

Luke 23,32.35.39.35., Mark 15,28. Math.27,44.

During the past few weeks we have studied some of the chief characters of the Pasion History of the Sav. We have attempted to show the individual traits, both good and bad of those who played such important role in the infliction of the suffering and finally in the death of our L. We saw how Judas the at one time faithful disc of X sells his L into the hands of the enemy for 30 paltry pieces of silver. We beheld how the multitudes took J captive and led him away as a criminal to the judgment hall of Pilate, first to be tried by Caiphas the Hi-priest. But, what a trial. The decision had already been reached beforehand. What should be done with X, but ways and means had yet to be devised in order to put him away privately and with as little commotion about it as possible. After Caiphas had pronounced his decision of guilt upon the Sav, the soldiers spit upon him, stuck him in the face, in snort, and all they could do mock and ridicule him. From Caiphas the hi-priest he is led to Pontius Pilate. While the Sav is being tried by Pilate - this had to be done, since the Jewish people could not carry out a death sentence without the consent of the Roman governor, Peter, who had beforehand so wonderfully confessed his L before all, becomes a denying coward. Three times he denies the L, even affirming the denial with a dreadful out. Pilate tries J, but finds him guiltless. There is no cause which should warrant the death of this man. He sends him to Herod, hoping that in this way he will be able to rid himself of the responsibility of pronouncing the death sentence upon X. Herod tries him, but also finds him without cause of death. After he had had his trial, X is again sent back to Pilate. He tries in a very feeble manner to free the Sav, yet he did not want to lose the support of the Jewish mob, and therefore comes upon the other only possibility of setting J free, namely to place him before the multitudes with Barabbas. But what is the outcome of this choice? The enemies of X had so incited the mob against the L, that we hear the cry arise "Release unto us B" and upon the question, what then should be done with J, who is called X, they answered, Crucify, crucify him. "Finally Pilate gives J over to the Jews, giving them the authority to crucify him. And so the Sav of mankind is led away by a small band of soldiers and nailed to the accursed tree of the cross.

On Mt. Calvary we see three crosses. On the cross in the center is the Sav. However, we do not wish to direct our attention especially to this central figure tonight, we would first of all take a brief glance into the situation as a whole. Nowhere in Scr are we told why or by whose authority the criminals were placed, one on each side of the Sav. Nor does it matter. Surely, the Jewish people did not know the significance of what they were doing. Perhaps they placed X into the center in order to add more reproach to his name, in order to make him the center of the attraction. But, m fr, it was really a MASTERPIECE of DIVINE WISDOM. It was really a reminder of the entire work of X. Was he not at all times walking about with the sinners? Had he not so often been reviled for his affiliations with such who were not of the highest rel rank? And did he not himself say, that he had come to seek and to save that which was lost? He had been the central figure in the entire work of salv, and is also the central figure here on the cross. And we should not forget, that X was made the companions of evil-doers in order that we might enjoy the companionship of the angels, yes more than that, in order that we might enjoy the eternal companionship of the eternal son of G.

But let us now also direct our attention to the other two crosses, and the two criminals crucified upon them. And we would direct our special attention to the cross on the left of the cross of X, and see what lessons may be learned from it. Let us then use as the topic for our discussion,

TESTAS, AN EXAMPLE OF BLIND AND BITTER UNBELIEF.

1. His person. 2. His conduct. 3. Reason for this conduct.

"Behold, the Lamb of G that taketh away the sins of the world". He has been crucified on the cross on Calvary. But he is not crucified there alone. On each side hangs a criminal, they were there receiving the just reward for the wicked deeds which they had committed. We shall call the man hanging to X's left, Testas. This is not a name which is taken from the Scr, since the names of those crucified with X are not mentioned in the B, but this name has been brought down to us thru tradition. However, in this instace nothing is dependant upon the name.

Testas, the criminal who was hanging to the left of the Sav, was receiving just reward for the sins and crimes which he had committed, just as was the malefactor hanging to Xt's right. Both had been thieves, robbers, common brigands, whom the gov't had taken prisoner for their evil conduct, and found it expedient to put them to death. They were perhaps of the same class and clan as Barabbas. A living danger to society. Perhaps they had been neglected in their childhood, perhaps they had been led astray by evil associates, perhaps they were plain outlaws or rix who were becoming rich on the goods of honest men. The law had dealt with them, but in vain. Only one thing remained. If justice has failed to restore, it must destroy. And therefore these criminals were condemned to die on the cross, crucifixion being recognized as being the worst form of punishment for any criminal, or such of desperate and base conduct.

My fr, there are perhaps many things which could be said here of the evil conduct of Testas and his fellow convict, but this will suffice to teach us a very serious lesson. Here we see the end of sin, as far as this life is concerned. Very likely the sins of this Testas grew larger from time to time. He may have started his career as criminal as a petty thief. Once having committed this sin, and having quieted his conscience against it, he tried it again. One sin brot forth another. Finally he had become a professional thief, a brigand. ~~Surely, for a time the small beginnings of sin may not result in any capture.~~ Sins may for a time escape their just due and reward, but the course of sin is always downward. You know too that sin does not raise a person's moral standards. No matter how small and insignificant may seem the beginning of some pet sin, it will inevitably work ruin, both morally and spiritually. Thus it was with Testas, of whom our T tells us. He was finally caught in his sin, and was duely punished for his wickedness by crucifixion.

So Testas is crucified, and with him his fellow robber, and X, the innocent Son of G. What has been said of Testas so far also applies to the other criminal who hung to Xt's right. But from now on the scene changes. We have come to the parting of the way. As we see in the case of these two criminals crucified with X, so it is with humanity in general. Humanity decides its course at the ~~cross~~ of X. And, as we shall see, to the one class it is foolishness, and to the other the cross of X is the wisdom and power of G unto salv.

II.

Around the crosses on Calvary we see multitudes of people. Every one was reviling the crucified ones, especially the Sav. We see in the mob Scribes and Ph, ch pr and elders, such who at another time would think it a disgrace to be seen in the presence of such mob. However, here they all have a common cause. They wanted to be among those who showed their hatred and enmity against the Son of G who claimed to be their Sav and King. And they themselves are instigating the wavering mob to ever stronger hatred. They reviled X with words such as the se, "He saved others, let him save himself, if he be the X, the chosen of G". One was trying to outdo the other in speaking words of reproach upon the Sav.

Testas, the man to the left of X, no doubt also received his share of mocking and jeering from the crowds. And surely, this should have caused him to think of the seriousness of the sins which he had committed and for which he was now justly being punished. However, our Text tells us that he too joined the mob in mocking the L, saying, "If thou be X the L, save thyself and us". ~~Of course he was merely thinking of a salv from death on the cross.~~ Then think of the condition in which this Testas finds himself. He is facing death. Has already been placed upon the tool of torture, the cross. Surely the thot of death should cause him to think seriously for a moment what is before him. But seemingly his heart is hardened to such extent, that the voice of his conscience does not warn him at all. Then too, he had heard all the warnings which X had given while on the cross, he had heard the conversation of X with the man who hung to his right, had heard the promise of salv, and yet he shuts his eyes to all these lessons and joins the frenzied mob in pouring out his venom and curses upon the Sav. Seldom will a criminal who is facing death as was Testas entirely ignore the pleadings of a conscience, seldom will they not have feelings of remorse for what they have done. Think for ex, of Judas. Tho he was too an unb as was Testas, yet he is sorry over his sins, and shows it at last outwardly.

But there is no sorrow, no remorse in the conduct of this man Testas. He is hanging to the left of X, and will remain ~~at~~ his left hand forevermore. To me the fact that Testas was hanging at Xt's left hand, and the fact that he remained so entirely unremorseful, symbolizes the judgment of X at his last coming. Then too, all unbelievers will be placed at Xt's left hand and be cast into et perdition. And, we ask, what was the cause of this conduct of Testas on the cross? His bitter and blind unbelief.

III.

Dysmas, the comrad of Testas, and the man who was hanging to Xt's right, was probably as wicked as Testas had been as far as mere deeds were concerned. But he had not sold himself to sin as had the other. We hear how he was converted by X on the cross and that X gives him the promise of et life, saying, "Today thou shalt be with me in paradise." His imprisonment and sentence had perhaps set him to thinking of his sins. He hears how X tells the women of Jerusalem to weep over themselves and their sins, not over him. He hears how X prays for his enemies on the cross, sees how he so patiently bears his cross and pain. And thus he is won for X. He confesses his sins, acknowledges X as his L, prays for a blessings and receives it.

Testas heard and saw the same which was heard and seen by Dysmas, the man who hung to Xt's right. However, his heart was controlled by blind and bitter unbelief. He knew that he was condemned but was not conscious of his sin. He thot that he was being unjustly treated. He had to use the expression - prepared his own bed but would not sleep in it. - X, in his estimation, should save him from being put to death, for he says, "If thou be X, save thyself and us". but that is as far as he would go. The thot never entered his mind to accept X as his Sav. Now, my fr, is this not the exact picture of what we find so frequently in our day? How often do you not hear people make remarks such as these. If X is truly what he is represented to be, why does he permit certain things to happen. Don't you see that X is here receiving the blame for things which perhaps are the inevitable result of mans sins and evil conduct, or at least, their folly and foolishness. Such expressions are expressions of ignorance and sp blindness and unbelief., and people who make them are trying to cover their own guilt by accusing X. A typical Testas.

Testas mentioned in our T is just another picture of such whom we have studied in the past who had reached the stage where the appeal of God's grace had no effect upon their hearts. We saw the same actions on the part of Herod, Pilate, and the ch priests. They saw, and yet did not see. They heard and yet would not understand. They ignored X and his righteousness and thus put themselves entirely into the hands of Satan.

My fr, let us learn our lessons from this ex of Testas. Let us avoid the beginnings of evil-doings. We see the result in the man of our T. As soon as one consents to live in sin, chances are that he will also die in sin and unbelief. An evil life is very likely to end in an evil death, and a hopeless eternity, as in this case. Again, we should give heed to the call of X when he calls us. Testas was called here on the cross, but would not give heed to the call. He ignored it, and was consequently ignored by X, and died in his sins and unbelief. And may we not be ashamed of the cross of X, but make the words of the poet our confession,

In the cross of X l glory,
Towering o'er the wrecks of time.
All the light of sacred story
Gathers round its head sublime.