

**THE CROSS OF CHRIST**

John 19:13-37

**Intro:** When the Lord Jesus instituted what is called “the Lord’s Supper” (1 Cor. 11:20), He told His disciples that this was the way He wanted to be remembered. Luke recorded it (Luke 22:19). And Paul recorded it (1 Cor. 11:24, 25). We have Matthew’s account of the Lord’s Supper in Matt. 26:26-30, and Mark’s account in Mark 14:22-26. John did not record it. But let me read to you what John had to say about the Cross. Cf. John 19:13-37, esp. vv. 17, 19, 25, 31.

Our Lord is remembered in the Gospels in many ways; among them, by His miraculous birth, by His perfect life, by His mighty works, and by His unique teaching. And all of them were extremely important to the Lord Himself, and they are important to us, too. But supreme among all of His works was His death. This was why He came to the earth. This was the will of His Father. And out of all Roman history where many experienced crucifixion, our Lord is the One Who is especially remembered as having been crucified.

The Apostle John actually mentioned the Lord’s cross as such more than any of the Gospel writers. All of them spoke of His crucifixion, but John spoke of the cross. You see his references in John 19:17, 19, 25, and 31.

Nothing was more inconceivable to the disciples than that the Lord would die, and die especially by crucifixion. It was a shameful death. It was reserved for the worst of criminals. Those who died by crucifixion experienced the greatest humiliation because they were put to death in this way, and their families after them were disgraced as well. And yet the Lord asked that this would be the way He would be remembered. The bread reminds us of His humanity. He came into this world as a human being that He might die for human beings. God prepared a body especially for Him for this purpose. He came, not in sinful flesh or He could not have been our Savior, but “in the likeness of sinful flesh” (Rom. 8:3). His blood reminds us of His death. He really died because the wages of sin is death. As we were told by Isaiah the prophet at least 700 years before the Lord Jesus was born, that “the Lord laid upon Him,” the Father laid upon His Son, “the iniquity of us all” (Isa. 53:6). He by the Father was “made sin for us, Who knew no sin, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him” (2 Cor. 5:21).

Furthermore, this is the Gospel, the good news of salvation. Paul told the Corinthians, “I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you” (1 Cor. 15:1), and then he went on to define it:

- 3 For I delivered unto first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures;
- 4 And that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures,
- 5 And that He was seen . . . (1 Cor. 15:3-5a).

And so when we observe the Lord’s Supper this is one way we have of preaching the Gospel. The Apostle Paul indicated it when he said as we read each time we observe the Lord’s Supper,

For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show forth the Lord’s death till He come (1 Cor. 11:26).

The words “show forth” are the translation of a Greek verb (καταγγέλω) which means “to announce, declare, promulgate, make known” (Thayer, p. 330). But Thayer adds this important comment, that this verb includes the “idea of celebrating, commending, openly praising” (*Ibid.*). So we are not to observe the Lord’s Supper in an attitude of indifference, but of thanksgiving to God, and with the hope that it might awaken any unbeliever present to the real significance of what we as believers are doing. However, the idea of a celebration does not mean with any sense of frivolity, but with joy in our hearts for the work of salvation which the Lord accomplished for us when He suffered and died on the Cross. Terrible physical suffering was experienced by our Lord when He died on the Cross, but as I sought to bring out when I spoke at our communion service recently, the Lord’s greatest suffering our Lord experienced was when the Father made our Lord’s soul an offering for sin.

So as long as we live, and all through eternity, we will never forget what our Lord experienced at the hands of men and at the hands of God for our salvation. The difference between now in time and then in eternity will be that in eternity we will understand more about what He went through to save us, and then we will praise Him in ways that we are unable to praise Him now. All that God did in sending His Son, and all that His Son did in laying down His life, were absolutely necessary because there was no other way we could be saved. You know that, and I know that, but the people of the world do not know that. To them it is a silly idea. They brand it as foolishness. And this is what the Apostle Paul has told us in 1 Cor. 1:17-25. (Read.)

As so, as we are about to learn in our Tuesday Class, we have Paul's classic statement about the Gospel in Rom. 1:16-17. (Read.) Rome was a city which worshiped power. But unregenerate Romans knew nothing about the power of the Gospel. Neither do unregenerate Americans! They can't understand it. See 1 Cor. 2:14. They don't want it. But they need it, and by the power of the Holy Spirit the Lord sends out His Word to save those for whom the Savior died, those who were chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world.

There is still an offense to the cross of Christ. Paul spoke of this in Gal. 5:11. We have had an illustration of the offense of the Cross this past week over the testimony of one of our generals concerning the Gospel. He made it clear that the God of the Lord Jesus Christ is the true God, and that the god of the Moslems is an idol, a myth. And by that he was saying that there is only one way to be saved, and that is through Christ. And Paul told the Galatians that there was absolutely nothing that needed to be added to what Christ did on the Cross in order for us to be saved. If anything can be added by us, then the offence of the Cross ceases.

So we have a message which is foolishness to Gentiles and a stumbling-block to Jews, but, as Paul said, "unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God" (1 Cor. 1:24).

And so we sing, "nothing in my hand I bring; simply to Thy cross I cling."

And we can say with the Apostle Paul,

14 But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by Whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.

15 For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature (Gal. 6:14-15).

The Cross of Christ shows us how desperate and hopeless man is apart from Christ. But thank God, the Cross also tells us how much God loves us, and how much Christ loves us, not only by what Christ did, but had to do, if our sins were to be removed so that we could be clothed in divine righteousness. The message of the Cross is that Christ alone is the Savior of sinner, and that He is the only Savior.

Let us observe the Lord's Supper tonight with these great truths in mind.