

**AS STRONG AS DEATH**

*It was now about the sixth hour, and darkness came over the whole land until the ninth hour, for the sun stopped shining. And the curtain of the temple was torn in two. (Luke 23:44-45, NIV)*

**W**E ARE AT THE HEART OF LINKS PLAYERS a loose collection of local Fellowships, where men and women also happen to enjoy golf gather purposefully to study God as he reveals himself to us in his Word. But these Fellowships themselves are not loose. It is our desire that the bonds within the groups are deeply formed and powerfully uplifting. And it is at a time like this that such tight fellowship is a true blessing.

What time do I mean? This time of year when we, as followers of Jesus, set our eyes upon the death of Jesus. Looking closely at the passages that describe the passion of our Lord, we may need all the courage we can muster.

Jesus, we know, was an innocent man. The charges brought against him were delivered by false witnesses (Matthew 26:59-61), heard by those intent on his death (Matthew 26:3-4), and presented to a Roman leader who would have preferred not to have been bothered (Luke 23:4). Who alone spoke unabashedly of his innocence? The confessed thief crucified with him! (Luke 23:41).

Jesus' death was torturous. We will not here recount the gruesome details of Roman crucifixion, for much emphasis has been placed on this aspect of Jesus' death—and the scourging that preceded it—in books and more vividly in films. Suffice it to say that the physical suffering of Jesus led to his quick death.

The sins of us all made for a stunning spiritual load. Jesus did not die for his own sake, but for ours. Consider that more than 100 billion people have been born in the history of the earth. Calculating an average life expectancy over history of roughly 30 years old and affixing a meager one sin per day to each person, Jesus bore the spiritual weight of more than 1000 trillion sins! When we recognize the damage that even one sin can do, the effect of that weight is unimaginable. No wonder God had to die! Who else could have accomplished our salvation?

And so it is not amazing to read that as he hung on that cross in the waning instants of his life, the heavens went dark and the veil was torn. Jesus' death was natural, but its every effect was supernatural. This man, this Messiah gave his all—and his all was spectacular.

**Opening questions** What is the closest fellowship of which you are a part? How does this fellowship support you and allow you to consider the most important matters in life?

**READING** Luke 23:26-49

**The exchange with the women (verses 26-31)**

Why do you think Jesus told the wailing women to mourn for themselves and their children? What meaning is there in his observation about the way men were acting “when the tree is green”?

---



---



---



---

**The exchange with the criminals (verses 32-43)**

How did the criminals differently interact with Jesus? What hope do you find in Jesus' promise to the humble thief?

---



---



---

**The testimony of the centurion (verses 44-49)**

How do you suppose the centurion saw righteousness in Jesus at such a time? How was Jesus' death different from all other deaths?

---



---



---



---

Written by Jeff Hopper ©2016 Links Players International.