

What The Cross Says

You have heard the expression, “Actions speak louder than words.” But the message of the cross may challenge this idea. If you are not resistant, it could reach into your soul and cause changes. Watch and see if it can or will?

INTRO

Picture with me: Jesus is praying in Gethsemane for the cup of anguish to pass from Him. But he is willing to do his Father’s will, knowing what is about to happen.

Picture him praying with loud cries. Jesus could have been seeing the crowds with swords and spears coming for him. He knew Judas would be betraying him with a kiss. He knew Peter, James, and John, all the other disciples, would scatter. They did arrest and bind him, They took him away like a criminal. They lied about him. Peter would deny him three times.

They slapped him, mocked him, and spit upon him. They condemned him to die. Before an angry crowd, they called for his crucifixion. The Gentile soldiers mocked him, scourged him, and beat him again and again. They forced him to carry the heavy cross through the streets. Then on Golgotha, in front of everyone, they stripped him of all his clothes.

See the large nails they drive through his hands and feet. They suspended him and left him to die.

He is mocked and spurned, despised and rejected without mercy.

Add to all this how the sins of the whole world were laid upon him.

Do you see the sun being darkened? Do you feel the earthquake?

He is so alone, so cursed, so burdened. He cries out, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”

Let's listen to what God has recorded for us. It is in 1 Corinthians 1:18-25. "For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. (19) For it is written, "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the discernment of the discerning I will thwart. (20) Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? (21) For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe. (22) For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom, (23) but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, (24) but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. (25) For the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men."

Was Jesus sending us a message when he died? It doesn't make sense if he didn't.

The first thing I see Jesus telling us is "I love you." I see God's love in the cross. John said in 1 John 4:8-10 "Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love. (9) In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. (10) In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins."

We have all seen small measures of love. But nothing compares to what Jesus did for us.

I have heard about people saying, "I don't feel very loved by God." They feel forgotten or neglected. Isaiah 49:14-16 tells us God has not forgotten you if you are one of His. You are engraved on his hands. You are not a fad, not a stranger; you're his child.

And, if you are His child, God cares about you the way any good father would care for his child. You are always on His mind. Jesus said in Matthew 7:9-11 "Or which one of you, if his son asks him for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a serpent? If you then, who are evil, know how to give good

gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him!”

God’s love implies you are lovable. Some people think they are unlovable, but Jesus sees things in us that we don’t see in ourselves. Remember the unwanted tax collector Zacchaeus? Jesus went to his house. Everyone was unafraid of lepers, except that Jesus touched them. Sin makes a person feel small and unimportant. But God sees not only what we are but also what we can become.

Second, Jesus tells us through the cross, “I want to forgive you” (and I’ll pay the price to make it happen). Don’t ever forget that God is in the saving business. Jesus died to save you from this sinful world. Paul said in Galatians 1:4 “who gave himself for our sins to deliver us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father,” God wanted to find a way for you to come out of sin and live a righteous and good life.

Using the cross, God made a way to save you from sin and to transform your life. Your salvation is personal to Jesus. Peter said in 1 Peter 2:24 “He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed.” Your salvation is important to Jesus.

You may know what it says in Hebrews 9:22, where it says that “without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins.” You being forgiven required Jesus to shed his blood on the cross. Jesus said in John 10:18 “No one takes it (that is, my life) from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. ...”

Well, God’s forgiveness implies something. That you are forgivable. Nothing you’ve ever done. Nothing you’re doing now. Nothing you’ll ever do will keep God from forgiving you, as long as you will repent and confess it.

You should not say to yourself, “I’m so bad a sinner that God could never forgive me.”

Now, you stop and think a moment. What is the only kind of people that God save? Only sinners.

Think about what Jesus said in Luke 18:9-14. “He also told this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and treated others with contempt: “Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee, standing by himself, prayed thus: ‘God, I thank you that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I get.’ But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, ‘God, be merciful to me, a sinner!’ I tell you, this man went down to his house justified, rather than the other. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted.”

The third thing Jesus says with the cross is, “I have a cross for you.” Jesus died for you. But he did it so you could make a difference with others.

In Mark 8:34 He says that Jesus summoned the crowd with His disciples, and said to them about, what I call a 3-Part Gauntlet. It says, “If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me.”

Jesus wants us to willingly follow Him. So, you must carry your cross. You must die to yourselves and live for Him.

The cross was intended to make Jesus suffer. But Christians see it as a symbol of love and salvation. We tell the world by our actions that we have stopped living the way Satan wants us to live. We have begun living like Christ. The heart of a Christian longs to love the Lord and serve Him and Him alone.

Now, carrying your cross also implies something. It implies that Christ has a work for you. God values every person and has a ministry for each one. Paul uses the phrase in 2 Corinthians 6:1, “working together with Him.” You are meant to be God’s partner to make your world better.

How are you using your life for the Lord? How are you serving? If you pick up your cross, God will use you to make a difference in your world.

See Jesus on the cross. He is giving everything for you and me. His body and his blood. He wants to make sure you know that he loves you and wants you to be saved.

Is Jesus hoping and praying that people will notice and respond? What more could Jesus have done to convince you of His love, His forgiveness, and of a wonderful life of service?

Now, how would Jesus feel if you simply ignored and forgot Him? Is there anything more cruel? Is there anything more ungrateful?

But again, how would Jesus feel about people when they do notice and respond? If they change their lives? If they pick up their cross?

Take a long, close look at the cross of Jesus. Obey Jesus today.

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