

# From The Pulpit

by Rev. Donald M. Clark

"THIS IS JESUS"

Text: "This is Jesus the King of the Jews." Matt. 27:37.

There He hangs--on a cross! He was born in a manger. He was a friend of the poor, and a frequent guest of the rich. He healed and restored outcast lepers, and the blind, the crippled, the frustrated and the resentful.

But now He hangs there--a "criminal."

Some had been coached to say that He was a threat to the empire; others that He had disturbed the peace.

At the moment, Jesus is suffering the worst pain of body and soul that a person can experience. And what is He thinking about? What words come from those parched lips? Listen!

"Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do..." He still believes in us, that at heart we are better than our deeds reveal. Ignoring hatred, He continues to love us. In fact, He is excusing us to God, whom He asks to forgive us, as we do a child, or one not held to be competent for his acts. Through the years He has taught men to forgive others. Now He is dying, and offering forgiveness to the human race.



REV. D. M. CLARK

The soldiers beneath the cross are trying to keep up their courage by mocking Jesus. Look closely, and you will see these words on a slab over His head: "This is Jesus the King of the Jews."

Back in town the priests are trying to get Pilate to change the wording on the sign. But Pilate, who was afraid to deny them a crucifixion, now has the courage to let the inscription remain. (Is the dying King already strengthening the weak Governor?)

Two thieves are hanging beside Him. Are they actually zealots, revolutionaries? If so, they are dying for their attempt to free their country from the Roman yoke. Jesus is dying to free all men from Satan's yoke.

The priests might have let the thieves live, but Rome wouldn't. Rome would have let Jesus live, but the priest's wouldn't; so they crucified all three.

The sky is black. The crowd is uneasy. One thief turns his head toward the central cross, saying, "Jesus, remember me."--

Raising his bowed head, Jesus says, "Today you will be with me." No catechizing, no probing into his past, no probationary period. Jesus on the cross gives a penitent sinner immediate forgiveness and eternal salvation.

After the sadistic crowd leaves, a sobbing woman's voice pierces the hillside. Jesus sees her. It is His mother. She is leaning on John. Her dying son says, "Woman, behold thy Son." Turning His eyes toward John, He continues, "behold thy Mother."

There is a limit to human endurance. The physical torture, mental and spiritual anguish, have reached a peak. Now, Satan intrudes.

"Well, Master, looks as though You lost after all. You wasted your life. Remember how I warned you? With a bit of compromising You could have been our national hero. Now look at you, dying on this pole like a criminal. Too bad."

Out of such agony of soul, Jesus cries out, "My God, my God--why hast Thou forsaken Me?"

Fever and pain parch the tongue and the spirit. He says, "I thirst." Mercifully, the end is drawing near. As it does, the Living Water, which He shared with so many, does not fail Him.

On the screen of memory, His thirty-three years flash by. As a boy of twelve, had He not sought to do His Father's will? Eighteen years later, torn between the security of a thriving business and the uncertainty of life on the open



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road, had He not done what He believed to be God's will? Throughout His ministry, had He not always referred men's gratitude and praise to God, instead of accepting it for Himself? Could He possibly have done better with His life? He might have saved His neck by compromise, but would another thirty years have served God better than immortalizing His words and deeds by dying for them now? In life, He had lived for others, so that man might live again through Him.

Triumphantly He exclaims, "It is finished!" It's pitch dark now. Nature herself--the universe--weeps, through torrent and earthquake, over man's inhumanity to man.

Even the soldiers have run for shelter. Only the three, on the crosses, remain on Golgotha. Jesus' head rests peacefully on His breast. The pain is over. He is leaving the temporal and entering the eternal. With the faith and trust He taught others to have, He says! "Father, into thy hands I commend My spirit."

The cross, until now a disgrace, is transformed into a symbol of love, forgiveness and eternal life.

There He hangs--our Savior and Lord!

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## Bethel Baptist, Clergymen Honor Rev. Wilson, Wife

BETHEL BAPTIST CHURCH members recently honored their pastor, the Rev. I. W. Wilson, and Mrs. Wilson, on the sixth anniversary of their association with the local church. A week-long commemorative celebration was featured by a Sunday morning Youth Day service conducted by associate ministers, the Rev. Roy Wilson and the Rev. Jessie Wesley.

In the evening, the Rev. J. L. Simmons and the Rev. Leo Johnson joined in the testimonial to their colleague and his wife.

Music was rendered by the Bethel Baptist youth choirs under the direction of Sisters Maggie Love and Griffen, with Sister Elnora Glasco at the organ. A special number entitled, "Walk On by His Faith," was led by Diana Glasco.

Quite a number of gifts were presented to the Rev. Wilson and Mrs. Wilson, with Mrs. Lorraine Hall making the presentations. The pastor and his wife thanked each member of the church and the guest clergymen for their kindnesses and cooperation in making the celebration a success, with a special tribute to Brother and Sister Montgomery for their untiring efforts as chairmen of the arrangements committee.