

THE BIG IDEA: The cross changes who we were and who we will be.

The Take-Off

Happy Resurrection Sunday! He is risen and our God is not dead!!!

Romans 8:11 is our cry this morning - the same Spirit that raised him is giving us life!

Today is going to be a little bit different so I want to kick it all off right away by explaining what we'll be doing.

For years, the church has celebrated Easter the same way: we highlight how the "really bad" people got together to kill Jesus but they couldn't keep Jesus from coming out of the tomb 3 days later.

It's all very dramatic and so we put music to it and turn it into a Broadway production with an opportunity at the end for any of the "really bad" people to decide to become one of the "really good" people by praying a prayer and locking up plans from 10-12 every Sunday for the rest of their lives.

Basically, Easter in North America has become the day that the church blames the world for killing our Savior and then we thumb our noses at the world when we point out that the tomb says they failed. To top it all off, we then ask the world to join us in following Jesus even though it's all their fault.

Without trying to sound too harsh, somehow, I think we've missed the point.

We've unknowingly taken the greatest act of self-sacrifice this world has ever known and made it about us.

We've taken the one symbol that forever lives to unite us and turned it into a wedge between "us" and "them."

And so today, we're making the whole morning about that symbol.

This morning, we want to invite you to take a new look at the cross.

Yes, Jesus is risen, and the resurrection is everything to us, but living with resurrection power means understanding the cross that led to the empty tomb and so this morning we want to really see the cross.

Our guess is that the more we see the cross, the more we'll see that it levels the playing field in this room.

In fact, the further away we are from the cross, the more we see our differences.

But the closer we get to the cross, the more we begin to see that all of us - young and old, rich and poor, black and white - have a lot more in common than we might think.

Take a moment during this first song and prepare your hearts for a morning at the cross.

1. The cross brings us to a common place

Over the years, the church has done a good job of adopting the cross as a symbol that divides

We hang it, wear it, buy it, share it to distinguish us from everyone else

We say things like "hide me behind the cross" and yet the cross isn't meant to hide us as much as it's meant to expose us

The cross is a divider, but not the church and the unchurched or the lost and the found, but a divider between a holy God and everyone else.

The cross brings us - all of us - to a common place: we are sinners in need of salvation

Many will argue this point.

We will agree that we need help, a leg up or a handout, but few are quick to agree that they need total and absolute rescue from sin, and yet the cross is forever the symbol that mankind - all mankind - has one thing in common: we are prisoners to sin.

Sin is such a problem that the Bible says we sin by what we do (Romans 3:23) and by what we don't do (James 4:17)

Still not convinced? Just look at the truth of God concerning sin:

- we're slaves to sin (John 8:34)
- we're born in sin (Psalm 51:5)
- we're blind to sin (2 Corinthians 4:4; John 12:40)
- we're comfortable with sin (Romans 1:32)
- we're haunted by sin (Genesis 4:7)

Do you see now why we struggle so much with sin? Why we can't simply choose one day to stop sinning?

In fact, all of us have tried. We've tried to "turn over a new leaf" or "make a New Years resolution"

How many have found themselves paying the price for their sin and whispering to themselves, "No more" only to find themselves doing the same thing a week, a day, an hour later?

We are all sinners in need of a rescue.

Sin is not an "us" and "them" problem, but an "us" and "Him" reality.

He's a perfect God; we are imperfect people.

God was perfectly justified to leave the gap there, but at the cross he proved that he wasn't willing to.

- God wants none to perish (**2 Peter 3:9**)
- So he acted in love and gave his son (**John 3:16**)
- He sent Jesus on a rescue mission (**Luke 19:10**)
- That mission included the cross (**Romans 5:6, 8**)
- That mission was completed at the cross (**John 19:30**)

The cross is the place where God's POW rescue plan was completed.

Here - at the cross - Jesus is a Savior and salvation gives us victory

- **Romans 7:24-25**
- **Romans 5:15, 18-19, 21**
- **1 Corinthians 15:57**

How do we experience this victory?

By trying harder, praying longer, living better? No!

By recognizing the sinful human condition that falls short of the exalted Godly position and accepting the sacrificial solution provided at the cross.

In desperation and humility, we need to admit that we are prisoners in need of a rescue that we could never orchestrate or pull off.

We need victory over the enemy that only a savior like Jesus can give.

We invite you to worship that God now.

2. The cross offers us uncommon grace

So the cross brings us to a common place - sinners in need of salvation

But it also offers us uncommon grace because we are more than sinners in need of salvation.

We are also orphans in need of redemption.

Not only is Jesus our Savior, but our Redeemer as well

Galatians 4:5 - redemption made us sons and daughters

Titus 2:14 - redemption gave us identity as HIS people and power to bring HIM glory

Ephesians 2:12-13, 19 - redemption brought those far from God near to God and the family of God

It makes the outsiders insiders.

In short, redemption gives us a home and a family.

The cross doesn't just save us and give us victory; it redeems us and gives us value.

How? How did the death of Jesus on a cross give you and me value?

Because value is determined by what someone is willing to pay, and Jesus paid everything for us.

In fact, we've already read **John 19:30** earlier - when Jesus said "it is finished"

The Greek word for that phrase is "tetelestai" which means PAID IN FULL

We aren't valuable because we're all that. We're valuable because Jesus paid it all for us.

// STORY OF THE 10 COW WOMAN //

There is an old African story about a man who chose for himself a wife from among his people and then went to her father to negotiate for her. It was customary for a suitor to offer two to four cows to the father to prove that he could provide for his bride-elect and to offer something in exchange for his daughter. The man was not like most men. Instead of offering just a few cows, he offered 10 fine cows to the father in his bid for her hand in marriage. The father gladly accepted the offer.

This created quite a stir in the village. What did this young man see in this particular young lady that made her valuable enough to pay 10 cows for her? Was there something the villagers had missed about this young woman? Word began to spread to other villages - there was a 10 cow woman living nearby.

The young man treated his new bride like a queen, for he had paid a queen's dowry for her. Likewise, the villagers treated the new wife with respect, for she was no ordinary 2 cow woman, she was a 10 cow woman! And all this treatment was effected this young woman, too. She began to act less like a commoner and more like a great lady, for after all, she was a 10 cow woman!

And so it was through great sacrifice and wisdom, that one African man transformed an ordinary woman into an extraordinary wife and took great delight in her.

This is how God feels about us. God, with great wisdom and through great effort and sacrifice, has transformed a group of very ordinary sinners into an extraordinary bride for Himself. Isaiah calls this woman Zion, today we're called the Church, the Bride of Christ.

Look at this beautiful passage from **Isaiah 62:2-5** (NLT) and see how He feels about you.

“The nations will see your righteousness.
World leaders will be blinded by your glory.
And you will be given a new name
by the LORD’s own mouth.
The LORD will hold you in his hand for all to see—
a splendid crown in the hand of God.
Never again will you be called ‘The Forsaken City’
or ‘The Desolate Land.’
Your new name will be ‘The City of God’s Delight’
and ‘The Bride of God,’
for the LORD delights in you
and will claim you as his bride.
Your children will commit themselves to you, O Jerusalem,
just as a young man commits himself to his bride.
Then God will rejoice over you
as a bridegroom rejoices over his bride.”

He has saved you and made you righteous. Like the African man with a 10 cow wife, His extraordinary payment shows your great worth!

Being wanted changes how we see ourselves, how we live
1 Corinthians 7:23 warns us not to throw away what God paid a high price to redeem
You see, the cross says more than just “I forgive you.” It also says “I want you.”
It says more than “You’re free.” It also says “You’re mine.”
If salvation gives us victory, then redemption gives us value.
Knowing we are valued changes us, and if we live unchanged lives after the salvation of the cross, we nullify the
redeeming power of the cross.
See, the cross doesn’t just change who we were (salvation). It also changes who we will be (redemption).
We learned last week that GRACE means God’s Redemption Always Changes Everything
Daniel is going to sing a song about being redeemed, and I want us to use the time to reflect on the truth we’ve
been talking about before we respond to such a great grace.

The Landing

Here are some quick takeaways to think about during the week:

- We are saved from something. We are redeemed for something.
- Salvation gives us protection. Redemption gives us direction.
- Salvation rescues us. Redemption restores us.
- Salvation brings relief. Redemption brings life.
- Salvation offers us safety. Redemption offers us significance.

The redeeming message of the cross is great news, but it is horrific news if we do nothing with it!
God’s redemption is similar to me giving you a gift card that you lose and never use
It had value because I had already paid for it, but it had no value to YOU until you used it
You have value - Jesus already paid for it. The only question is whether or not you’ll do anything with it.
If you will, the cross will be a place that changes who you were and who you will be.