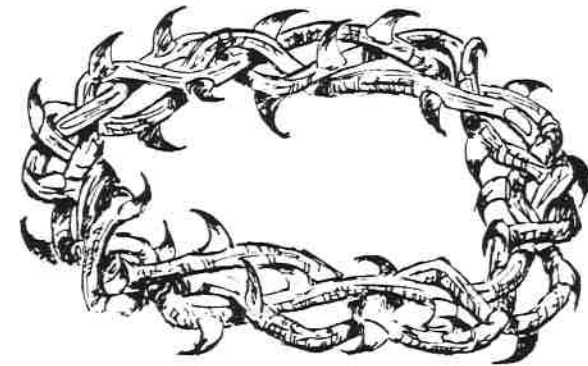


Session 3

The Crown of Thorns



The call to the Kingdom

"When Jesus came out wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe Pilate said to them, "Here is the man!" Jn. 19:5

This week we take as our starting point the crown of thorns which was placed on Jesus' head by Pilate's soldiers.

Crowns stand for Kingship, for rule and authority. Crowns stand for glory. Thorns stand for suffering and hardship. Thorn bushes are the desert fuel that quickly blazes up and doesn't last for long. Thorns can come up instead of crops, they choke out life and growth of good seed. But thorns can also protect. Thorn bushes are used as an impenetrable hedge as a defence against wild animals or enemies.

PREPARATIONS - LENT 3

The Crown of Thorns

Day 1

Read: Matthew 27:29

Jesus is a King but is mocked as if he claims to be someone he is not. He takes the mockery and holds back from letting the true might of his majesty be shown.

Ponder: Are there ways in my life which mock at the true majesty of Jesus? In what ways do I choose him as king but make his crown into one that hurts?

Pray: Lord Jesus, King and Saviour, come and be enthroned in my heart.

Day 2

Read: Judges 9:8-15

In this story told by Jotham, the thorn bush is invited to be King because the other trees don't want to give up their advantages in staying as they are. It is the thorn which invites the other to take refuge in its shade. Jesus is the King crowned with thorns. In his shadow we take refuge and find our protection.

Ponder: What did Jesus give up in order to become King?

Pray: Lord Jesus be my refuge all this day long...and forever!

Day 3

Read: 2 Corinthians 12:7

S. Paul was granted the vision of the Lord: a crowning revelation of the persecuted Jesus [see Acts 26:12-16] In his turn Paul became a subject of the King of Kings.

From the wood to the weave

And, in turn, he too bore the pain of what he called his "Thorn in the flesh". He didn't complain about it. He took shelter in what he saw as its protection, a protection against pride.

Ponder: So often we want the glory of walking with King Jesus without the pain..The crown without the thorns! What is Jesus trying to teach me through the thorny bits of my life?

Pray: Lord Jesus lead me through the thorny ways.

Day 4

Read: 1 Corinthians 9:25 and 1 Peter 5:4

Not only was S. Paul determined to let God use even the thorns of personal suffering to build him into a more humble man, he also did not let his personal affliction stop him from going flat out in the work that the Lord had called him to do. He could see that Jesus would turn his temporary thorns into an everlasting crown.

Ponder: In what things is Jesus calling me to redouble my efforts? What things in me does he want to crown with success?

Pray: Blessed Lord, give me vision enough to see the finishing line and strength enough to achieve it.

Day 5

Read: Matthew 13:7 & 22

In Jesus' story the thorns are the natural growth which take the light and nutrients away from the grain and whose roots smother the other plants. Even the ordinary everyday cares and interests of our world can do that...if we let them take the place of Jesus the King in our lives.

Ponder: Today is the day to review my priorities. What is the most important thing in my life? Who is the most important person?

Pray: Lord, help me to see when I am giving too much attention to things which choke your life from me.

Day 6

Read: Revelation 2:10 & Isaiah 28:5 & 2 Timothy 4:8

The suffering which Christians endure in belonging to the Kingdom of God is soon gone. They are like the thorns in the fire which burn up quickly and disappear. The Lord is waiting to bestow the victory prize; the crown of abundant life upon the one who remains faithful.

Ponder: Do I really have this vision of the heavenly Kingdom as the crowning glory of all my life? The early Christians longed for the Lord's appearing. What about me?

Pray: For the whole Church, the world over, that it may be truly an expectant Church, mindful of the Lord's coming.

Your
Notes



From the wood to the weave

SHARING WITH OTHERS

Focus: The Kingdom and the Cost - Session 3



Welcome and introductions

Opening Prayer



Lord Jesus, you rode into Jerusalem as a king on Palm Sunday and the crowds hailed you with shouts of triumph. Help us always to enthrone you as King in our hearts and to live gladly under your rule, for with the Father and the Holy Spirit you reign over all, one God, world without end. Amen



Getting started

Share and discuss with the other members of your group any question, problem or observation that has come out of the daily readings for you.



Read the Scripture passage.

Matthew 21:1-11 & 27:27-31 and 35-37



Questions for reflection

1. Why do you think Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a donkey rather than a stallion or a camel?

2. Share some reasons why you think, "the city was thrown into uproar" [NIV says "stirred"] v.10

What would be your answer to the people's question?

3. For Jesus the thorns of mockery were present as well as the thorns in his crown. What can you do about the thorns in your own life as a Christian?

From the wood to the weave

4. In terms of where you are in your own faith at the moment, which one of the following from this story best describes you.

- a) One of the cloaks - walked all over by Jesus.
- b) A Palm branch - waving in joy and welcome.
- c) The donkey - bearer of the King.
- d) A member of the crowd - walking in front of Jesus or walking behind
- e) The colt - tied up and waiting for the King's use.
- f) A voice - praising God.

Tick only one and share why you chose it.

5. Jesus, although a King, did not look like one when impaled upon a cross. [Matt. Chap 27:35] By what things are you 'pinned down' at present so that you are prevented from showing the majesty of Jesus to others?



Discussion highlights

Share anything important that has happened for you in this session.



Closing prayer

(Allow time and opportunity for group prayer, finish with this set prayer if you so desire).

God of justice and love you came to rule in our hearts and wore a crown of thorns, when we pray, "Your kingdom come", may we mean it, so that we are prepared to work to free the oppressed, to bring relief to the victims of hatred and misrule, and to include the outcasts of our society so that, under your loving rule, all may find peace, through Jesus Christ our Lord.



Fellowship and a Cuppa



Something to do

Remove one "thorn" from someone's life today!!

From the wood to the weave