

Mark 8:31–33

And he began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes

and be killed, and after three days rise again.

And he said this plainly. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. But turning and seeing his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said,

“Get behind me, Satan! For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man.”

Matthew 26:20-24

When it was evening, he reclined at table with the twelve. And as they were eating, he said,

“Truly, I say to you, one of you will betray me.”

And they were very sorrowful and began to say to him one after another,

“Is it I, Lord?”

He answered, “He who has dipped his hand in the dish with me will betray me.

The Son of Man goes *as it is written* of him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed!

What crime most changed the course of history?

If the Sons of Liberty, in defiance of the Tea Act, hadn't boarded those ships in Boston Harbor in 1773 and heaved overboard shipments from the East India

Company, then the United States of America might never have been born.

Imagine the history of the world without the USA!

Gavrilo Princip assassinated Archduke Franz Ferdinand in 1914 which:

- triggered World War I,
- led to the October Revolution,
- the end of the Hapsburg and Ottoman empires,
- rewrote the world map,
- set the stage for World War II and
- affects just about every person alive today.

In order to beat those for importance we must get Biblical.

- How about Cain killing his brother Abel?
- How about Pharaoh deciding to kill all the Hebrew boys born?
- How about Adam and Eve eating the forbidden fruit and bringing sin and death into the world?

Theologically that might be it, but we also need to consider the murder of Jesus of Nazareth right up there.

If you're looking for negative impact on history, then you're thinking:

- Princip,
- Cain,
- Pharaoh and
- Adam.

From a positive perspective, and this is counter-intuitive, it has to be the murder of Jesus of Nazareth.

Falsely accused, illegally and unjustly tried and put to death in spite of obvious innocence; this was nothing short of murder.

But we must consider the fact that this would not have happened had Jesus not allowed it to happen.

- Jesus knew that he came into the world to offer his life as a sacrifice for the sins of the world.
- Jesus knew that one of his disciples would betray him, another would deny him and all except John would abandon him.
- Jesus knew that his own people would engineer his execution and scream for his blood.
- Jesus knew that even the Father in heaven would forsake him as he died on the cross.

The Son of Man goes as it is written of him!

Psalm 22

My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

Why are you so far from saving me, from the words of my groaning?

But I am a worm and not a man, scorned by mankind and despised by the people.

All who see me mock me; they make mouths at me; they wag their heads;

Many bulls encompass me; strong bulls of Bashan surround me;

they open wide their mouths at me, like a ravening and roaring lion.

I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint;

my heart is like wax; it is melted within my breast;

my strength is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue sticks to my jaws;

you lay me in the dust of death.

For dogs encompass me; a company of evildoers encircles me;

they have pierced my hands and feet—

I can count all my bones— they stare and gloat over me;

they divide my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots.

Jesus knew who he was and what he came to do. He knew the words of Isaiah-

Isaiah 50:6–7

I gave my back to those who strike, and my cheeks to those who pull out the beard;

I hid not my face from disgrace and spitting.

But the Lord GOD helps me; therefore, I have not been disgraced;

therefore, I have set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be put to shame.

And we read in **Luke 9:51**

When the days drew near for him to be taken up,

he set his face to go to Jerusalem.

The Son of Man goes as it is written of him!

And so, the murder of Jesus of Nazareth turned out to be the best thing that happened to the world since God had created it perfect and mankind since he had made us in his image.

This crime, without doubt had the most profound positive effect on the world of any crime ever committed.

1 Corinthians 15:22

For as in Adam all die,

so also in Christ shall all be made alive.

Not only did Jesus' death make it possible for all people to be restored to a right relationship with God but the transformed lives of Jesus' followers were responsible for much of what is good in our world.

In was Christians who were largely responsible for:

- The elevation of the status of women and children.
- The importance of marriage and family.
- Health care.
- Education.
- Science.
- The dignity of labor, the value of hard work, the sense of vocation and worker's rights.
- Individual rights and freedoms in republics and democracies.
- The concept of private property and property rights.
- The protection of workers and workers' rights also flows directly from the biblical worldview.

- Modern science.
- Art and literature.

The freedoms and benefits we enjoy in many modern cultures are directly due to the influence of Jesus and his followers. And besides all the institutional, cultural, social, political and artistic benefits, there is one last benefit: the countless millions of changed lives due to a liberating encounter with the risen Christ. These changed lives result in changed families, changed neighborhoods, changed societies.

Back in 1989, a film was being made of *The Handmaid's Tale*, a novel by Margaret Atwood.

The film crew had built a scaffold, complete with hangman's noose, outside the Duke University Chapel.

Couples who were planning weddings in the chapel were especially troubled by the thought that a hangman's noose could be the first thing they and their guests would see as they exited the sanctuary.

The then-dean of the chapel, William Willimon, voiced his objections to a local newspaper, saying: *"As a Methodist minister, I find all forms of capital punishment repugnant. Duke Chapel is a sacred place to many of us, and the scene going on seems to be kind of a violation of that sacredness."*

A letter to the editor published in the student newspaper reminded him (and others) about another instrument of death with which they were all too familiar: ***"I don't understand what all the fuss is about. Maybe the people who are upset have not noticed the cross at the center of Duke University Chapel."***

Look at it! That which stands at the focal point of our church is in fact an instrument of torture and death. The cross is far more cruel than a hangman's noose. It reminds us that our Lord Jesus, the only truly innocent person to ever live, was murdered most cruelly.

The Son of Man goes **as it is written of him!**

Isaiah 53: 3 -6

He was despised and rejected by men,

a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief;

and as one from whom men hide their faces

he was despised, and we esteemed him not.

Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows;

yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted.

But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities;

upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed.

All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way;

and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

The Son of Man goes **as it is written of him!**

And as a result:

- his light has gone into the world,
- his truth has made people free,
- this fallen world is made better and
- all people have a chance to be forgiven and heirs of eternal life.