

THE CROSS The Power

1 Corinthians 1:18 & 1 Corinthians 2:1-5

April 7, 2019

This morning we are going to continue our look at The Cross as we head into the Easter season. We have talked about God's *plan* for using the cross to save us from our sins, we've looked at the *prophecies* from way back in Isaiah about the suffering servant who would save us, we looked at the *purpose* of Jesus' death on the cross and we've looked at the *place* of his death and why it changed the world. Today, we are going to look at the *power* of the cross and what that means for our lives.

In Bible there is this guy named Paul who says that the message of the cross is foolishness to those who don't believe, but for those who do believe it makes complete sense. Has there ever been a time when you didn't understand something and then, poof, all of a sudden you understood it and your mind was blown? It's one of those things where "you don't know what you don't know", right? You may not have known what you were missing until you understood it. We've all been there at some point, right.

What Paul is trying to say here is that those who don't yet believe and understand the saving message of Jesus and the cross, the whole message feels like the gibberish of a language that they don't understand. They don't know what they don't know, and what they don't know is that the cross has the power to save them and restore their broken relationship with God. They don't even know they have a broken relationship that needs fixed! The power of the cross can bring life to empty people, healing to sick people, love to lonely people, hope to abandoned people and life to spiritually dead people. The cross has the power to bridge the gap between us and God.

The cross has the power to bridge the gap between us and God.

And Paul is on a man on a mission to tell people about the power of the cross. He has a heart for those who are "headed for destruction." And his desire is to help them understand and experience the Great News. He was the instrument that brought clarity to the people about their need for Jesus. If Paul hadn't gone to them then they wouldn't have known. They would still be lost.

A few years ago I began having trouble seeing. I was reading a lot so I thought maybe my eyes were just kind of tired. So, I went to the eye doctor and she sat me behind that thing where they keep putting different lenses in front of you and asking which one makes the image seem clearer. If you've had an eye exam you know what I'm talking about. Well, as they put different lenses in front of my eyes and I realized that I had a problem that could be fixed. The eye doctor was the instrument used to show me that I both had a problem and how I could fix that problem.

Paul was the eye doctor for these people and we are called to be the eye doctor for other people too. They didn't know that they were separated from God by sin and needed Jesus to restore that relationship with God, just like I didn't know that not being able to see clearly far away was a problem. Paul had to tell them that they had a problem and that he knew the solution. He was the instrument God used to show them the power of the cross; the power that saves people from their sins also gives us the power to share our story with others so that they can see that they too need Jesus.

The cross gives us power to be an instrument God uses to change the lives of others.

The next part of this passage is one that I think it key to all of this. Paul talks about how he came to the people in humility to share with them in plain words and language the story that he had to tell. While the cross gave him the power to share with others about salvation, he didn't want to hold that power over people. He didn't come in on his high horse, holier-than-thou and explain that he knew the secret and if people would just be more like him then they would be saved. He didn't come in telling them how awful and terrible they were compared to him and how they needed to repent or they'd be doomed. He didn't come in as somebody in charge with authority and use that authority to demand they change their ways. He came in weakness, timid and trembling, humbly sharing his own story of having been lost and not being found. He came in an attitude of somebody who used to be where they are now; he came to them as somebody just like them.

Jesus was very much the same way. He was God but, humbled Himself to the place of a servant in order to show people the way to God. He didn't blast the person suffering in sin rather, He served them and showed them love and compassion that led them to an understanding of who He was. In Matthew 20: 25-26 Jesus talked about this to His own disciples

where He tells them that rulers lord their power over people and show authority, but that He wants them to go to people humbly like servants.

The power we are given is to be used humbly.

We are not called to use our standing or authority to force people to believe in Jesus. We aren't called to use laws or political power to try and force people to act like Christians. We are called to follow Jesus' example of humble servant leadership that drew people into a relationship with him.

Think about it like this – nobody likes to be told what to do. We don't – not kids, not adults – nobody. We have to be able to share in a way that allows people, empowers people, to make their own decision about their relationship with God. People will respond when you share your story with them and they can see your vulnerability and the change in your life.

It can be intimidating to tell your story, I know. It is hard and we are concerned we won't know the right thing to say or the right way to say it. We get worried about follow-up questions and if we will know the right answers. It can be a scary thing! I have good news for you though – you are not alone! When we trust in Jesus and commit our lives to Him we are given a gift that helps us to be able to share our story – the Holy Spirit. Paul talks about it here in these verses where He says that He relied on the Holy Spirit so that the people wouldn't rely on him, but rather rely on God!

There's the good news for you about telling your story – it's not your job to save people! You're not that powerful! You and I are given the power from the cross to have our lives changed and share our life-changing story with others – but it's God's job, He has the power, to save people. We are called to share our story and let the Holy Spirit both guide us and open up the heart of others to hear our story. God saves people through the cross, we just have to tell people about it and then let Him do His job.

The power we are given is the Holy Spirit working through us to tell our story.

So, what if we are really bad at talking and telling our story is something that freaks us out? The good news is that words are not the only way to tell a story. In fact, for some people, words are meaningless and they won't even hear you. As a follower of Jesus your life can be a story, the way you act can be a story, the way you love people and treat people can be the power of your story. Not all stories are told with words, some of the best stories ever told are the ones told in silence with actions.

We don't all have the same way of telling our story because we don't all have the same gifts to use to tell that story. Here is the key thing though – we all are called to tell our story. No matter how we share our story we are called to be a light in the darkness.

The power we have is the power to be a light in the darkness.

We all have the light of the world inside of us when we become Christians. There is a little piece of it that we each get and then we are required to let it shine in the dark world around us. We don't hide it away so that nobody else can see it. We don't build a wall around it so that people can look in and see this light that we have. We aren't supposed to keep it to ourselves, we are supposed to spread it. Our light has the power to light other lights. The power of the cross is the power to shine a bright light into the dark world that people cannot keep their eyes off of. We can work towards driving out darkness with the light of the world given to us through the cross!

The cross has power. It had power when Jesus died on it and it has power today. The cross began as a symbol to take power away from people, to take life away from people. Jesus turned that idea on its head when He was able to use the power of the cross to be the bridge from us to God. It was no longer a symbol of death, it was now a symbol of new life in Jesus. It was a symbol of restoration and hope. We don't wear a cross or get cross tattoos to celebrate death, we get them to celebrate life! The cross has the power to save us and to bring us back to God. With the guidance of the Holy Spirit we are given the power to share our story and to share the light of Jesus in a dark world. Together, as a body of believers sharing our stories and sharing our lights we have the opportunity to change the whole world!

COMMUNION