

March 29, 2020

“The Crucifixion”
Matthew 27:27-44

FCF: Need for certainty

PROPOSITION: (anchor) The drama of Good Friday
(magnet) reveals timeless and vital realities.

SCRIPTURE INTRODUCTION:

These are uncertain times. How long will it take for the curve to be flattened? How long must we maintain social distance? When will the markets recover? When will life feel normal? Is a cure to COVID-19 coming? And will I contract it before then? Real significant questions.

Some are already speculating that this could lead to a spiritual awakening. May it be. We long for certainty in uncertain times, unshakable truth and hope. Let's take a look at our text.

SCRIPTURE READING: Matthew 27:27-44

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

SERMON INTRODUCTION:

Great events have a revealing effect. A pop quiz can reveal a student's knowledge. An illness can reveal a family's moorings. A storm can reveal a community's cohesiveness. A war can reveal a nation's readiness. Whatever the level in view, great events have a revealing effect.

And the greater the event, the greater the revelation. The more that's at stake, the more you learn. That is certainly the case with the events surrounding the crucifixion of Jesus. It is, among many other things, revealing. And that's what we see here. The drama of Good Friday reveals timeless and vital realities. The drama of Good Friday reveals timeless and vital realities.

What would those be? What does the drama of Good Friday reveal? Three things. First, the horror of our sin. Second, the wonder of God's love. And, third, the pattern for our lives.

I. THE HORROR OF OUR SIN

First, we see that the crucifixion reveals and exposes the horror of our sin.

A) What They Did

1. The testimony

Consider what was done to Jesus. We have assurance of the accuracy of the reports. Beyond the New Testament, we have the testimony of other sources from the 1st and 2nd century. Josephus (a Jewish historian), Tacitus (a Roman historian), Serapion (a Stoic philosopher) all refer to this.

2. A summary

The Gospels give us the details, though they are restrained in the report. Everyone knew what crucifixion meant and it was reviled. This was the most painful and shameful death for that time. An agony beyond imagining. Stripped, nailed, and put on display for all to see. Dehumanizing.

B) What They Said

1. The mockery

That's what was done to Jesus. Now consider what was said, the mockery. Dressed as a king and abused by the soldiers. The passersby hurling insults. The religious officials pressing harder.

2. The irony

The irony was Jesus is the Son of God, the King of the Jews. They spoke better than they knew.

All this shows us the horror of our sin, the evil within, what we are capable of doing.

Application:

It's so humbling. It means we shouldn't be surprised when we read of scammers trying to leverage COVID-19 fears. We shouldn't be surprised. And we should be sobered because that same impulse lies within us. That's why the cross was needed. And it's why Jesus had to die.

The horror of our sin. The drama of Good Friday reveals timeless and vital realities.

II. THE WONDER OF HIS LOVE

The crucifixion reveals the horror of our sin. But it also reveals the wonder of His love.

A) *Why He Came*

1. The mission

Why did Jesus come? (**READ Matthew 1:20-21**) This was His mission from the very start.

2. The proof

And its accomplishment is the proof of His love (**READ Romans 5:8**). There is much that may make us question God's ways. But we need never doubt His love. We have unassailable proof.

B) *Why He Stayed*

His love is why Jesus came. And it's why He stayed, why He endured this terrible cross.

1. The taunts

Think of the taunts, the shocking irony of the insults (**READ Matthew 27:41-43**). He could have come down. He could have saved Himself. Absolutely. But then He couldn't have saved us.

2. The silence

So His answer to the taunts was a deafening silence. There was no point where He lashed back or mounted a defense. He chose to be silent, to endure, fully bearing our guilt and our shame.

Do you see it? The crucifixion shows the wonder of Jesus' amazing love.

Application:

Can we be loved this way and then be unmoved? Can we see His heart for us and yet be unchanged? Can we feel no obligation, no challenge to respond? My friends, this is the ground of Christian obedience - the love of Christ. This is the soil from which it grows. This alone.

This is the ground of Christian obedience and Christian security - seeing that no matter what, Jesus will love you still. His love is as secure as He let Himself be to that bloody cross.

The wonder of His love. The drama of Good Friday reveals timeless and vital realities.

III. THE PATTERN FOR OUR LIVES

It shows us the horror of our sin, the wonder of His love, and then the pattern for our lives. After all, hearing all this, where do we go from here? What does it mean to follow Jesus?

A) *Jesus' Words*

1. His teaching

Jesus tells us. Think back with me to what He said in His teaching (**READ Matthew 16:24-25**).

2. The disciples' response

This was pretty strong, awfully graphic imagery. What was the disciples' response to this? They were confused at the least, no doubt concerned. What would this eventually mean for them?

B) Simon's Story

Which then brings us to Simon's story (**READ Matthew 27:32**). Now put yourself there.

1. An historical figure

Simon was from Cyrene, a region in northern Africa with a large Jewish population. Likely, he was in Jerusalem for the Passover. Mark mentions two of his sons as a footnote, implying they were known to the reader. Jesus had been severely weakened by the scourging and loss of blood. This made carrying a 40-pound crossbeam impossible. So Simon was pressed into service.

2. A symbolic picture

The point? Last week, we saw that Barabbas was a picture of what it means to have Jesus die in your place. Now we see Simon serving as a picture of what it means to bear the cross. The Lord, in His wise gracious providence, does not just tell us these things. He shows us as well.

Do you see it? The events surrounding the crucifixion show the pattern for our lives.

Application:

What does it mean to "take up your cross"? It means you're all in. You are trusting Jesus completely - going anywhere, doing anything, giving Him thanks for everything. Everything.

What would that mean for us now in this time of pandemic? It's the same but different for each of us. And so we have to go to the Lord in prayer, asking Him to show us. What does it mean to live not just cautiously and carefully but with compassion, creativity, and courage?

It's the pattern for our lives. The drama of Good Friday reveals timeless vital realities.

CONCLUSION:

This is why many speak of "the centrality of the cross." Think of the proportions in the Gospels. How many biographies devote such space to the last week of the subject's life? Then there are the predictions of Jesus. Four times in Matthew's Gospel, Jesus says the cross awaits and He must go. So there is the proportionality and predictions. And then the provision Jesus makes with the Lord's Supper. How does He want us to remember Him? Not for how He lived but for how He died - a body broken and blood shed. Christianity has the cross at its center.

Think of what other symbols could be used. A manger for His birth, a carpenter's bench for His early years, loaves and fish for His miracles, a scroll for His teaching. No, it's a cross, a cross. Calling us back to Good Friday. Why? Because the cross is central to the Christian faith.

The crucifixion of Jesus, the drama of Good Friday reveals timeless and vital realities.

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(magnet) reveals timeless and vital realities.