



2026 Weekly Devotions

Week of: Mar 30th - Apr 5th

Sermon: March 29th



SMYRNA BAPTIST CHURCH
building community • equipping believers • serving Jesus

March 30

“When I Survey the Wondrous Cross”

Galatians 6:14

Resurrection Sunday, or Easter, provides a wonderful opportunity for believers to consider the cross of Jesus Christ. The late, great songwriter Isaac Watts penned the beautiful song, “When I Survey the Wondrous Cross” in 1707. His motivation was to help worshippers reflect on the suffering of Christ and the significance of the cross. He based his song on Galatians 6:14 where Paul wrote, “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.” Surely he considered the truth of Philippians 3:7-8 as well which says, “But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. Indeed I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord.” Oh that the love displayed by our Savior on the cross would prompt us to love and adore Him more.

The hope in the lyrics of this song is that you and I would stand at the foot of the cross realizing what Jesus had to do to save men and women like us. How can I boast or brag about anything in my life, apart from Christ, knowing that I am the reason He had to die in such a horrible manner? How can I be prideful or arrogant knowing that I was helpless to save myself and that I deserved that punishment that He willingly took for me?

Friend, I hope that you will join me as we boast about what Jesus did and the length to which He went to save us. We are so tempted to glory in temporary and worldly gains and accomplishments, failing to realize that all good things come from His hand including our very existence. We deserve death and punishment because of our sin. We had no standing before a holy God, no access to Him, and no way to reach heaven. We were destined, as children of darkness who were prisoners to the domain of darkness, for hell and an eternity apart from our Father. I pray with Isaac Watts that the Lord would forbid our mouths, minds, or hearts to boast except in the death of Jesus. For it was His death that secured for us our home in heaven and our standing and acceptance before God our Creator.

Watts ends this song in the final verse with a declaration that we could never repay the Lord for what He has done to redeem us. Even if we had the whole world to give to Him, it would not be enough. So, what do we do to express our love and thankfulness for His amazing love that put Him and kept Him on the cross until the blood necessary for the forgiveness of sins was shed and the price for our sins paid in full? Watts said that we should serve Him with our soul, life and our all.

Friend, I know we can never repay the Lord for what He did. Honestly, I don’t believe we should ever try to repay Him; we can’t and it is not necessary. We should however demonstrate our love for Him and our understanding as well as gratitude in lives lived for His glory and the advancement of His kingdom. It is our reasonable service to offer our lives as living sacrifices to the Lord for as long as we live and until we are safely in His presence (Rom. 12:1).

March 31

“Oh the Blood of Jesus”

Hebrews 9:11-14

Pause dear church family this week as you prepare your hearts and your families for Resurrection Sunday to consider what has been accomplished by the shed blood of Jesus Christ for us. Space does not permit an exhaustive look into all the effects of the spotless Lamb of God's death for the sins of God's people, but we will ponder some of those things today. The song, “Oh the Blood of Jesus”, was one of my favorites in the musical presented on Sunday. Oh how my heart soared as I listened to the precious words meant to remind me of all that has been won for and granted to me as a child of the King.

Who among us has never wondered if the depth of your worst sins is too much for the Lord to forgive? I hope that when you think such thoughts, you will quickly remind yourself of the truth of His Word that where your sin abounded, His grace abounded more (Rom. 5:20). May you also remember that when your heart incorrectly accuses you (condemns) of sins long ago forgiven, that He is greater than your heart (1 John 3:20). Conviction is a wonderful gift from God applied to our hearts and minds by the Holy Spirit, but sometimes we can “feel” guilt from a past sin of which He has already forgiven us. That is when we must listen to His Word and His truth rather than our emotions.

This beautiful song made me think so much of how His blood has reached far enough to cover every sin I have ever committed or ever will commit once I have received Jesus as Lord of my life. The same is true for every true follower of Christ. We were reminded in the song that my sins can't outrun the blood of Jesus, and I have no pain that He cannot heal because of sin and disappointments in my life. I have never been, nor will ever be, in a state in which my heart can't be restored regardless of how bad it has been torn.

I must say that I deeply appreciated the way the chorus was written for this sweet song. It began with, “Oh the blood, the Lamb of glory...” There was an emphasis on the blood that was shed but not just any blood. It was the blood of the Lamb. Later in the song, the Lamb is identified as Jesus Christ. It had to be His blood dear ones because His was the only blood unstained by sin. The Bible tells us that even though He was tempted in every way like us, He never gave in to the temptation and never sinned. He was born with innocent blood, and it stayed that way because of His perfect and sinless life lived in human flesh as a man. By the way, He was born with innocent blood because He was conceived by the Holy Spirit.

The finished work of Christ has the power to change your life and your story friend. He did not suffer and die for you to have to remain the same and be prisoner to your past mistakes. He came that you would be redeemed, restored, and renewed. When you surrender to the Lordship of Christ, “Old things are passed away, and you become a brand new creation” (2 Cor. 5:17). This is only possible beloved because of the blood of Jesus Christ.

April 1

“Clean”

1 John 3:2

It is vitally important that we see ourselves as sinners in need of God’s mercy, grace, and forgiveness. Our goal should never be to reach a place where we think we are so good that God got the good end of the deal. Like Paul, may we remain humble, dependent upon our Savior and the Spirit, and forever pressing on toward the mark of the high call of Christ Jesus on our lives.

At the same time, it is also vitally important that we see ourselves in light of who we are in Christ. We are no longer prisoners to sin and captives of Satan. We are no longer alienated from God with no access to Him or seat at His table. We are truly children of God (John 1:12) and joint heirs with Christ of our Father’s inheritance (Rom. 8:17). We need to come to this place, so we don’t live defeated lives under the lies of the adversary. Jesus came to give us life and to give us life abundantly in the here and now too (John 10:10). It is certainly possible to live in light of our true identity as children of God and followers of Christ while remaining humble. Honestly, all we need to do is look in the mirror or take stock of how we are living day in and day out to see that we still need our precious Lord’s intercession and the Holy Spirit’s wonder working power and presence in us.

I don’t believe I will ever grow tired of hearing Jonna Bowers sing. I am sure you experienced a deep sense of gratitude for the Lord in light of what He did to save us and in view of the struggles that remain in us as those being sanctified and cleaned up piece by piece. John wrote in his first epistle these words, “Beloved, we are God’s children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared, but we know that when He appears we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him as He is. And everyone who thus hopes in Him purifies himself as He is pure” (1 John 3:2-3). I absolutely adore this passage of God’s Word.

John reminds us that we still see the rough edges and the remains of our sinful flesh, but He is not finished making us all that we are becoming. The hope that He will get us completely “clean” and like Him is to serve as a source of inspiration to encourage us to run hard after holiness and to utilize all the means of grace that He has given us for our sanctification. The Lord is truly restoring us piece by piece and even now when we see a life shattered and broken, He sees wholeness and beauty because He is seeing what we will ultimately be. I am so glad He can see me as I will be and not simply as I am today.

Dear friend, Jonna reminded us through this beautiful song that there is nothing and no one too dirty that God’s bath of mercy can’t make clean. Stop letting the devil win and keep you in the past. You are not who you once were, and you are not who you will someday be. For now, trust the work of the Spirit to make you whole, clean, and perfect. He sees you that way now. His blood flowed red to make you as white as snow. Step into who you really are and rejoice in the fact that you and I have been washed in the blood of His sacrifice. He set you free so throw off the chains and live clean.

April 2

“What He’s Done”

Ephesians 1:7

Church family, I think one of the challenges that we face as human beings is our tendency to grow too familiar with that which is still amazing. I think of the love that appears and grows in the hearts of a young man and woman who are drawn together and end up getting married and having a family. What an amazing experience to love someone so deeply and to share a journey together. Why then do we get so used to it that it becomes mundane or routine and so easily taken for granted? I wish that I could keep the value of my dear wife and the incredible life that God has given us forever precious in my thoughts and actions. Oh yes of course, I know that I love her and our life together, but I also know that far too often I don’t demonstrate in my attitude or demeanor just how true that is.

The same can be said of our incredible salvation that Jesus wrought for us by the shedding of His own blood and the sacrifice of His perfect life. Ashley E. and the choir did a wonderful job singing the song, “What He’s done.” I think it would behoove us to think often of the ramifications of His atoning death on the cross for us. Let’s take the rest of this “point to ponder” to consider what the Lord did when He gave His life on the cross of Calvary.

For starters, the Bible tell us that He satisfied the Father’s rightful wrath against us because of our sins and rebellion against our Creator. Paul stated it this way, “And we 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...” (Rom. 3:24-25). He took care of God’s wrath for us. That is part of what He’s done. Dear ones, we could not have access to God without this accomplishment. In satisfying the Father’s will and the demands of the law with His own life and blood, He earned for us forgiveness of our sins. Isaiah said about God, “I am He who blots out your transgressions for My own sake and I will not remember your sins” (42:25). Paul wrote to the Ephesians, “In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses” (Eph. 1:7). We know that what He has done is made it possible for us to be “justified” in the eyes of the Father (Rom. 5:1,9) and therefore made us free (John 8:32) from the slavery of sin and free to pursue Him and to offer ourselves as instruments of righteousness to our great God and King (Rom. 6:12-14).

Brothers and sisters, the empty tomb proves that He has defeated death and the grave so that we need no longer fear death as the punishment for our sins. The sin debt has been paid in full by our Savior. This is what He’s done, along with providing us a home in heaven where we will live with Him and all other saints who have died or been transferred to His wonderful Kingdom (John 14:2). Even now, what He’s done is given us the ability to live the overcoming life as we walk through our lives in the here and now (John 16:33).

Let us praise Him for what He’s done and live our lives in constant thankfulness for He alone is worthy of worship and worthy of praise, worthy of glory and honor. Let’s give Him our best because He certainly gave us His. Thank God for what He’s done.

April 3

“All Sufficient Merit”

Ephesians 2:8-9

The great preacher Alistair Begg once reminded his audience that Christians are saved solely by the work of Christ with this little quote, “if you stand before the Lord one day and He asks, ‘why should I let you in’, and your answer begins with personal pronouns: ‘because I...’, you’re sunk!” Why would a man like Begg say such a thing? The answer is grounded in the Gospel of Christ.

Our “All Sufficient Merit” is Jesus! This beautiful little song summarizes the truth of salvation by grace alone when it says, “a fortune I inherit, by no work I have done. My righteousness I forfeit at my Savior’s Cross. Where all sufficient merit did what I could not.” What a glorious lyric indeed!

The Apostle Paul reminds the Ephesians that it was by grace they had been saved. In fact, the centrality and exclusivity of grace was so heavy on the Apostle’s mind that he went further in saying that this grace was bestowed upon the people by faith and even that faith was a gift of God! Literally, from start to finish, our salvation is rooted in the benevolent, undeserved grace of God.

I wonder what you may say to the Lord upon your entry into heaven? If He indeed asks you the question, “why should I let you in?”, what would your answer be? My fear is that many “Christians” would start with “I”. I have this worry because I hear it all the time. People believe that God would let them into glory because “I am a good person” or because “I go to church” or some other variant of the same kind of thought. The problem with this thinking is that it totally undermines the very purpose and point of Jesus’ life and death.

Folks, if there was a way for you to honestly earn your salvation, do you think we would need Easter? Would God have sent His Son to die to redeem us if we could redeem ourselves? If we were able to do what was necessary (through our morality or religious achievements) to gain entry into heaven without Christ, it would be pointless and ruthless for God to send His Son into the world. Conversely, if you and I stood hopeless and helpless before the Lord, with no prospect of redemption from within, then the “All Sufficient Merit” of Jesus begins to look sweet and gloriously necessary!

Christ came to die in our place because there was no other way for us to atone for our sins. We could not absolve our souls of the guilt of our transgression and we could not achieve the righteousness required of those who are permitted into the presence of God. Therefore, if we have any hope of entering heaven one day, it must be on the ground of someone else. A more righteous substitute must be our “merit” and, thankfully, that is exactly the case in the Person of Jesus. This is why Jesus would say, “I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father but through me.” It may sound like a prideful statement but it is in fact simply a statement of fact! There is one way to gain the merit we need to be saved and it is in Christ’s shed blood alone.

April 4

“But for the Cross of Christ”

2 Corinthians 5:21

The Cross of Christ constitutes the greatest transaction in mankind’s history. If you’re like me, you may not like to think of the crucifixion in accounting terms but the Bible does! In fact, Scripture utilizes an accounting term, “imputation”, to refer to the great exchange that took place on Calvary whereby Jesus took our sin upon Himself (placing it in His account) and transferred His righteousness to us!

The song entitled “But for the Cross of Christ” captures this truth well saying, “He bore my sin and I bear His righteousness. Oh what a glorious exchange! The wrath of God laid on the spotless lamb, Oh what grace, oh what grace!” What a glorious exchange indeed! At the cross, the Bible tells us that Christ “became sin”. What does this mean? It means that God laid all of the punishment for our depravity on the head of the sacrificial lamb. At the moment of His crucifixion and death, Jesus bore the penalty, in His body, for our sins.

Matthew Henry describes the effect of this sacrifice saying, “Our reconciliation to God is only through Jesus Christ, and for the sake of His merit: on Him therefore we must rely and make mention of His righteousness and His only.” Do you see what He is saying here? While those who believe are truly righteous, it is an “alien” righteousness. This simply means that the righteousness which marks you did not originate in you, instead it was transferred to you from outside of you! Everything that you enjoy today as a child of God is the result of God’s goodness towards you and His faithfulness to bear your sin, in your place.

Having lived in this world for several decades, I have come to realize that everything that seems too good to be true... is! Deals often have a “hook”, something that is hidden that only comes to light after you have been lured into the agreement. The Gospel is an exception to this rule. There is no hook. Jesus freely offers grace to all who would believe. Christ really did take your punishment and He really does offer you grace and mercy and righteousness. The “Good news” of the Gospel is the best news you will ever come across!

Have you believed it today? Some of you might confess Jesus but you are still working as if He hasn’t done enough. Some of you are so concerned about your performance or motivated by the prospect of not measuring up that you miss the truly good news of the cross. Dear friend, there is no earning left to do! Jesus paid for your sins in full and He offers you His righteousness in full as well. Its an exchange with no downside for you. This wonderful, sacrificial and kind act forms the very motivation behind our worship. We gather on Easter Sunday (and every Lord’s Day) to exalt a God who loved us so much that He would take our place in death so that we could enjoy life that He alone rightly possesses.

April 5

“I Know That My Redeemer Lives”

Romans 8:38-39

I want to begin this entry with a personal testimony. Transparently, we attempt not to get too autobiographical in these entries but I simply can't help myself today. My assumption is that all of you have songs that are more meaningful to you because of the personal history they evoke. Perhaps you heard a song on your first date with a spouse or you remember a worship song that God used to encourage you during a dark season. If so, you know what its like to be drawn back to another time when you hear the melody once again.

The Bobo family cherishes this precious song. Two years ago this month, my oldest daughter (Analeigh) and Ashley sang this song during worship a mere two weeks before her heart surgery. I recall the joy and pain of that moment very well. It was a hard season for us (many of you know the feeling!) but God met us during that trying time in the words of this precious song.

As we gathered to worship a few years ago, I remember hearing the girls sing these words, “I know that my Redeemer lives, what hope this sweet assurance gives. That He who gave His life for me arose with healing in His wings.” Frankly, I can't even type those words now without shedding a tear!

One thing that moment in life taught me is that the fact that Christ died and rose again to secure everlasting life for us is precious in hard times. The fact is that I didn't know what tomorrow may hold then, and I don't now. I'm not sure what is around the corner, I don't know how momentary circumstances might play out but I do know that Christ died and rose so that I will rise as well. I know that in the resurrection, Jesus demonstrated His power over my greatest enemy, death, and He promised that I would prevail, in Him, over the grave as well.

It is because our Redeemer lives that we have hope because He is the One who provides us with security for the days ahead. In fact, the Apostle Paul famously told us in Romans 8 that “nothing can separate us from the love of God that is (catch this church family) IN Christ Jesus” (emphasis mine). It is because our Redeemer has come back to life that we have security. If He were dead, we would be on our own and there would be no hope for future prospects in times of difficulty. If Jesus didn't come back to life then surgeries and sicknesses and risks should terrify us because they would bring us to the precipice of losing everything but because Jesus is alive, we can face all things with confidence, knowing that He has made it sure that we will be with Him forever.

Friend, do you know your Redeemer lives? When was the last time you simply meditated upon the fact that He is alive? Have you considered the rich blessings of faith? Do you believe that you are secure? These convictions won't stop trial and they won't totally prevent momentary sorrow but they will be an anchor to your soul as they provide the reminder that our future is secure and bright precisely because Jesus is alive.