

Cross Examination

(John 12:27-34)

(preached 3/31/19; Pine Grove BC Sun AM)

Introduction

If there is any symbol of Christianity in the world, it is the cross.

You can even trace the association of the cross with Christians all the way back to the 2nd century when believers often used crosses as seals on official documents..

The earliest known cross themed jewelry also dates back to 2nd century as well..

Needles to say, the cross has been associated with Christianity ever since Jesus hung on one outside of Jerusalem..

Even the great reformer Martin Luther wrote, “the cross alone is our theology.”

Why such a fascination with the cross?

Well, the cross is central to the gospels.

All four gospel writers devote verse after verse to the events of Jesus’ time on the cross..

Even the letters that comprise the majority of the NT have a focus upon the cross..

Paul even writes that the foundation of his ministry is to “know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified.”

But even before the NT, the OT previews the picture of Jesus on the cross in countless verses on the Jewish sacrificial system...

In fact, the OT is a bloody book, not because of wars and conquests but because of the extensive sacrificial system described in it.

In fact, the OT is a preview of a coming ultimate sacrifice for all sin..

It is for these reasons and many more that the cross has become central to Christianity..

The cross is the picture of substitutionary atonement.

The picture of sinless Jesus dying as our substitute on a cross that we as sinners deserved.

In fact, there is a cross behind me as I preach to you right now as a reminder of the price paid for your sin by the Sinless Christ..

No matter how far our minds stray from the truth, the cross calls us back to reality and to the foundation of who we are as believers..

Now with all that said, we must resist the temptation to worship the cross.

In fact, many Christians tend to treat the cross as a good luck symbol.

Others use the symbol to attract the business of Christians.

Or worse yet, they wear crosses that have Jesus still attached to it.

WE don't preach a still crucified Christ.

We preach a risen Christ.

We even sing songs about clinging to the old rugged cross, when we need to make sure that we are clinging to the Christ alone.

Yet, with those warnings in mind, we also recognize the centrality of the cross to our faith.

It is clearly foundational to who we are as believers in Christ.

But the cross was also always in the mind of Jesus during his time on earth.

The cross always loomed in the distance.

Even a young boy and man, Jesus knew that the cross was his ultimate destination.

It was his God-ordained appointment..

The cross was his purpose in life.

And now as we get to John 12, the cross is but days away.

When we started John 12, we were 6 days from the cross as Jesus ate with his dear friends Mary, Martha, and Lazarus at the home of Simon the Leper on Saturday..

Then 5 days away from the cross, Jesus watched as a group of curious Jews traveled to Bethany not to see Him but to marvel at Lazarus..

Last week, the cross was 4 days away as Jesus entered Jerusalem on Palm Monday to the cheering of crowds only to hear those same crowds cheer for his death 4 days later.

And as we ended last week listening to Jesus in the temple issue an incredible invitation to those in the male to give up their lives and come to Him, we were only 2 or 3 days away from the cross.

This morning as we come to verses 27-34, the cross is closer still.

It is possible that this this is Wednesday or even Thursday morning...

It is likely that this is his final public outing before his arrest and crucifixion on Friday.

And now the cross is no longer looming in the distant future for Jesus, it is knocking on his door, so he begins to speak about the death that he is going to die..

We are going to discover 6 Truth about the cross this morning that should sober us and fill our hearts with thankfulness for our Savior.

Let's begin in verse 27 with truth #1..

I. The Cross Troubles the Son (27-28a)

27 “Now My soul has become troubled; and what shall I say, ‘Father, save Me from this hour’? But for this purpose I came to this hour.

As the hour of his death approaches, Jesus is troubled by the thought of it.

But what is troubling Him?

He would obviously know that the pain of nails being driven through his hands and feet, but that wasn't the issue here.

He would know the excruciating death by suffocation that killed most of the people nailed to a cross, but the wasn't the issue here either.

He would know the sting of the whips.

He would know the pain of the rods.

He would be aware of the scorn and humiliation of being spit on and rejected.

But none of that physical pain is the source of his troubled heart..

The single source of trouble in his heart was the spiritual reality of being judged by God as if He were a sinner.

The Father is about to condemn Him for sins that he did not commit, and that weighed on his soul like a ton of bricks.

Jesus had never known sin.

Jesus had never committed sin.

Yet Jesus was about to experience God's wrath against the sins of all who would believe in Him.

The sinless Christ was about to experience the spiritual reality of bearing the weight of sin for His people.

Though we can never relate to that reality, we must never forget the crushing weight of God's wrath that should have come to us but instead went to our Savior.

Though John won't record it, Luke tells us that this burden on Jesus' heart became so great that he sweat drops of blood in the garden on Thursday night...

However, Christ bears the burden..

Look at the end of verse 27...

what shall I say, ‘Father, save Me from this hour’? But for this purpose I came to this hour. 28 Father, glorify Your name.”

Jesus could have asked for the Father to save him from such coming wrath, but He knew that the cross was his purpose in life.

He knew that the Father’s plan called for the Son’s death.

This was his appointment with destiny and Jesus faced it, so that none of His people would have to.

Yet, we must never forget that the cross was deeply troubling to our Savior.

A second truth of the cross takes us verse 28b-30..

II. The Cross Glorifies the Father (28-30)

As Jesus affirms the purpose of the the cross, he simply says, “Father glorify your name.”

Now look, this is the desire of every believer in every action we take.

We hope that what we do glorifies God.

But what does that mean?

Simply put, to glorify God is make his nature and name big in the world.

We glorify God when we love others as God loves them.

We glorify God when we call for justice as God calls for justice.

We glorify God when we strive for peace as God is a God of peace..

As Jesus prepares for the cross, he desires to glorify the Father through it.

Look at verse 28..

28 Father, glorify Your name.” Then a voice came out of heaven: “I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again.”

As Jesus declares his desire to glorify the Father in the cross, the Father speaks to declare that he will be glorified in it..

In fact, the Father says that his name has already been glorified by the Son, and will be glorified by the Son in the cross..

Clearly, Jesus had already brought much glory to the Father in his teaching, in his miracles, in his perfect obedience to the Law.

In fact, Jesus only heard the audible voice of the Father on 3 occasions in his life.

The first was at his baptism, where the Father declared that he was well-pleased with the Son’s obedience and formal entrance into ministry..

The second was at the transfiguration where the Father again affirmed that he was well-pleased with the Son.

And now the 3rd time that the Father speaks audibly is here as Jesus prepares for the cross.

And the implication is clear.

The Father has been glorified by the Son already, and HE will be glorified by the Son at the cross.

And how will he be glorified?

Well, all of the Father's attributes will be on full display at the cross.

Now most folks see the cross as a picture of God's love, and indeed it is, but that is not all we see at the cross.

WE also see God's justice in demanding payment for sin.

We see God's grace in pardoning the guilty sinner.

We see God's wrath against sin.

We see God's faithfulness in bringing about his promise to send the ultimate sacrifice for sin.

We see God's holiness in that he can't look on His Son who is being treated like a sinner.

WE see God's sovereignty in that Jesus was crucified at just the right moment in just the right place by just the right people.

Clearly, the cross glorified the Father in every way possible..

Now, a side note is added in verses 29 and 30..

29 So the crowd of people who stood by and heard it were saying that it had thundered; others were saying, “An angel has spoken to Him.” 30 Jesus answered and said, “This voice has not come for My sake, but for your sakes.

This should come as no surprise to us but very few in the crowd recognized the voice as the voice of God.

The affirmation of the Father was probably only heard by a handful of people around Jesus.

Surely, the disciples heard it.

I think the Greeks who had come to Jesus heard it if this was on the same occasion..

But the vast majority had no clue.

Some thought it was thunder.

Some thought it was an angel.

But this is simply symbolic of their spiritual condition.

Their eyes don't believe that God is standing in front of them, and their ears don't hear God speaking around them.

I would warn you this morning.

It is possible to be in the church but not know the Lord of the church.

The crowd was all around Jesus.

The crowd heard the voice of the Father.

But they might as well had been a 1000 miles away.

Nearness to God does not mean closeness to Him.

So the cross troubles the Son and glorifies the Father..

But 3rd,

III. The Cross Judges the World (31a)

As we get to verse 31, Jesus begins to lay out 3 incredible accomplishments of the cross..

Verse 31..

31 Now judgment is upon this world;

Simply put, everyone will be judged by their view of Jesus.

As we have time and time again in John's gospel, Jesus is the dividing line of all of human history.

Men and women will rise or fall due based solely upon their view of Jesus Christ.

They will either see the life, death and resurrection of Christ and repent and believe in Him.

Or they will see the life, death, and resurrection of Christ and reject Him.

The cross brought lasting judgment into the world.

In a sense, the world has already been judged guilty ever since the sin of Adam and Eve.

However, the cross becomes a clear line in human history.

You either see your sin and look to the cross for forgiveness.

Or you find some other way to deal with it.

Jesus may have walked in the shadow of the cross, but all of mankind lives in the shadow of judgement that the cross casts over us all..

A 4th truth of the cross is found in the second half of verse 31..

IV. The Cross Crushes Satan (31b)

“...now the ruler of this world will be cast out.”

In a strange turn of events, the cross, which looks like a grand victory for Satan, turns out to be his final defeat.

As Satan enters Judas to send him out to betray Jesus, he signs his out death certificate.

Sin, rebellion, and wickedness will not be the way of the world forever.

The cross took away the sting of sin.

The cross crushed the wickedness of the world..

Rebellion was routed at the cross.

No, Satan is not gone yet.

He still roams the earth looking for souls to devour.

But Satan is on death row.

The verdict and sentence of his life was declared at the cross.

He will get the death penalty.

He is going to the lake of fire in the end..

His reign will never occur.

The promise to crush the serpent's head given to Adam and Eve in Genesis 3 finds its partial fulfillment at the cross outside of Jerusalem..

A 5th truth of the cross comes to us in verses 32 and 33..

V. The Cross Draws the Sinner (32-33)

Verse 32..

32 And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to Myself.” 33 But He was saying this to indicate the kind of death by which He was to die.

One unbelievable reality of the cross is that God draws people to it..

And the reason that is so unbelievable is because the cross looks like the supposed defeat of Christ..

In other words, why would people be drawn to the place their Master was killed?

The cross is paradoxical.

Jesus loses but wins.

1 Corinthians 1:18 puts it this way..

18 For the word of the cross is foolishness to those who [m]are perishing, but to us who [n]are being saved it is the power of God.

The wonder of the cross is that the death of Jesus doesn't repel some from following Him.

Instead, it attracts those who are called by God.

And then finally, truth #6 of the cross is found in verse 34...

VI. The Cross Angered the Jews (34)

As Jesus predicts his way of death by hanging on a Roman cross, the unbelieving Jews who cheered him on Monday are now angered by him..

Look at verse 34..

34 The crowd then answered Him, “We have heard out of the Law that [l]the Christ is to remain forever; and how can You say, ‘The Son of Man must be lifted up’? Who is this Son of Man?”

Last week, we answered a very common question that people have..

Namely, why did the Jews miss their Messiah?

And the simple answer is that they wanted a Messiah to deliver them politically and not spiritually..

They cheered Jesus into Jerusalem on Monday thinking that he would banish the Romans by Friday.

But the reality is that Jesus was going to be banished by Friday.

However, the Jews couldn't imagine a Messiah like that..

You even see that in what they say here..

They say that the Law, the OT, described a Messiah who would rule forever..

And clearly it does describe a Messiah who would occupy the throne forever.

In fact, Jesus is coming a 2nd time to do just that..

However, the 1st coming was intended to make him a spiritual savior.

The Jews didn't need a better politician.

They needed someone to forgive their sins..

Sadly, they never saw themselves in need of salvation..

They thought themselves to be good moral people that God would never deny into heaven.

Sound familiar?

It should.

There are a lot of southerners today with the same wrong opinion of themselves.

And just like the Jews of Jesus day, there are people today who never see their sin.

In their fallen minds, they are simply good people who just need a good politician to lead them.

They Jews were hoping for the same.

But now, some days have passed since Jesus came in on Monday.

And instead of taking on the Romans, Jesus has entered the temple of his own people and talked about their false religion..

And now he is talking about dying on a Roman cross..

So the Jews respond very sarcastically here..

What do you mean you as the supposed Messiah are going to a cross?

What kind of Messiah are you?

And truly, this is all the crowds needed to completely reverse course from Monday.

Not only has Jesus refused to take the throne, he is now predicting that he will take on a cross..

For the Jews, this was the final straw.

They would now join with the religious leaders and call for Jesus' death.

They weren't interested in a Messiah to forgive their sins.

They only wanted a king to make their nation great again, and Jesus had not come to do that.

The sad reality is that the cross angers some as much as it draws others..

Conclusion

What should we take from John 12:27-34 this morning?

#1 - The conflict within us is not sinful.

Though Jesus struggled with the thought of going to the cross, that struggle was not sinful.

Jesus battled his troubled soul all the way to the very end.

But that battle was never once sinful.

Look, the battle against sin is not sinful in itself..

WE must recognize our troubled souls, ye remain obedient in the battle versus sin.

The way to victory is to seek to say no to your emotions and yes to God.

#2 -The cross before us is not playful.

In light of Jesus' anguish here, may we never make light of our sin.

Jesus' soul was troubled by the cross, but believers are resistant to go to the trouble to fight against sin in their life.

Jesus anguish should encourage our anger at sin.

Yes, your sins are forgiven if you truly repent and believe in Christ alone.

But that is not license to see the cross as something frivolous.

May we all be moved and motivated by the seriousness of the cross.

#3 - The Christ in front of us is not optional.

When Jesus wouldn't meet their demand to be their political ruler, the Jews simply moved on to the next option.

Interestingly, no other Messiah has come to them in over 2000 years.

And the reason is simple, there is no option 2 or plan B.

Christ is the way, the truth, and the life.

You can search the world over.

You can search from beginning to end.

There is no one like Christ.

There is no sacrifice like the one he made on the cross.

There is no other way in the kingdom of God except by Christ.

He is option 1 and option 2 and option 3.

HE is plan A, plan B, and plan C.

If you are waiting on a better way to heaven than Christ, you will for an eternity in a lake of fire.

Today is the day to come to Him in repentance and faith alone.

There are no other options, but the good news is that He is best option as well...

Let us pray.