

A COMMUNION SERVICE

To Glory in the Cross

John 13:31-32, 1 Cor 11:23-26 / September 10, 2017 / Pastor Bill Russell


 **INTRO:** Seeing things with different perspectives

Let's talk a moment, about how we see things. It is interesting how you can take the simplest of items and one person can look at the item and see one thing while someone else can look at that same item and see something entirely different. For instance take a baseball. One person can look at a baseball and see a baseball and yet someone else can look at that same baseball and see much more. They can see the baseball field they were at and the home run that was hit when they caught that ball. They can see the ball game and recall the score. Same baseball - different perspective.

Someone else can hear a song on the radio and it is just that a song, they may enjoy it but it is not much more than a song. Someone else may hear that song though and remember the first place they heard that song, the person they shared that song with, maybe the wedding where they sang it to the one they loved. Same song - different perspective.

What a house. One person can drive by a house and not even notice it. It is nothing more to them than a house. Someone else though could drive by that exact same house and see a home. They could see the place they lived as they were growing up. From the outside it looks eerily similar. From the inside it is filled with memories. Same house - different perspective.

And that takes me to the cross. I wonder what we see when we look at the cross. I wonder what our perspective is. I'm talking about looking at the cross in the middle of the crucifixion and describing it. What words would YOU use? I can think of some preset standardly applicable words. Such as...

 *Gruesome, Ugly, Bloody, Brutal, Violent, Hateful, Angry, Torturous...*

I remember when the famous Passion of the Christ movie was released by Mel Gibson back in 2004. One of the big controversies in regards to the movie was the fact that it was rated R. The reason it was rated R was simple. It was rated "R" because of how graphically violent it was. Mel wanted the Movie to be as accurate as possible and that earned it an "R" rating.


The thing I want us to consider this morning, as we prepare ourselves for communion, is how it is possible to look at that exact same cross in that exact same setting, the exact same scene and see something entirely different. Its not that we may not see the brutal and bloody violence of the cross, it is hard to NOT see that. I am talking though about seeing more and describing the cross with a higher perspective. That is exactly what Jesus does. Listen to His words to the disciples in John 13.

First though, the context. It is the night before the crucifixion, the night that Jesus will be arrested. Jesus is in the Upper Room with the 12 disciples where they have celebrated the Passover meal together. It is in this setting that Jesus does some teaching as well as some calling-out. Jesus specifically calls out Peter for his upcoming denial and Judas for his upcoming betrayal. This actually is where we pick up Jesus words in John 13. Jesus had just called out Judas and Judas got up and exited the room.

John 13:31-32 ESV

When he had gone out, Jesus said, "**Now** is the Son of Man **glorified**, and God is glorified in him. 32 If God is glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself, and glorify him at once.

Now is the Son of Man **glorified**.

 **When Jesus looked to the cross, where the world would see disgrace, humiliation and mockery, He would see glory.** Jesus understood what was coming. While He maybe could not fully comprehend what each sin he would bear would feel like, He knew he was in for a brutally violent experience. So much so that leading up to the cross His adrenaline was so intense he literally sweat drops of blood. Still knowing all of this and knowing that the furry of hell would be unleashed upon Him, Jesus could still look to the cross and see Glory. Jesus saw what we call today the Glory of the Cross.

The thing is when we speak of the Glory of the cross, we are looking at it from the other side. The Bible say that Jesus endured the cross because of the joy awaiting Him on the other side. There are two side of the cross and Jesus as he is staring down the dark side of the cross, He still manages to speak of the Glory of the cross; he speaks of how the cross will glorify Him and the Father. And yet the cross can also be our glory.

This morning we are going to celebrate communion. We are going to look back to the dark side of the cross, the crucifixion and death of Jesus, yet I want us to see the glory of the cross and what the cross means to us each and everyday.

TODAY'S BIG IDEA

THERE ARE TWO SIDES TO THE CROSS. ONE SIDE IS BRUTAL AND BLOODY, UGLY AND VIOLENT, ANGRY AND HATEFUL. THE OTHER SIDE IS BEAUTY, HUMILITY, MERCY, COMPASSION AND LOVE. THERE ARE TWO SIDES TO THE CROSS ONE SIDE IS THE SHAME OF MAN AND THE OTHER IS THERE GLORY OF GOD! IT IS AT THE CROSS THOUGH WHERE WE CAN TRADE OUR SHAME FOR GOD'S GLORY! WHERE WE CAN TRADE OUR BROKENNESS FOR HIS BEAUTY, OUR HURT FOR HIS HEALING, OUR DARKNESS FOR HIS LIGHT AND OUR DEATH FOR HIS LIFE! THE CROSS TRULY IS THE GLORY OF GOD!

Why do we Glory in the cross?

1. The Cross is the EVIDENCE of our CONFIDENCE!

The thing is those of us who have been saved, who have have embraced the Gospel and personally encountered the Lord Jesus, we should be the most confident people in the world. We should ooze confidence. Not arrogance mind you but confidence. You see Christ should give us confidence.

I am reminded of Peter's Words in His epistle...

1 Peter 3:15 ESV

...but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you...



That word hope, hope is liken the cousin of confidence. They are closely related. **It is our hope that gives us confidence and our confidence that gives us hope.** The thing is, people should see us as a people of HOPE. People should see the hope that we have in Christ. People should see us and ask us why are you so hopeful, so confident. It might even be that you are in the midst of a storm and yet people see you hopeful and confident.

There are some verses in the Bible that speaks with such appropriateness right now as we look at Texas and Florida. How about David's words in Psalms 46...

Psalms 46:1-3 ESV

God is our refuge and strength, A very present help in trouble. 2 Therefore we will not fear, Even though the earth be removed, And though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; 3 Though its waters roar and be troubled, Though the mountains shake with its swelling. Selah

Even if you live in Texas or Florida or even Mexico and you have been impacted by the hurricanes or earthquakes you can still be a person of hope. You can go through the worst storms and still have confidence in a faithful God.

The thing is, as Peters says, when people approach you and ask you why you are so confident, we are to be ready and able to tell them why we have such confidence. The cross is the EVIDENCE of our confidence!

Now let me be just a little more specific if I may. What evidence does the cross give us that produces confidence in us? I can think of three very basic areas the cross addresses.

A. First there is the evidence of God's **LOVE**

The cross has a lot to show us about God's Love.

The cross shows us that God loves us in the most undeniable way.

- **In fact what the cross does is the cross shows the love we are all looking for.** There is a love that every single person is looking for, and this love is found in God and is evidenced at the cross. The cross show us the incredible, amazing, extreme, unfathomable even violent love of God. There is no mistaking God's love when you look at the cross.

Now here is the thing. The cross shows us the self-sacrificing, servant-minded love that we are ALL looking for. That we ALL need. The problem we often have as humans is we look to other people for the love that only God can truly give us. We expect others to love us as only Christ ultimately will.

Now you might say "well aren't we called to love other people as Christ loved us?" Yes we are. There is a very specific verse from Jesus himself that teaches that. In fact it is in that key passage we started out with, John 13. Right after Jesus talked about the glory to be found in the coming cross, He goes on to say this.

John 13:34-35 ESV

A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. 35 By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."

So we are called to love each other as Christ loved us, with a self-sacrificing, servant-minded mentality. In fact this is the evidence that we are Christ's followers. The thing is then, that should be what I strive for. I should want to try and measure up to that standard.

What I don't want to do though, is expect someone else to always love me like Christ loved me because if I am honest I know that I don't even love that way. It is what I talked about a few weeks back. God gives us standard to live to and a potential to live-out that we will never fully realize in the this world, in our flesh. That doesn't mean that I don't keep striving for it though.

In the end there is an amazing, extreme, radical, crazy love witnessed through the cross. It is the love that we have all been looking for and desire and it is the love that give us an amazing confidence, knowing we are that accepted, fees and all, in Christ.

The love of God is one area then where the cross gives us the evidence of our confidence. How about this one, though...

B. Second there is the evidence of God's **POWER**

The cross shows us the evidence of God's POWER. Someone asks why you are so confident, you can tell them, my life has collided with the cross and I have seen the evidence of God's power.

These hurricanes come through Texas and Florida and it is easy to see the impact they have, the power they wield. Now if these storms never hit land, if they just stayed out at sea, the evidence of their power would not be as great, but when they hit land look out. We see what these winds in excess of 150 hours can do.

Our lives can be like that. When the cross collides with our life, the impact is life-changing. It can take a life and turn it upside down in a good way. The fact is though, it is the exact opposite of these hurricanes we have witnessed. The cross and Christ can come through and take a life that is devastated and ruined by the effects of sin and the cross can set everything right. The Bible says we become NEW CREATIONS in Christ and our messed up lives can be made whole. All through the power of the cross.

Here is what Paul says...

1 Corinthians 1:18 ESV

18 For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing,
but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

To be honest the redemptive plan does not make much sense to most people in the world today. It seems like a foolish Idea to them that someone died on the cross for their sin. I have talked about this recently, but the Gospel forces us to look at ourselves in ways we don't want to. It forces us to be honest about who we really are. The Gospel forces us to be honest about our sin.

The Gospel is a very humbling reality.
Christ came to earth in humility.
He died on the cross in humility.
We respond to the Gospel in humility.
The Gospel is a very humbling reality.

The Gospel then does not make a lot of sense to this world, but when someone humbles themselves and responds to the Gospel in faith, they immediately experience the POWER of the Gospel.

This power is evidenced in 2 specific ways.

- **First Christ deals with my SIN Problem at the cross.**

Isaiah 53:4-5 ESV

Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. 5 But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed.

On the cross Christ bore my sins and when He died my sins and the power they wielded died with him. We don't often think about sin having power but the Bible looks at our sin in that way. The Bible looks at our sin as something that we are enslaved to, something that has us in bondage. It is something that has a power over us. At the cross though Jesus broke the power of sin in our lives and set us free. That is if we humbly come to the cross and ask Christ to set us free.

At the same time, the cross also deals with my DEATH problem, because you see the wages of sin is death. When Christ died then, He defeated death and hell along with sin and Satan.

Hebrews 2:14-15 ESV

Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, 15 and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery.

Colossians 2:13-14 ESV

And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, 14 by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross. 15 He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him.

Think about all of the relationships you have. I don't care what relationship it is and how close you are to that person, there is still stuff in that relationship. There are still hurts and wrongs and shortcomings and failures in that relationships. Now think about our relationship with God.

We were in fact created first and foremost to be in a relationship with God. That is why God created us, so we could live together with each other in community. The problem from the outset, from genesis 3, is that we sinned and there has been stuff between us and God, sin between us and God and our fellowship has been broken.

At the cross Jesus took all of the wrongs that we have ever done to Him or anyone for that matter and He wiped them away. He forgave us. He forgave everyone! He offers everyone the gift of forgiveness. Unfortunately many refuse His forgiveness and choose to live in with and in their sins.

I want you though to think about the power of that thought. The power to simply forgive everyone of the sins they have committed. Now God is just so He devised a plan where justice can be attained and sins can be forgiven and that is the cross. It is what the Bible calls the atonement.

2 Corinthians 5:21 ESV

For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin,
so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

At the cross Jesus deals with our SIN problem by forgiving our sin and paying its wage.

- **At the cross Jesus also deals with our DEATH problem by dying for sin and the wage of sin which is death.** By coming back to life He completed the victory triumphing over sin and death and Satan.

Someone asks you why you are so confident you can say because of the power of the God that you experienced through the cross. The power that dealt with your sin problem and your death problem.

Whereas then, the world looks at the cross and sees weakness and humiliation the Gospel shows us a different picture of the cross. The Gospel shows us a cross that gives evidence of God's Power and His Glory!

So the evidence of our confidence is witnessed in God's LOVE, and God's FAITHFULNESS, but how about...

C. The evidence of God's **FAITHFULNESS.**

When we look out the cross we can see the faithfulness of God, how God always keeps His Word. The cross is the first promise that God made to mankind and God kept that promise. God kept His Word!

It took 4,000 years for that promise to be realized but it was realized. The Bible tells us very plainly that it is impossible for God to lie. He simply cannot fail to keep His Word.

The astounding thing is that the plan to redeem the world was in place before God ever created this world. I like to think of it like this.

- **First there were the The Blueprints for Creation's plan.** God had a blueprint for this world and everything he spoke into existence came into existence just as he spoke not because God's Word is always faithful.
- **Second there were the Blueprints for the Redemptive Plan.** Before he ever created this world God had the blueprints for redemption all drawn up and on the table. Once again because God always keeps His Word once he spoke that Redemptive plan to Adam, Eve and Satan, it was a forgone conclusion because God always keeps His Word.

It doesn't stop there though, because...

- **Third, there were the Blueprints for your life!** God had a life-plan drawn up for you before you were ever born. He had a purpose for you and good works prepared for you to carry out.

Now that does not mean that we always live according to God's plan but it does mean that on God's end He is always faithful to His Word and His plan for your life. It also means that God in His life-plan for you, has also accounted for the sin, mistakes, bad decisions, and even hard times that we have and will encounter.

When people ask us why we are so confident we can say it is because the evidence of the cross, the love, power and faithfulness of God witnessed through the cross. This is the Glory of the cross!

Why do we Glory in the cross?

2. The Cross is the FELLOWSHIP of our SUFFERING.

Life is filled with hardship and suffering. Just ask those who live in Texas and Florida, they are dealing with it firsthand. The thing is, all of us in this room can probably point to our lives and find some sort of struggle that we are presently facing. In Philippians Paul actually puts a positive spin the on the suffering that we endure.

Philippians 3:10-11 NKJV

...that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection,
and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death,

Paul's prayer was that he wanted to KNOW Christ. He wanted to REALLY know Christ. He wanted to know the power of Christ's resurrection, He wanted to live a life of victory. Paul though understood what many of us do not often want to admit. I will get to know Christ best, and most intimately, in my moments of suffering, in those moments when I join Him in the fellowship of His suffering.

Now I want you to think about that statement a moment though. I want you to really weight it out with me a moment.

■ ■ We will get to know Christ best, and most intimately,
in our moments of suffering.

Paul understands that there is a connection between knowing God and joining Him in His sufferings. Paul knew this from personal experience. Paul knew that as he had suffered for the Gospel and with Christ he had come to know Christ more intimately, more personally, more deeply.

Galatians 6:14 ESV

14 But far be it from me to boast
except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ,
by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.

17 From now on let no one cause me trouble,
for I bear on my body the marks of Jesus.

Paul boasted in the power and glory of the Cross, so much so that he proudly wore the scars of Jesus on His Body. This is not like an imitation scar as in a tattoo, this is the real deal. You see Paul was so committed to Christ and the glory of the cross he was willing to suffer for it.

Paul understood the reward though of knowing Christ more deeply.

■ ■ Now the thing is though and this is where it gets good, but **we join Christ in His suffering because He first joined us in ours.** It was at the cross when Jesus entered into our suffering by taking on our sin.

Isaiah 53:4-5 ESV

Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. 5 But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed.

Here is what you have to understand. It was at the cross, when Jesus entered into our sufferings, when He took on our sins and faced our temptations, that he came to know us more deeply, personally and intimately. You say, well didn't God already know us inside and out? Yes he did. The Bible though tells us that the one thing that God didn't know and the one thing that he didn't know about us, was what sin felt like. He didn't know what got was like to be enslaved to sin. God had never experienced sin, and Jesus never committed sin, and yet on the cross as He entered into our sin and our temptation, He more fully understood what we were facing. He came to know the battle we face on a daily basis.

Now I think is a place where we can maybe disconnect from how personal and powerful the cross and the gospel really is. I want you to do a short exercise with me this morning. I have a number of areas I want us to review and I want us this morning to identify where our deepest struggle currently is. I'll bet if we all personally pray and ask God to reveal to us at least one area, He will. Probably He can reveal MORE than one area, but lets all try and define at least one area where we are struggling this morning... I'll explain why in a moment.

Our Deepest Struggles

Depression	Anger	Jealousy	Lust	Trust
Discouragement	Hate	Envy	A Substance	Faith
Doubt	Bitterness	Greed	Abuse	Control
Fear	Revenge	Pride	Past	Overwhelmed
Loneliness	Unforgiveness	Selfishness	Hurt/Pain	??

Now I want you to think about that struggle this morning. Your greatest struggle you are presently dealing with. Now look at this verse again.

2 Corinthians 5:21 ESV

For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin,
so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

At the cross whatever you are currently dealing with, struggling with, we can know that Christ faces that at the cross and he defeated it. He was victorious over whatever it is you are facing. That is why we say that there is a sense of intimacy to be found in the fellowship of sufferings. You see Christ took on your suffering, entered into it and He knows what it feels like.

Take that verse then and personalize your struggle this morning.

To the one struggling with Depression He ENTERED INTO that Depression.

To the one struggling with Fear He ENTERED INTO that Fear.

To the one struggling with Anger He ENTERED INTO that anger.

To the one struggling with Abuse He ENTERED INTO that abuse.

To the one struggling with lust He ENTERED INTO that lust.

To the one struggling with Anger He ENTERED INTO that anger.

Jesus joined us in our sin in a way that we can not fully comprehend. In fact I want you to see something I had never even considered before. Remember after Adam and Eve sinned. What was the first thing that happened. Adam and Eve were identified as naked. They saw they were naked because the glory of God that covered them had departed. **All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God - Romans 3:23**

Adam and Eve's nakedness resembled their shame and how the glory of God had departed from them.

Now on the cross, consider this, Jesus was stripped naked and humiliated before everyone. Jesus was stripped naked and took on shame, our shame!

Now this is what is so amazing about the cross and why we can find such confidence in it. At the cross Jesus took on our shame, bore our sin and entered into our suffering and yet the Bible says that Jesus never personally sinned! He didn't personally succumb to the temptation to sin at the cross, the temptation to doubt, deny, become angry or bitter, to lose His cool or strike back in anyway.

That is why we have such confidence and why we can say that Christ was victorious over sin because he faced it all down, he bore not all in His body and yet he never personally gave into it. Instead he defeated it once and for all.

What I want you understand this morning, is this...

We can join Christ in His sufferings because He first joined us in ours.

We can be victorious over our sufferings, any trials we face, because empowers us to face them with an attitude of confidence and spirit of victory! We know at the cross that Christ triumphed over all of our struggles and they have no power over us anymore.

I mean think about it. The cross where Christ was stripped naked by sin and publicly shamed is the exact same cross that Jesus said was the Cross of Glory!

Romans 8:18 ESV

For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.

What we have to always remember is that because of the cross there is a glory awaiting us on the other side of this world! The glory that Jesus brought to a sin-stained, shame ridden cross is the same glory he can bring to our broken lives. I would say that is a reason for confidence.

Let's look at one last reason we can glory in the cross.

WHEN SUFFERING, FIND EMPATHY IN THE CROSS

This does not mean that we always get a simple, satisfying answer to all of our questions about suffering. In a 2014 testimony about his experience with a debilitating disease, former Wheaton College Provost Stan Jones provided a helpful perspective on all the questions about our suffering that we find it difficult or even impossible to answer. He said:

Long ago, I read a book about suffering, and the author made a point that I have had to return to time and time again. He said most of our why questions about suffering are ultimately unanswerable. God does not seem to be in the business of answering the why questions, and most of our philosophical responses to the question of suffering amount to various forms of taking God off the hook for the problem of suffering. But this author pointed out that God doesn't seem to be interested in getting off the hook. In fact, the answer of God in Jesus Christ to the problem of suffering is not to get off the hook at all, but rather to impale himself on the hook of human suffering with us in the very midst of our suffering.

When trouble comes and places a giant question mark over our existence, we should remember Jesus and the empathy of the Cross.

Philip Ryken, When Trouble Comes, When Trouble Comes (Crossway, 2016), pages 95-96

3. The Cross is an INVITATION to COME.

This morning we are going to celebrate communion. We are going to take the bread and the wine (or grape juice) according to I Corinthians 11 and the last Supper, and remember the cross. Because the cross is an invitation to come.

We are actually returning to where we started this morning with Jesus proclaiming the coming Glory of the cross in John 13. The thing is He proclaimed that right after He had celebrated the last supper with the disciples. In the face of all the brutal ugliness, violent torture and humiliating disgrace to come Jesus proclaimed the glory of the cross.

Let's look then at Paul's words to the Corinthians and to us as well concerning communion. It is here we see that the cross is an invitation to come.

1 Corinthians 11:23-26 ESV

For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, 24 and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, "This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." 25 In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." 26 For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

I can see at least four invitations in this passage.



The invitation to come and BE SAVED!

- *"This is my body, which is for you."* v24

The thing is Jesus died on the cross for YOU, He died on the cross for all of us. Jesus didn't come to start another religion or to simply be a great teacher. He came to do the one thing that NO ONE ELSE could do and is offer salvation and provide a way to the father.

The cross is an invitation for us all to come and find salvation and be made right with God, to be reconciled to God. This is where it starts, though not ends. You see the cross is set before us as a daily invitation to come. We are invited to come and take up our own cross and follow Christ but we are also invited to fellowship with Christ at His cross.

⚙ The invitation to come and Worship.

- *Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.*" v25

- *..." you proclaim the Lord's death..."* v26

We are invited to come to the cross and worship **WHO** God is and **WHAT** He has done for us.

We are invited to come and celebrate our salvation as wells our Savior!

The thing is there is a joy found in the cross that you can find nowhere else. Remember that Jesus endured the cross for the joy that awaited Him on the other side.

The victory and freedom realized at the cross gives us a reason to rejoice and worship!

⚙ The invitation to come and Hope.

- *"...you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes."* v26

When we come to the cross we remember that God is faithful to His word and just as he came the first time and wore a crown of thorns He will return for His crown of Glory, Just as He came to the first time to hang on the cross He will return a second time rule on His throne.

We are invited to come and look forward to the HOPE of GLORY that we have in Christ.


Colossians 1:24-29 ESV

Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church, 25 of which I became a minister according to the stewardship from God that was given to me for you, to make the word of God fully known, 26 the mystery hidden for ages and generations but now revealed to his saints. 27 To them God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

Paul, like Christ, embraced suffering on behalf of the gospel and the church that he was serving. Paul did so because He k

It is Christ right here that gives us a deep and abiding hope, even in the darkest of times.

Finally there is...

 The invitation to come, let go and find healing.

An invitation to come to the alter and leave our greatest burdens and deepest struggles behind, no matter what they are.

Isaiah 53:4-5 ESV

Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. 5 But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed.

It is at the cross where we find the healing we need in the world today. This is not talking about physical healing but it is talking about spiritual healing and even emotional healing that allows us to live in the fulness and freedom of the cross.

Now understand we come to the cross once for salvation, but we come back to the cross to remember the freedom we have in Christ, the forgiveness we have been granted, the acceptance that is our in the father and the identity we have in Christ. Yet we come back to the cross to allow that freedom and forgiveness, our acceptance and identity to be reinvigorated and to heal our scars from the sufferings of the cross.

It is the evidence of our confidence.

It is the Fellowship of our suffering.

It is the Invitation to come.

🌀 **CLOSE:** Jesus brought GLORY to the Cross of sin and shame
and He can do the same in your life!

Application & Transformation

- How confident do I feel in Christ in this season of my life?
Could I be more confident? What could I do to encourage my confidence?*
- How have you come to know Christ more intimately
through your seasons of suffering?*
- As I come to the cross this morning what words describe my worship?*
- What struggle, burden or hurt do I need to bring to the alter or cross this morning,
and leave behind, recognize Christ's victory over or embrace His healing for.*

THE CRUCIFIXION OF JESUS IS UNIQUE AMONG FAMOUS DEATHS

There have been many famous deaths in world history; we might think of John F. Kennedy, or Marie Antoinette, or Cleopatra, but we do not refer to "the assassination," "the guillotining," or "the poisoning." Such references would be incomprehensible. The use of the term "the crucifixion" for the execution of Jesus shows that it still retains a privileged status. When we speak of "the crucifixion," even in this secular age, many people will know what is meant. There is something in the strange death of the man identified as Son of God that continues to command special attention. This death, this execution, above and beyond all others, continues to have universal reverberations. Of no other death in human history can this be said. The cross of Jesus stands alone in this regard. ... There were many thousands of crucifixions in Roman times, but only the crucifixion of Jesus is remembered as having any significance at all, let alone world-transforming significance.

Fleming Rutledge, The Crucifixion (Eerdmans, 2016), page 3-4

ONLY ONE ANTIDOTE WILL CURE SIN

It's difficult for many people to accept that there can be only one way to rescue us from sin and judgement. But a Christian apologist uses the following analogies to show how the cross of Christ is the one and only solution we need:

Most ailments need particular antidotes. Increasing the air pressure in your tires will not fix a troubled carburetor. Aspirin will not dissolve a tumor. Cutting up credit cards will not wipe out debt that is already owed. If your water pipes are leaking, you call a plumber, not an oncologist, but a plumber will not cure a cancer. Any adequate solution must solve the problem that needs to be solved, and singular problems need singular solutions. Some antidotes are one-of-a-kind cures for one-of-a-kind ailments. Sometimes only one medicine will do the job, as much as we may like it to be otherwise. Mankind faces a singular problem. People are broken and the world is broken because our friendship with God has been broken, ruined by human rebellion. Humans, you and I—are guilty, enslaved, lost, dead. All of us. Everyone. Everywhere. The guilt must be punished, the debt must be paid, the slave must be purchased. Promising better conduct in the future will not mend the crimes of the past. No, a rescuer must ransom the slaves, a kindred brother must pay the family debt, a substitute must shoulder the guilt. There is no other way of escape.

Gregory Koukl, The Story of Reality (Zondervan, 2017), pages 131-132

WHEN A MUSLIM WAS OVERPOWERED BY GOD'S SELFLESS LOVE

Nabeel Qureshi, a Muslim convert to Jesus Christ, had a "resolutely" Muslim friend named Sahar who was attracted to parts of Christianity but couldn't accept the idea of God becoming a human being. On one occasion she honestly asked, "How can you believe Jesus is God if he was born through the birth canal of a woman and that he had to use the bathroom? Aren't these things beneath God?"

Qureshi affirmed her questions and then asked her one in turn: "Sahar, let's say that you are on your way to a very important ceremony and are dressed in your finest clothes. You are about to arrive just on time, but then you see your daughter drowning in a pool of mud. What would you do? Let her drown and arrive looking dignified, or rescue her but arrive at the ceremony covered in mud?"

Her response was very matter of fact, "Of course, I would jump in the mud and save her." Nuancing the question more, Qureshi asked her, "Let's say there were others with you. Would you send someone else to save her, or would you save her yourself?"

She responded, "If she is my daughter, how could I send anyone else? They would not care for her like I do. I would go myself, definitely."

Qureshi said, "If you, being human, love your daughter so much that you are willing to lay aside your dignity to save her, how much more can we expect God, if he is our loving Father, to lay aside his majesty to save us?"

The biblical story of God eventually won Sahar's heart. As Qureshi reported, "The message of God's selfless love had overpowered her, and she could no longer remain a Muslim. She had accepted Jesus as her Savior."

Nabeel Qureshi, *No God But One* (Zondervan, 2016), pages 100-101

