



WEEK 2

by David Broberg

When they came to the place called the Skull, they crucified him there, along with the criminals—one on his right, the other on his left. Jesus said, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.” And they divided up his clothes by casting lots.

The people stood watching, and the rulers even sneered at him. They said, “He saved others; let him save himself if he is God’s Messiah, the Chosen One.” The soldiers also came up and mocked him. They offered him wine vinegar and said, “If you are the king of the Jews, save yourself.” There was a written notice above him, which read: THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS.

– Luke 23:33-38

They did not know what they were doing. The rulers sneered; the soldiers mocked; the people stood watching—and so they crucified him, along with the criminals. They did not know what they were doing.

Before we get ahead of ourselves and read Jesus’s words as if from our vantage point—“Father, forgive *them*, for *they* do not know what *they* are doing; but, *we*, we would never have crucified you”—this passage will not allow us to stand on that side of the dividing line. No, in this moment, Jesus stands alone, rejected by humans, sneered at by humans, mocked by humans, crucified by humans. He alone asks the Father to forgive *them*—all those who have contributed to this horrific moment: the rulers, the soldiers, the people, even, you, and me. *We*, as humans, did not know what *we* were doing.

How tempting it is to ridicule others and to place ourselves on the side of the angels. How could *they* do that? *They* are so selfish and arrogant. But, as soon as we draw a dividing line between *us* and *them*, we only expose our own selfishness and arrogance. As humans, we all rejected Jesus and his new way of life—his new way of being human. He said, “whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me,” (Luke 9:23);

we argued, “which of [us] would be the greatest,” (Luke 9:46). He said, “whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant,” (Mark 10:43); we demanded, “Let one of us sit at your right and the other at your left in your glory,” (Mark 10:37). But Jesus’s glory was not to be found enthroned between two of us, but crucified between two condemned criminals. “THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS,” read the sign above his head. What was meant to be humanity’s sarcastic ridicule of a would-be king, was, in divine irony, the truest declaration staring right back at humanity: “THIS *IS* THE KING OF THE JEWS.”

When we hear Jesus praying “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing,” the first thing we have to recognize is severely sobering: he wasn’t just praying for a select *them*; rather, he was praying for *us*, the whole of humanity. In each of our own ways, we all have despised and rejected him. Once we own that, the second thing to recognize is all the more thrilling: though we rejected him, Jesus did not in turn reject us; rather, he prayed for an offer of forgiveness for us, even in the midst of suffering on behalf of our rejection. That’s the nature of his kingly rule. And so we sing the hymn *How Deep the Father’s Love for Us*:

*Behold the man upon a cross,
My sin upon His shoulders;
Ashamed, I hear my mocking voice
Call out among the scoffers.
It was my sin that held Him there
Until it was accomplished;
His dying breath has brought me life –
I know that it is finished.*

Questions for Reflection:

1. Look back over that stanza from *How Deep the Father’s Love for Us*. Perhaps sing it aloud or hum it in your head. Which line is God laying most on your heart? Take some time to reflect and pray on that line.
2. In the midst of all the mockery and rejection, Jesus said, “Father, forgive them.” What does it mean for you to hear Jesus speak those words?



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