

## Sermon Discussion Questions & Follow-Up Notes

March 3, 2024

Rev. Dr. Andrew Keuer

(andrew@firstprotestant.com)

Sermon Text for Lent 3: John 19:1-5

Title: "The Crown of Thorns" / Series: "Things He Carried"

### Core Observations of the Text

**1. Thorns** – The meaning of “thorns” is found in Genesis 3. God announces in that chapter that henceforth, because of Adam & Eve broke faith with God, the ground will yield thorns. The ‘thorn’ symbolizes anything that keeps you from being productive for good in the world. As the bible unfold, we can see various authors describe at least three kinds of ‘thorns’ in our daily experience: First, Genesis 3 shows us that some thorns are natural. For example, you come down with the flu the day before you plan to travel to be at a friend’s wedding. Second, the prophets in the bible talk about thorns as relational dynamics that try to hold you back from some good thing. For example, if you are due a promotion but someone spreads false rumors about you; that is a relational thorn. Third, the Apostle Paul references having a ‘thorn in his flesh’ (2 Corinthians 12:7-10), which shows us that a thorn can be a spiritual set-back. Thus, on the whole, the bible says a ‘thorn’ is a natural, relational or spiritual dynamic that makes it difficult to do good in this world.

**2. Crown** – Someone in Pilate’s household area took the time to fashion and weave the thorns together into the shape of a crown (19:2). What a contradiction it is to weave thorns into a crown. A crown is a symbol of access to resources and power to accomplish anything (hopefully something good!) in this world. We can say that a crown is the exact opposite of a thorn.

### Questions to Ponder

- 1. A significant symbol:** What is the significance of the fact that Jesus wore the crown from the trial in Pilate’s house all the way to his death?
- 2. A right view of God:** It was remarked in the sermon that a God who is compassionate but not powerful is not good news, nor is a God who is all-powerful but lacking compassion. What goes wrong in our walk with God when we lose a grip on the compassion or power of God?
- 3. Pray:** What is a ‘thorn’ (a persistent set-back) in your life right? Find someone to pray with, and in faith place that thorn on Christ’s brow.
- 4. Seeing Christ’s face:** The call to place and see our thorns on Christ’s brow is an invitation to look at Him in the face. What does it mean to look on Christ’s face? (Hint: It does not depend on knowing what He looks like!)

-----  
Books and articles mentioned in the sermon:

\*The Suiheisha movement in Japan, which unfurled the Crown of Thorns flag on March 3, 1922 is described in detail in Teruo Kuribayashi’s book *A Theology of the Crown of Thorns*.

\*The play “The Gold-Crowned Jesus” by Chi-Ha Kim tells the story of the rich man and leper interacting with the Jesus statue.