

## What did the cross mean to... Jesus

Palm Sunday,  
April 5, 2009

We've been on a journey the past several weeks as we've look at the cross and talked about what it meant to the various people who were there to witness it. We started by talking about God the Father and the Hebrew word, "Chasak", which means manipulating circumstances to allow someone to get out of something, and we saw that God the Father did not chasak Jesus, even when Jesus asked Him to.

We talked about what the cross meant to the devil, and saw it was the death-knell to him; we saw that to the disciples it meant something slightly different to each one of them as they realized they knew what they did to their Lord. Last week we talked about what it meant to Mary, and saw how it tore her apart, but then allowed the Holy Spirit to enter into her at Pentecost.

Today we're asking the question, "What did the cross mean to Jesus?" We've been circling around the cross with everyone else, but no one else actually experienced the crucifixion first hand. What did the cross mean to the One who endured it? There are so many answers to this question that we could literally spend the rest of our lives plumbing the depth of this one. For us today, we're looking at just a few of them though – don't worry!

We're going to be looking at our Gospel reading from today, because it marks the beginning of the last week of Jesus' life. Our reading was from John 12, verses 12-19. Will you please turn with me to these verses now?

John is the third book in the New Testament, so the order goes Matthew, Mark, Luke, and then **John**. John was the youngest of the disciples, and brother to the disciple James. John was often included in the 'inner three' with Peter and James, and was the only disciple who died a natural death. The other books he wrote are 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, and 3<sup>rd</sup> John, and the book of Revelations.

Again, we are going to John 12:12-19:

*The next day the great crowd that had come for the Feast heard that Jesus was on His way to Jerusalem. They took palm branches and went out to meet Him, shouting, "Hosanna!" "Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!" "Blessed is the King of Israel!" Jesus found a young donkey and sat upon it, as it is written, "Do not be afraid, O Daughter of Zion; see, your king is coming, seated on a donkey's colt." At first His disciples did not understand all this. Only after Jesus was glorified did they realize that these things had been written about Him and that they had done these things to Him. Now the crowd that was with Him when he called Lazarus from the tomb and raised him from the dead continued to spread the word. Many people, because they had heard that He had given this miraculous sign, went out to meet Him. So the Pharisees said to one another, "See, this is getting us nowhere. Look how the whole world has gone after Him!"*

First, let's set the context just a little. The "Feast" that is being referred to is the Passover, and all good Jews went to Jerusalem for the Passover feast to offer a sacrifice for sins and join in the festivities leading up to the Passover meal that was celebrated on Thursday of that week. The greeting they were shouting was both a greeting and a plea: "Hosanna" means, "save us!" and it carries with it the force of meaning, "and do it right now!" To come in the name of someone was to come in the power and authority of that person.

What the crowd was shouting to Jesus was, "Save us now, son of David! Blessed are You who comes in the power and authority of the LORD, of YHWH!" No wonder the Pharisees said at the end of our verses, "Look how the whole world has gone after Him!"

This was also the first time Jesus accepted public proclamation of who He was, and it would be the last time He would ever hear it. In fact, that's the first thing the cross meant to Jesus, He would never again have this kind of acceptance among the people. You can write the scripture reference Matthew 21:42 in the margins of your Bibles: *"Jesus said to them, 'Have you never read in the Scriptures: 'The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone; the Lord has done this, and it is marvelous in our eyes'?"* The cross meant that though for one brief moment in time Jesus was accepted among the very people He came to save, He would never again have that kind of reception. In fact, though probably not the exact same crowd, He was rejected just five days later.

I think even more disheartening than this, though, is the cross meant that Jesus would be rejected by His Father. You can write Matthew 27:46 in the margins of your Bibles next to these shouts of acceptance: *About the ninth hour Jesus cried out in a loud voice, 'Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?' – which means, 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?'*

Why did God the Father reject Jesus? He rejected Jesus on the cross because He did not want to reject us. In that moment when the weight of sin upon sin times 10 million was on the shoulders of Jesus, He experienced literal hell – God the Father left Him. That's what makes hell "hell" you know; hell is where God is not. For that time on the cross Jesus experienced the pains of hell so you and I would not have to.

Those who believe in Jesus as their only Lord and Savior; those who believe that He died on the cross paying the ultimate price for our sins; those who believe that He rose again and still lives in Heaven; those who believe that He is the God who was and who is and who is to come will never need to fear hell. They will never have to be afraid of being separated from God the Father. The old hymn says, "Jesus paid it all; all to Him I owe. Sin had left a crimson stain, He washed it white as snow."

We have the opportunity to be washed clean, to be made as white as snow. There is no cost, but that of faith. There is no losing anything, but that of the hold to the worldly things that are just going to pass away anyway. There is nothing better, and everything else is worse.

A third thing the cross meant to Jesus is that it was a fulfillment of prophecy. The Old Testament has over 400 prophecies about the Messiah, and many of them are about the crucifixion, beginning

with the earliest, Genesis 3:15, *“And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.”*

The cross meant the ancient prophecy would be fulfilled. The prophecy was no longer something that loomed on the horizon, it was here, now, and there was no avoiding it. We’ve mentioned it before, but it still amazes me to think about it:

Jesus put the ore in the earth that would be mined to make the spikes that were nailed through His wrists and feet.

He gave life to the tree that would be cut down and used to be fashioned into the cross.

He gave life, and sustained through their lives, the men who would nail him to the tree; the people who would reject Him; the one who would betray Him; the ones who would run away from Him; the one who would wash his hands of any responsibility over His death, and the one who held the whip in his hand as he scourged Jesus.

And He did it for you and me.

He did it because He loves us, and would rather go through and to hell for us, than to be in Heaven without us.

He did it because there is no greater thing for Jesus to think about than making sure every conceivable hindrance is out of the way that would keep us from getting into Heaven.

Now the only thing that keeps us out of Heaven is ourselves.

“God,” the skeptic shouted to the sky, “would You really be so cold as to send me to hell?”

“No,” God answered back, “but I will respect your decision to reject my Son and send yourself there.”

The final thing we will look at regarding what the cross meant to Jesus is found later in the book of John, chapter 20, verses 24-26: *Now Thomas (called Didymus), one of the Twelve, was not with the disciples when Jesus came. So the other disciples told him, “We have seen the Lord!” But he said to them, “Unless I see the nail marks in His hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe it.” A week later his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you!” Then He said to Thomas, “Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe.”*

The cross meant Jesus was scarred. Even more than that, the cross meant Jesus was scarred *forever*.

Jesus will be the only one in Heaven with scars. Those scars we have in this life, whether physical or emotional or mental will all be gone. The perfect Son of God, took on flesh and bone and suffered and died, and is now scarred for eternity. The Bible tells us,

“By His wounds, we are healed.”

“He has carved our names into the palms of His hands.”

And so, somewhat tangentially, I’d like to close our series with a few questions. What are your scars this morning? What are those things you would just *die* if anyone found out about? What are those things you pray no one will ever know about, or those things you’ve shoved down, hoping they would never surface again? What are those things you can’t talk about, even though they may have happened years and years ago? What keeps you awake at night and dogs your days?

These are scars, my friends. These are things that we carry in this life, mostly because we’ve hung on to them. Sadly for many, we define ourselves – or allow ourselves to be defined – by our scars. It doesn’t have to be that way. Jesus is the only one who is defined by His scars, and it’s because of those scars, those who believe in Him can have healing.

The scars of Calvary were given to Jesus on our behalf. Those scars tell us we can be free from the eternal affects of sin. Those scars bring freedom and healing and peace. Those scars that show the death of Jesus, also show the Life that can be ours.

And so I ask you again, what are your scars this morning? The cross that put the scars on to Jesus hands and feet is the same cross that brings us healing. By His wounds *we* are healed! I suppose that’s actually the fifth and last thing the cross meant to Jesus – our healing.

Save us now, Jesus! Blessed are You who come in the power and might and strength of the LORD.

Would you pray with me please?

Lord Jesus,

Today we remember the crowds who greeted You waving branches, shouting for You to save them, and praising You for coming to them in the name of the LORD. Today we come into Your house, still lifting up praises to You, and still desperate for You to save us.

Jesus, we will never know what the full weight of the cross meant to You, but we do know why You went to the cross: You went for us. You took the cross upon Yourself because You could not stand the thought of being in Heaven without us. You went to the cross because Your love for us is deeper, wider, higher and longer than we can ever know.

Thank You for Your sacrifice for us. Thank You for being our deliverer. Thank You for not turning away from the cross, but instead embracing it for us. Thank You for loving us just that much.

Thank You for being scarred for us. Help us to find our help and hope and healing in the scars You still carry on Your body. We are healed by Your wounds. We are saved by the carving of our names into Your hands.

All glory, laud and honor to You, our redeemer and our King.

Amen