
Intro: The Cross

- Six hours hanging on a piece of wood. 9am to 3pm on a Friday. It was the hour of darkness.
- It gave birth to the most powerful symbol in the world. Not Nike, Not McDonalds. The cross.
- Most churches in the world have it on a steeple, in their lobby, in their worship center
- These days, you can find a cross in jewelry. Earrings, necklaces. You find it embroidered onto jackets, made into 1000 tattoos and stitched onto the back pockets of fashion jeans.
- People in Jesus day would think this to be weird. A cross was a gruesome picture in the roman world. Crucifixions were meant to be painful and often lasted for days. The victim hanging on the cross was placed in a public venue – often along a road or a crossroad. Not only was this humiliating for him, but it was a deterrent to every person who walked by. This is what happens when you mess with Rome. Don't mess with Rome. Someone like Jesus would have seen dozens or hundreds of people being crucified by the time he became an adult.
- It actually took two centuries for the cross to be adapted as a symbol of the faith. Originally it was predominantly the ICHTHEuS Fish. The first letters of Jesus Christ Son of God Savior spelled Ichtheus or fish. And the disciples were to be fishers of men. Isn't that a NICE symbol?
- The cross is anything but nice– the cross is a graphic symbol of torture. Like us wearing an electric chair necklace or hypodermic needle tattoo.
- The cross has been captured in movies and books as an icon with supernatural power. Cross your fingers and the witch has to back off. It wards off evil and burns vampires.

The cross became this powerful symbol because it is the means by which Jesus died. The hero... come to an ugly demise. Plain and simple. The irony can't be more strongly felt. The worlds greatest man – by morality, by impact, by teaching, by miracle... that man died a horrific death of torture and asphyxiation on the cross.

What was it about this event, this man, this death that eclipses all other deaths in history?

Well, Jesus accomplished a LOT in his death. A LOT. You hear about these things here and there, but I wanted to compile 7 of them in a single message. Seven is a big deal in the Bible and it stands for completion. Seven days in creation. Jesus is symbolized by seven lampstands in revelation. Seven churches worship Jesus there. Jesus has seven "I am statements." And it is no surprise that Jesus spoke seven sentences or phrases or statements on the cross. I want you to not just hear them taught, but feel them in the message. So I have arranged the seven things that Jesus accomplished around the seven statements on the cross and my prayer is that you will not only HEAR them taught, but FEEL them worked out in your life.

1 - Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do

- Soldiers who put him on the cross. Driving in the nails, heckling him. Taunting. Spitting, mocking, dividing up his clothes. And Jesus' words are "Father, Forgive them.
- How is it possible that Jesus could forgive them AS THEY torture him? Well, it wasn't just them. They happened to be the soldiers at the time just crucifying another criminal. You and I are the real culprits.
- You put him on the cross. Your sins nailed him there. Every evil thought... every intentional lie, every anger explosion, every sexual immorality, every pornographic website, every cheat on your taxes, every time you were cold to your husband, every time you were short with your kids... these were the things that Jesus went to the cross to forgive
- Forgiveness was purchased by Jesus death. When he looked at the guards, he saw humanity. He saw you and me. He knew they were the REASON that he died. He wanted them to know the father.
- This is one of the most amazing things about Jesus. He knows every last one of your sins and he loves you anyway. I don't know about you, but I kinda play a game in life. "Hide the sin" You know what I mean? I want everybody to think that I am better than I am. I don't wear my sins on my sleeve... You have any of those in your deep, dark past? In your recent history? Maybe it was something you did last night... maybe it happened on the way to church today. But Jesus forgives those things. He forgives the sexual history that you'd rather keep in the closet. He forgives the vengeful thoughts that you wish did not come into your mind. He forgives the dumb choices you made in your youth.
- Can I add that when he spoke this statement, he was forgiving the sins of all who would trust him – past, present and future. How does it make you feel that God has forgiven your future sins?
- Accomplished: Forgiveness of a billion sinners. A very big deal.
- But more than that. It becomes a model by which we can forgive others. The gamechanger of this statement is that we are now the company of the forgiven. For us to NOT forgive a sin against us is just trivial compared to the mountain of sin God has forgiven. So he teaches us to take the brunt of sin and return forgiveness, just as he has done for us.
- Who is coming after you today? A business associate? A contractor? A client? A spouse or former spouse? When you forgive you not only break the cycle of revenge, but you also free your own soul from bitterness. This is world shaping. It began with Jesus and continues with you.

2 - Today you will be with me in paradise

- Jesus death was unlocking eternity. Our sins had blocked us from eternal life, but Jesus' death opens the door.

- He was dying between two thieves. One joined in the taunting, the other expressed faith in Jesus – and the fact that he was innocent.
- I love the thief’s simple question “Jesus, will you remember me when you come into your kingdom?” It acknowledges Jesus’ power and his kingdom. He probably has no clue theologically what his happening before his very eyes. His faith is simple. – “I can see you are being killed, but I still believe in you. You are innocent and whatever you have I want it.” Amazing. And Jesus welcomes people like that.
- This was no choir boy. He was on death row. And I have seen it over and over. People who think they are too far gone, too illegal, too immoral. I have known adulterers, murderers, Satan worshippers, criminals and more. God has welcomed them all into his family And they find Jesus saying ‘today’ you will be with me in paradise.
- You don’t have to have all your ducks in a row or all your theology straight. You just need to look at the cross and trust in Jesus. Even though you died (or really BECAUSE you died), I can have eternal life! You have opened the doors for me.
- Accomplished: Eternal Life for thieves and murderers and all who trust him

3 - Mother, behold your son – John, this is your mom

- Jesus knows he can’t take care of his mom anymore and so he asks John to step in – to include her in the new community, to be sure she is loved.
- At the same time, he can’t disciple John anymore and so he connects the disciple to his mom – the woman chosen by the Father to raise the Messiah. It is a win-win.
- And it reminds us that at the cross, Jesus makes new community. At the cross, those who are a part of the company of the forgiven find a forgiven forever family. It has been said that the ground is level at the foot of the cross. I like that saying. Because we all come to the cross broken and needy. Men and Women, rich and poor, male and female... the ground is level. People who sin secretly and people who sin obviously – the ground is level. People who are famous and obscure, pretty and ugly. The ground is level. You are no better or no worse... everybody looks up to Jesus alone.
- In fact, in the cross, reconciliation is possible – between the races, between warring tribes, between men and women... the cross makes relationship possible! Since everyone is guilty
- In fact, Colossians 1:20 and Romans 8 suggest that it was at the cross that the entire cosmos was reconciled to God. In other words, our sin broke the system, but Jesus blood covered that so that the cosmos could reflect God once again
- 3 - Accomplished: reconciliation and a new community for everyone

4 - My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?

- First time ever the trinity was broken. God could not look on his son who took on sin, or as 2 Corinthians says – became sin – with the same favor. Most intense pain of the whole episode.
- Prophecy fulfilled – When Jesus said this phrase, it would have tipped everyone off to a commonly quoted psalm. Everybody knew it... much like if we said “Jack and Jill ran up the hill” you would know what comes next. Everybody would know this is psalm 22 and would start rehearsing it in their heads. Now you must know that this psalm was written 950 years before Jesus – and for the first time ever, the onlookers would be seeing an extra dimension of what it meant.
- Psalm 22:1-2 says, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from saving me, so far from the words of my groaning? O my God, I cry out by day, but you do not answer, by night, and am not silent." ... Is this not exactly what is happening here?
- Psalm 22:7-8 says, "All who see me mock me; they hurl insults, shaking their heads: 'He trusts in the LORD; let the LORD rescue him. Let him deliver him, since he delights in him.'" And the onlooker would say... this is exactly what is happening now!
- Psalm 22:14 “I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint; my heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of my bowels.” And the onlooker would see Jesus shoulders coming out of joint. Later they would watch the spear thrust into his side and clotted blood coming out separate from water looking like the melted wax of a broken heart.
- Psalm 22:15 says, "My strength is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue sticks to the roof of my mouth; you lay me in the dust of death." The onlookers would see his dehydration and his thirst.
- Psalm 22:16 – “Dogs have surrounded Me; a band of evildoers have encircled me; they have pierced my hands and my feet.” ... and whether you think the dogs are the Jewish leaders or the Romans, they are all around him. And that line... they have pierced my hands and feet? Crucifixion was not even invented in 950 BC when David wrote this. And yet they graphically describe piercing hands and feet.
- Psalm 22:17-18 says, "I can count all my bones; people stare and gloat over me. They divide my garments among them and cast lots for my clothing." OK, so this part is crazy 950 years before Jesus is a prophecy that they will gamble for his clothing while he is dying. And that is exactly what happened.
- Do you know what this tells us? God had this planned all along. Described in detail hundreds of years in advance. It is like Jesus is saying to all the people who would pay attention: Don't worry. THIS IS THE PLAN! I meant to do this and wrote it out through David a LONG time ago.
- 4 - Accomplished: Fulfillment of centuries of scripture

5 - I Thirst

- Jesus Humanity – He was thirsty because of blood loss
- Crucifixion described After the arrest in the middle of the night, Jesus was next brought before the Sanhedrin and Caiphus, the High Priest; it is here that the first physical trauma was inflicted. A soldier struck Jesus across the face for remaining silent when questioned by Caiphus. The

palace guards then blind-folded Him and mockingly taunted Him to identify them as they each passed by, spat upon Him, and struck Him in the face.

- Pilate didn't want to condemn Jesus to death, so he just condemned him to a scourging. 39 lashes with a whip that had leather thongs, lead balls and shards of glass. It was designed to bruise and rip. Bruise and rip. Until long shreds of skin and muscle hung blood yfrom the back.
- When it is determined by the centurion in charge that the prisoner is near death, the beating is finally stopped. The half-fainting Jesus is then untied and allowed to slump to the stone pavement, wet with His own blood.

- A crown of thorns would be screwed violently on his head. Bleeding would be copious. Nerves would flair with pain. After mocking Him and striking Him across the face, the soldiers take the stick from His hand and strike Him across the head, driving the thorns deeper into His scalp.

- The crossbeam is laid on his sore back and tied to his arms and he begins the 650 yard journey down the via dolorosa. Due to pain, loss of blood and dehydration, he is too weak to walk. So the soldier grabs a sturdy North African dad and forces him to carry the crossbeam. At the end of the journey outside the city gates, Simon is ordered to place the crossbeamm on the ground and Jesus quickly thrown backward with His shoulders against the wood.

- The legionnaire feels for the depression at the front of the wrist. He drives a heavy, square, wrought-iron nail through the wrist and deep into the wood. Quickly, he moves to the other side and repeats the action, being careful not to pull the arms too tightly, but to allow some flexion and movement. The crossbeam is then lifted in place at the top of the vertical piece and the sign reading, "Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews," in three languages, is nailed in place.
- The left foot is now pressed backward against the right foot, and with both feet extended, toes down, a nail is driven through the arch of each. The Victim is now crucified. As He slowly sags down with more weight on the nails in the wrists, excruciating pain shoots along the fingers and up the arms to explode in the brain — the nails in the wrists are putting pressure on the median nerves.

- Six hours Jesus spent hanging on a piece of wood. 9am to 3pm on Friday. As He pushes Himself upward to avoid this stretching torment, He places His full weight on the nail through His feet. Again there is the searing agony of the nail tearing through the nerves between the metatarsal bones of the feet. At this point, as the arms fatigue, great waves of cramps sweep over the muscles, knotting them in deep, relentless, throbbing pain. With these cramps comes the inability to push Himself upward. Air can be drawn into the lungs, but cannot be exhaled. Jesus fights to raise Himself in order to get even one short breath. Finally, carbon dioxide builds up in the lungs and in the blood stream and the cramps partially subside. Spasmodically, he is able to push Himself upward to exhale and bring in the life-giving oxygen.
- It is in this moment that each of the seven phrases are uttered. With pain searing through Jesus' body, thirst is the one pain that can be relieved. I can't help but wonder if God chose crucifixion as a symbol of the extreme.
 - The extreme of a powerful God choosing powerlessness.
 - The extreme of one who will not save himself while he is saving the world.

- The extreme of the King of the Universe subjecting himself to privates in an army where he actually created each soldier.
- The extreme of moral perfection being judged as guilty.
- The extreme of love going through the most awful torture because of his love for us.
- One thing is for sure. Jesus knows pain. He knows suffering. Even death. Arent you glad that when you pray there is one who understands pain? Loss? Injustice? Thirst? Betrayal?
- Accomplished: Empathy with the broken and dying

6 - It is finished – Tetelestai! Three words in English, but in the Greek, it was a single triumphant word.

- What was finished? Jesus life was finished for sure. But is it bigger than that?
 - The horror of crucifixion was finished. Tetelestai
 - The pain was over. Tetelestai
 - The ministry was over – Jesus had done every thing the father asked – healings, teachings, exorcisms, compassion. It was now finished. Tetelestai.
 - But what was finished was bigger than that. Jesus mission was accomplished. The death of death through death. From this point forward nobody has to be afraid of death. Nobody has to be subject to death. Nobody has to be a slave of death because Jesus beat it in his death. Tetelestai!
- Death was introduced by the first Adam, it was eliminated by the second adam.
- And Jesus invites us to follow him both in life and in death. Take up your cross. Die now. The invitation is for you to die with Jesus that death may die in you. And I have to tell you that there is freedom in death. When you have died, you don't have anything to protect or preserve.
- Accomplished: Death was destroyed forever!

We are only on the sixth phrase, but I want to stop now for an experience. I hope this is sitting pretty heavy on you and under the weight of it all, I want to offer you communion. You see, in the cup, we remember the blood that rushed out of Jesus back and side and head. In the bread, we remember his tortured and broken flesh.

We consume the flesh and blood of Jesus in symbol, remembering that this torture was not isolated or random. It was for me. It was for you.

Now, at CCC, we practice "open communion". That is, you do not need to be a member of CCC to take it. Anybody who honestly trusts in Jesus' death on the cross can participate. If you don't trust in Jesus, do not take communion. Do not make a mockery out of the cross or the name of Jesus. This is a weighty matter and not to be trivialized.

But if you are a person who wants to declare to God – right here and now, I will trust you.... One of the ways you can symbolize that is by taking communion and meaning it. Meaning that Jesus is yours, that you trust his death, that you want his body and blood to become your spiritual life. If you want his forgiveness and eternal life today, his offer still stands. So feel free to make today your first communion as an act of trusting in Jesus.

Ushers, can you please come forward? As they do, please take the full double cup as you'll find bread in one and drink in the other. Hold on to it and we will all take it together. And as we wait, can you just breathe in the life of Jesus, remember the weight of his death and all that he accomplished. Forgiveness, Eternal Life, Reconciliation, Fulfillment and Death beating death... Jesus did it all!

So, the night before all this happened, Jesus gave thanks and broke the bread. He said this is my broken body – eat it and remember what I have done. (EAT). And he said this cup is my blood that will be poured out for you. Remember me every time you drink it.

7 - Father into your hand I commit my spirit

- After he was done, Jesus simply trusted the Father.
- The ultimate end is that Jesus paid for sins, raised from the dead and was elevated to the Father. That was his fate. Elevated to the Father.
- A reuniting of Father and Son – post valley of the shadow of death.
- Our invitation is to do the same thing. With reckless abandon to say “Into your hands I commit my spirit!” When you do, you have a resurrection from the dead to look forward to. You can also anticipate a new body and a union with the LORD that is immense and eternal.
- Death no longer means ‘separation’, it means a reunion – with the father and your loved ones who have gone before.
- Accomplished: a safe landing with the Trinity

Review the seven things Jesus accomplished on the cross.

- 1) Forgiveness of a billion sinners
- 2) Eternal Life secured for thieves and normal people alike
- 3) Reconciliation between people
- 4) Fulfillment of centuries of prophecy
- 5) Empathy for the broken and dying.
- 6) Death was destroyed forever!
- 7) A safe landing with the Trinity

Not bad for six hours one Friday

Pray...

- **When I die, I want to go peacefully like grandpa did, in his sleep – not screaming, like the passengers in his car!**