



First Baptist Church At The Villages

Palm Sunday • On the Cross • John 12:27-36 • For Use by Groups 4/5 through 4/11/2020

MAIN POINT

The world was judged, Satan was defeated, and Jesus drew others to himself through the cross.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

What are the most popular or recognizable brands that you can think of? Where do you primarily see their logos or slogans?

How does an image or logo become a widespread symbol of a company or product?

**What has the cross symbolized? What are some ways it has been used in the past?
How is it used today?**

There are brands and logos that you can recognize in every corner of the world. Coca-Cola, Pepsi, Nike, and Apple have become ubiquitous on this planet. The brands symbolize something. It may be happiness, fitness, or coolness.

The cross today can mean anything from a fashion statement to a hate sign. It can be a form of devotion or a powerful proclamation from the top of a steeple. For the Romans, it was a symbol of power. They used it to instill fear in people in or near their empire.

Yet the work of Christ turned the symbol of the cross upside-down. A symbol of death and domination is now a symbol of life and freedom. Jesus spoke to his disciples and others about the cross, showing them many things about the meaning it would carry through his death on it.

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

| have a volunteer read John 12:27-30.

Do you find it odd that Jesus, of all people, was troubled? Why should one who could heal the sick or raise the dead in any way be troubled?

Jesus, alluding to his impending death on the cross, expressed the horror that was gripping His soul. Jesus was undergoing a crisis moment, but he quickly reminded himself that it was for this very purpose he came. He knew it was his destiny. As horrible as the reality was in that moment, and as much as he longed to not endure it, he knew it was God's will for him and he persevered in obedience.

The Gospels record God the Father audibly speaking only three times, and verse 28 is one of them. What was Jesus's request of the Father, and what did God the Father mean in his answer to Jesus?

Jesus's prayer was that through the cross, God would glorify his name. God the Father audibly affirmed that he would, indeed, do that, and that he had been glorifying his name all through Jesus's life. The heavenly Father who has been glorifying his name throughout the ministry of Jesus could be counted on to continue that glorification through the cross. And this information—delivered in this way—was not so much for Jesus as it was for those who were with him. Apparently some or none understood this, so Jesus elaborated on the meaning of the cross to come for them.

| ask a volunteer to read John 12:31-33.

In what sense is Jesus's death on the cross an act of judgment of the world (v. 31a)?

In the cross, the world thought that it was passing judgment on Jesus. The irony is that Jesus was passing judgment on the world. In the callous murder of the Son of God, sin displays itself in its most virulently evil form. But in that death, God was also giving his Son as a sacrifice, the Lamb of God; in that death, Jesus was securing the life of many. Thus Jesus's cross signifies judgment both positively and negatively.

According to Jesus, what impact would his death on the cross have on Satan (v. 31b)? Read Revelation 12:11 for further insight.

The irony of the cross continues in that although the cross might seem like Satan's triumph, it is his defeat. Revelation 12:11 highlights this fact, as the followers of the Lamb overcome the

dragon on account of the blood of the Lamb. When Jesus was lifted up to heaven by means of the cross, Satan was torn down.

At the end of v. 32, Jesus gave a third impact of his death. What is that? What does it mean? What are its implications for you and I?

Jesus states that through his death on the cross, not only will the world be judged and Satan defeated, but people will be drawn to him. That is, they will be saved. "All people" cannot mean "every person," since the judgment of others also takes place in the cross. Rather, as the surrounding context and the overall theological emphasis of the Gospel of John demonstrates, "all people" is a reference to all people groups.

| have a volunteer read john 12:34-36.

What does the people's question reflect about their understanding of Jesus and his mission? How did Jesus respond?

The people clearly did not understand the purpose of the cross, and Jesus did not answer their question directly. Rather, he warned them. The window of opportunity was closing for the people to hear the gospel from Jesus Himself. One might even fear his retreat into solitude as a precursory form of judgment.

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

For you, will the cross be your judgment or will you be drawn to Jesus through it?

How does the truth of the gospel defuse your tendency to focus on yourself? How can you keep that truth central this week?

Jesus draws people to himself through the cross. We do not earn a place at the cross through our efforts. Is there anything you might be doing subconsciously as a way to earn righteousness? What do you need to do differently to approach that area of your life appropriately?

PRAYER

As you close in prayer, ask that the reality of God's gift of salvation will lead to gratitude and trust. Thank Jesus for meeting our need and taking upon Himself the penalty and punishment

for our sins. Pray that God will give us such understanding and humble appreciation for His gospel that we will be compelled to share it with others.

COMMENTARY

| john 12:27-36

12:27–29. Along with the time of dying, there is also a time for judgment. We see the emotional trauma in Jesus' heart as he pondered the cross, refused to retreat, and asked that God would be glorified through his death. Then, for the third time in Scripture (first the baptism, then the transfiguration), the heavenly Father spoke from heaven with a promise to do precisely what Jesus has asked.

Interpretations differ on what the crowd heard. Jesus' prayer had already been answered, since the Father had already glorified his name. How? Surely the immediate reference aims at the life and work of Jesus up to that point and the immediate projection at the death, resurrection, and ascension. But we do not stretch the text to see the sweeping hand of God's glorification going all the way back to creation and all the way forward through the ages to the gathering of the church.

This glorification was not a mere repetition but a corresponding manifestation of the Father's glory. Glorification during the limited, earthly ministry to Israel was followed by a glorification answering to the proclamation of the universal Gospel to the world.

12:30–33. Jesus told them plainly that judgment (krisis) was coming, and deliverance from that judgment was faith in his work on the cross. Once again the reference to Jesus being lifted up centers not on exaltation but death. The cross forms the centerpiece of the gospel. And verse 33 shows us that John had no intention of drawing his readers' focus anywhere else. Here we must go a bit further in our understanding of verse 32: But I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself. Certainly the Lord had no intention that we should read into this text the idea that everyone would be saved because we know only believers find eternal life.

12:34. This business of being lifted up did not fit with the first-century idea of the Messiah who will remain forever. How does this "Son of Man" prophecy fit in with our religion? Jesus favorite name for himself threw the crowd into consternation. How could a dead prophet throw out the Romans and restore the kingdom? Indeed, though the title occurs sixty-nine times in the Synoptics and twelve times in John, they could not grasp the connection. They asked, Who is this "Son of Man"? Intellectual and religious confusion had set in.

12:35–36. John’s key word life in just a few verses now changes to light—hardly a new concept since John introduced it early in the first chapter. He expected his readers would understand that Jesus was talking about himself as the light of the world. But the immediate crowds on that day still struggled. Surely the disciples would have remembered the moments immediately following their receipt of the news about Lazarus’s death. On that occasion Jesus told them “a man who walks by day will not stumble, for he sees by this world’s light” (11:9).

Again, he warned that the light would soon be gone, but individual torches can be lit from the original flame and go on burning in the darkness, even when that flame is withdrawn.