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Viewpoints

Observing events in our modern world from the viewpoint of our ascended Savior.

Crucifixion Horror? ~ March 30, 2016

Yes, Christ's crucifixion was horrible, but then there's the empty tomb!

[Online Version & Archive](#)

A news site splashed this gripping announcement: "Easter Horror: ISIS Crucifies Priest."

Here's the story behind the headline. "The Rev. Thomas Uzhunnalil... was kidnapped in Yemen in early March during a raid on a nursing home.... His Islamic State kidnappers, who also killed 16 Christian nuns, nurses and patients, had issued threats to execute him using the same method used by the Romans on Jesus and marked on Good Friday every year. According to a report... the Islamist group had followed through on those threats." (Since this news was published on Easter Sunday, additional reports indicate that ISIS may have lied, and the reverend may still be alive as a captive.)

The general reaction to the news of ISIS crucifying a Christian leader was one of repulsion and revulsion. Somehow people can speak about Jesus being crucified, and it's almost treated as a fact devoid of any emotion. Could this partly be because Christ's crucifixion happened two thousand years ago, at a time judged to be less civilized and more barbaric? But when we think of a person being crucified today, in our "civilized" age, the image may suddenly explode, lacerating us with shrapnel of shock. To behead someone or to burn someone alive (as ISIS is fond of doing) appears more merciful than a crucifixion. Which is, in fact, why the Romans used crucifixion: for its horrific impact.

God also used crucifixion to send a powerful message to the world, the message of mercy and forgiveness. "For what Christ suffered in the body we ought to have suffered in the soul before the eyes of God; and the severity which God at the cross manifests in his Son, we deserved. Realizing that Christ carried our sins at the cross, we're moved to repent of our sins; and to receive forgiveness in Christ's crucifixion, confident that just as the Father saved his Son from death and the devil, so the Father will save us. This is our comfort and salvation" (Luther, paraphrased*).

And how exactly did God the Father "save his Son from death" when he in fact died and was buried? The Apostle Paul answers: "[Because Christ] humbled himself and became obedient to death-- even death on a cross! -- therefore God exalted him to the highest place [so that] every tongue [might] confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Philippians 2:8-11).

On Easter, God the Father exalted his Son, Jesus, by raising him from the dead. Therefore, Christ's empty tomb shines the spotlight of glory onto the cross, as it simultaneously lights up our pathway into eternity. For just as God considers you and I to have paid for our sins when his Son died on the cross, God considers us to be forever alive with Jesus, in the fact that we were raised with Jesus to life. This is so certain and complete because of Christ's resurrection, Paul speaks of it in the present tense, as a reality right now. "Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God.... For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God" (Colossians 3:1-3). The horror of crucifixion is filtered out as it's redeemed by the glory of the resurrection.

That ISIS might have crucified a Christian over Easter weekend? That's horrible. And that's the best that anyone can view Christ's crucifixion, if they don't know how Jesus willingly gave himself over to the cross to be our Savior.

But when you know that Jesus willingly and lovingly became your Substitute at the cross, and was therefore raised from the dead to rule forever? Then from the empty tomb comes the treasures that crown the cross with priceless and timeless glory. ✝

Source Material (Links may become inactive over time.)

[Archbishop says that ISIS crucified a priest on Good Friday](#) @ Time.com

* Luther's comment is a summary of these passages: [John 1:29](#); [2 Cor 5:21](#); [Heb 7:23-27](#); [Heb 9:23-28](#).

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Blessings to you and your loved ones, Pastor Mike Nitz

