**Mike Hipes – Facebook Lesson, December 3, 2020**

Good Afternoon!

When I was in my twenty’s while living in Midland Park NJ, I had a painful experience like never before. While I was driving in my car one afternoon suddenly it was as if somebody stuck me with a knife in my lower back! I pulled the car over and suffered through the pain for about the next 30 minutes. I never said anything to Margie about it at the time for two reasons. First, I didn’t want to go to the doctor. Second, I’m a man! Lol. About 3 days later while at home one evening the piercing pain hit me again. This time it was so bad I was brought to my knees in pain. When Margie found me, her eyes were wide open and she became very concerned. She said, what is it, what’s happening? I said, something is sticking me and cutting me on the inside; but don’t worry, after about 30 minutes it should go away like before! Since I was in such pain, she didn’t say what she was really thinking at that point but she did say, you have a kidney stone, you need to go to the doctor! I remember saying, are you sure? They say that there is no pain that compares to childbirth, but I must say if there was ever a pain that was close, it was having a kidney stone! You know the kidney stone that caused all that pain was only the size of a lentil, but a stone with sharp edges. In the end, the pain left me with a deeper impression than expected!

Who likes to be punctured or cut by a sharp object? That’s what happened to Jesus! When He was scourged, crowned with thrones, and nailed to a cross with metal stakes, it likely left a deeper impression than expected on those who witnessed it! What impression does the crucifixion of Jesus leave on you? The crucifixion of Jesus can leave a deeper impression than you may expect. The key is to allow it!

Since the pandemic started about 11 months ago folks in our country have been making major sacrifices! So much sacrifice from front-line workers, doctors, and health care workers, to cleaning crews, and business owners, all those sheltering at home and so many more; the sacrifice has been great! Holidays have been missed by folks, some companies have closed, untold amounts of people have suffered a great loss. For all those doing their best to do their part, many are grateful! However, when it comes to sacrifice for the greatest cause, only one name rises to the top, Jesus who made the greatest sacrifice for all of mankind! He made it against the greatest threat to all of mankind, sin. He died on a cross to save our souls so that we could be with Him in glory and forever!

How did Jesus suffer? In Jesus’ day crucifixion was designed to be painful and cause deep suffering, humility, and lingering death. A cross was the object of brutality and the cruelest kind of death. Today we wear a cross around our necks as a piece of jewelry, but in the 1stcentury it meant death in the worst way. Crucifixion left all who witnesses it with a deep impression. Maybe even deeper than expected!

Have you been to the cross lately? Maybe you have heard the story so many times that it has lost its impact. What was it like to stand at the foot of the cross that day? As close to the cross as so many were, there is a big difference between witnessing someone being crucified and experiencing being crucified, as were the two criminals who were also being crucified that day!

A deeper impression than expected lesson:

1. The other criminal. “One of the criminals who were hanged there was hurling abuse at Him, saying, “Are You not the Christ? Save Yourself and us!” But the other responded, and rebuking him, said, “Do you not even fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? And we indeed are suffering justly, for we are receiving what we deserve for our crimes; but this man has done nothing wrong.” And he was saying, “Jesus, remember me when You come into Your kingdom!” And He said to him, “Truly I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise.” Luke 23:39-43. Jesus was crucified along with two other criminals, one on His right and one on His left. One criminal was a man who lived a life of failure but ended up with faith! As people stood by watching, the rulers sneered, soldiers mocked and at first both criminals hurled insults. (Mark 15:32). But then one criminal had a change of heart. He allowed himself to be impacted, to be changed, to have a deeper impression than he may have expected! Maybe it was the sign above Jesus' head that read King of the Jews, maybe it was the Lord’s silence to the abuse He was receiving, it could have been His prayer to forgive those who were crucifying Him. I truly don’t know for sure. But one thing is for sure. He needed Jesus, he was a sinner and Jesus could change his eternal destiny! This was this man’s turning point from failure to faith! He spoke up, Lord, can you put in a good word for me today; remember me when you come into Your kingdom? Can you imagine the man’s shocked surprise when Jesus said, today you will be with Me in Paradise? This man was a criminal sentenced to death, he was soon to die and unable to produce any fruit for the kingdom, but still to Jesus a precious but lost soul! Why me he may have wondered? Why not him, why not you? It’s called grace, mercy, forgiveness, and love! That day the crucified Christ made a deeper impression than expected on that criminal because he allowed Him to! May we do the same! Remember it’s never too late!

Blessings,

Mike