



# prayer *life!*

## Weekly Prayer Focus

March 22, 2015

### Man of Sorrows

*He was despised and rejected by men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not.* —Isaiah 53:3

Anyone who has attended church for any number of years knows of the excruciating tortures Christ suffered on the cross. Beyond that, *The Passion of the Christ* vividly portrayed for millions of viewers what Jesus went through physically at the hands of cruel men. We know His cry, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” and understand He endured the unfathomable—rejection by God Himself. Bearing our sin made the man Jesus odious to His Father, who had to separate Himself, somehow, from His Son, as He bore our sins alone. This we know but will never understand.

There’s another side of what Jesus went through. A personal side. *He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him* (John 1:10-11). Our need for love is palpable. More than a physical dependence on others to provide for us, our need for love reflects the image of God in us, because God is love. Jesus’ very presence here on earth shows His love, a love that connects with others, giving, receiving, reciprocating. And we rejected Him.

We see sin on a scale of greatest to least, and the Bible does treat some sins as more grievous than others. The “Big Ones” tend to be sins of violence and murder, followed by sexual sins, which are also sins against life more than we understand. Homosexuality ranks high, since it so clearly goes against nature and God’s good plan. Then there’s theft and dishonesty, followed by internal sins like hate, spite, and malice. So we tend to think that if we manage to avoid these sins most of the time, we’re basically okay. Everyone pretty much means well? Don’t they?

We know the pain of rejection. It hurts when others disregard or disrespect us. There is a primal fear of having the crowd turn on us. Any childhood memory of being singled out for rejection gets shoved aside as too tender to recall. I confess to a time when I witnessed bullies targeting a schoolmate. I’m sure he hurt physically, but the social stigma from his peers (including me) must have filled him with hurt and fear. My primary thought was how glad I was not to be him. Hardly the mind of Christ!

Jesus was despised and rejected of men. The world He came to was His beloved creation. We despised Him. The people He was born to and lived among were His children, conceived, nurtured, guarded, protected, and treasured in His heart. They put Him on trial and condemned Him to death. The Gentile rulers of His day prided themselves in their justice. They pronounced Him innocent and condemned Him to death.

Pure hatred struck Jesus in the face. Unfettered rage beat His back to shreds. Visceral spite wove a crown of long, sharp thorns and drove them into His skull. Every blow, every torture said, “I hate you!” and Jesus knew the rejection of the entire human race more vividly than we can imagine.

But the rejection began long before, when Adam turned from a garden filled with trees that were good for food and insisted on eating the one fruit God forbade, on pain of death. “I’d rather die than follow to you,” he said in essence. And we said it with Him.

Every sin refuses God’s way. Each lie rejects His Truth. A wrongful death destroys life, which He gives. An insult—spoken or thought—slaps His image in the face. By its very nature, sin is a decision against God in favor of hell. And as the saying goes, be careful what you ask for. You may just get it.

Which is what Jesus did. Very purposefully and with perfect resolve, He told His Father, “Not my will but yours be done.” He took the punishment for our sin—every one in whole and in part—and bought us the opportunity to choose again. And by rising from the dead, He gave us the power to choose Him.

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