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St. Paul's Lutheran Church
2100 16th Street SW
Austin, MN 55912-1749
Pastor Ted Barthels
Sermon preached on
March 20, 2019
3rd Midweek Lent

Passion History: Jesus is Betrayed to His enemies.
Hymns: 358; 172:1-4 142:1-4 552:1-4

Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Sermon Text: Matthew 27:27-30

Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the Praetorium and gathered the whole garrison around Him. ²⁸ And they stripped Him and put a scarlet robe on Him. ²⁹ When they had twisted a crown of thorns, they put *it* on His head, and a reed in His right hand. And they bowed the knee before Him and mocked Him, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!" ³⁰ Then they spat on Him, and took the reed and struck Him on the head. (NKJV)

This is the Word of God.

Sanctify us, oh Lord, through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

In Christ Jesus, God our Savior, dear fellow Redeemed:

INTRO: People are all too easily fooled by appearances. At the library it is often the book with the enticing slipcover that is checked out the most, while the good literature in the plain binding is left on the shelf. Though many may warn that one can't judge a book by its cover, most people are taken in by show, or by enticements to the baser instincts.

The same is also often true of people's evaluation of other people. Judgments are often quickly made on the basis of outward appearances, and often enough with some justification. Someone that appears evil very often is evil. However this often leads to mistakes in judgment. One can be easily misled by the glitz of this world, and turn away from the good and wholesome blessings of God because they appear too humble, or even shameful.

The Memento from Christ's passion which is the focus of our attention this evening is one such object. When this object is associated with Jesus it causes some to react very differently from others. Indeed the object came onto the scene of Christ's passion because of a negative perception of Jesus in His humility and sufferings. Some people who were very seriously fooled were responsible for the appearance of --

THEME: A Crown of Thorns.

It was --

I. This World's Object of Scorn and Torment.

The soldiers assigned to guard Jesus looked at Him with disdain! In their eyes Jesus was no big shot. He was at their mercy. They had heard the charges against Jesus, that He was supposedly the King of the Jews. Jesus was not like any king they had ever seen. To them Jesus and everything about Him was nothing more than a big joke!

And so they gathered their entire garrison, all their mates, and they had some fun at Jesus' expense. He claimed to be a king, so they adorned Jesus with some of the outward trappings a king should wear; a discarded purple robe for regal attire, the crown of thorns pressed down hard into Jesus' scalp as a royal crown of glory, and they placed the reed in His hand which was later ignominiously used against Jesus to represent the scepter of royal power. They mocked Jesus, bowing the knee before Him, calling

out, *"Hail, King of the Jews,"* but then spitting on Him, and taking the reed back, hitting Jesus' head with it, surely driving the thorns even deeper into His scalp. This Crown of Thorns is a memento of all the indignities endured by our dear Redeemer.

Still today some consider Jesus to be nothing more than a big joke! The holy name of Jesus is used carelessly, blasphemously. People fail to acknowledge the power, glory, might and dominion of Jesus. Many still seek to have some fun at Jesus' expense. People still mock and ridicule the Lord. They mock Jesus by spurning His redeeming grace, and rejecting the power of faith and life which only Jesus can bring into their lives. Some today still make a show of service to the Lord Jesus by continuing the form of religion, but stripping the truth from their worship. Their show of worship then becomes little more than a parody. That leaves only a cloak for evil, a crown of thorns piercing the Lord, adding to the grief of His suffering for souls that perish in their foolishness. They hold Jesus in disdain. They are not about to let Jesus tell them what to do with or in their lives. They willfully refuse to recognize Jesus' authority over their bodies and souls. They regard Jesus as powerless, much as the Roman guards did.

However, as believers we see this memento very differently. We see this Crown of Thorns as -

II. An Object of Devotion.

That Crown of Thorns really does bring us to our knees! In that Crown of Thorns we see the depth of Jesus' love for us sinners. We see Jesus' patient endurance as this memento of Jesus' passion was pressed down upon His head and as He endured the cruel mockery and derision without a reply. Peter reminds us in his first epistle: *"When He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously."* (1Peter 2 :23) Even when

striking Jesus on the head with the reed they had placed in His hands they could not rob Jesus of His royal and divine dignity as our Savior King. And yet as we praise our Redeemer King we do so with the realization that it was our sin that brought this woe, this shame upon Jesus. All the shame that was heaped on Jesus during in His passion was the shame of a sinful mankind, the shame of our sin.

Truly this Crown of Thorns is a Crown of Glory. When we look to these objects of mockery foisted upon Jesus by that Roman guard we see mementos of all that Jesus endured so they become mementos of devotion leading us to recall all that Jesus willingly suffered at the hands of sinful men that He might gain for us salvation.

May we in our devotion repent of any shame we have brought upon our Savior's name. May our lives be devoted to glorify Jesus. By faith we realize that the greatness of Jesus' power. All that this world glories in as being great and powerful is insignificant before the power of the Lord.

Jesus is Lord! Jesus has gotten us the victory. He was the Conqueror over the power of death and remains forever victorious over the power of the devil. Jesus rules the world contrary to all appearances. He does direct the course of human events, and sets limits on the activity and evil of men. He directs all things for the advancement of His gospel and the growth of His kingdom. The realm of Jesus' Kingdom is not so easily seen by men, for it remains within the hearts of those who believe in Him, and find in His sacrifice their hope of life and salvation.

In this memento of Jesus' passion, This Crown of Thorns, we see a Crown of Glory for it was through the depth of His sufferings and humiliation that Jesus imparts saving grace to us.

“Heartless scoffers did surround Thee
Treating Thee with shameful scorn
And with piercing thorns they crowned Thee.

All disgrace Thou, Lord, hast borne
That as Thine Thou mightiest own me
And with heavenly glory crown me.
Thousand, Thousand thanks shall be
Dearest Jesus, unto Thee.” (The Lutheran Hymnal 151:4)
AMEN.

“Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, To receive power and riches and wisdom. (Revelation 5:12) Amen.
(The congregation response is hymn 367:4 printed following the sermon in your bulletin.)

**“Worship, honor, power, and blessing Thou art worthy to receive;
Loudest praises, without ceasing, Meet it is for us to give.
Help, ye bright angelic spirits, Bring your sweetest, noblest lays;
Help to sing our Savior's merits, Help to chant Immanuel's praise.”**