

The Case For The Cross

- **What a glorious day to come & celebrate the Risen King of Kings & Lord of Lords.**
 - This is one of the best times of the year for us as Christians because this entire Holiday season revolves around the cross.
 - The cross is the turning point in all of history as a matter of fact.
 - The cross is the greatest demonstration of the amazing & sacrificial love of God.
 - And the cross is the only hope for a world lost in sin.
- **Today is recognized across our world today as Palm Sunday, a commemoration of the day that Jesus rode into the streets of Jerusalem on a donkey in a celebratory parade as throngs of people cried out, “Hosanna!” and as they waved their palm branches in celebration.**
 - The ministry of Jesus had been a very trivial ministry, to say the least, at least among the religious leaders & the spiritual advisors of that day.
 - Jesus had gone about proclaiming that He was the Son of God, the promised Messiah, and He had proven His claims on many occasions through miraculous healings.
- **Though the crowds gathered on this day & rang out the praises of Christ, these events would change quickly in the days to come, not only for the crowd, but also for the followers of Jesus.**
 - The shouts welcoming Jesus into their city would turn into cries of, “Crucify Him, Crucify Him”, in just a very short time.
 - The very ones who had heard His teaching & followed Him would now stand in opposition to Him being released due to the political pressures that were present.
 - Even the disciples, the ones that should have been willing to give their lives for Him, found themselves wondering why all this had happened & many ran away in hiding fearing their own lives would be in jeopardy b/c of their relationship with the Son of God.
- **Many have wondered over the years how things could have changed so quickly, even though it is understood now that this was all a part of God’s plan.**
 - It was foretold that the Messiah would come, that He would be rejected & that He would be led as a lamb to the slaughter.
 - Isaiah 53:7 – “He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth.”
 - Yet now that it was all taking place, this was far from the way those closest to Jesus ever imagined His ministry would end..
- **During this week, some very important events took place, some events that would forever change the lives of those that followed Christ.**
 - The meeting in the upper room where Jesus met with His followers one final time & announced His betrayal by one.
 - It was here where Jesus symbolized what would be taking place by the breaking of the bread (His body) & drinking of the wine (His blood).
 - Not long after this meeting, Judas would go out & collect his ransom for turning Jesus over to the Roman officials.
 - There in the Garden of Gethsemane as Jesus was praying, Peter, James & John found themselves overtaken in exhaustion & instead of praying as Jesus had commanded them, they fell asleep.
 - Jesus cried out, as His sweat turned to drops of blood (Lk. 22:44), for the Father to take this cup from Him if there be any other way. Yet He chose the Father’s will & not His own.
 - The kiss, the arrest, the prosecution in the middle of the night, the rooster crowing ... all of this would eventually take us to a place called Golgotha, “the place of skulls”, where Jesus would give His life willingly on an old rugged cross, & through His blood, purchase redemption for the world.

- **Though His crucifixion was prophesied & we know that this was God's plan for our salvation, the question has been asked time & again, why would they crucify Jesus?**
 - Honestly, it's hard to fathom that they would kill Jesus & release Barabbas isn't it?
 - Why would anyone want to kill a Man who loved them so much & had taught them so much & had done so much for them?
 - Jesus had given Himself completely to these people in an effort to proclaim the Gospel & minister to their needs.
 - He had healed their sick.
 - Fed their hungry.
 - Raised their lame & given new life.
 - He had spoken comfort to their troubled hearts.
 - And now they were willing to throw all that away in an effort to appease the multitude.
 - Why would they not believe that He was in fact the Son of God?
- **As we look at the false arrest, conviction & crucifixion, we have to ask the question, "who was to blame? Who was it that ultimately took Jesus to the cross?" Let's take a look at the evidence this morning ...**

Exhibit A – The Jews

- **Was it the Jews that crucified Jesus? This seems like an easy answer, but before you say that the Jews crucified Jesus, I want to remind you that His early disciples were Jews.**
 - The apostles were Jews. Peter, James, and John were Jews.
 - It was a Jew that preached that great sermon on Pentecost.
 - A Jew, the apostle Paul, was perhaps the greatest missionary that ever lived.
 - John the Baptist, the forerunner of the Lord Jesus Christ, was also a Jew.
 - As a matter of fact, the early church was made up entirely of Jews.
- **Certainly there were Jews that participated in the crucifixion of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and there was a certain group of them that petitioned for His death, but only ignorance would blame the Jews alone as responsible for the crucifixion.**
- **God loved the Jewish people & would send His Son to die for the Jewish people.**
 - God said to Abraham In Genesis 12:3, concerning the Jews, "I will bless those that bless you, and I will curse those that curse you."
- **Did the Jews crucify Jesus? They were certainly a part of it, but the evidence doesn't support their conviction alone.**

Exhibit B – The Romans

- **Let's look at the Romans. These were the men that actually carried out the gruesome execution. Were they to blame for the death of our Lord?**
 - The Roman soldiers were brutal.
 - They beat upon our Lord.
 - Whipped Him with the "cat of 9 tails".
 - Spat upon Him.
 - Placed a crown of thorns upon His head.
 - In their hands, He was beat & treated in a way that no man should even be treated, much less, the Son of God.
 - But in a sense, they were only pawns. They were obeying orders, orders that came from higher up.
- **Jesus was crucified with Roman authority, but we cannot we blame the Romans altogether?**

Exhibit C – Pilate

- **What about Pilate, is he to blame? After all, he certainly could have changed the tide of events.**
 - This was a political war & he was one of the chief politicians in that day.

- He had an opportunity to stop this, an opportunity to stand up for the Son of God, & right the wrong that was being done.
- But instead of standing up, we find him washing his blood-stained hands (Matt. 27:24) of the whole situation in an effort to free himself from the verdict.
- **The question must be asked, was Pilate alone guilty of the crucifixion of Jesus Christ?**
- **The obvious answer is No, and in order to find the guilty party & the ones who were ultimately responsible for the death of Christ, we must look at ...**

Exhibit D – We Are To Blame

- **When you get right down to it, we crucified Jesus Christ with our sins. Our sins were the nails that held Him to the cross, and our hard hearts were the hammers that drove those nails into His hands & feet. He died for our sins.**
 - He did not die because of anything He had done, but because of what we had done.
 - **READ Isaiah 53:3-6**
 - The Bible says He was "wounded," which means "pierced through."
 - His hands and feet were pierced by nails (Ps. 22:16; Luke 24:39-40) and His side by a spear (John 19:31-37; Zech. 12:10; Rev. 1:7).
 - He was crucified, which was not a Jewish form of execution (John 12:32-33; 18:31-32).
 - Capital punishment to the Jews meant stoning (Lev. 24:14; Num. 15:35-36). If they wanted to further humiliate the victim, they could publicly expose the corpse (Deut. 21:22-23).
 - On the cross, Jesus Christ was "bruised," which means "crushed under the weight of a burden."
 - What was the burden? The Bible even gives us that answer. It was b/c the "Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all" (Isa. 53:6).
 - He was "chastised" and given many "stripes," and that punishment brought us peace and healing.
 - The only way a lawbreaker can be at peace with the law is to suffer the punishment that the law demands.
 - Jesus kept the Law perfectly, yet He suffered the whipping that belonged to us. Because He took our place, we now have peace with God and don't have to suffer the condemnation of God's law.
 - The "healing" in Isaiah 53:5 refers to the forgiveness of sins, not the healing of the body. Sin is not only like a burden, but it is also like a sickness that only God can cure.
- **When you lay all the evidence out on the table, though many contributed to His crucifixion, we are all to blame.**
 - All the way back to the sin of Adam, God knew there had to be a cross. This sacrifice would not be like any other sacrifice given b/c it would require a spotless Lamb, without spot or blemish, in order to save man from the wrath of God's judgment.
 - This Sacrifice would be very personal though, b/c it would require the Only Begotten Son of God. No other sacrifice would do.
 - And yet, as much as it grieved Christ to take upon Himself the sins of mankind & as much as God hated turning His back on His Son, Jesus knew it was necessary ... no it was essential if we were to be redeemed.
- **As gruesome as the crucifixion scene is, without the beating, the crown of thorns, or more specifically the shedding of blood, there would be no remission of sins.**
 - Romans 3:25 – "Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God;"
- **I Thank God today for the cross. Because it is through His stripes that you & I can be healed if we will place our faith in Him. (I Peter 2:24)**

- So many today are reaching for everything but the one thing that is needed to find forgiveness.
 - It's not found in living a good enough life.
 - It's not found in good deeds.
 - It's not found in church attendance or even religion for that fact.
 - Forgiveness, eternal life, redemption, sanctification, freedom from guilt of sin ... all these things are ONLY found through the blood of Jesus Christ.
- Have you trusted in Him today?
 - I hope you have, but if not, He is waiting today with open arms.
 - No qualifications.
 - No pre-requisites.
 - No down-payment.
 - Just a humbleness before Him to admit your sins & your need of Him.
- Perhaps today you are a Christian, but like me, you find yourself so undeserving for Someone like Christ to take your place & today you want to come & offer your thanks & your complete commitment to Him today.

- **So now that we have discussed who was to blame as far as the crucifixion, its important now to understand why we did it, knowing who is only half the battle.**
- **Tonight we are going to look at the attitudes that crucified Jesus. We going to see, literally, not who crucified Jesus, but what crucified Jesus. We're going to find the sin that lurks in your heart and my heart that crucified the Lord Jesus Christ.**

1. Hypocrisy (Matthew 27:3-5)

- **This may surprise you, but hypocrisy was one of the tools that was used to carry Jesus to the cross.**
- **This same tool is being used today & is keeping many people from ever accepting Jesus Christ or stepping into the church to hear the Gospel message.**
 - Sad as it is to say, some people are going to miss heaven because of a hypocrite.
 - You're going to see some hypocrite and you're going to characterize Christianity by some hypocrite and throw all of Christianity in the pot of those hypocrites.
- **But let me tell you, there always will be hypocrites in every area of life.**
 - Some lawyers are crooked as can be & are only concerned with padding their pockets,
 - Some doctors are only in it for the money & are not truly concerned about your well-being,
 - But just because there are hypocrites out there does not undermine the reality of what is real. As a matter of fact, the hypocrites are nothing more than proof that there is something real.
 - Some money is counterfeit, and why do people make counterfeit money? Because it proves the validity and the worthwhile of the real.
 - Every counterfeit Christian is but a testimony to the worth and the validity of the real.
- **Judas was one of the biggest hypocrites who has ever lived. But don't you let some hypocrite like Judas keep you out of heaven.**
 - Every now and again, I will hear someone excuse not coming to church or not accepting Christ by justifying, "Well, I would go to church, if it wasn't for hypocrites!"
 - Now I'm not going to be foolish enough to say that we don't have any hypocrites, but the rest of us aren't going to quit serving God b/c of a few that stray, right?

- I will remind you that there were eleven other disciples who did not stop serving Jesus because of Judas.
- **Hypocrisy is a terrible thing, but I had rather deal with one or two in the church than be cast into a place called hell that will be full of hypocrites.**
- **Don't you let some hypocrite keep you from Jesus Christ. Hypocrisy crucified the Lord Jesus Christ for thirty pieces of silver. Judas betrayed Jesus & was tormented with guilt and sorrow, but there was never any repentance, just remorse and guilt.**
 - He flings down the thirty pieces of silver. He's tormented by his conscience, by remorse. He goes out somewhere, he finds a limb, puts some rope around his neck, and steps out over that cliff trying to escape the torment of his soul.
- **Hypocrisy is awful, it's terrible. As a matter of fact, it was one of the tools used to crucify our Lord.**

2. Compromise (Matt. 27:11-14; 24-26)

- **One of the greatest tragedies in the life of people is when they compromise to do evil when they know to do right.**
- **I believe that when we are tempted to do wrong, we are convicted by one of three sources or a combination of the three.**

a. Reason (v.18)

- Pilate had Jesus on his hands, and he had to do something with Jesus.
- Now watch this, Pilate is not innocent here b/c Pilate knows what he should do. Pilate sinned because he was willing to compromise.
 - God had spoken to him. Pilate was a wise man in the flesh. He knew human nature, and he knew why this crucifixion was being carried out.
 - 27:18 – “For he knew that for envy they had delivered him.”
- Whenever God speaks to your heart, church, we need to obey & follow His direction.
 - I look back over my life & when God speaks to me & I don't obey, it never turns out good.
- Pilate knew the right thing to do & I will tell you that most people know the right thing to do, yet they choose to sin.
 - Would it shock you if I tell you that I believe most Christians don't “stumble” into sin, they walk into it knowingly.
 - Because of pressure, maybe.
 - Because they want to be accepted, perhaps.
 - But ultimately, they sin b/c they want to.

b. Revelation (v.19)

- You see, the voice of reason had spoken to Pilate. But Pilate's own wife had also warned him about this b/c God had given her a dream.
 - 27:19 – “When he was set down on the judgment seat, his wife sent unto him, saying, Have thou nothing to do with that just man: for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of him.”
- He ignored the counsel of those closest to him.
 - Now, I don't know what kind of life Mrs. Pilate lived, but I know she was genuine in this moment & she did not want to see her husband destroy his life through this sin.
- Do you have people in your life that love you & care about you? If you do, you should be thankful for them & you should also be willing to listen to them.
 - When we are in the middle of a situation, it is awful hard at times to see the danger around us.
 - If everyone around us is telling us the house is on fire, it would greatly benefit us to get out of the house, right?

- People advise us b/c they care about us. If Pilate had listened, he would have saved himself from some tremendous heartache & no doubt the greatest mistake of his life.

c. Conscience (vv.22-23)

- Pilate, in his conscience, knew that Jesus was innocent. He knew he had no business being involved in this & making this decision.
- Yet b/c of the political pressure & the concern for his career, Pilate had to make up his mind. Pilate knows what he is doing is wrong, but he is willing to compromise.
- Pilate tried to make no decision at all, but history shows that indecision is the worse decision.
 - Jesus said, "He that is not with me is against me."
 - The things that Pilate sought, he lost.
 - The robe that adorned his back soon adorned somebody else's back.
 - The gavel that he held in his politician's hands was soon held by another hand.
 - The position that he coveted, he lost.
 - History tells us he died of suicide because he was a coward. He would not take a stand for the Lord Jesus Christ.

3. Conformity (Matt. 27:20)

- **In order for Pilate to get out of this situation, he thought, "I will give the decision to the people. If they choose to do it, then it's on them."**
- **And so he gave the people the choice as to who they would take, Barabbas or Jesus ... and to his surprise, they chose Jesus.**
 - Now here's the thing, if you could have been in the crowd & you ask those people, "Why did you choose Jesus?", they would have said, "Well that's what everyone else wanted. We were just going along with them."
 - What you are seeing in our country right now are people who are saying the exact same thing.
 - "Everyone else wants it."
 - "It's not affecting me."
 - "It's not my fault, this is what they wanted."
 - And we continue, talking about even Christians, we continue to go along with the crowd.
 - Let me read you a verse of scripture that gives reference to following the crowd & where that winds up ...
 - Matthew 7:13 – "Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat:"

4. Indifference (Matt. 27:36)

- **These are the people that go to church every Sunday, sing the songs, fellowship, "Preacher, we enjoyed the sermon", but that's it ... no change.**
 - They're not outwardly rejecting Jesus.
 - They're pretty good people.
 - They agree with everything that is said from the pulpit.
 - But they're just looking AT Jesus, they're not ready to submit to Him.

➤ **Are you glad for the cross tonight? Are you glad that Jesus chose to save an old sinner like you & me? Do you realize how significant the cross is in our lives? Have you thanked Him for the cross today?**