

Why Is The Crucifixion of Jesus Good News?

March 25, 2018

Good morning. Welcome to Palm Sunday at CrossWinds. This week is a special week for many churches as Christians remember the final week of Jesus' life that culminated with Jesus' death on the cross. Next weekend, we remember the best part of Jesus' death, which was his resurrection. He came back to life. Next, we will celebrate Jesus' resurrection at the Sami Center and delve into what Jesus' resurrection from the dead means for you and me.

All four Gospels spend the majority of their time on the final week of Jesus' life. For example, in the Gospel of John, chapters 1-11 teach us about Jesus' two plus years of ministry. Chapters 12-21 are all about Jesus' final week of life. The same is true in the Gospel of Mark. Mark 1-10 teach us about Jesus' life and ministry, but chapters 11-16 focus exclusively on the final week of Jesus' life.

Since all the Gospels spend so much time on that final week, we know the events of that week must be incredibly important, especially Jesus' death and resurrection. This morning, I have three objectives. The first is to give you a brief overview of that final week. For those of you who are new Christians, I simply want to familiarize you with the major events of the week. Second, we will focus on one particular event of that week — Jesus' death on the cross. I want us to understand what Jesus faced in his crucifixion from both a physiological perspective and a spiritual perspective as the Son of God. Third, we will see why the horrid crucifixion of Jesus is such good news for you and me.

What happened in Jesus' final week?

Sunday — The Triumphal Entry

The gospels record Jesus coming to Jerusalem during Passover. The crowds were thrilled to see him. Mark tells us how things unfolded.

Now when they drew near to Jerusalem, to Bethphage and Bethany, at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two of his disciples and said to them, "Go into the village in front of you, and immediately as you enter it you will find a colt tied, on which no one has ever sat. Untie it and bring it. If anyone says to you, 'Why are you doing this?' say, 'The Lord has need of it and will send it back here immediately.' " And they went away and found a colt tied at a door outside in the street, and they untied it. And some of those standing there said to them, "What are you doing, untying the colt?" And they told them what Jesus had said, and they let them go. And they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their cloaks on it, and he sat on it. And many spread their cloaks on the road, and others spread leafy branches that they had cut from the fields. And those who went before and those who followed were shouting, "Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David! Hosanna in the highest!" Mark 11:1–10 (ESV)

In riding into town on a donkey, Jesus fulfilled an ancient prophecy which said he would come to Jerusalem this way. That prophecy is found in Zechariah 9:9. When the crowds called out to him "Hosanna, the one who comes in the name of the Lord," they were giving him the title of the Messiah. They were quoting Psalm 118:25-26. This looked like a red carpet welcome, but it would quickly turn by the end of the week.

Monday — Clearing the Temple

Mark 11:15-18 tells us that the next day, Jesus returned to the temple to find the court of the Gentiles — where those who were not Jews were allowed to worship — filled with traders and money changers. In the temple, the only money you were allowed to use for your offering was Jewish money. The money changers made a handsome profit as they exchanged Roman money for Jewish

money. Jesus drove out the money changers and overturned their tables saying his father's house was to be a house of prayer for all nations, not a mall.

Tuesday — Day of Teaching

Mark 11:27-13:37 tells us Jesus spent that day teaching in parables. He also warned the people about the Pharisees and the coming destruction of the temple.

Wednesday — Day of Rest

What happened this day is not talked about in the Gospels.

Thursday — Passover

Mark 14:12-26 tells us that in an upper room, Jesus prepared to eat the Jewish Passover meal with his disciples. When they ate the meal together, Jesus gave new meaning to the meal telling his disciples the meal actually pointed to him and would be fulfilled by him. Jesus also transformed the eating of the bread and drinking of the cup in the Passover meal to the practice of communion that we have today. Jesus said he was about to set up a new covenant between God and man through his blood.

Afterward, he went to the Garden of Gethsemane to pray. Later that night, he was arrested and ran through a series of false trials during the night.

Friday — Crucifixion

Jesus was condemned by the Jewish leaders shortly before morning. Here is a rough approximation of the way Friday unfolded.

- 6 a.m. — Jesus was taken before Pilate, who sent him to Herod (Mark 15:1).
- 7 a.m. — Herod returned him to Pilate who sentenced him to death.

- 8 a.m. — Jesus was led away to be crucified.
- 9 a.m. — Jesus' crucifixion began.
- 10 a.m. — The soldiers divided up his clothing.
- 11 a.m. — One of the criminals at his side hurled insults at him, while the other trusted him.
- Noon — Darkness came over the land until 3 p.m. as Jesus became sin for us.
I will explain this in a moment.
- 3 p.m. — Jesus died.
- 6 p.m.— Between 3 p.m. and 6 p.m. Jesus' body was taken off the cross. It was briefly prepared for burial and laid in a borrowed tomb. Next Sunday, we will pick up the historical story of Jesus rising from the dead on Sunday mornings.

Now let's zoom in on the crucifixion of Jesus on Friday and see what we can learn.

What is the historical background of crucifixion?

Crucifixion was invented by the Persians around 500 B.C. It was originally used by Darius I on 3,000 Babylonians. At that time, it consisted of sharpening a piece of wood and running it through a victim's middle like shish-kabob. The wood was stuck in a hole in the ground with the point to the sky. This enabled victims to die a slow gruesome death. Alexander the Great, who was a master of terror, invented crucifixion as we know it today in the form of either an uppercase or lowercase "T". He used it on the people of the city of Tyre when he conquered them in 332 B.C., crucifying 2,000. The most famous mass crucifixion was in 71 B.C. when the Roman legions crucified the 6,000 remaining men of Spartacus' slave revolt. They erected their crosses along a 120-mile stretch of road known

as the Apian Way. Imagine driving a highway witnessing 120 miles of continual crosses with men dying in unspeakable agony.

At the time of Jesus, crucifixion had become an art form as Roman soldiers experimented with various forms of torture to prolong death and increase the agony of those dying on a cross. Crucifixion was so gruesome that if you were a Roman citizen, even if you were guilty of the most notorious of crimes, you were not allowed to be crucified because it was such a barbaric form of death. Instead of crucifixion, you were beheaded. Josephus, the ancient historian, called crucifixion the most wretched form of death known to man. Cicero said good Romans should not even speak of crucifixion because it was such a disgraceful and disgusting subject. The Romans even invented a new word to describe the level of pain that was achievable by the cross. They called it *ex-crusis* pain. That means a level of pain only achievable by the cross. That Greek word came over to English. That is where we coined the phrase “excruciating pain.”

Crucifixion is a slow death by suffocation as the weight of the body across the arms stretches out the chest cavity making it difficult to breath. The pushing of the nail-pierced feet to raise the body on the cross produced mind-altering pain.

This week, as I was thinking on this, what came to mind was a time in college when I was in my bare feet walking on a friend’s old wooden deck. I slipped my foot across the old deck and ended up with a large deep splinter in the bottom of my foot. Being a college wrestler, I thought I could handle it. Using

alcohol we sterilized some needle-nose pliers and tweezers, and I became to operate on my foot. I could take out some of the wood but I couldn't take out the wood sunk deepest into my foot. I tried for an entire day to dig in the wound and get it out, but I couldn't because of the pain. I finally went to the doctor. After some novocain, he had no problem digging it out. That was a splinter. I cannot even imagine 5- to 7-inch spikes driven all the way through Jesus' feet. I cannot imagine him needing to put the full weight of his body on those nails in his feet to be able to take a breath. The pain he experienced just to breath is beyond my comprehension.

Crucifixion lasted from a few hours to as long as nine days as people dangled between life and death, passing in and out of consciousness. It was common for people to attempt to hasten their deaths by slouching on the cross to restrict their breathing. To prevent this, Romans installed small seats to prevent a full slouch and lengthen the death process.

What happened to Jesus' body when he was crucified?

Jesus spoke plainly about this death. In fact, he said the main reason he came was to die.

"Now is my soul troubled. And what shall I say? 'Father, save me from this hour'? But for this purpose I have come to this hour. Father, glorify your name." Then a voice came from heaven: "I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again." John 12:27–28 (ESV)

Jesus told his disciples numerous times that he came to die.

Let's return to the chronology of Jesus' final week and walk through his final hours of life in greater detail. On Thursday night, after he celebrated the Passover meal, saying it was really about him, the Bible tells us Satan entered

Judas. Judas left the meal to arrange Jesus' betrayal. After Judas left, Jesus went to Gethsemane where he spent time in prayer, while his disciples slept. As he prayed, the Bible tells us he sweat great drops of blood. This is a condition doctors tell us only happens to people that are under extreme stress. The stress is so hard on the body the capillaries burst in the skin so people sweat blood. This rarely happens because few people ever experience this level of stress.

Later that night, Judas arrived with a squad of temple soldiers to arrest Jesus. Judas betrayed Jesus with a kiss. After Jesus was taken captive, he was run through a series of false trials during the night. The cowardly temple guards blindfolded him then preceded to mercilessly beat his face to disfigure it. Each time they hit him they asked him to prophecy. "Who was it that hit you?" Can you hear their laughter as the blood ran out his nose and his eyes swelled closed?

In the morning, determined to end his life, they took him to Pilate, then to Herod and finally back to Pilate. Ultimately, Pilate condemned him to death. As part of that process, our Bibles simply say they scourged Jesus. That doesn't mean much to us but it was a phrase that made ancient readers shudder.

Scourging often preceded crucifixion. Many people died from the pain of the scourging before the crucifixion. Jesus would have had his clothes removed. His hands were either chained above him or to a stump or over a rock, exposing his back, legs and buttocks. Two executioners on opposite sides would take turns using a cat-o-nine-tails across his body. This was a whip with leather straps. On the end of some of the straps were large metal balls designed to crush, bruise and tenderize flesh like a meat hammer. Who has used a meat mallet to pound a

steak flat? That was the purpose of the metal balls on this whip. The bruising from these balls was so severe it would extend beyond the surface of the skin into the lungs. A cat-o-nine-tails also had pieces of bone woven in the straps to introduce infection. The most dreaded part of these whips were the large metal hooks that would sink into the tenderized flesh. The executioners would tear the whip across the back, buttocks and legs, literally ripping the hooks through the skin. When the flesh was tender enough, the hooks would literally tear sheets of flesh off the victim's body. The hooks would lodge into muscle and tear out chunks of meat and tendons. Historical accounts tell us of these hooks lodging into the ribs and ribs being torn out of men's bodies. The result was a back, buttocks and legs that were shredded and torn open. Historical accounts tell us of sheets of skin and muscle hanging off a victim's back and even organs hanging out of the back.

Jesus' face was disfigured beyond recognition by the temple guards, beyond human semblance.

What I find most amazing is that as Jesus went through all of this, he never sinned. He never called out in hatred. He never cussed. He never sinned. I know what comes out of my mouth when I hit my finger with a hammer. Jesus never had a thought that didn't honor his heavenly father as he endured this pain. The Bible tells us in Isaiah that as a sheep before his shearers is silent, so Jesus did not open his mouth.

The Bible tells us that after this, he was taken to the Roman army barracks where a battalion of soldiers, that is 600 men, mocked him. They put a

purple robe on him, and they made a crown of thorns that they pressed into his head as they mocked him as a king. As the thorns were pressed into his skull, the blood and sweat would run down his face, blurring his eyes and making his beard a filthy mess. They continued to strike him in his already bruised and disfigured face.

The purple robe would have become saturated with his coagulating blood. Later they would rip the robe off, tearing open the deep and painful wounds on his body.

Isaiah said this prophetically about Jesus to describe him before he went to the cross after he suffered these beatings:

As many were astonished at you — his appearance was so marred, beyond human semblance, and his form beyond that of the children of mankind... Isaiah 52:14 (ESV)

When people saw Jesus, they didn't ask, "Who is this?" They asked, "What is this?" He didn't even look human.

After this, they put his own clothes on him and led him away to be crucified. Jesus was forced to carry his own cross. Most likely it was just the crossbeam. That would have weighed 100 pounds. It was rough, splintering lumber across the open wounds of his back. Since the wood was always in short supply, the wood of the cross was considered more valuable than the men who died on the cross. No doubt, the wood was already stained with the tears, sweat and blood of many other men. Carrying the cross after a night of no sleep, continual beatings and a back and shoulders that were torn open and exposed would have been excruciating.

When they arrived at Golgotha, the place called The Skull, they pulled out Jesus' beard. It was another act of disrespect and pain to his already disfigured face. There, Jesus, the carpenter who had driven many nails, had 5- to 7-inch rough metal spikes driven into the most densely packed nerve centers on the human body, his hands and his feet. Jesus was then violently dropped into a prepared hole. As the cross hit the bottom of the hole the metal spikes would have further tore the flesh of his hands while the sudden jolt of the cross hitting the bottom of the hole would have dislocated his shoulders and arms, providing even less support for breathing.

At this point, those being crucified labored to breath as their bodies were in shock. Hanging their weight on their hands made it impossible to breath. Pressing their feet on the nails to breath produced mind-altering pain. The whole time, the torn, open back rubbed back and forth on the rough, splintered beam.

Naked and in pain, victims used their remaining strength to spew hatred and vulgarity on the gathered crowds that laughed when they saw their fate. Jesus did none of that. Not a sinful word came from his mouth.

I realize this description of Jesus' crucifixion is uncomfortable for you. It is uncomfortable for me. We must understand this horrid death is what Jesus experienced. The Bible says this about Jesus as he hung on the cross.

He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Isaiah 53:3 (ESV)

Just as we want to hide our faces when we imaginatively see Jesus suffer these things, the people of Jesus' day wanted to literally hide their faces. They could not bare to look at him. It was too barbaric a scene.

As Jesus hung on the cross, from noon-3 p.m., darkness covered the land. Finally, just before 3 p.m., Jesus said, “I thirst.” We read that someone ran and took a sponge, dipped it in sour wine then held it to his lips. At first, this sounds like someone finally showing compassion to Jesus. As I researched it this week, I learned that probably isn’t true. First, the thing they gave him to drink was sour wine. That is wine vinegar. It is a disgusting taste. In addition, I learned that Roman soldiers were issued sponges and sour wine to use as toilet paper. The sour wine had antiseptic properties to it so a sponge and that wine was used by Romans soldiers to wipe themselves. It may have been the toilet paper sponge that was pushed into Jesus’ face.

With that disgusting taste in his mouth, Jesus said his last words as he cried from the cross, “It is finished.” Then he breathed his last.

At that moment, an earthquake shook the land. Tombs broken open, and some saints came back to life as death stretched its jaws wide enough to swallow Jesus. One of the most important things that happened when Jesus died was the curtain in the temple — which separated God the Father in the holy of holies from everyone else — was torn in half from top to bottom, signifying the way to God was now open because of Jesus’ death on the cross.

Before 6 p.m. that evening, which would have been the end of the Jewish day, Jesus was laid in a tomb.

If you think the visible horrors of Jesus’ death were bad, beyond those physical horrors were the personal horrors Jesus endured as the Son of God.

What else did Jesus experience when he was crucified?

The Bible tells us every problem in the world comes from sin. We know the right things to do, but we do the wrong things. Just as sin separated Adam and Eve from God and cast them out of God's presence in the Garden of Eden, our sins cut us off from God.

...but your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hidden his face from you so that he does not hear. Isaiah 59:2 (ESV)

The problem is the Bible says there is nothing we can do to save ourselves from our sin or to stop ourselves from committing sin. We are hopelessly addicted to sin. That is why each of us needs Jesus.

On the cross, Jesus took on our sin.

The Bible tells us that on the cross, Jesus became our sin. On the cross, Jesus was made to be the worst of what we are. This does not mean Jesus sinned. It means he was made to be our sin. Jesus became the most ugly, defiled, evil, corrupt, rebellious and hideous thing in all creation when, like a sponge, he soaked all of our sin into himself as he hung on the cross. In that moment, Jesus became a homosexual, alcoholic, thief, glutton, addict, pervert, adulterer, coveter, pedophile, and whatever else we are.

Jesus soaked up our sin so he could be a perfect substitute for our sin so he could die in our places. His death was in our place solely for our benefit. Jesus took the penalty of our sin in our places so we don't have to suffer the penalty ourselves. Jesus did this voluntarily.

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. Isaiah 53:5 (ESV)

For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, 1 Corinthians 15:3 (ESV)

Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree”— Galatians 3:13 (ESV)

Jesus endured the pain of our sin.

While we saw the pain Jesus endured physically, even more painful than the physical pain was the pain of becoming our sin. Each of us instinctively recoils from sin. When we sin, we are filled with shame and guilt over what we have done. Even though we recoil from sin, we are used to sin because we are sinful people. Jesus had never sinned. The revulsion he felt at the mere sight of sin was infinitely more than anything we could experience, yet in obedience to God the Father’s will and out of love for us, he took onto himself all of the sins of God’s people from the beginning of time to the end of time. The sin of the past, present and even future.

Can you imagine the crushing emotional and psychological guilt Jesus experienced in that moment when he became all of our sin so he could die for all of our sin?

All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all. Isaiah 53:6 (ESV)

The pain of becoming all of our sin at one time is more than we can imagine.

Jesus experienced the abandonment of the Father.

The Bible tells us that as Jesus hung on the cross and was made to be sin, God the Father, who is too pure to look on sin, turned his back on his son for the first time in all of eternity. The closest and most joy-filled relationship in the entire creation, the relationship between the Father and Son, was broken.

And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, “Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?” that is, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” Matthew 27:46 (ESV)

Few of us can survive long when our loved ones cut off a relationship. We often hear of elderly couples that spend a life together in marriage. One dies of a heart attack. A few months later the remaining spouse dies of a broken heart. That is the kind of pain Jesus felt, but to a infinitesimally greater degree. Imagine what it would have been like for Jesus as he hung on the cross, having taken on the sin of millions upon millions of people. He was physically destroyed and emotionally broken. He was in his greatest need for emotional support, but in that time, for the first time, his Father was forced to turn his back and walk away.

The horror of the physical pain experienced by Jesus was nothing compared to the pain of abandonment from his father.

Jesus experienced the wrath from God we deserved.

One of the central themes of the book of Hebrews is that Jesus came to fulfill the entire Old Testament sacrificial system, thus making it obsolete. Many times Jesus showed how the Old Testament sacrificial system pointed to him. We already saw how Jesus said the feast of Passover pointed to him and what he came to accomplish.

Another Old Testament sacrifice was called the Day of Atonement, also known as Yom Kippur. In ancient Israel, this was the most important sacrifice of the year. This sacrifice was offered once a year. It was the only sacrifice that could completely deal with all the sin of the people. It was the ultimate get-out-of-jail-free card. The sacrifices on the Day of Atonement involved two perfect goats. The first goat was killed and its blood was taken into the holy of holies where it was sprinkled on the mercy seat. The bloody death of that goat meant the goat died as a substitute for the people. That goat died the bloody death the people deserved to die for their sin.

The goat figuratively represented that God could divert his wrath to a substitute that could die in the people's place.

This is called propitiation. *Propitiation means pacifying wrath by taking the penalty for the offense.*

The goat propitiated God's wrath for the people's sin by dying as a substitute.

The problem is goats cannot substitute for human beings. The book of Hebrews tells us the blood of bulls and goats never took away sin.¹ All they were was an annual reminder that someone needed to die as a substitute for our sin.

That is what Jesus did. Jesus propitiated God's wrath for our sin. All the eternal wrath we deserve for our sin was poured out on Jesus so the penalty for our sin was taken care of because Jesus took all the punishment for sin we deserve. He absorbed all of God the Father's wrath for all the sins of our past,

¹ Hebrews 10:4

our present and even the sins we have yet to commit in the future. We can never sin so much that the death of Jesus has not already paid for it. Every last drop of God the Father's justified wrath for our sin was completely absorbed by Jesus.

If you think the physical suffering of Jesus as he hung on the cross was horrid, imagine what it felt like when God the Father didn't just turn his back on his son but he actively poured upon Jesus all of the wrath that millions upon millions of people deserved for their sin. It was super-compressed and inflicted on Jesus when he hung on the cross.

...for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. Romans 3:23–25 (ESV)

...and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come. 1 Thessalonians 1:10 (ESV)

We saw what Jesus experienced on the cross beyond physical pain. He experienced the pain of sin, the abandonment from his father and the wrath of God as he absorbed all the suffering for our sin.

So far everything about Jesus' death has been horrifying. The personal suffering of Jesus as the Son of God was even worse than the physical suffering of Jesus on the cross. Is there any good news in all of this? Yes, there is.

Why is Jesus' crucifixion good news for Christians?

Jesus took away the stain of our sin.

A few moments ago, we saw the first part of the good news of Jesus' death. He absorbed all of God the Father's wrath for our sin so those who trust in Jesus will never experience God's wrath for their sin.

In Leviticus 16, which describes the day of Atonement, there was another goat. This goat was called the scapegoat. The first goat figuratively died as a substitute for people's sin.

This second goat, called the scapegoat, was the one on which the priest put his hands then confessed the sins of the people onto the goat. Then the goat was taken far away into the wilderness never to be seen again. This represented that when God completely dealt with sin, he didn't just pay for our sin, but he removed from us all the stain and guilt we have for our sins. He washed us, cleaned us and made us completely new, like the sin was not part of our past.

The Bible uses more than a dozen words to speak of the stain of sin upon the soul. Sin leaves us feeling dirty, unclean and disgusting. This is not just true of sins done by us but it is true of sins done to us. They stain us and leave us feeling dirty and filled with shame. People spend their entire lives living out the guilt and shame of what they have done in their past. The scapegoat on the Day of Atonement teaches that on the cross Jesus didn't just take God's wrath for our sin but completely took away the inner stain of our sin. Sin is not just forgiven but it is forgotten. God separates it from us as far as the East is from the West. God no longer looks at us based on who we were or what we have done.

Today, you need to understand that Jesus didn't just die to pay for your sin but he died to take away all the shame and guilt of your sin. He died so you can finally move beyond those feelings of darkness and dirtiness that plague your soul.

But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin. 1 John 1:7 (ESV)

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. 2 Corinthians 5:17 (ESV)

Jesus gave us his purity.

The Bible tells us that Jesus loves us so much that when he went to the cross, he didn't just absorb our sin and wash away the stain of our sin, but he gave us the purity of his life.

For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. 2 Corinthians 5:21 (ESV)

Martin Luther called this the great exchange. When God looks at us, he doesn't just see our sins forgiven and washed away but he sees the holiness and purity of Jesus when he looks at us. When we look at ourselves in the mirror, this is not what we see. Most of us don't like what we see. We see ourselves as failures. We see ourselves as worth very little. We see ourselves as unimportant. When God the Father looks at us, because we are "in Christ," he sees us shining forth the very righteousness of Christ. This is why we are qualified by Jesus to reign and rule with Christ over the new creation in eternity. That is not because of who we now are but because we now have the very character and purity of Jesus given to us. God doesn't see us as men and women deserving penalty. He sees us as men and women of perfection, which comes from Jesus!

Jesus conquered Satan and the fallen spiritual world.

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, by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he

set aside, nailing it to the cross. He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him. Colossians 2:13–15 (ESV)

On the cross, Jesus tore the fangs out of the devil. He tore away his authority. He destroyed all his power. He rendered him harmless over our lives. Satan can only gum us. He can't bite us. He doesn't have teeth or claws. Satan can roar but he can't bite.

Even Satan's great weapon of death is rendered impotent by Jesus. Our deaths, which Satan planned to be our greatest defeat, were transformed by Jesus into our greatest gain as we are ushered into the very presence of Jesus in heaven when we close our eyes in this world.

The cross shows us how much God loves us.

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. John 3:16 (ESV)

...but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Romans 5:8 (ESV)

In this world, we often feel lonely. We long to be loved. The good news is we are loved more than we can imagine. Jesus loves us so much that he willingly endured the physical horrors of the cross to save you. Jesus endured the personal horrors of being made sin to die in our places. Jesus did this all for you because he loves you. God's love for us is not sentimental love that is empty words. Jesus put his love for you and me into action as he paid for our sin to bless us beyond our wildest dreams as he rendered Satan, sin and death powerless against us while he gave us his purity.

This is why the horrid crucifixion of Jesus is actually good news for you and me. It is God's love in action. My friends, we can't be any more loved today than we are by Jesus.

Where does this story go? What happens on Sunday morning when Jesus rises from the dead? Join us next Sunday morning at the Sami Center to hear the rest of the story which is even better news than we heard today.



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