

Standing in Front of the Cross

Scripture Reading — Mark 15:33-39

When the centurion, who stood there in front of Jesus, saw how he died, he said, "Surely this man was the Son of God!" — Mark 15:39

What would it have been like to stand in front of the cross of Jesus? It must have been unforgettable. Death by crucifixion was gruesome and grotesque. Shredded flesh rubbed against rough wood. Iron spikes punctured flesh and nerves. Blood dripped constantly. Breathing became labored and joints dislocated as muscles weakened, unable to support the body's weight. And all this took place in full view of a mocking mob.

That's how Jesus died, and that's what the Roman centurion in front of Jesus' cross saw. He had likely witnessed many crucifixions. But nothing had prepared him for what he experienced the day of Jesus' death. For three hours it was dark. The earth shook (Matthew 27:51). The veil of the temple ripped in two. Then there were Jesus' final words: "Father, into your hands I commit my Spirit" (Luke 23:46). When he heard Jesus' words and saw how Jesus died, the centurion declared, "Surely this man was the Son of God!" The centurion saw that Jesus died victorious. Death didn't conquer him; he conquered death!

Standing in front of the cross, what do you see? Can you see beyond the suffering to salvation? Whom do you see? Just another man or the God-man, the sin-bearing Savior who conquered death for us?

Prayer

Father, we stand before the horrors of the cross, humbled and grateful that Jesus endured what we deserve. Thank you that we're forgiven because he was forsaken. Amen.

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