

Daily Bread with Brother Hwa-Chi (Not reviewed by the speaker, for personal use only)

Mark 15: 33-38

Brothers and sisters, peace be with you, this is Hwa-Chi. Thank the Lord, it's time to read the Bible again. We will continue to read Mark Chapter 15, verse 33 to 38.

Jesus was nailed to the cross on the day of Passover at 9 o'clock in the morning, and He breathed His last at 3 o'clock in the afternoon of that day. Jesus spent 6 hours on the cross; the first 3 hours from 9 o'clock in the morning to noon, Jesus endured the judgment, mockery, and insults of people on the cross, because Mark's Gospel emphasizes Jesus as a servant who came to serve others, so Mark did not record any words spoken by Jesus during this time; if we refer to other Gospels, we will find that during the first 3 hours, Jesus spoke three statements, all related to people.

The first statement is found in Luke 23:34, when Jesus was first nailed to the cross, He prayed to the Father for those who hurt Him, saying: "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do." Jesus willingly, according to the will of the Father, became the Passover Lamb to fulfill God's plan of redemption. And those who harmed Jesus did so out of their selfishness and ignorance. Therefore, Jesus interceded for them first, asking the Father to forgive them.

The second statement is found in Luke 23:43, where Jesus makes a promise to one of the criminals crucified with Him. This criminal, acknowledging the justice of his punishment, recognizes that Jesus has done nothing wrong. Therefore, he repents before Jesus and asks to be remembered when Jesus comes into His kingdom. Jesus grants him this promise, saying, "Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise." This is Jesus' second statement on the cross, giving us a promise: repentance is never too late, as long as you have breath, genuine repentance brings the promise of Christ, and it doesn't have to wait until the day when the kingdom of God comes, but rather, "today you will be with Me in Paradise." Paradise is the

part of Hades where the righteous rest, as described in Luke 16:19-31, where Lazarus, the beggar, goes after his death, resting in Abraham's bosom.

Jesus' third statement on the cross is recorded in John 19:26-27. While Jesus was being crucified, several women, including Jesus' mother Mary, stood by the cross with Him. Among the twelve disciples, only John stood by the cross with Jesus. Jesus took this opportunity to entrust John with the care of His mother Mary. Addressing His mother first, Jesus said, "Woman, behold your son," and to John, "Behold your mother." From that day on, John took Mary into his own home. John was a faithful disciple who cared for Mary on behalf of Jesus until her passing. Only after Mary's death did John receive God's calling to fulfill his ministry. God granted John a long life, and after the other apostles who had served alongside him had been martyred, John rose up to fulfill his ministry. In the preceding three hours on the cross, Jesus endured ridicule, mockery, and insults from unbelievers while also interceding for humanity, promising the repentant thief paradise and entrusting John with the care of His mother Mary. Now let us consider the final three hours that Jesus spent on the cross.

Verse 33: "Now when the sixth hour had come, there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour."

The sixth hour refers to noon, or 12 o'clock in the afternoon. The ninth hour, in the original text, corresponds to the ninth hour of daylight, which is 3 o'clock in the afternoon. In Jewish reckoning, the day begins at 6 in the morning, so the ninth hour is 3 in the afternoon. At this time, darkness covered the entire land. Normally, from noon to 3 o'clock in the afternoon, it should be the brightest part of the day, the time when sunlight is most abundant and the day is at its peak brightness. However, during this time, darkness enveloped the land. This darkness symbolizes that during this period, God placed upon Jesus all the sins of humanity—past, present, and future sins. This includes the sins you and I have committed in the past, those we commit now, and even those we will commit in the future. Of course, this

encompasses sins committed unintentionally or deliberately, major or minor sins, sins of civilization or coarseness—every sin was laid upon Jesus.

Jesus was born of Mary through the Holy Spirit, and He never committed any sin throughout His life. In 2 Corinthians 5:21, it says, "For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us," where "Him who knew no sin" in the original text means "He who did not know sin." Jesus not only never sinned Himself but also didn't even know what sin was. He was so pure and good, walking the path of His life in righteousness. And now, on the cross, in a moment, the sins of all humanity are laid upon Him. For Jesus, this is an incredibly unbearable ordeal. He who knew no sin became sin for us. Moreover, God the Father is holy, just, and glorious. Because Jesus has become sin, judgment will be executed upon Him by the Father. This judgment is so severe, so terrible, that even when the sunlight should be at its brightest, the entire land becomes dark because of God's judgment.

Verse 34: "At the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, 'Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?' which is translated, 'My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?'"

At the ninth hour, which is 3 o'clock in the afternoon, Jesus had been on the cross for 6 hours, nearing at its end. Then Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?" Mark specifically records the Aramaic words Jesus spoke, immediately bringing us to the scene. Jesus was undergoing God's severe judgment, and at that moment, He cried out, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" This is the fourth statement Jesus made on the cross, the first one during the last 3 hours when He endured the judgment of God. Since Jesus came into the world, He always had the presence of God the Father; there had always been an intimate communion between Him and the Father. But now, for the completion of the redemption plan, our sins were laid upon Him, and He even became sin itself. So much so that God the Father had to distance Himself and judge Him, causing Jesus immense anguish, hence His loud cry, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?"

This is a cry of agony, not a question. Jesus certainly knew the answer, just as we do. In Isaiah 53, many verses clearly tell us the answer. For example, in verse 4, "Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed Him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted." In verse 5, "But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities." In verse 6, "And the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all." And in verse 10, "Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise Him; He has put Him to grief. When You make His soul an offering for sin." The prophet Isaiah told us long ago that this is the price Jesus paid for our redemption.

Verses 35 and 36: "Some of those who stood by, when they heard that, said, 'Look, He is calling for Elijah!' Then someone ran and filled a sponge full of sour wine, put it on a reed, and offered it to Him to drink, saying, 'Let Him alone; let us see if Elijah will come to take Him down.'"

Those standing nearby were the Jewish people who had been mocking and ridiculing Jesus in the first three hours. Seeing the darkness that had covered the land since noon aroused their curiosity. For years, the Jews had been anticipating the coming of the Messiah, and they were well aware of the prophecy of Malachi, written in Malachi 4:5, which says, "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord." Elijah was widely recognized among Jews as the most powerful prophet of the Old Testament. Now, witnessing the change in the sky and hearing Jesus' loud cry, they jokingly said that He was calling for Elijah.

It's crucial to understand that the Jewish council condemned Jesus because He claimed to be the Son of God, the Christ, the Messiah who was to come. Elijah was considered the forerunner of the Messiah. Therefore, in their eyes, when the one who claimed to be the Messiah was suffering on the cross, calling for His forerunner Elijah, and hoping for Elijah to save Him, it became an amusing notion. Hence, someone ran to offer Jesus sour wine on a reed, mocking Him, saying, "Let's wait and see if Elijah will come to save you, to take you down from the cross." In their

mockery, they were oblivious to the fact that the Jesus they had crucified was indeed the Messiah, and His forerunner Elijah had already come.

In Mark 9:13, Jesus had already told His disciples beforehand, "Elijah has also come, and they did to him whatever they wished." Of course, here Jesus was referring to John the Baptist. These Jews, despite their knowledge of the Scriptures, lacked revelation and insight. Astonishingly, they not only killed Elijah but also the Messiah, yet they remained self-satisfied and joked about it. They didn't realize that this was the will of the Father, who intended to sacrifice His only begotten Son to atone for the sins of humanity. Thus, the Bible lays the groundwork here. Fifty days later, on the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit was poured out. Peter stood up to deliver his first sermon, pointing to this group of Jews, saying in Acts 2:23, "Him, being delivered by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God, you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death." The Jews who had mocked Jesus at the cross were deeply affected upon hearing this, leading to Peter's sermon, which resulted in 3,000 people repenting and believing. Many Jews present at that time had participated in persecuting Christ. We see the breadth of God's grace; even those Jews who had mocked Jesus at the cross could be saved if they sincerely repented and were baptized.

Verse 37: "And Jesus cried out with a loud voice, and breathed His last."

The account in the Gospel of Mark is quite concise, simply stating that Jesus cried out with a loud voice, and then breathed His last. Between Jesus' loud cry and His last breath, the other Gospels record three additional statements Jesus made on the cross, making a total of seven statements. Three statements were made during the first three hours, and four during the last three hours, forming what we know as the "seven last words of Christ." We've already seen the four statements He made earlier, while the fifth and sixth statements are recorded in John 19:28-30. There it says, "After this, Jesus, knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the Scripture might be fulfilled, said, 'I thirst!' Now a vessel full of sour wine was sitting there; and they filled a sponge with sour wine, put it on hyssop, and put

it to His mouth. So when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, 'It is finished!'" Jesus' fifth statement is "I thirst!" He said this to fulfill the Scriptures, specifically Psalm 69:21, which says, "They also gave me gall for my food, and for my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink."

First, we must ask why Jesus was thirsty. Of course, after hanging on the cross for nearly six hours, His body was indeed thirsty. But more importantly, there is a spiritual significance. With the sins of all mankind placed upon Him, Jesus personally experienced every sin committed by humanity. Jesus Himself was sinless, yet now He bore the sins of the world, hence He was thirsty.

Dear brothers and sisters, have you ever thought about why you sin? The reason is that you are thirsty. Remember the Samaritan woman by the well in John 4? She had already been married five times, and the man she was currently with was not her husband. Why did she keep changing husbands? Because she was thirsty. She longed for genuine love but kept looking in the wrong places. She kept changing husbands, yet still could not quench her thirst. Jesus specifically sought her out and said to her in John 4:13-14, "Jesus answered and said to her, 'Whoever drinks of this water will thirst again, but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life.'"

The reason people sin is because they are thirsty and seek to quench their thirst in the wrong places, because the sins of all mankind are placed upon Jesus. Jesus personally experienced "I thirst" because the weight of sin placed upon Him made Him feel thirsty. And at that moment, someone brought a sponge filled with sour wine to Jesus' mouth, and He tasted it. We all know that vinegar cannot quench thirst; instead, it makes one even thirstier. The actions of these bystander Jews, mocking Jesus, inadvertently made Him taste the bitterness of becoming even thirstier.

Dear brothers and sisters, isn't this a vivid depiction of our inability to extricate ourselves from sin? Thirsty, drinking vinegar, yet becoming even thirstier—this is the image. Jesus Himself never sinned and naturally did not have such an

experience. However, under God's sovereignty, as Jesus hung on the cross, approaching 3 o'clock in the afternoon, just before His last breath, to let Jesus experience thirst, taste vinegar, and undergo the feeling of becoming even thirstier, God allowed Jesus to have such an experience to empathize with those trapped in sin and unable to break free.

Therefore, after Jesus tasted the vinegar, He uttered the sixth statement, which was "It is finished!" He had already borne the sins of all, tasted the bitterness brought by sin, including thirst and becoming even thirstier. He also underwent God's righteous and severe judgment because of these sins, and now the price of redemption has been paid in full, so He said, "It is finished!"

At this point, in Luke 23:46, the seventh statement is added, where Jesus cried out loudly, saying, "Father, 'into Your hands I commit My spirit.'" Here it is clearly indicated that Jesus' death was not passive but voluntary. He had completed the redemption plan of the Father, and He actively surrendered His spirit. So, what Mark's Gospel describes as Jesus crying out loudly encompasses the final three statements Jesus made on the cross, after which He breathed His last.

Verse 38: "Then the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom."

In the temple in Jerusalem, there were the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place. Between these two areas, there was a thick veil that separated them, and this veil was torn in two from top to bottom. In the Old Testament, the priests usually served in the Holy Place, while only the high priest could enter the Most Holy Place once a year, on the Day of Atonement, bringing with him the blood of sacrifices and seeking God's guidance there.

In the Most Holy Place was the Ark of the Covenant, with Cherubim above it symbolizing the glory of God. Anyone who dared to intrude into the Most Holy Place, interfering with the holiness, righteousness, and glory of God, would be struck dead by God. When Jesus breathed His last, the veil of the temple, which

separated the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place, was torn in two from top to bottom. It was a beautiful picture, rich in spiritual significance.

First, this veil represents the body of Jesus. The veil was woven with blue, purple, and scarlet thread, and embroidered with Cherubim, each of which is actually a foreshadowing of Jesus. This veil is the body of Jesus. When Jesus breathed His last, this veil was torn in two, indicating that the body of Jesus was broken.

Second, it was torn from top to bottom, indicating that this was not done by human hands but by God's work. On the one hand, it was the will of the Father, and on the other hand, it was Christ's voluntary submission to the will of the Father, causing His body to be torn in two from top to bottom.

Third, the Cherubim embroidered on the veil also tore in two. It speaks of the all-encompassing death of Jesus Christ on the cross, satisfying the requirements of God's holiness, righteousness, and glory. These requirements were met, so the Cherubim also tore in two, indicating that Jesus is the perfect Passover Lamb, once and for all solving the problem of human sin, removing the barrier between God and humanity, and now God can reconcile with humanity.

Fourth, Jesus's body was torn open, causing the veil to be torn in two from top to bottom, opening up a new and living way. It allows people to come directly from the Holy Place to the Most Holy Place. Originally, only the high priest could come before God once a year with the blood of sacrifices. Now, Jesus's body is broken, opening up a new way for us, and Jesus Christ himself is that way.

In Hebrews 10:19-20, it tells us, "Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh." In the past, the high priest could only come before God once a year. But now, in the New Covenant, every saved saint can, through Jesus Christ, who is the way, pass through the veil and come boldly and fearlessly into the Most Holy Place. Hebrews 4:16 also tells us, "Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need."

In the Most Holy Place, there is the mercy seat above the Ark of the Covenant, and this mercy seat is where God's righteousness and mercy intersect. Jesus has already paid the price for us, satisfying the requirements of God's righteousness. Therefore, we can come boldly and fearlessly before the mercy seat, where we can obtain mercy, find grace, and receive help whenever we need it. All this is because Jesus Christ, according to the will of the Father, completed the work of redemption. It is because His body was torn open that we can come boldly and fearlessly before the presence of God. What incredible grace this is!

Let us pray together: Lord, thank You. As we once again read through Your suffering on the cross, our hearts are deeply moved. Grace covers us abundantly, but it came at such a great cost to You. As we go over these scriptures, reviewing what You did for us on the cross, we cannot help but offer You thanks and worship once again. We, a people without hope, have become such because of Your grace, able to come before the Father, seeking mercy, finding grace, and receiving help every day. Help me today to carry a heart of gratitude, entrusting everything that happens today into Your gracious hands, helping me to experience Your grace in every situation, and teaching me Your example, that I may rest in the will of the Father and take up my cross to follow You. Bless my life today, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ.