

The Triumph of the Cross

Mark 15:22-47

The Cross of Jesus Christ stands at the center of God's redemptive Plan. Its shadow was across the steps of each day of Jesus' life. Remember the steps that have lead to this point? Jesus has had six mock trials:

1. Trial of, before Annas
2. Trial of, before Caiaphas [Jerusalem], Matt. 26:57,58,69-75; Mark 14:53,54,66-72; Luke 22:54-62; John 18:13-18,25-27.
3. Tried by the council, Matt. 26:59-68; Mark 14:55-65; Luke 22:63-71; John 18:19-21
4. Led by the council to Pilate, Matthew. 27:1,2,11-14; Mark 15:1-5; Luke 23:1-5; John 18:28-38.
5. Arraigned before Herod, Luke 23:6-12.
6. Tried before Pilate, Matthew. 27:15-26; Mark 15:6-15; Luke 23:13-25; John 18:39,40; 19:1-16.

Then we have in rapid succession, the path to the Cross:

1. Mocked by the soldiers, Matthew. 27:27-31; Mark 15:16-20.
2. Is led away to be crucified, Matthew. 27:31-34; Mark 15:20-23; Luke 23:26-32; John 19:16,17.
3. Crucified, Matthew. 27:35-56; Mark 15:24-41; Luke 23:33-49; John 19:18-30.

Our text this morning has as it central focus the Cross of Jesus Christ. In this portion we can see God's triumph in:

1. The Purpose of the Cross 15:22-32
2. The Passion of the Cross 15:33-46
3. The Power of the Cross 15:37-47

Lets look at each of these and grow in our awareness of how much Christ did at the Cross.

The Purpose of the Cross

Mark 15:22-32

1. First, to show the sinfulness of man. The cross was invented because of mans sinfulness.

The Roman Cross that was the tool of God to accomplish Redemption had its origin in the horrors of the utter baseness of a sin filled culture.

Jeremiah 32:35 And they built the high places of Baal, which *are* in the valley of the son of Hinnom, to cause their sons and their daughters to pass through *the fire* unto Molech; which I commanded them not, neither came it into my mind, that they should do this abomination, to cause Judah to sin. (KJV)

ASHTORETH. An idol of the Philistines, Zidonians, and Phoenicians. Probably identical with queen of heaven, Jer. 7:18. Worshipped by Israelites, Judg. 2:13; 10:6; 1 Sam. 7:3,4; 12:10; 1 Kin. 11:5,33; 2 Kin. 23:13. Temple of, 1 Sam. 31:10. High places of, at Jerusalem, destroyed, 2 Kin. 23:13 See *Groves*.

BAAL. 1. An idol of the Phoenicians, god of the sun. Wickedly worshipped by the Israelites in the time of the judges, Judg. 2:10-23; 1 Sam. 7:3,4; by the kingdom of Israel, 2 Kin. 17:16; Jer. 23:13; Hos. 1; 2; 13:1; under Ahab, 1 Kin. 16:31-33; 18:18; 19:18; Jehoram, 2 Kin. 3:2; by the Jews, 2 Kin. 21:3; 2 Chr. 22:2-4; 24:7; 28:2; 33:3. Jeremiah reasons against the worship of, Jer. 2:8,23; 7:9.

Altars of, destroyed by Gideon, Judg. 6:25-32; by Jehoiada, 2 Kin. 11:18; by Josiah, 2 Kin. 23:4,5.

Prophets of, slain by Elijah, 1 Kin. 18:40. All worshipers of, destroyed by Jehu, 2 Kin. 10:18-25.

2. A Benjamite, 1 Chr. 8:30; 9:36.

3. A Reubenite, 1 Chr. 5:5.

4. A city in the tribe of Simeon, 1 Chr. 4:33. Called *Baalath-beer*, Josh. 19:8.

MOLECH, called also *Moloch* and *Milcom*. An idol of the Ammonites, Acts 7:43. Worshipped by the wives of Solomon, and by Solomon, 1 Kin. 11:1-8. Children sacrificed to, 2 Kin. 23:10; Jer. 32:35; 2 Kin. 16:3; 21:6; 2 Chr. 28:3; Isa. 57:5; Jer. 7:31; Ezek. 16:20,21; 20:26,31; 23:37,39; see Lev. 18:21; 20:2-5.

Ezekiel 16:21 That thou hast slain my children, and delivered them to cause them to pass through *the fire* for them? (KJV)

Ezekiel 20:26,31 ²⁶ And I polluted them in their own gifts, in that they caused to pass through *the fire* all that openeth the womb, that I might make them desolate, to the end that they might know that I *am* the LORD. ³¹ For when ye offer your gifts, when ye make your sons to pass through the fire, ye pollute yourselves with all your idols, even unto this day: and shall I be inquired of by you, O house of Israel? As I live, saith the Lord GOD, I will not be inquired of by you. (KJV)

Ezekiel 23:37 That they have committed adultery, and blood *is* in their hands, and with their idols have they committed adultery, and have also caused their sons, whom they bare unto me, to pass for them through *the fire*, to devour *them*. (KJV)

It was into this debased society, crucifixion was born.

- To a people that burned their first born child on the red hot glowing arms of the abominable god Molech.
- To a culture that buried alive a child in the foundation of their homes.
- Among a citizenry that worshipped in an orgiastic frenzy came the ultimate of pain and suffering, the cross.

Listen to the gruesome exactness this art of death had arrived:

In His book, *The Life of Christ*, scholar Frederic Farrar wrote:

A death by crucifixion seems to include all that pain and death can have of horrible and ghastly--dizziness, cramp, thirst, starvation, sleeplessness, traumatic fever, tetanus, publicity of shame, long continuance of torment, horror of anticipation, mortification of untended wounds--all intensified just up to the point at which they can be endured at all, but all stopping just short of the point which would give to the sufferer the relief of unconsciousness.

The unnatural position made every movement painful; the lacerated veins and crushed tendons throbbed with incessant anguish; the wounds, inflamed by exposure, gradually gangrened; the arteries--especially of the head and stomach--became swollen and oppressed with surcharged blood; and while each variety of misery went on gradually increasing, there was added to them the intolerable pang of a burning and raging thirst; and all these physical complication caused an internal excitement and anxiety, which made the prospect of death itself--of death, the awful unknown enemy, at whose approach man usually shudders most--bear the aspect of a delicious and exquisite release ([Portland: Foundation, 1976], p. 641).

But the cross not only reflects the triumph of God's purpose in the sinfulness of man.

Second, to show the Sovereignty of God. The details were planned in ages past by the Father. Listen to the scriptures fulfilled at the Cross:

1. *David had declared, for example, that the soldiers who crucified the Messiah would, in the process of dividing His clothes among them for souvenirs, gamble for His robe (Psalm 22:18) and give Him vinegar and gall to drink (Psalm 69:21). This was exactly what happened. How could Christ have arranged for that to occur while He hung helpless on the cross?
2. Isaiah had foretold that he would be executed in the company of criminals (Isaiah 53:9). How did Christ arrange to have Himself crucified between two thieves?
3. *The common practice was to break the legs of those crucified so they could no longer support their weight and would collapse and suffocate. Although the soldiers broke the legs of the thief on either side of Him, they did not do so to

Jesus, thus fulfilling the Scripture: "He keepeth all his bones, not one of them is broken" (Psalm 34:20).

4. Instead, one of the soldiers plunged a spear into His side--a seemingly inexplicable act which fulfilled yet another prophecy: "They shall look on me whom they pierced" (Zechariah 12:10).
5. What about the rabbis? Their actions, too, fulfilled prophecies which proved that Jesus was the Messiah--clearly the last thing they wanted to do! Take, for example, the 30 pieces of silver which Judas threw down in the temple, as the Scriptures foretold he would (Zechariah 11;13). Dividing that tempting sum among themselves would have been the natural thing for the rabbis to do. After all, it no longer belonged in the treasure but had been paid out to the betrayer.

So, the Purpose of the Cross was to show the Sinfulness of man and the Sovereignty of God. Paul put it this way:

2 Corinthians 5:21 For he hath made him *to be* sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. (KJV)

What can we learn from this? Listen to J. Oswald Sander:

AN UNCEASING CROSS-BEARING Spiritual Discipleship p. 21-22

"Anyone who does not carry his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple" (Luke 14:27; italics added).

"Anyone who does not take his cross and follow me *is not worthy of me*" (Matthew 10:38; italics added).

To understand what Jesus meant by His command to carry the cross, we must think what that expression would have meant to the people of that day.

What is the cross of which Jesus spoke? Those words were said before He went to the cross. In common parlance people speak of some physical infirmity, some temperamental weakness, some family problem, as their cross. One woman referred to her bad temper as her cross.

"Oh, no!" was the reply. "That is the cross of the unfortunate people who have to live with you" The cross was all too familiar a sight to them. They would have thought of the cross as an instrument of agonizing suffering and eventual death.

What did the cross mean to Jesus? It was something He took up voluntarily, not something that was imposed on Him; it involved sacrifice and suffering; it involved Him in costly renunciations; it was symbolic of rejection by the world.

And it is to cross-bearing of this nature that the disciple is always called. It involved a willingness to accept ostracism and unpopularity with the world for His sake. We can evade carrying the cross simply by conforming our lives to the world's standards.

The Passion of the Cross

Mark 15:33-46

What was Jesus doing on the Cross? Of all people He was unworthy of its ignominious horrors. What was He doing there? SUFFERING IN MY PLACE. The central tenet of Christianity is the Substitutionary Atonement . Jesus died in my place. Gal 2.20 HE GAVE HIMSELF FOR ME!

Listen to what one Pastor so eloquently said:

The Power of the Cross

Mark 15:37-47

What is the power of the Cross? It is our Triumph. It is our liberation. It is the crushing of Satan's head.