

1. This morning I want to ask you to consider with me an encounter that happened on the day of the crucifixion, and to think about the impact this encounter had after the resurrection.
2. It is an encounter that I'm not sure I've ever spoken about. And I'm not sure when the last time I heard someone else speak about it.
3. It happens after Jesus has been beaten, but before he reaches the place where he would be physically nailed to the cross. A place called Golgotha.
4. In-between these two events, Jesus is made to pick up the very cross he would be crucified on and carry it to the place of the crucifixion.
5. The distance from point A to point B was about half a mile. That would be like walking from here to David's home and sleep center on Harrison Street. Or from here to the Tea Crate on St. Louis.
6. Not only was the cross heavy, but because Jesus was so weak from being beaten, he didn't have the strength to carry the cross the entire way.
7. So, a man by the name of Simon was forced to carry the cross for Jesus.
8. I am going to read three verses in three different books of the bible because each of them give us a little more insight.

**TEXT:** **Matthew 27:32** As they were going out, they met a man from Cyrene, named Simon, and they forced him to carry the cross.

**Mark 15:21** A certain man from Cyrene, Simon, the father of Alexander and Rufus, was passing by on his way in from the country, and they forced him to carry the cross.

**Luke 23:26** As the soldiers led him away, they seized Simon from Cyrene, who was on his way in from the country, and put the cross on him and made him carry it behind Jesus.

**TITLE:** **Watch the Lamb.**

### INTRODUCTION:

1. From these three verses we learn several things about the circumstances surrounding these events.

2. As Jesus begins to stumble and struggle carrying the cross, the soldiers who were leading him to be crucified forced a man by the name of Simon to step in and carry the cross for Jesus.
3. From Matthew 27:32 we learn that Simon was from a place called Cyrene.
4. Cyrene was a city in northern Africa. Simon had been born there, but later moved to the area near Jerusalem.
5. From Mark 15:21 we learn that Simon was the father of two boys. Alexander and Rufus.
6. Now, Simon was not some well known figure in Israel. Very few people knew who he was. So how does Mark know that Simon is the father of Alexander and Rufus?
7. More than likely these two boys were with Simon on the journey. So, when Simon was seized and forced to carry the cross, it would have been fairly easy for Mark to find out who these boys were and to get their names.
8. Another thing we learn from Luke 23:26 is that Simon and his two sons were coming into the city from the countryside.
9. I believe it's fairly straight forward to assume that Simon and his sons were making the trip to Jerusalem because it was the time of year for the Passover celebration.
10. Each year, people from all over Israel would travel to Jerusalem to offer sacrifices to God in recognition of his provision and care for them.
11. It is highly likely that Simon and his two sons were bringing with them a one-year-old lamb to be used as the sacrifice. (illustrate)
12. We learn from the book of Exodus chapter twelve that this was to be a male lamb, and that this lamb was to be without blemish or defect.
13. In other words, perfect.
14. So, as they walked along, I would imagine that Simon and his boys were probably talking about the sacrifice and the events that would happen there.

15. Maybe Simon was taking the time to remind his sons that when the children of Israel were still captives in Egypt, that God had freed them when they sacrificed the lamb and applied the blood to the doorpost so that the death angel would pass over them.
16. Simon I'm sure was taking advantage of this opportunity to show his sons how important it was to trust in the Lord.
17. More than likely, the primary responsibility of the boys was to make sure the lamb was taken care of and didn't get lost.
18. Little did they know they were about to run into an entirely different scene than they had anticipated, and that they would be introduced to a different kind of lamb.
19. As they arrived in the city it was in an uproar like they had probably never experienced.
20. Along the road that led to Golgotha, thousands of people had lined the way to see Jesus come by carrying his cross.
21. People were shouting and making a fuss. Perhaps Simon pushed his way into the crowd to see what was going on.
22. But as he did, one of the soldiers spotted him, grabbed him by the arm and demanded that Simon pick up the cross and carry it for Jesus.
23. That would have left the two boys with the lamb, by themselves.
24. So here is Jesus, beaten, bruised, and exhausted, and he and Simon come face to face.
25. The prophet Isaiah many hundreds of years before had foretold this very event. And in that prophecy Isaiah refers to Jesus as being lead like a lamb.
26. Isaiah 53:1-8 Who has believed our message and to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed? 2 He grew up before him like a tender shoot, and like a root out of dry ground. He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him. 3 He was despised and rejected by mankind, a man of suffering, and familiar with pain. Like one from whom people hide their faces he was despised, and we held him in low esteem. 4 Surely he took up our pain and bore our suffering, yet we considered him punished by God, stricken by him, and afflicted. 5 But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed. 6 We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to our own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all. 7 He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so he did not

open his mouth. 8 By oppression and judgment he was taken away. Yet who of his generation protested? For he was cut off from the land of the living; for the transgression of my people he was punished.

27. In verse 7 Isaiah says that Jesus was led like a lamb to the slaughter. And that as he went he was silent.
28. Jesus was now to become the ultimate sacrifice.
29. Whereas the physical lamb sacrifice had to be offered, and then another lamb offered, and then another. Jesus once and for all would be the ultimate sacrifice that would be the last sacrifice necessary.
30. The imagery Isaiah uses to describe what Jesus the sacrificial lamb did for us is absolutely beautiful.
  - a. He was despised and rejected. He took the rejection that should have been ours.
  - b. He suffered the penalty that should have been ours.
  - c. He was pierced for our transgressions or sins.
  - d. He was crushed for our iniquities. That word iniquity means crime or evil.
  - e. The punishment that brought us peace was on him.
  - f. We were, and are the ones who go astray like sheep, yet he was the one who was sacrificed.
31. When I read what Isaiah said about Jesus, and what was really occurring as Jesus was beaten, as he bled, and as he was crucified. I can't help but be moved by the fact that Jesus did all of this for me.
32. He suffered all of this for you.
33. He endured some of the most horrific pain imaginary for us.
34. What that begins to sink in I realize that I cannot have a passive or ho-hum response to Jesus.
35. In the face of the sacrifice of Jesus for our sins, indifference is not a reaction that is acceptable.
36. If I were on the waiting list to receive a life saving transplant. And generously, someone whom I never met volunteered to give me that organ so I could live.
37. They endured the surgery and recovery. All for me.

38. Imaging how utterly offensive it would be if when given the chance to meet them and say something my response was thanks. Preciate ya.
39. When we think of what Jesus has done. And the fact that he not only gave us life, he gives us eternal life. Life everlasting.
40. And then when we consider that the resurrection of Jesus from the dead is the seal on the deal.
41. What I mean by that is, Jesus predicted his death and his resurrection. And if Jesus can pull that off, then every promise ever written in the bible has a guarantee.
42. You can take those promises to the bank. And the great promises of God and the great sacrifice of Jesus demands a response.
43. Actually, what it demands is a transformation.
44. The message of the cross and Christ being raised from the dead should have changed us and should continue to change us each and every day.
45. Very quickly I want us to consider some changes that occurred in the lives of Simon and his sons.
46. For Simon.

### **This was not an event. It was an experience.**

1. Matthew 27:32 As they were going out, they met a man from Cyrene, named Simon, and they forced him to carry the cross.
2. There is so much this verse doesn't say that we know must be true.
3. If all we do is take it at face value and read the words, and don't let the reality of what it says take hold of us, then this part of the crucifixion of Jesus is just an event.
4. But for Simon it was not just an event. It was an experience.
5. Simon experienced coming face to face with the son of God.
6. More than likely, when the cross was transferred from Jesus to Simon, their bodies touched.
7. Simon didn't just see the blood, some of the blood got on him.
8. Simon could probably smell the blood.
9. He most likely could smell the sweat of Jesus.

10. The thorns that were driven into Jesus' skull were real and the blood that drained from his badly beaten face was real.
11. And when three days later Simon learned that this same Jesus. The one who's cross he carried. The man who was beaten so badly he was almost unrecognizable.
12. When Simon heard about the resurrection it wasn't an event. It was an experience.
13. It mattered to him. It moved him. He knew that only a miracle from God could have caused Jesus to be risen from the dead.
14. Has the death and resurrection of Jesus become just an event to us? Or are we daily being changed and transformed by the fact that if not for the death and resurrection of Jesus from the dead, we would still be dead in our sins?
15. I don't believe Simon was the same after this experience, and I don't believe we should be the same after this experience.
16. Holy Spirit make real to us again the experience and the hope of what Jesus has done for us.
17. For Alexander and Rufus.

### **They were not observers. They were witnesses.**

1. Mark 15:21 A certain man from Cyrene, Simon, the father of Alexander and Rufus, was passing by on his way in from the country, and they forced him to carry the cross.
2. Imagine how close to this experience Alexander and Rufus must have been.
3. Imaging the conversation between them and their dad when Simon was reunited with them.
4. Imagine them touching the blood on their dad's arms and back and face.
5. Then imagine the affect on these two boys when they heard the good news that this Jesus, the one they had probably seen hang on the cross as well, was raised from the dead.
6. Though they were young and could do nothing to change these circumstances, I believe these circumstances changed them.

7. An observer is a person who watches or notices something. But a witness is a person who testifies to what they saw.
8. This experience had such a profound affect on them, that some decades later, it is believed that this same Rufus is the one Paul referred to in his letter to the Romans.
9. Romans 16:13 Greet Rufus, chosen in the Lord, and his mother, who has been a mother to me, too.
10. There was nothing casual about Rufus' relationship with Jesus.
11. The experience of the crucifixion and the resurrection produced this profound belief in Rufus' heart that he had been chosen by God.
12. Chosen by God to be a witness to others of what he had seen and what he knew.
13. Rufus couldn't keep that kind of good news to himself.
14. We too are chosen to be witnesses of the crucifixion and resurrection.
15. In fact, we are called. Called not to be observers, but witnesses to the truth.
16. If the kingdom of God were to be compared to a stadium where a sporting event were being held. We are not called to be the spectators in the stands. We are called to be participators on the field. In the game. A part of the team.
17. Acts 26:16 'Now get up and stand on your feet. I have appeared to you to appoint you as a servant and as a witness of what you have seen and will see of me.'
18. Are you a spectator or a participator?
19. And finally, for the world...

**The message of the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus is for everyone. No one is excluded.**

1. Luke 23:26 As the soldiers led him away, they seized Simon from Cyrene, who was on his way in from the country, and put the cross on him and made him carry it behind Jesus.
2. I told you earlier that the city of Cyrene was a city in northern Africa.
3. Forgive me for stating the obvious. But most Africans are black.

4. I don't know if it has ever occurred to you or not, but the man who helped get the cross of Jesus to Golgotha was a black man.
5. He wasn't a white man. He was a black man.
6. Without the help of Simon from Cyrene, Jesus doesn't make it to the cross, he doesn't die for our sins, and he isn't raised from the dead.
7. The message of the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus is not a white male, blond haired, blue eyed, white skinned, English speaking message.
8. It is a message that includes people everywhere.
9. Revelation 7:9-10 After this I looked, and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. 10 And they cried out in a loud voice: "Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb."
10. What is heaven going to be like? It will be a place where every skin color, every language and accent, every different way of dressing and acting, every culture from all over the globe will be standing, worshipping, and watching the Lamb.
11. Watch the Lamb.

#### Conclusion:

1. When I read those verses from Revelation chapter seven it occurred to me, if we want to be at home in heaven, we probably ought to start practicing here on earth by watching the Lamb.
2. Easter is about the Lamb. The Lamb who was slain and rose again from the grave.
3. But watching the lamb is not something reserved for one day out of the year. Because a true experience with the Lamb will change us day by day.
4. In all the craziness of our world could I implore you for the next few moments to focus all your attention on the Lamb.
5. Thank him that he died on the cross and was raised from the dead.
6. Thank him that he carried your shame, your iniquities, your suffering, and your punishment in your place.



7. And then ask the Lord what kind of impact he wants to have on your life.
8. Ask him to help you experience the truth of the resurrection in a brand-new way.
9. Ask him to help you be more than an observer.
10. Ask him to help remove any pride or prejudice that might exist in your heart toward others.
11. Salvation call.
12. Song-Worthy is the lamb.