

# Goodness, Severity and Thanksgiving

## **Luke 23:18**

**18 And they cried out all at once, saying, “Away with this man, and release unto us Barabbas” ... (KJV)**

This is a dark and shameful hour. Amid the outrage and betrayal is, however, hidden a great blessing.

The ministry of Jesus was not performed in a closet. His authoritative teachings, and his staggering miracles were performed, for the most part, in public view. His works were known to the whole nation. Most particularly, the religious leadership had carefully scrutinized Him. One wonders how they could come to hate Him so. It seems that every stratum of Jewish society desired His death. Those leaders who had at their fingertips the scriptures could not see the Messiah in them! The common people, so often the objects of His benevolence and grace, had no fixed loyalty to Him. They were swayed by their masters, and their peers into an intoxicating and bloody thirst for His death. In our verse the Jews are faced with a choice. Will they have virtue and Christ, or rebellion and Barabbas? How dark is the heart of man that that they should choose as our scripture records!

The innate dignity of all mankind derives largely from the fact that they bear responsibility for the deeds that they do. Here the Israel of Jacob makes a choice. Though they have been carefully prepared throughout their whole history for this hour, their failure is great and the consequence is appropriately catastrophic! This generation will not pass away before the Roman armies come. The temple will be effaced and the people carried away to the Egyptian mines, the arenas of the empire and to slavery! The spiritual darkness that obscures the recognition of their Savior will remain upon them! Yet, the bright light of Our Father’s grace shines even here!

## **Romans 11:22**

**22 Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, ... (KJV)**

Israel was invited to a great celebration, but they would not come. They disdained the table of God and would have permitted the banquet to languish with sparse attendance. But the Founder of the feast would not have it so! He would allow these ungrateful ones to forfeit a singular great opportunity and in so doing make room at the table for the entire Israel of God! By their disdain the door is opened wide so that even such as we - who could never have wished to find a place there - may enter freely! The elite of humanity were passed by so that a people who were no people might come, sit, commune and dine!

We do not delight in God's passing over Jacob's Israel. But our hearts are caught up in a most profound joy that a place *was* thereby made for us. There is now no difference between us! As we are in Christ, we are alike the Children of God!

Let everyone who is thirsty come with thanksgiving and drink of the water of life freely. Let everyone who is hungry come and be filled!

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