

**Sermon - 03-07-21**  
**Ps 19; Ex 20:1-17; 1 Cor 1:18-25; Jn 2:15-22**  
**The Message of the Cross**

If something in life is especially painful, we say it is *excruciating*. The root of that word is *crux* – meaning cross. Thus, deep pain is compared to being crucified on a cross. It is excruciating. In the day, the cross was a fairly tall upright made of wood, to which a crossbeam was nailed, or tied. On this instrument of torture, someone convicted of heinous crime was nailed and left to die a humiliating, slow and painful death.

“The Christian teacher, Anne Graham Lotz (daughter of Billy Graham) said:

*If God can bring blessing from the broken body of Jesus and glory from something that's obscene as the cross, He can bring blessing from my problems and my pain and my unanswered prayer.”* ([brainyquote.com](http://brainyquote.com))

We vividly recall the obscene and agonizing death of our Savior on a Roman cross – especially in this season of Lent, leading up to Easter Morning. The first message of the cross is pain and death -- what Jesus endured for His love and obedience. His love for you and me and His love and obedience to His Heavenly Father. On the other side of that ordeal, is the message of great joy in the promise we have received. Just as our Lord went all the way to death – then through death – to the miracle of resurrection – so we inherit His victory over the last enemy. The last enemy is death.

The message of the cross is scandalous. In a unique time in the history of the world, this baby was born to a woman by the Holy Spirit. He lived His life as we all do – in a family, among neighbors – becoming a carpenter like his earthly dad. These particular facts silence those who want to relegate the entire story of Jesus of Nazareth to the realm of fantasy or myth. It is no such thing. Jesus was not a disembodied spirit moving in and out of view. He was and is truly, fully human in the flesh. He was born, lived a life of self-giving service, and He died. How could this be? Can God face the same destiny we created men and women – boys and girls face? Death was what Jesus chose. It was not forced upon Him. No, He surrendered to this death. The message of the cross makes our heart beat quicker – to understand in this emblem of shame and humiliation – that God's love is a self-giving love, welcoming all who hear the message and believe in this Son – this Jesus of Nazareth.

The Apostle Paul tells the Corinthians that to those who are perishing, the message about the cross is foolishness. It makes no sense that God should send His Son to bear all the consequences of our sin. Why should He do that? In worldly thinking, that is the waste of a life

In the same breath, Paul says that to those of us who are being saved, the message about the cross is the power of God. What does this message accomplish? What is the power of this message in the lives of those who hear and believe?

This word, this proclamation – even the foolishness of preaching brings the power of God to draw to Himself all who hear and believe the message of Jesus Christ. This crucified Savior is the Way, the Truth and the Life. God's foolishness is wiser than human wisdom. God's weakness is stronger than human strength.

The cross speaks to those who have ears to hear. The message is God's love poured out for those who draw near, believing. To look to the cross is to see how great a love God has for you. It is an amazing love – beyond any love you or I could ever imagine. It is not natural. It is supernatural.

This love will not leave you and me as we are. There are changes that must happen in our heart and soul – in our thinking and action. It is the very life blood of Jesus that purifies us – and makes us ready and worthy to stand before our holy God. Nothing less will do. The message of the cross is that Christ's broken body is necessary – it is needed – it is required. Our reconciliation to God and one another is in His very body. Only this can remove the stain of our sin.

The message of the cross is the cleansing work of judgment. The catch phrase of our time is, “Don't judge me!” My millennial friends and family say this all the time. Maybe they say it to me more often because I am a preacher. Believe

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me when I tell you I am not judging. Neither you nor I is it fit to judge anybody.

We see today in our Scriptures both the Father and the Son as Judge. The Father reveals the portrait of His holy face: The Ten Commandments. God the Father has a face. It is the face of Jesus Christ – fully human, fully divine. And here He is in action. In John's Gospel, this scene of driving the money-changers and the animal traders out of the temple court happens early in Jesus' ministry – chapter 2. Both Mark and Matthew place this scene toward the end of Jesus' ministry – in later chapters of their Gospels.

It is a scene of judgment. Jesus says, "Take these things out of here! Stop making my Father's house a marketplace!" In Mark's and Matthew's account, Jesus quotes the prophets saying, "(Thus says the Lord) "My house shall be called a house of prayer." (Is 56:7; Jer 7:11)

After the work of the cross was completed, the disciples remembered the Scripture, "It is zeal for your house that has consumed me; the insults of those who insult you have fallen on me." (Ps 69:9) Jesus, through the way of the cross, has been given all that the Father has. It is Christ, the God-Man, who will call all things to Himself and put all things right on the last day.

Those who saw our Savior's agonizing death thought it was defeat. In Lent you and I look at the cross again. The message of the cross is victory – victory over pain and death – victory over shame – victory over sin and sorrow.

The message of the cross continues to go out for all who believe. In the woe and worry you are facing today, Jesus can bear it. He does not remove us from the world's disappointments. He walks with us through them, and when we can no longer go on, He carries us forward into His kingdom. Amen.