

Series – At the Cross

The Christ on the Cross

Mark 15:16-41; 1 Cor. 1:18; 2 Cor. 9:21

Introduction: Captain Kirk of the starship Enterprise used to call space, "The Final Frontier." And it seemed that way until 1962 when John F. Kennedy promised to put a man on the moon before the end of the decade, and seven years later, it became a reality with the Apollo 11 moon landing in 1969.

It's amazing when you think that man would have the capability, the knowledge, the creativity, the ingenuity, the engineering, and the wisdom to be able to create a space craft that can go from earth into outer space. We have gone from those Apollo missions to creating a space station and building space shuttles at a cost of \$1.7 billion dollars each...Columbia, Discovery, Enterprise, Atlantis.

The last Space Shuttle launch was the Atlantis on July 8th, 2011. At launch, the Shuttle, external tank, solid rocket boosters and all the fuel combined has a total weight of 4.4 million pounds. It takes just 8.5 minutes to propel the space shuttle from ground level to the orbital height of at least 115 miles.

You talk about power. While in orbit, the space shuttle travels around Earth at a speed of about 17,500 miles per hour. At this speed, the crewmembers can see a sunrise or sunset every 45 minutes.

But as powerful as the Space Shuttle is, or nuclear bombs, or any man-made invention; it pales in comparison to the power of the Cross of Jesus Christ.

The power of the Cross can change your life today. I began a series of messages called, *At the Cross* three weeks ago. We looked at the *Crowd around the cross*, and *the Criminals on the two crosses next to Jesus*. Today I want to tell you about the [Christ on the Cross](#).

Eventually, everyone everywhere for all time must come to the cross of Christ. And when you come to the cross, you can only go one of two directions:

You either believe it or you don't.

You either hold on to it or you're hardhearted to it.

You receive it or reject it. There is no third response.

1 Cor. 1:18 says, ***“For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.” (NIV)***

The cross divides the entire human race into two categories: Those who are perishing. Those who are being saved.

One group believes the cross to be utter foolishness, and they are ***perishing***. The other believes the cross to be the power and wisdom of God, and they are ***being saved***. It's one or the other. Your eternal destiny is determined by your decision about the cross.

The cross either stands between you and heaven, or between you and hell.

That's why the overwhelming emphasis of the New Testament is not on the BIRTH of Jesus, the LIFE of Jesus, the TEACHINGS or MIRACLES of Jesus, but on the DEATH and RESURRECTION of Jesus.

The Apostle Paul wrote half of the New Testament, and yet he didn't mention the sermons Jesus preached; or the miracles He did; or the parables He taught; or the friends that He made; or the places that He went.

Paul, inspired by the Holy Spirit, focused primarily on the death and resurrection of Jesus. He said, ***“This one thing I do...I preach Christ crucified.”*** Why? Because the cross of Jesus is the core of our faith.

The Bible shows us that the right decision about the cross leads to abundant life, and eternal life.

Every person, other than Jesus, was born for the specific purpose of living. But Jesus was born for the specific purpose of dying.

Jesus said about Himself: ***“For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” (Mark 10:45, NIV)***

Listen, death didn't end the work of Christ. Death WAS the work of Christ.

So today, I'm not going to spend time on HOW Jesus died, but rather on WHY Jesus died. I talked about the gory details of the crucifixion two weeks ago.

The gospel writer Mark certainly didn't give us all the details about Jesus' death, because Mark's point is not to stir up PITY, but to strengthen FAITH.

Mark didn't want people focused on the Pain of crucifixion, but on the Person of Christ crucified.

Let's READ Mark 15:16-41

The soldiers led Jesus away into the palace (that is, the Praetorium) and called together the whole company of soldiers. 17They put a purple robe on him, then twisted together a crown of thorns and set it on him. 18And they began to call out to him, "Hail, king of the Jews!" 19Again and again they struck him on the head with a staff and spit on him. Falling on their knees, they paid homage to him. 20And when they had mocked him, they took off the purple robe and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him out to crucify him.

21A certain man from Cyrene, Simon, the father of Alexander and Rufus, was passing by on his way in from the country, and they forced him to carry the cross. 22They brought Jesus to the place called Golgotha (which means "the place of the skull"). 23Then they offered him wine mixed with myrrh, but he did not take it. 24And they crucified him. Dividing up his clothes, they cast lots to see what each would get.

25It was nine in the morning when they crucified him. 26The written notice of the charge against him read: the king of the Jews.

27They crucified two rebels with him, one on his right and one on his left. [28] 29Those who passed by hurled insults at him, shaking their heads and saying, "So! You who are going to destroy the temple and build it in three days, 30come down from the cross and save yourself!" 31In the same way the chief priests and the teachers of the law mocked him among themselves.

“He saved others,” they said, “but he can’t save himself! 32Let this Messiah, this king of Israel, come down now from the cross, that we may see and believe.” Those crucified with him also heaped insults on him.

33At noon, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon.

34And at three in the afternoon Jesus cried out in a loud voice, “Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?” (which means “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”).

35When some of those standing near heard this, they said, “Listen, he’s calling Elijah.” 36Someone ran, filled a sponge with wine vinegar, put it on a staff, and offered it to Jesus to drink. “Now leave him alone. Let’s see if Elijah comes to take him down,” he said. 37With a loud cry, Jesus breathed his last.

38The curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. 39And when the centurion, who stood there in front of Jesus, saw how he died, he said, “Surely this man was the Son of God!”

40Some women were watching from a distance. Among them were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James the younger and of Joseph, and Salome.

41In Galilee these women had followed him and cared for his needs. Many other women who had come up with him to Jerusalem were also there.

Let’s PRAY

Through His Crucifixion, Jesus...

1. FULFILLED SCRIPTURE.

Without the OT the NT doesn't make sense. Through the OT, God tells us what He's going to do. In the Gospels, He does it. And in the rest of the NT God explains what He did and what we need to do.

The Old Testament contains over 300 prophecies of the Messiah. 25 of those prophecies make specific predictions about His suffering and death. Why would God give us specific details about who the Messiah would be, where He would be born, what He would do, and what He would go through?

So that we would not miss Him. Every fulfilled prophecy is like the finger of God pointing from heaven saying ' Here is the Messiah! Here is your Savior! Don't miss Him! He is here for you!'

The gospel of Mark includes at least 8 of those prophecies in what a just read.

Just so you know, the gospel of Matthew was written to the Jews to prove that Jesus fulfilled the OT prophecies; Luke was written to a man named Theophilus and the Gentiles, John 20:31 gives us the intention of this gospel by saying, **“But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.”** (NIV)

The gospel of Mark was written to the Roman believers, and his intention is...not stirring up PITY but strengthening FAITH.

Let's look at these 8 prophecies quickly.

1. **PROPHECY:** Isaiah 50:6; ***“I offered my back to those who beat me my cheeks to those who pulled out my beard; I did not hide my face from mocking and spitting.”*** (NIV)

Fulfillment: Mark 15:19-20; ***“Again and again they struck him on the head with a staff and spit on him. Falling on their knees, they paid homage to him. 20And when they had mocked him, they took off the purple robe and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him out to crucify him.”*** (NIV)

2. **PROPHECY:** Psalms 69:21; ***“They put gall in my food and gave me vinegar for my thirst.”*** (NIV)

Fulfillment: Mark 15:23; ***“Then they offered him wine mixed with myrrh, but he did not take it.”*** (NIV)

Jesus was offered wine mixed with myrrh which would have been a primitive drug that would dull His pain, but Jesus said no. He wanted to face the agony to come with full control of his mental faculties. He refused the cup of sympathy so He could fully drink the cup of suffering.

3. **PROPHECY:** Psalm 22:16; *“Dogs surround me, a pack of villains encircles me; they pierce my hands and my feet.” (NIV)*

Fulfillment: Mark 15:24a; *“And they crucified him...” (NIV)*

Of course, crucifixion is the piercing of a person's hands and feet to a cross. Here's what is incredible. Psalm 22 was written 1000 years before crucifixion had been invented. But it sounds exactly like someone being crucified.

4. **PROPHECY:** Psalm 22:18; *“They divide my clothes among them and cast lots for my garment.” (NIV)*

Fulfillment: Mark 15:24b; *“... Dividing up his clothes, they cast lots to see what each would get.” (NIV)*

5. **PROPHECY:** Isaiah 53:12; *“Therefore I will give him a portion among the great, and he will divide the spoils with the strong, because he poured out his life unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors. For he bore the sin of many and made intercession for the transgressors.” (NIV)*

Fulfillment: Mark 15:27; *‘They crucified two rebels with him, one on his right and one on his left.’ (NIV)* The Scripture was fulfilled which says, "He was numbered with the transgressors."

6. **PROPHECY:** Psalm 22:6-8; *“I am a worm and not a man, scorned by everyone, despised by the people. 7All who see me mock me; they hurl insults, shaking their heads. 8“He trusts in the Lord,” they say, “let the Lord rescue him. Let him deliver him, since he delights in him.” (NIV)*

Fulfillment: Mark 15:29-32; *“Those who passed by hurled insults at him, shaking their heads and saying, “So! You who are going to destroy the temple and build it in three days, 30come down from the cross and save yourself!” 31In the same way the chief priests and the teachers of the law mocked him among themselves. “He saved others,” they said, “but he can’t save himself!*

32Let this Messiah, this king of Israel, come down now from the cross, that we may see and believe.” Those crucified with him also heaped insults on him.” (NIV)

Just so you know, it wasn't that He could not come down from the cross; it's that He would not come down from the cross, because if Jesus had saved Himself, He could not have saved us.

7. **PROPHECY:** Amos 8:9: ***"In that day," declares the Sovereign Lord, "I will make the sun go down at noon and darken the earth in broad daylight."*** (NIV)

What did Mark record happened at the crucifixion?

Fulfillment: Mark 15:33: ***"At noon, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon."*** (NIV)

The sixth hour was noon, so the ninth hour was 3pm. So, from 12 to 3pm there was utter and unexplainable darkness. Think about it for a moment. What holiday were the Jews celebrating? Passover.

That was about remembering the time God sent 10 plagues on Pharaoh to convince him to free His people from slavery. Do you remember what the ninth plague was? It was a 3-day period of complete darkness over the whole land of Egypt. And what was the 10th plague? The death of every firstborn son without the blood of a lamb over the doorpost of their home.

The darkness of Calvary was God's announcement that His Firstborn Son, the perfect Lamb of God was giving His life for the sins of the world. **One more:**

8. **PROPHECY:** Psalms 22:1: ***"My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from saving me, so far from my cries of anguish?"*** (NIV)

Fulfillment: Mark 15:34: ***"And at three in the afternoon Jesus cried out in a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?" (Which means "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"*** (NIV)

One common method to help people identify a specific Psalm was to quote the first verse of it. So instead of saying to everyone at the foot of the cross 'Read Psalm 22, Jesus quotes the first verse of it. And every Jew who would have heard Him, would immediately recognized this messianic psalm.

This was another way for Jesus to say, **'I am the Messiah! I am the One God promised to send! I am the Savior of the world.'**

This is the only time Jesus referred to God as His God and not His Father. Why? Because this was the one moment in all of time and eternity, where Jesus sees Himself not as the Father's Son, but as a sinner's sacrifice.

ILLUST: In his book *Science Speaks*, Peter Stoner talked about the probability of the predictions of Jesus coming to pass. He did some calculations and said the mathematical probabilities of all 8 of those predictions being fulfilled accurately is one in a septillion – that is 10 with 21 zeroes after it.

Most people cannot visualize that number, so he uses an illustration to show us what one in a septillion is. He says if you take dimes and cover the surface of the entire state of Texas, with a whopping 268,596 square miles; and then take one of those dimes and mark it so you can identify it.

Then toss that dime in the state of Texas, take big bulldozers, and mix those dimes all over the state, take someone, blindfold him, and put him in the middle of the state of Texas. What are the probabilities that person, the first dime he picks up will be the marked dime? One in a septillion.

In other words, impossible, except with God ALL NOTHING IS IMPOSSIBLE. God is emphatically saying, I don't want you to miss Jesus. He's one in a septillion!

Through His Crucifixion Jesus fulfilled scripture...

2. CHANGED LIVES.

Mark 15:21 says, ***“A certain man from Cyrene, Simon, the father of Alexander and Rufus, was passing by on his way in from the country, and they forced him to carry the cross.” (NIV)***

Isn't it interesting that a stranger named Simon was pulled out of the crowd to help an exhausted Jesus carry His cross to Calvary? Where's Simon Peter, the big fisherman, Jesus' disciple, who promised to die with Him or for Him. AWOL!

Simon was a man from northern Africa, who had traveled to eat the Passover lamb. **But he doesn't just eat a Passover lamb, he meets THE Passover Lamb.**

Mark does something interesting to remind his readers that they know who Simon is. He says, '*Simon...the father of Alexander and Rufus.*' Guess what, Rufus is mentioned in Romans 16. Mark is writing to persecuted Christians in Rome, and we see that Rufus was a Christians in the church. His father, Simon, carried Jesus' cross up Calvary, and it changed their lives.

Luke 23 says, *"One of the criminals who hung there hurled insults at him: "Aren't you the Messiah? Save yourself and us!" 40But the other criminal rebuked him. "Don't you fear God," he said, "since you are under the same sentence? 41We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong."42Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." 43Jesus answered him, "Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise." (NIV)*

This should remind every single one of us that it is never too late! Yes, we all know people currently insulting Jesus, hating Jesus, mocking Jesus. Don't give up on them. Keep praying. Keep sharing. Keeping loving.

This man's testimony should be a reminder to all of us that salvation is a result of faith in Jesus, not good works. This guy does literally nothing. He doesn't attend any church services, read any Scripture, give any money, pray any prayers, or do good deeds. He does just one thing: he believes Jesus is who He said He was. The Bible says, *"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whoever believes in Him will have everlasting life."*

Illustration: Michael Jordon, early in his career, scored 69 points in one game. There was a bench warmer who got in at the end of the game and made one free throw. Several weeks later, the bench warmer was interviewed and asked, **'What is the most memorable event in your pro career?' He said, 'The night Michael Jordon and I scored 70 points.'**

God has provided the salvation. He's done all the work on the cross on our behalf. And we are saved through our relationship to Him by faith not by our own efforts.

So, we see a bystander, a criminal and finally a centurion changed by Christ. Verse 39 says, ***“And when the centurion, who stood there in front of Jesus, saw how he died, he said, “Surely this man was the Son of God!”***

These three men met Jesus, believed in Jesus, and were changed by Jesus. And the good news of the Gospel is that Jesus still changes lives TODAY.

Through His Crucifixion Jesus fulfilled scripture, changed lives, and thirdly:

3. CLEARED THE WAY TO DRAW NEAR TO GOD.

V37-38: ***“With a loud cry, Jesus breathed his last.38The curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom.” (NIV)***

That veil in the Temple was a symbol of the barrier between man and God. Behind the veil was the holy of holies where the presence of God's Shekinah glory was. It was the most sacred spot on the face of the earth.

In the holy of holies, there was a chest called the Ark of the Covenant. And it had a gold cover over the top of it called the mercy seat. Now once a year the high priest of Israel could enter that holy of holies and he would sprinkle blood on that mercy seat in atoning for the sins of the people.

And when he sprinkled that blood on the mercy seat the Shekinah glory of God would come down and engulf that entire place so much so that you could see the smoke pouring out of the top of that tabernacle.

Now if anyone else tried to enter the holy of holies he would instantly die. And if the high priest were to administer his duties incorrectly, he also could die.

That is how sacred this place was. It was separated by a veil. And only the high priest could go under that veil once a year. He could only go by the blood of a lamb, and he could only stay for just a short while.

When Jesus died on that cross, His blood was spilled, and the presence of God would no longer be contained behind a curtain. That veil was torn from the top

down meaning no man did this. God, through His Son, tore down the barrier that separated Him from people and now welcomes us into His presence.

Hebrews 10:19-22 says, ***“Therefore, brothers and sisters, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, 20by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, 21and since we have a great priest over the house of God, 22let us draw near to God with a sincere heart and with the full assurance that faith brings, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water.” (NIV)***

Now no one needs to go through a preacher, a priest, or Jesus' mother, Mary, to get to God. We can go straight into the presence of God ourselves. Before the cross, we were separated from God; but because of the cross, we are now invited into His presence.

Through His Crucifixion Jesus Fulfilled scripture, Changed lives, Cleared the way to draw near to God, and finally,

4. PAID THE PENALTY FOR YOUR SIN.

V34: ***“And at three in the afternoon Jesus cried out in a loud voice, “Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?” (which means “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”).” (NIV)***

It was the ninth hour. Guess what time the priests would slaughter the Passover lambs? The ninth hour. 3pm. The Lamb of God, our Passover Lamb, was slain on our behalf on the right day at just the right time.

Key Verse: ***“God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God” (2 Corinthians 5:21).***

This is the gospel in one verse, and it tells us two things.

I. Jesus had no sin.

Paul begins with the fact that Christ “had no sin.” Some versions say that he “knew no sin.” There was no sin outwardly because there was no sin inwardly. This is crucial because if Christ had sinned, he could not be our Savior.

The only person who kept every law in the Bible is Jesus Christ. Not Mother Teresa. Not the Pope. Not Billy Graham. We all sin! And the Law condemns sinners. But Jesus satisfied the Law by paying for our sins.

Paul writes in Colossians 2:14 ***He canceled the record that contained the charges against us. He took it and destroyed it by nailing it to Christ's cross.***

II. Jesus became sin for us.

Paul is not suggesting that Christ literally became a sinner. Perhaps the best way to understand this is to say that God treated his Son as if he were a sinner.

Historically Christians use two phrases to describe how Christ “became sin.”

A. ***He took our Place.*** This is the doctrine of substitution—that Christ died in the place of guilty sinners. His nails were meant for you and me, the crown of thorns should have been on our head, the spear should have pierced our side. It was Jesus dying in your place.

B. ***He took our Penalty.*** On the cross Jesus became the sinless Sin-Bearer. He paid the price we owed to God, the debt we could never pay. His death satisfied God’s righteous decree that sin must always be punished.

We read in Romans 8:3, ***“what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin: condemned sin in the flesh.”***

He was condemned that we might be justified.

He bore our sin that we might be set free.

He died that we might live.

He suffered that we might be redeemed.

He was made sin, so that we might be made righteous.

Theologians call it the doctrine of imputation. It means that when we trust Christ, our sin is credited to Christ's account and his righteousness is credited to our account. He takes our debt, and we get his credit.

CONCLUSION:

1. Christ crucified powerfully communicates the holiness of God.
2. Christ crucified powerfully communicates the awfulness of sin.
3. Christ crucified powerfully communicates the abundance of God's grace

"Surely, He took up our pain and bore our suffering, yet we considered Him punished by God, stricken by Him, and afflicted. 5But He was pierced for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on Him, and by His wounds we are healed." (Is 53:4-5)

The world is offended by the cross, the world will be judged by the cross, but the world can be saved by the cross. This is our hope, and this is our message to anyone who will listen.

The crucifixion of Christ on the Cross proves that sin is not trivial, people are valuable, and forgiveness is possible.

S.M. Lockridge, Pastor of Calvary Baptist Church, San Diego described Jesus, like this:

"The Bible says my King is a seven-way king...

He's the King of the Jews; that's a racial king...

He's the King of Israel; that's a national King...

He's the King of Righteousness...

He's the King of the Ages.

He's the King of Heaven...

He's the King of Glory...He's the King of Kings, and He's the Lord of Lords. That's my King. I wonder, do you know Him?

He's the greatest phenomenon that ever crossed the horizon of this world. He's God's Son. He's a sinner's Savior.

He is the centerpiece of civilization.

He's the miracle of the age.

He's the superlative of everything good that you choose to call Him.

He's the only one qualified to be an all-sufficient Savior.

I wonder if you know Him today?

He supplies strength for the weak.

He's available for the tempted and the tried.

He sympathizes and He saves. He strengthens and sustains.

He guards and He guides. He heals the sick.

He cleanses lepers. He forgives sinners.

He discharges debtors. He delivers captives.

He defends the feeble. He blesses the young.

He serves the unfortunate. He regards the aged.

He rewards the diligent.

And He beautifies the meek. I wonder if you know Him?

He's the key to knowledge. He's the wellspring of wisdom.

He's the doorway of deliverance. He's the pathway of peace.

He's the roadway of righteousness. He's the highway of holiness.

He's the gateway of glory Do you know Him? His office is manifold.

His promise is sure. His light is matchless.

His goodness is limitless. His mercy is everlasting.

His love never changes. His Word is enough.

His grace is sufficient. His reign is righteous.

And His yoke is easy, and his burden is light. I wish I could describe Him to you, but He's indescribable. You can't get Him out of your mind.

You can't outlive Him, and you can't live without Him.

The Pharisees couldn't stand Him, but they found out they couldn't stop Him.

Pilate couldn't find any fault in Him.

The witnesses couldn't get their testimonies to agree.

Herod couldn't kill Him. Death couldn't handle Him,

And the grave couldn't hold Him. Yea! that's my King.

Is Jesus your Kings this morning?

Jesus has already done everything that needs to be done for you to be saved. You don't spell salvation DO you spell salvation DONE.

Jesus paid it all! All to him I owe. Sin that left a crimson stain, he washed it white as snow.

Perhaps you are here, and you do not have that peace of knowing that if you died today you would go to heaven. If you don't have that peace, you can invite Jesus into your heart. He stands at the door of your heart. He wants to come in and give you eternal life. He said if anyone opens the door I will come in and I will stay with him and he with Me.