

SERMON TITLE: Jesus Christ and Him Crucified
SCRIPTURE: 1 Corinthians 2:2

DATE: April 5, 2020
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Paul told his friends in Corinth, “I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified” (1 Corinthians 2:2). What does he mean by this? Certainly Christians have to think about other things. We can’t just walk around all day looking at a picture of Jesus on the cross. What is Paul getting at?

Paul wants his friends in Corinth to think of all of life in view of the cross. He wants them to think about their motives, relationships, addictions, hobbies, and everything in light of Christ crucified. But how do we do that? How do we look at all of life through the lens of the cross? How do we wear gospel glasses, and see the world from God’s perspective?

For starters, historically, the cross wasn’t a good thing. It was violent, barbaric, and dehumanizing. It was the Roman Empire that perfected crucifixion as torture, and also a warning. It told the watching world, “Go ahead, disagree with us, and see what happens. We’re in charge. You only have one option: submission.” Because of this, the Greek philosopher Cicero said that dignified and respectable people shouldn’t even say the word “cross” out loud in public (“stauros” in Greek). But Paul’s desire is the *exact* opposite: “I want you to be definitively known by the cross of Jesus!” But still, what does this look like?

Tim Keller writes, “Because of the gospel, and at the cross, you are more sinful than you could ever dare imagine, and you are more loved and accepted than you could ever dare hope – at the same time.” So, yes, historically Rome was oppressive and violent, and crucifixion was a primary example of that. But the Bible explains that it’s our sin that truly made the cross horrendous. It’s our rebellion against God that gives the cross its deeper ugliness. And, at the same time, the cross is also the apex of God’s revelation of his love. In Romans 5, Paul writes, “God shows us his *love* for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” So the cross is about our sin, but it’s more so about God’s love. Because the sinless Jesus took the place of sinners at the cross, God lovingly and freely accepts us.

At the cross, God doesn’t accept you based on whether or not you feel spiritual. He doesn’t accept you based on your track record. He loves you based on what Jesus has accomplished, not what you might accomplish. God’s grace and love to you is based on Jesus’ performance and not yours. Again, it’s here at Calvary where these two realities collide – our sin, and God’s love. And God’s love wins.

But how do we take this, and see all of life differently because of the cross? Let’s push the metaphor of “gospel glasses” a little bit. For our purposes, these glasses should actually be bifocals. Think about it: If the cross is the place where our sin and God’s love collide, and God’s love wins out – then that means we should look at everything by thinking “Hmm, I’m part of the problem here” (that’s the smaller bottom part of the lens), and at the same time, we should think, “But wait! God’s love is redeeming this!” (that’s the bigger part of the lens). You should never think about your money, your relationships, your addictions, or your hobbies just in terms of your sin or God’s love. Rather, if you look at them through the lens of the cross, you will look at them rightly, and you will see, not only the mess you’ve made but also the redemption God is working out. This is how our gospel glasses are bifocal.

So, for Paul and his friends in Corinth, the cross reframes the divisions in the church by reminding them that they’re not more worthy of grace than the people they disagree with. The cross means that God doesn’t judge you, so now you’re set free from judging each other in court or in regard to food or wine. The cross is the place where we see God’s love most intimately, so now we don’t need to look for intimacy in temporary immortality. That’s how Paul wants them to run everything through the filter of the Christ crucified. And we should do the same.

We should think about how the cross should inform our marriage and our parenting. We should ask about how the cross should change our work-life. We should ponder how the cross should change our relationships with the people who bother us. We learn the art of filtering everything through Christ crucified. That’s what Paul is wanting when he says, “I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified” (1 Corinthians 2:2). Here are three examples:

1. "What is God really like?" We can know what God is like through Scripture, through creation, through the Spirit inside of us, and through the Spirit in each other, but God's voice is never louder than when he speaks at the cross. And the cross is proof that God is not scared to get his hands dirty. Remember, the cross is messy and violent and shameful, but that doesn't deter God. So, what does the cross say about who he is? Because of the cross, we know that God is just yet loving, holy yet gracious, pure yet forgiving, and righteous yet compassionate.
2. "What about my past?" How should you think about it? Maybe your past is like a ghost that haunts you, and you want to erase it from your memory. Or maybe your past is like your trophy case where you try to show off everything you've achieved. But both of these have to bow before the cross. Why? Because the cross is where I know I'm accepted, my past is neither a burden that can weigh me down nor a stepstool to gain me favor.
3. "What about my future?" What's going to happen? When is it going to happen? As you think about the future, are you filled with depression, anxiety, or worry? Or do you have a flippant confidence, presumption, and indifference? Regardless of what our reflex response is to looking forward on the horizon, we have to submit it to the cross. And furthermore, when we think about the future, we're not just thinking about this life, but the next one. And it's only gospel that can change our outlook of the future. Because of the cross and resurrection, I am eternally secure in God's love, no matter if my earthly life meets pains or successes.

So, what might it look like for you to live a cruciformed life - a life shaped by the love of God in the cross of Jesus? What does it mean for you to think about your days and weeks and loves and motives all in view of Jesus' death? This is a patient, lifelong journey to think like this. And it is simultaneously an invitation to a life of sacrificial love, just like Jesus. And wearing these gospel glasses, seeing the world through them, and thinking and living based on what we see - it's one massive act of faith. So, God, grant us the grace to trust you for these things. Let it be.

- How does the cross help us think about what God is like?
- When you think about your past, how are you tempted to think about it wrongly?
- When you think about the future, how are you tempted to think about it wrongly?
- Who is someone you know who patiently sees all of life in light of what Jesus has done?
- What part of this message stood out to you the most?
- What is a present area of life that you need to run through the filter of Christ crucified?