt. 27:39-43).*

**\*At noon, the whole country was covered with darkness, which lasted for three hours. Jesus cried out with a loud shout, “Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?”, which means “My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?”** *(Matt. 27:45-46).*

\***“He really was the Son of God!”**, *Lit, “Truly, this man was the Son of God!” (Matt. 27:54).*

DVD Spot: **Matthew DVD on chapter 27**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PmK9Mvsyfqs>

Discussion Questions

1) The old Afro-American song asks, “Were you there when they crucified my Lord?” Imagine being there on that first Good Friday. Who do you identify with, in the crowd watching Jesus being tried, and then being crucified? Why do you identify with this person?

2) Specifically, imagine yourself as the leader of the Roman soldiers there, the centurion. What would you have known about Jesus? That he was a “miracle worker”? That he was not well liked by the Jewish authorities? That Jesus had made certain claims about himself?

3) After Jesus died on the cross, the centurion cried out about Jesus: “He really was the Son of God” *(Matt. 27:54)*

Why do you think that he came to this conclusion about Jesus? Talk together about all that the centurion would have seen: before Pilate; on the way to the cross; at the cross, after the death of Jesus *(Read Matt. 27:32-56).*

4) Do you think that the Centurion became a follower of “the Way”, as the early Christians were called?

Why? Or why not?

5) Why have you become a follower of “the Way”?

Who, or what events, led you to become a follower of Jesus? Why do you still follow Jesus, and trust in him as your Saviour?

 Quotes:

The following is are quotes from Good Friday’s message on the theme: “Were you there when they crucified my Lord?”

**\*This morning, I want you to imagine that you were there in the crowd as the soldiers led Jesus away to be crucified, that you were there as they nailed him to the cross and finally died, and that you were there as his body was taken and laid in a tomb.**

**No, more than this, *more than just imagining that you were someone at the foot of the cross,* I want you to imagine with me that you are the leader of the Roman soldiers there, *the centurion….***

**\*What would the centurion have known about Jesus, prior to seeing him being tried before Pilate’s court? He was well known as a “miracle worker”** *(cf. Josephus),* and the centurion would have surely heard about many of the amazing things Jesus had done….

**He would have known, too,** or have deduced from watching the events in Pilate’s courtyard as Jesus was tried by him, and as the Jewish chief priests and elders incited the people “to ask Pilate to set Barabbas free and put Jesus to death” *(Matt. 27:20****),* that Jesus was not well like by the Jewish authorities.**

**Maybe the centurion had heard stories about who people thought Jesus was: the Messiah, the King of the Jews, even “the Son of God”.** Certainly, he would have heard Jesus say “Yes, so you say” to Pilate when Pilate asked him, “Are you the King of the Jews?” *(Matt. 27:11).* And he would have seen the title on a piece of board at the top of the cross, reading “This is Jesus, the King of the Jews”. Probably, he ordered his men to put it up on the cross, in response from a command from Pilate to do so *(Matt. 27:37; cf. John 19:19-22).*

**\*** The centurion was there with his men watching all that happened to Jesus as he was sentenced to death by Pilate, mocked by the soldiers, forced to carry his cross beam to the place of execution, nailed to his cross, and crucified. **What led him to exclaim after Jesus died, *as Matthew and Mark both tell us he did,* that Jesus “really was the Son of God”?** *(Matt. 27:54; Mark 15:39).*

**\*Maybe the centurion was impressed by the way that Jesus faced his persecutors and his death….** Matthew tells us that Jesus didn’t say virtually anything in response to his persecutors *(Matt. 27:14; cf. 26:63).*

**\*The centurion would have then seen how Jesus faced his crucifixion….** **Maybe he heard some of the things that Jesus said on the cross….** Maybe he heard Jesus pray for his soldiers, as Luke tells us he did:

**“Forgive them, Father! *For* they don’t know what they are doing”** *(Luke 23:34).*

**\*The centurion, as I said, would have almost certainly been impressed by the seemingly supernatural signs that accompanied Jesus’ death on the cross: first of all the amazing darkness that pervaded all for three hours, and then the earthquakes that happened immediately after Jesus died on the cross** *(Matt. 27:51-53).*

**\*Did the centurion come to faith in Jesus as the Son of God, and our Saviour who suffered and died “for our sins”?** *(1 Cor. 15:3).* Did he become a follower of “The Way”, as the early Christians were called? *(Acts 9:2; cf. 11:26).* We don’t know! That’s the last that we hear of this centurion….

**\*But the more important question is: “Have *you* come to faith in Jesus as the Son of God, and your Saviour, *who suffered and died on the cross for your sins?”***“Are you a follower of Jesus who claimed to be “the way, the truth, and the life”? *(John 14:6).*