

What you are about to hear is an R rated sermon. R rated means bloodshed and violence. Yet, we will see in this sermon that R rated will refer to more, so much more. But we begin with bloodshed and violence.

We're in a series in Matthew's Gospel called Places of the Passion. Today we walk to Golgotha—that's Aramaic for "The Place of the Skull." Golgotha was a place where Roman soldiers systematically maimed and mauled people. Then they threw them away. How so? Golgotha was not only a public place for execution. Golgotha was also Jerusalem's city dump.

Christ's crucifixion at Golgotha was an act of utter brutality and barbarism. Rome famously called it—in Latin—*moris turpissima crucis*, "the utterly vile death of the cross." Violence and bloodshed are at maximum levels—a scourge, some thorns, a hammer and three nails. By anyone's calculation—add another R rated idea, indecent exposure. Yes, indecent exposure. Jesus is first stripped before Herod Antipas' soldiers. He's stripped again at the command of Pilate at Gabbatha. And stripped once more at the cross when the soldiers divide his garments by casting lots.

When Jesus prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane, Luke says he sweat blood. The medical condition is called hematohydrois. Hematohydrois happens when people have psychological stress that is off the charts. Hematohydrois makes skin extremely sensitive to the touch.

After experiencing hematohydrois, Christ's skin was extremely fragile and sensitive, so when the Romans flogged him the next day the pain had to be unbearable. The lacerations tore into his underlying skeletal muscles and produced quivering ribbons of bleeding flesh. Roman soldiers used a whip of braided leather thongs with spikes woven into them. The Latin is *flagrum*. When the *flagrum* would strike the flesh, spikes would cause deep bruises and lacerations. The whipping would have gone all the way from the shoulders down to the back, the buttocks and the back of the legs.

Romans had crucifixion down to a science. Historians tell us that between Pompeii's defeat of the Jews in 69 BC and the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 AD, Rome crucified about 350,000 Jews. Historians also tell us that most crucifixion victims lasted about seventy-two hours on the cross. Christ lasted six. They almost killed Him with whips at the Stone Pavement, in Aramaic the place is called Gabbatha.

At Golgotha the Romans threw Jesus on the wood, then pounded tapered spikes through His hands and feet—all the while mocking Him and spitting on Him. The Savior's arms were stretched out six inches upward, intentionally dislocating his shoulders. The stress of Christ's diaphragm, then, forced his chest into an inhaling position. In order to exhale, he had to push up using his feet to relieve the pressure on His diaphragm and temporarily exhale. In doing so, the nail tore through His feet, eventually locking up against his tarsal bones.

For six hours, this breathing motion continued. Christ scraping his shredded back against the coarse wood until he became completely exhausted and unable to push up and breathe. As Jesus slowed down His breathing, He went into respiratory acidosis—leading to an irregular heartbeat. In fact, with His heart beating erratically, Jesus knew that death was near. This is why He said, "Lord, into your hands I commit my spirit." Jesus died of cardiac arrest.

R rated—to be sure—bloodshed, violence, and indecent exposure. But these R rated events lead to R rated gifts. On Good Friday, R rated events lead to R rated Gospel gifts for us. How so?

***Redeemed.*** "Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land until the ninth hour. And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, 'Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?' that is, 'My God, My God, why have you forsaken Me?'" (Matthew 27:45–46)

Matthew is using Roman times. The Roman trial with Pontius Pilate began at 6:00 a.m. It took the Romans three hours to prepare Jesus for crucifixion so He was nailed to a cross at 9:00 a.m.—or the third hour of the day. The sixth hour is noon and the ninth hour is 3:00 p.m. The three hours of darkness was not a solar eclipse. The darkness indicated the

Father's judgment against Jesus because the Savior was carrying the sin of the world.

Christ hung in the darkness; we walk in the light. Christ was cursed; we are blessed. Christ was forsaken; we will never be. Christ died; we live. Christ was bound; we are free. There's a word for all of this.

***Redeemed!***

Bloodshed, violence, and indecent exposure also means we are ... ***Reconciled.*** "And behold, the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. And the earth shook, and the rocks were split." (Matthew 27:51) Josephus, a first-century Jewish historian, tells us that this inner curtain was fifty-five cubits high, or the height of a seven-story building. The from top to bottom tearing indicates that this was God's doing. God no longer needs the temple and its sacrifices.

It means we are ***reconciled*** with the Father. We don't achieve this gift! We receive this gift. It is Christ's Gospel gift to us! We are completely reconciled and at peace with our heavenly Father. God has opened the door to eternal forgiveness. Bloodshed, violence, and indecent exposure. It means we are redeemed. We are reconciled.

We are ***renewed.*** "When the centurion and those who were with him, keeping watch over Jesus, saw the earthquake and what took place, they were filled with awe and said, 'Truly this was the Son of God!'" (Matthew 27:54) Do you want to be renewed? Come alive? Live again? Then right now, stand at the foot of the cross and confess with the centurion and those with him, "Truly this was the Son of God!" Trusting Jesus. Loving Jesus. Captivated, beholden and enamored with Jesus. There's a word for that. ***Renewed.***

We are ***resurrected.*** "The tombs also were opened. And many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised, and coming out of the tombs after his resurrection they went into the holy city and appeared to many." (Matthew 27:52-53) Imagine that! Christ's power over death couldn't wait for Easter. Already on Good Friday there is resurrection! The death of Jesus is the death of death! The day is coming, when the Savior returns, and we, too, will be resurrected. On that day we will stand before the throne washed white in

the blood of the Lamb with all our shame and guilt covered in His love. There's a word for that. **Resurrected!**

R rated. To be sure. Bloodshed, violence, and indecent exposure. It was all so that you and I can know—know beyond a shadow of a doubt—that we are redeemed, reconciled, renewed and resurrection is coming!

What kind of love is this? One more R word. This love is **radical**. Radical comes from the Latin word radix which means the root, the core, the center. The Good Friday Giver and His gifts are radical. They are the root, the core of our salvation, hope and eternal life. Nothing will ever be more important.

On this Good Friday, these R rated events and gifts are yours—straight from God's loving heart. Amen.