

## Cinderella Man Part 1 Death and Good Friday

By John Van Sloten

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### OPENING READING - The Gospel of Matthew 27:27-50

The soldiers assigned to the governor took Jesus into the governor's palace**(1)** and got the entire brigade together for some fun. They stripped him and dressed him in a red toga. They plaited a crown from branches of a thorn bush and set it on his head. They put a stick in his right hand for a scepter. Then they knelt before him in mocking reverence: "Bravo, King of the Jews!" they said. "Bravo!" Then they spit on him and hit him on the head with the stick. When they had had their fun, they took off the toga and put his own clothes back on him. Then they proceeded out to the crucifixion.

Along the way they came on a man from Cyrene named Simon and made him carry Jesus' cross. **(2)**Arriving at Golgotha, the place they call "Skull Hill," they offered him a mild painkiller (a mixture of wine and myrrh), but when he tasted it he wouldn't drink it.

After they had finished nailing him to the cross and were waiting for him to die, they whiled away the time by throwing dice for his clothes. Above his head they had posted the criminal charge against him: THIS IS JESUS, THE KING OF THE JEWS. Along with him, they also crucified two criminals, one to his right, the other to his left. People passing along the road jeered, shaking their heads in mock lament: "You bragged that you could tear down the Temple and then rebuild it in three days--so show us your stuff! Save yourself! If you're really God's Son, come down from that cross!"

The high priests, along with the religion scholars and leaders, were **(3)**right there mixing it up with the rest of them, having a great time poking fun at him: "He saved others--he can't save himself! King of Israel, is he? Then let him get down from that cross. We'll all become believers then! He was so sure of God--well, let him rescue his "Son" now--if he wants him! He did claim to be God's Son, didn't he?" Even the two criminals crucified next to him joined in the mockery.

From **(4)**noon to three, the whole earth was dark. Around mid-afternoon Jesus groaned out of the depths, crying loudly, "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?" which means, "My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?"

Some bystanders who heard him said, "He's calling for Elijah." One of them ran and got a sponge soaked in sour wine and lifted it on a stick so he could drink. The others joked, "Don't be in such a hurry. Let's see if Elijah comes and saves him."

**(5)**But Jesus, again crying out loudly, breathed his last. **PAUSE**

### LONG PAUSE... CLIP #1 – 7:19 – 8:34 Freeze/Fade

I don't think Jim Braddock ever imagined himself situation like that... From such glory to such poverty! That scene from Cinderella man... a powerful story about a man who was a prize fighter... destined for glory... ends up tragically losing it all... only to have it all miraculously given back to him again... **PAUSE...**

Watching it 2<sup>nd</sup> time this week **"This is what Easter is all about... this is what Easter feels like..." PAUSE...** this is death & resurrection known visceral level... the ultimate struggle made real... **PAUSE**

As I journeyed into the desperation of the first half of this prize fighter's story... I couldn't help being drawn into a **deeper understanding of Christ's suffering...**

The **deep despair** of having life ripped out of your hands... **PAUSE...** sense of **disillusionment...** loss of **control... hopeless destitution... PAUSE...**

**(6)** "...for your sakes he became poor..." 2Cor 8:9... Film really opened up understanding what **poverty** felt like **This boxer had it all...** ends up living in a hovel, can't pay electricity bills [**cut off**]... no money to buy clothing or food for his children... **PAUSE...** scene son caught stealing a salami from local butcher... this deeply humbling... **broken scene** plays out...

**CLIP #2 – 14:06 - 16:21 FREEZE** And his son **ends up getting sent away... PAUSE...** can you imagine

being in that place... no control... nothing you can do to change things... nothing! Losing own son? **PAUSE**

**[(7) EVELYN question; “Tell me what death/resurrection like?”... **READING**]**

“My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?  
Why are you so far from saving me,  
so far from the words of my groaning?”

Psalm 22

Such poverty... such destitution... **so much was the suffering of Christ... LONG PAUSE...**

“Who would have thought GOD's saving power would look like this? The servant grew up before God--a scrawny seedling, a scrubby plant in a parched field. There was nothing attractive about him, nothing to cause us to take a second look. He was looked down on and passed over, a man who suffered, who knew pain firsthand. One look at him and people turned away. We looked down on him, thought he was scum.” Isaiah 53:1-3

“Who would have though God's saving power would **look** like this?”... **Feel** like this? **PAUSE...**

The descent into poverty continued for this prize fighting boxer... **PAUSE...** he loses more dignity when they take away his boxing license... (“**They stripped him...**”)... gets to the point where he even loses his faith in God, “I'm all prayed out...” (“**My God, My God why have you forsaken me?**”)... **LONG PAUSE**

Then, at the very end of his rope... lost all hope... lost all of his pride... he does this... **CLIP #3 – 40:12 – 43:58 FADE then FREEZE...**

Can you imagine being so poor? **LONG PAUSE**  
Can you imagine going there willingly?... **PAUSE...**

**(Communion table)...** Don't be obsessed with getting your own advantage. Forget yourselves long enough to lend a helping hand. Think of yourselves the way Christ Jesus thought of himself. He had equal status with God but didn't think so much of himself that he had to cling to the advantages of that status no matter what. Not at all. When the time came, he set aside the privileges of deity and took on the status of a slave, became human! Having become human, he stayed human. It was an incredibly humbling process. He didn't claim special privileges. Instead, he lived a selfless, obedient life and then died a selfless, obedient death--and the worst kind of death at that: a crucifixion.

**Why?... for you... like any good Father would LONG PAUSE...**

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(Holding elements)... “Who would have though God's saving power would **look** like this?”

**[JVS Story... entering into X's suffering/poverty...]**  
Same with your sufferings (sickness, relational mess, \$\$ poverty, psych poverty)... Creational poverty (Wars, climate fairing poorly, death...)

Life right now not way supposed to be... falling short... broken... living in a depression... only hope is **what Good Friday points to...** what Communion points to... Our only hope is Death and Resurrection of Christ!

1 Cor 11 **READING...**

“...Not twelve hours later sitting in bed on a Saturday morning in October, sipping tea, I unconsciously put my hand against my breast and felt an unmistakable hard lump. I immediately knew it needed follow up. I thought of how the year before during the early months of my 37-year-old daughter’s diagnosis, mother of two children, how I would do anything, I prayed and longed and pleaded that I could have cancer and not her, and now here it seemed likely, so we plunged back in again to crisis. Each new news about it brought new terror. I had escorted people through their cancer journeys. I have seen them die. I have been at their funerals. I have given my eulogies. I know this disease, but I know this disease is a wild card. I was shocked. Anyone we told immediately burst into tears...

Since then I have been more or less on a three-week cycle of death and resurrection. I have always known theoretically what chemo is like, so after surgery chemo came. Chemo came weeks later than I expected. Reassuring e-mails would come from Christian friends. “Evelyn, God is never late. This will work out. It’s OK”. But I was terror-stricken. Then chemo started. I was sure I had a great attitude. I had a growing faith. I had an excellent constitution. It wouldn’t knock me down. But it did each time lower, each time the brain fog would come over me I would hardly know who I was. I could sit or lie down and think of the tasks I would do. I would picture the task, a planned task. I would get up and try to do the task. It would seem I have been given all the wrong blocks, some Lego, some Mechano, and some wooden blocks and nothing could be constructed. I felt desperate. I felt as if my brain would never come back. I would read Psalms, and others including one of my angel

doctors would read Psalms to me. They were wonderful, they were beautiful, they were reassuring for the moment, and then I would think, “Yes, but soon David was dust”. The trial of faith was horrific, the presence of God was gone...”

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