Playing Games At The Foot of The Cross

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[0:00] If you have your Bibles, I want to turn to Luke chapter 23, Luke chapter 23, and while you! are turning there, I want to acknowledge that Chase Williams is here this morning and just! completed basic training in the Marines at Parris Island, heads to Camp Lejeune in about a week.

Chase, God bless you. Let's give him a hand. Thank you for your service, my friend.
The most important events in human history. I was curious as to what people said about that, so I found some lists this week, went to the authorities. The Neolithic Revolution was number one.
You don't even know what that is, do you? It's when we became civilized. Some of you are still coming, but it's when we became civilized. Number two was writing.
Number three was the Roman Empire. Then there was the printing press. Then there was the age of exploration.
[1:09] And then the Industrial Revolution. And then the World Wars. And then the Internet. And I don't believe any of them are the most important events in human history.

Because none of them changed eternity. I mean, they're big. They're right up there with sliced bread and homemade churned ice cream. And I don't know why they didn't make the list.
But I found on one list that Jesus was listed number 16. Behind Buddha and behind Confucius.
Or confusion, depending on how you pronounce it. I believe the greatest event in human history and in all of eternity is the death and the resurrection of Jesus Christ.
Followed by the birth of Christ. And some of you may say, well, that's more important because if that hadn't happened, the second hadn't happened. Okay, you got a right to be wrong. But either way, the crucifixion of Christ is the greatest event in human history.
[2:23] And people were playing games at the foot of the cross. Luke chapter 23. Beginning in verse 26 to set the setting.

And as they led Christ away, they seized one Simon of Cyrene who was coming in from the country and laid on him the cross to carry it behind Jesus.
And they followed him a great multitude of the people and of women who were mourning and lamenting for him. Two others who were criminals were led away to be put to death with him.
In verse 32. And when they came to the place that is called the skull, there they crucified him. And the criminals, one on his right and one on his left.
And Jesus said, Father, forgive them for they know not what they do. And they cast lots to divide his garments.
[3:30] And the people stood by watching. But the rulers scoffed at him saying, He saved others, let him save himself. If he is Christ of God, his chosen one.

The soldiers also mocked him, coming up and offering him sour wine and saying, If you are the king of the Jews, save yourself.
There was an inscription over him, This is the king of the Jews. One of the criminals who were hanged railed at him saying, Are you not the Christ?
Save yourself and us. How in the world did they not get it?
How could they be standing at the base of Mount Calvary watching the Savior die and not get it? It's hard to understand.
[4:37] Or is it? Because actually, there's often a wasted opportunity when it comes to the cross of Christ. Some just stand there.

But verse 35 tells us that there's some were just standing there watching. They were just taking it in. calmly, probably dazedly, standing there with little to no response.
It does not mean they were against him. It does not mean that they were for him. They were just bystanders. Observing, pondering, trying to figure it out.

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What scares me is some still do that today. There's no ill intent.
There's just no response. There's not much of anything. Just standing there. Above his head hung a sign that said he was the king of the Jews.
[5:46] It was written in Aramaic, Latin, and Greek. Aramaic was the language of the Jews. Latin was the language of the law.

Greek was for the educated. And the rest of the folks, if they could read. Remember, Christ was crucified in a very public place.
place. A major thoroughfare outside the city. Scottish minister George MacLeod years ago said we ought to keep that in mind when he said this.
I simply argue that the cross be raised again at the center of the marketplace as well as on the steeple of the church. I am recovering the claim that Christ was not crucified in a cathedral between two candles but on a cross between two thieves on a town garbage heap at a crossroads of politics so cosmopolitan that they had to write his title in Hebrew and in Latin and in Greek and at that kind of place where cynics talk smut and thieves curse and soldiers gamble because that's where he died and that's what he died about and that is where Christ own ought to be and that is where church people ought to be about.
End of quote. In other words he died where he did for the people that were standing around and gawking at him. He died for them.
[7:34] He died for people who are slow to respond. He died for people who are resistant to respond. He died for people that just stand by and gawk.

He died for me. He died for you. Let's not just stand and watch. There was enough of that on the day that he died.
There was another response too. Still is. Some try to get what they can get. When my grandmother was too aged to live by herself she moved in with my mom and dad and sometime after that her house on the Brandon Mill Village was sold.
and before it was we as a family went there to visit the museum of my childhood. The treasured place where I got to spend the night with my grandmother.
The porch with the wrought iron chairs and that couch swing felt like home. It wasn't that they were comfortable they were just at grandma's.
[8:59] I rolled a mini matchbox car across that porch with a whole universe of a made up grown up world of a kid's imagination. When you walked in that front door you walked into the living room with the oil heater right in the middle of the room.

I can still smell it on cold days. The bedroom off to the right is where I saw my beloved grandpa for the last time alive and later that night he died in that bed.
My grandma's room with the two twin beds is in the next room and between those two beds where when I was spending the night as a child her mutt mean dog laid.
A staunch defender of my grandma. I was afraid to move. The dog made me hope that my bladder held out all night for the risk of my life.
And then there was that kitchen. That kitchen where years before my grandfather had fried egg sandwiches frying in the morning before he went to the Anderson Jockey Lot to sell tools.
[10:21] and that kitchen table where my grandmother drank her coffee out of a saucer, read her Bible, ate her toast and cut her government cheese.

And then there was the enclosed back porch where grandma's washer and dryer was, her mason jars and canned things and a cabinet. That cabinet held a handful of outdoor toys that stayed at grandma's.
And I loved that five foot by 15 inch cabinet. It was cheap, nothing fancy, but it was special. It was my spot. My mother had us meet her there on that day to see what we wanted to keep and my wants were simple.
I claimed the cabinet. It sits in our kitchen today. As Jesus hung on the cross, there were people putting in dibs on his clothing.
However, it was not because they were sentimental. It was a fringe benefit for the soldiers to claim the clothing that had been stripped from the dying. And they divided up his clothing.
[11:41] That would have been his tunic, his robe, his sandals, the fourth item would either be his cap or turban or possibly even his undergarments.

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They did not seek these things because he was their savior, nor because he was the king of the Jews as the placard said. They claimed him because it was standard practice.
They gambled to see who would get the tunic because John 19 tells us that it was a rare seamless tunic that was valuable. Not special to them, but it was worth money.
They were just trying to get what they could get. That's not the first time people were trying to get what they could get from Jesus. When 5,000 men and their families were fed, they tried to follow Jesus to the next meal.
Jesus told the disciples to get out of there as he escaped to his own solitude. There's an account in scripture where Jesus healed ten leper men and only one of them came back to him to give him thanks.
[13:02] It's easy for us to ask God for what we want, but do we bother to come back and thank him? At least with words. But even more than that with our lives.

About that account, Jesus asked in Luke 17, 17, where are the other nine? Why didn't they come back? He gave his life for us knowing that all about the kind of sinners that we are.
And yet he also still cares about the little things that stress us out. Recently on the night before Abby was to drive home and return to work, she lost her one key fob to her car the night that she was going to leave the next morning.
No idea where it was. We lit a lamp scripturally, swept the house and searched diligently. And I prayed.
And after looking in the same place three times, all four of us that were looking, we found it 17 miles away at my mom and dad's house at an odd and hidden place there where she had to plug up her phone, which was dying.
[14:32] And we rejoiced when we found it, that Abby could go back home after being with us for a week. Yes, Jesus cares enough about us, I believe this folks, to help us find a fob when we lose it.

He cares enough to forgive those that whipped him. He cares enough to forgive those that hung him on the cross.
he cares enough to forgive those that gambled for his clothes. He still cares enough for those that claim to love him, but vaguely show it with their lives.
Because people are still trying to get what they can get. They're still playing games at the foot of the cross. And there's a third kind of person.
Some mock the hope in Christ. Luke records that besides the people just standing there, there were three different kinds of people that were mocking.
[15:53] there were the rulers which speaks of the Sanhedrin, a group of 70 religious ruling leaders that most of which never liked Jesus.

They were threatened by Jesus. Jesus was not afraid of them. You were supposed to be afraid of them. He wasn't afraid of them. He was not afraid to confront them. He was not afraid to call them hypocrites.
And he called it as he was. In Matthew 23 he calls them whitewashed tombs. You look good on the outside but on the inside it's dead man's bones.
There's no spiritual life there at all. He said you're like a cup that's clean on the outside but yet inside is still nastiness.
He spoke of their dead bones as being their hypocrisy. He spoke of the nasty cup as being one full of greed being one full of indulgence.
[17:02] When you call the real shots on people they sometimes dislike you and on the cross they mocked him. They mocked how he saved others.

Thank God that he did bring salvation but they desperately needed salvation and was so in love with the law and their own performance that they thought they were enough.
They're not the only ones though. Soldiers mocked him as well. They felt like they had the might and authority was too much for him.
He couldn't do anything about it. They relished in the misery and they scoffed at his salvation. Even a criminal that was hanging beside him ridiculed him.
Little did both those groups know or that man know that their reaction was a fulfillment of prophecy. Psalm 22 verse 6 through 8 says this but I am a worm and not a man scorned by mankind and despised by the people.

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[18:11] All who seek me mock me. They make mouths at me. They wag their heads he trusts in the Lord. Let him deliver him. Let him rescue him for he delights in him.

I hope you pick up on the irony of the scoffing because the only way that Jesus could save us was by refusing to save himself.
He was easily able to deliver himself but his mission was to provide the opportunity for deliverance and that would have not come if he had been delivered.
He died on Mount Calvary for me and for you and for those onlookers and for those lost religious folks and for those hardened ruthless soldiers and for those guilty criminals on each side of him and for you and for me and for all those people that he puts in our path.
2 Corinthians 5 verse 15 says he died for all that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised.
[19:32] He was busy dying while they were busy playing, gulking, gambling, and the only reason he hung there was to meet them where they are and to make them to be what he would have them to be.

What an opportunity. A friend of a friend shared with me an experience that he had that I can well relate to because my family loves Disney.
I've been there, I've done it, spent too much money at it but they love it. They love it.
I've told them what's wrong with the Disney Corporation. They don't care. They love it. My girls have been several times and one of the grandest experiences that a little girl can have is to eat in the top of Cinderella's castle.
While Cinderella and some other princesses walk around and greet you. It is an amazing experience for most little girls. There's always some brat in the corner trying to ruin it for everybody but for most folks it is just the best.
[20:59] best $60 eggs and bacon I've ever eaten. Cinderella and those princesses come in and they gravitate to her like moths on a flame.

It's amazing to see. But one friend of a friend had an even more memorable experience there.
Cinderella made her entrance and the children rushed to be near her.
He said if it had been a boat we would have tipped over. It was amazing. Cinderella. The pristine princess.
Perfectly typecast. A gorgeous young girl with every hair in place and flawless skin and a beaming smile.
She stood waist deep in a garden of kids and wanted to touch and be touched. However on the other side of the room was a little seven or eight year old boy.
[22:09] His age was not easy to determine because his body was disfigured. He was dwarfed in size. His face was disfigured.

His countenance was shy. He stood across the room watching quietly and wistfully holding the hand of his older brother.
You know that he wanted to be there with the other children. But even just telling you can you can sense his feeling of an outcast. That fear of rejection once again.
you can feel the fear. Fear of being taunted again. Fear of being mocked one more time.
Wouldn't it be nice if Cinderella made her way over there? If you've been to Disney you know she did. that's exactly what she did.
[23:15] She noticed the little boy. She immediately began to walk in his direction. Gracefully politely but yet firmly she inched her way through the crowd of children until she finally broke free.

She walked quickly across the room and when she got there she knelt down to eye level with this stunned little boy and she placed a kiss on his cheek. She met him in the state that he was in right where he was and that's the relevance of the story.
Rather than a princess of Disney today we're considering the prince of peace. rather than a boy and a castle we look at a thief on the cross.
However in both stories mercy was given. Love was shared and a loving one gave a gesture that's better than words. Jesus meets us where we are.
But he does more than Cinderella can. Cinderella just gave a kiss and when she left she took her beauty with her. The boy was briefly delighted but in reality he was unchanged.
[24:48] But Christ meets us where we are. He meets us in the state that we're in. He makes us what he would have for us to be.

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Christ gave us his beauty and took on our sinful deformity. Isaiah chapter 55 53 verse 4 and 5 puts it this way.
Surely he was born, surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows. Yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions.
He was crushed for our iniquities. Upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace and with his wounds we are healed.
Christ changes everything. So let's quit just standing there. Come across the room as you are and come to Jesus.
[25:51] Let's quit playing games at the foot of the cross. Let's quit making a mockery of what Christ has done for us and instead as he gave his life for us may we give our lives to him.

May we entrust him with all that we are and simply accept the greatest offer that we have ever or will ever receive.
Hope in the Lord Jesus. God with every head bowed and every eye closed this morning I want to ask you do you know the Lord?
Have you ever surrendered your life to follow the Lord Jesus Christ? Have you ever admitted the sin that is in your life separates you from him and that you need his cleansing?
You need him to change you and empower you? You need to surrender your ways to his ways? If that's never happened to you I encourage you today to come down this aisle when we stand to sing.
[27:07] I'd love to share with you what it means to give your heart and life to the Lord Jesus.
Jesus. Maybe you're here today and you have done that but you've never acknowledged that publicly. Jesus by his commission and by his example shows us that the acknowledgement of that publicly is through baptism.

If you've never been baptized as a believer it's coming up in just a few weeks. Let's get together and let's talk about it. Maybe you're here this morning and God's leading you to Pickens First Baptist Church.
You've worshipped with us. You felt the spirit of God leading you to be here. You feel led to come. I'd love to guide you in that process.
Or maybe you're here and you're gawking or gambling or just gabbing and it's time to change and you know that.
and I am so thankful that the same Christ that came to where we are comes to where we are today. Meets us where we are. Get it right with the Lord.
[28:25] You can do that where you'll stand. You can do that at this altar. You can do it with a pastor praying for you. I don't know what God's told you to do. I just tell you you need to be obedient to follow his lead.

Trust him. You can trust him. Heavenly Father, work and move in our midst right now, I pray. Help us to simply be obedient to follow your will and your way in our life.
In Jesus' precious name, Amen.

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