***Vol. 5***

*Session 5*

***The Crucifixion of Jesus***

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Introducing the Study

Jesus did not come to call the righteous but sinners. He did not come to heal the healthy but the broken. He did not come to the proud but to the humble. Through His ministry, Jesus welcomed those who recognized their need for salvation and who embraced the good news of the kingdom. In word and deed, Jesus showed that the gospel is for all, for all are sinners and all are in need of God’s grace.

**What was your biggest insight through your study of Jesus’ parable of the prodigal sons?**

During His three-year ministry, Jesus taught thousands of people, performed numerous miracles, and turned Galilee, Judea, and Samaria upside down. But as impressive as these things were, they are all part of a bigger story—the story of redemption that was driving Jesus to the cross. At the cross, Jesus fulfilled His mission and, in so doing, satisfied the justice of God. It was at the cross where Jesus offered Himself as the punishment for sin and provided the way for humanity to be saved.

**What thoughts and feelings are raised when you think about Jesus’ crucifixion?**

Setting the Context

The cross was never far from the mind of Christ. Throughout His teaching ministry, Jesus alluded to His death several times when speaking to His disciples. But His disciples failed to understand what Jesus was telling them. They couldn’t understand that Jesus would die, that He needed to die. For them, Jesus was the Messiah who would rule over an earthly kingdom, and to do that, you had to be alive. But that was not Jesus’ plan because it was not the Father’s plan. Jesus waited on God’s timing and plan for when He would be recognized as Lord over heaven and earth.

**Why is the message of the cross foolishness to those who don’t believe but a message of power to those who do believe?**

After three years of ministry, Jesus approached Jerusalem knowing that He would hang on a cross within the week. Accordingly, He made final preparations for what would happen, including fulfilling the Old Testament prophecies of His entrance into Jerusalem, teaching in parables about the end of the age, and preparing for and eating the Passover meal with His disciples.

Meanwhile, the religious establishment made their preparations, also according to Scripture, to kill this threat to their power, including paying Judas, one of Jesus’ disciples, to betray Him. “Jesus’ Suffering” (p. 59) recounts the ways Jesus suffered as the climax of His life and ministry, according to the Father’s plan.

**Why is it important for Christians to continue to think about and meditate on the crucifixion of Jesus?**

CHRIST Connection

Unjustly condemned to death, Jesus willingly took up His cross and suffered the judgment our sins deserve. At the moment He died, the curtain in the temple sanctuary was torn in two, signifying the truth that sinners have access to God through the blood of Christ. The crucifixion of Jesus is the center of history, revealing God’s holiness and justice, our sinfulness and unrighteousness, and Christ’s humility and love.

Continuing the Discussion

**What are some of the ways a non-Christian might view the crucifixion of Jesus?**

**What are some ways we can combat an over-familiarity and coldness to the story of the cross?**

***As a group, read Mark 14:22-26.***

**How did Jesus give new meaning to the Passover celebration?**

**As the disciples observed and listened to Jesus at the first Lord’s Supper, what do you think might have been going through their**

**minds?**

The Passover meal looked back at the exodus and served as a reminder of God’s deliverance, love, and power. Jesus added to this meaning by pointing His disciples to look ahead, foreshadowing His death on the cross that would provide a greater deliverance—one from sin and death. Rather than a lamb dying for only one family, Jesus, the Lamb of God, would die for all the world (see John 1:29). Rather than the blood of a lamb covering a door, the bread and wine were symbols of Jesus’ body and blood covering whoever trusts in Him. The elements serve as reminders that Jesus sacrificed His body and shed His blood on our behalf to pay for our sins and to make it possible for us to have a relationship with God.

***As a group, read Mark 14:32-36.***

**How does this garden scene compare with the first garden scene in the Bible—the garden of Eden? What temptations were presented in both?**

**What was the focus of Jesus’ prayers?**

Adam and Eve were tempted in Eden to act on their own desires rather than submit to God’s will. Jesus was tempted likewise in Gethsemane. But while Adam and Eve succumbed to this temptation, bringing death upon themselves and all of humanity, Jesus acted in obedience. Jesus kept God’s will above His own and brought eternal life and salvation to the world.

***As a group, read Mark 15:22-41.***

**Where do you see Psalm 69:21, Psalm 22:18, and Isaiah 53:12 fulfilled in Mark’s account of the crucifixion?**

**Why is it significant that the curtain was ripped, and ripped from top to bottom?**

Neither the Father nor Jesus were surprised by the crucifixion. It was known long before. It was planned long before. From our perspective, the cross seemed to be the result of a situation spiraling out of control. But it wasn’t. It was the centerpiece of God’s design to bring salvation to the world. Jesus’ death has once and for all provided access to God’s holy presence.

MISSIONAL Application

Record at least one way you will apply the truth of Scripture as a recipient of God’s grace through faith in Jesus, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

Personal Study 1

**Jesus prepares the disciples at the Last Supper.**

***Read Mark 14:22-26.***

For more than a thousand years, God’s people were to celebrate the Passover meal to remember the exodus, God’s deliverance of His people from bondage in Egypt. But on the night of His betrayal, Jesus added new meaning to this meal. The Passover would no longer only look back at God’s deliverance from Egyptian bondage through Moses, but it would also picture God’s deliverance from sin’s bondage through Christ.

One of the hallmarks of God’s law was His requirement that His people offer regular sacrifices. Even before the law was given, God’s people intuitively understood the need to sacrifice. But God had a better plan than His people serving Him year after year with sacrifices. He always intended to be the One to offer the ultimate sacrifice for His people. That is why Jesus had come. Not to be served, but to serve. He came “to give his life as a ransom for many” (Mark 10:45).

This was at the center of the new and better covenant God had promised as the Old Testament closed. Jeremiah and Ezekiel both prophesied of a day when hearts of stone would be replaced with hearts of flesh—when God’s people would be cleansed of their sin, filled with God’s Spirit, and be His people (Jer. 31:31-34; Ezek. 11:19-20; 36:26-36).

This new covenant, this new, one-time sacrifice, was what Jesus had in mind when He spoke of His body being broken and blood poured out during the Last Supper. What the disciples would see on the cross soon after would be the fulfillment of God’s promises. No longer would God’s people offer goats and bulls for their sin. God was offering Himself.

Then Jesus offered what might have seemed to be an offhand remark, but it was actually a beautiful promise. It was a promise to give His disciples in the room that evening, and us, hope. Jesus would drink the fruit of the vine with them again. It would not be soon, but it would happen, and when it did, they would all be in His Father’s kingdom.

The message of the coming kingdom is a message of hope and joy and fulfillment. It is the longing of the Christian heart. This is why we pray, “Your kingdom come” (Matt. 6:10). We anticipate the day when wars and violence cease and when peace reigns. We yearn for the day when sin’s teeth have ceased biting and death itself is dead. We hunger and thirst for the kingdom because we hunger and thirst for the King of righteousness, and we will be with Him then and there.

After speaking these words, the disciples and their Teacher headed out into the darkness with singing. Likewise, fueled by the feast of faith and longing for the coming kingdom, we walk through the darkness of the world with hearts inclined to songs of praise for our Savior.

**What would it look like for a Christian to yearn for the consummation of the kingdom?**

**What excites you most about eternity in God’s kingdom?**

Personal Study 2

**Jesus prepares Himself in the garden.**

***Read Mark 14:32-36.***

It was almost time. The cross was only hours away. Jesus knew this and He knew that the cross was God’s design. But He also knew that obeying the Father would bring great suffering. So Jesus followed His routine—He found a place to pray.

Jesus wanted to obey the Father. He wanted to bring the Father glory and be the One to bring salvation to the world. And yet, He knew what a Roman crucifixion was like. He understood that the physical agony He would feel would not be His greatest suffering—bearing the sins of the world and being separated from the Father would be. And so, He wrestled with what lay before Him. He was so distressed that He told His disciples He was “deeply grieved to the point of death.”

The Bible teaches that those who continue in rebellion to God’s Word and refuse to submit to God’s will store up wrath for themselves. One way the Bible describes the outpouring of God’s wrath is with the imagery of a cup filled with wine, which represents God’s wrath or anger (Jer. 25:15-17,28; 49:12). On the day of judgment, God will pour out this wine, and He will make sinners drink every drop until they become drunk with His wrath (Ps. 75:8; Ezek. 23:32-34).

At the cross (the “hour” that Jesus spoke of), God the Father poured out the full cup of His wrath on His own Son as a judgment against sin. Since Jesus took on our sin, He was forsaken and abandoned (Mark 15:34). Anticipating this judgment, Jesus asked His Father, the only One with the authority to remove Him from both this hour and this cup, if there were any other possible way to bring His will to pass.

But in the end, unlike Adam, Jesus submitted to the Father’s will with an emphatic “not what I will, but what you will” (v. 36). Jesus knew that there was no way to fulfill the Father’s Word other than by submitting to the Father’s will. God would only take this cup away from His people by pouring it out on His righteous Servant (Isa. 51:17,21-22). Jesus received the wounds we deserved, and by faith we receive forgiveness we do not deserve (53:1-12).

Only when we meditate on Christ’s life and death are we able to live out our faith. If we fail to ground our efforts to be like Christ in the good news of what Christ has done for us, we will throw up our hands and give up! The cross is what makes our obedience possible. It shapes what our obedience looks like.

This means that like Jesus, we are to submit to the Father’s will, even when it results in suffering. We are called to follow Christ, which means we are called to suffer (1 Pet. 2:21). We should not be surprised when suffering comes our way; it is one way God transforms us into the image of His Son. The good news is, though, that by His death and resurrection, Jesus has granted us the power to face any and all suffering we may face (vv. 24-25)

**Have you ever submitted to the Father’s will knowing it would bring suffering? How does understanding the purposes of God help you face suffering?**

**How does meditating on Christ help you prepare for suffering? What does a Christ-like response to suffering look like?**

Personal Study 3

**Jesus lays down His life as the crucified Savior.**

***Read Mark 15:22-41.***

As we read of the events surrounding the crucifixion of Jesus, the word humiliation should echo in our minds and hearts. The Son of God was beaten and tortured. Mocked and abused. Insulted and taunted. For over three years, people had gathered around Jesus and looked on in amazement because of what He said and did. Now, the soldiers, religious leaders, and Jews gathered around Jesus and looked on in disgust as the supposed king hung dying on a cross.

Who could endure such ridicule, shame, and torture, especially by choice? At any moment Jesus could have resisted. At any moment He could have fought back. The same mouth that had spoken words to calm a storm could have spoken words to call forth a legion of angels to come to His defense. But Jesus did not do that. He chose, instead, to endure.

And that is why we should also think of the word humility as we read this passage. The Son of God demonstrated patience. Love. Grace. Mercy. Jesus humbled Himself and laid down His life for those He had created. The cross is a spectacular drama showing how far the Son of God was willing to go in perfect obedience to His Father, and we are encouraged to live in likewise humility (e.g., Phil. 2:5-11).

The irony in this passage is thicker than blood. The King of kings is mocked by being called a king. He is told to come down and display His glory when doing so would have undone all that He was accomplishing for His glory. By saving Himself, He would sacrifice others. But by sacrificing Himself, He would save others. So He stayed on the cross and endured the pain, shame, and wrath, and we are the beneficiaries. The crucified King—a stumbling block to the Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, and yet, the very hope of the world (see 1 Cor. 1:23-25).

Before God spoke light into existence, there was darkness. Before the Israelites’ redemption from Egypt, the plague of darkness covered the nation. Now, here at the crucifixion, darkness swallowed the whole land for three hours as a marker of this moment’s cosmic significance.

Initial shrieks of terror at the darkness eventually subsided as wonder, fear, and awe overcame the crowd. As light was extinguished, so too was sound. The silence hung heavily like a morning fog until a single cry pierced the stillness: “My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?” (Matt. 27:46).

Some phrases are so embedded in our collective consciousness that they convey much more than the phrase itself: “We hold these truths to be self-evident.” “Four score and seven years ago.” “I have a dream.” “Houston, we have a problem.” The same is true of these words uttered from the cross.

Jesus’ cry should have resonated in the minds of the onlookers, but they missed His reference. These are the opening words of Psalm 22, a psalm dripping with messianic meaning (see especially vv. 1-2,6-8,12-18). Jesus was not calling upon Elijah, as the crowd supposed. He was identifying Himself as the One to whom the psalm pointed and demonstrating the horror of feeling forsaken by His Father.

And then Jesus let out His last breath. With it, the veil in the temple that separated heaven and earth was split from top to bottom, signifying that this act was accomplished from above.

In the torn curtain, a message is proclaimed. A Son was rejected so that the Father would have many more sons and daughters. The Father forsook His only Son that He might extend forgiveness to a great many children. A Son’s sacrifice was accepted in the holy of holies that all who trust in Him might be accepted before the very throne of God.

**Why are people prone to miss Jesus’ glory on the cross?**

**If a non-Christian asked you the question, “Why did Jesus die?” how would you respond?**