This morning as we continue with our Old Time Gospel Sermon Series I would like to preach An Old Time Gospel Message on The Old Rugged Cross.

I would like for you to open your Bibles to the 23rd Chapter of the Gospel of Luke and let’s read verse 33.

LUKE 23:33

33 When they came to the place called the Skull, there they crucified Him, along with the criminals---one on His right, the other on His left.

Let us pray.

INTRODUCTION

The CROSS is the pivotal point in all of history. The Old Testament points us to the cross. The New Testament points us back to the cross.

The CROSS is the foundation of our CHRISTIAN FAITH!
NO CROSS…………………….NO FORGIVENESS OF SINS.
NO CROSS…………………….NO SALVATION.
NO CROSS…………………….NO HOPE OF ETERNAL LIFE.
NO CROSS…………………….NO FUTURE.

The CROSS is the “great divider.”

The CROSS divides the CHRISTIAN from the NON-CHRISTIAN.

The SAVED from the LOST.

Those who WALK IN DARKNESS from those who WALK IN THE LIGHT.

When this life is over every man will be judged by his ACCEPTANCE or his REJECTION of THE CROSS.

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Throughout all generations THE CROSS has been at the very heart of all TRUE GOSPEL PREACHING.

On the day of PENTECOST, the apostle Peter stood before thousands of people and declared,

*Men of Israel, listen to this: Jesus of Nazareth was a man credited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did among you through Him, as you yourselves know. This man was handed over to you by God’s set purpose and foreknowledge;*
And you, with the help of wicked men, PUT HIM TO DEATH BY NAILING HIM TO THE CROSS. But God raised Him from the dead, freeing Him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on Him.

(Acts 2:22-24)

The Apostle Paul also preached THE CROSS.

For Christ did not send me to baptize but to preach the gospel—not with words of human wisdom, lest THE CROSS OF CHRIST be emptied of its power.

For the MESSAGE OF THE CROSS is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the POWER OF GOD.  (I Corinthians 1:17,18)

And in Galatians 6:14 Paul said, “May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.”

In Acts 8:5 we read where PHILIP “went down to a city in Samaria and proclaimed the CHRIST there.”

Throughout the ages THE CROSS has been the central theme of all true gospel preaching.

THE CROSS was at the heart of the gospel preached by all the apostles.

Livingston, Carrey, Judson, Spurgeon, Sunday, Campbell and Stone………..they all PREACHED THE CROSS OF CHRIST.

It is the message of the CROSS and that message alone that has the power to save the soul of a man.
As we now go back to our scripture text in the Luke 23:33
I want to focus your attention on FOUR KEY WORDS in this verse.

THERE.............THEY.............CRUCIFIED...........HIM

There is a lot of meaning in each of those four words. So let’s look at each one of them individually.

I. THERE ......vs. 33

The Greeks called it *topos kranion*.

The Jews called it *Golgotha*.

The Romans called *Calvary*.

But to all it was known as “*the place of the Skull*.”

Why was this place called “*the place of the skull*?”
Jerome, an early Christian author, said, “It was a place of public executions where the skulls of many men were left lying on the hillside.”

Others have suggest it got its name from the actual appearance of the hill itself. Having seen this place with my own eyes I can tell you the hill bears a striking resemblance to a human skull. Two caverns in the hill give the appearance of eye sockets. A rock protruding from the hill looks like a nose. And a crack running the length of the base of the hill looks like a mouth.
There were many places that played a part in our Lord’s earthly life.

There was BETHLEHEM……NAZARETH……JERUSALEM and BETHANY.

There were the JUDEAN HILLSIDES and the SHORES OF GALILEE and THE MOUNT OF OLIVES.

There were the SYNAGOGUES and the GREAT TEMPLE in Jerusalem.

All of these places were significant to Jesus, and yet all of them were mere stepping stones along the path to that ugly hill just outside the city wall of Jerusalem.

From the day Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden of Eden that hill was Jesus’ destiny.

From the day He was born in a manger in the little town of Bethlehem, every step he took led Him closer and closer to “the place of the Skull.”

II. There THEY……..vs.33

Who crucified JESUS? Whom does “THEY” refer to?

Well the immediate response would be “THEY” refers to the ROMAN SOLDIERS.

Jesus was executed in a land under ROMAN RULE by the orders given by a ROMAN GOVERNOR, named Pontius Pilate. And the actual execution was carried out by ROMAN SOLDIERS.
But “THEY” also refers to the JEWS. The ROMANS executed Jesus at the PROMPTING and INSISTENCE of the Jewish people.

At the trial, Pontius Pilate washed his hands of any responsibility in the death of Jesus, and the JEWS took full responsibility upon themselves by saying, “Let His blood be on us and on our children.” (Matthew 27:25)

But “THEY” doesn’t just mean the ROMANS and the JEWS, it also means JUDAS ISCARIOT and THE RELIGIOUS LEADERS.

Then Satan entered JUDAS, called ISCARIOT, one of the Twelve. And Judas went to the CHIEF PRIESTS and the OFFICERS OF THE TEMPLE GUARD and discussed with them how he might betray JESUS. They were delighted and agreed to give him money. He consented, and watched for an opportunity to hand Jesus over to them when no crowd was present. (LUKE 22:3-6)

But “THEY” doesn’t just mean the ROMANS, THE JEWS, THE RELIGIOUS LEADERS and JUDAS ISCARIOT.

“THEY” also refers to YOU and ME. We were responsible for the MURDER of JESUS CHRIST.

I Corinthians 15:3 For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that CHRIST died for our sins according to the Scriptures.

II Corinthians 5:21 God made Him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God.

You see, we can point the finger of blame at the ROMANS....and at the JEWS and at the RELIGIOUS LEADERS and at JUDAS ISCARIOT. But we must also point the finger of blame at ourselves. “THEY” means YOU. “THEY” means me!
III. THERE THEY CRUCIFIED…….. vs. 33

The term “crucifixion” comes from the Latin word, *crucifixio* or *crucifixus* which means “to affix to a cross.”

Death by crucifixion originated in Persia, which is modern day IRAQ. From there it spread throughout the ancient world. The Romans were the ones who perfected the art of crucifixion into the barbaric form of execution we associate with the death of Christ.

After mercilessly beating Jesus beyond recognition, the Roman soldiers forced Jesus to carry a cross through the narrow streets of Jerusalem to Golgotha’s hill some 500 yards from Pilate’s courtyard.

The cross itself consisted of four main parts.

The UPRIGHT or vertical part of the cross was called the STIPE.

The CROSSBAR or horizontal part of the cross was called the PATIBULUM. This is the part of the cross that Jesus would have carried. The Patibilum was approximately 5’ to 6’ wide........and weighed anywhere from 90 to 125 pounds.

To prolong the agony of a crucifixion, the cross had a small wooden seat called the SEDILE or the SEDULUM.

And approximately 3 feet below the SEDULUM was a small acacia wood platform the crucifixion victim would use to push himself upward.
Upon arriving at Golgotha, Jesus was quickly forced to the ground. With a heavy wooden mallet in one hand and a 7”-8” long construction spike in the other, a Roman soldier drove a nail straight through Jesus’ wrist into the rugged timbers of the patibulum. Taking another spike the soldier would do the same with the other wrists.

Once the nails were driven, the Roman Centurion would do a quick inspection to insure Jesus was firmly secured to the patibulum. Then the Centurion gave the order for JESUS to be hoisted up on the STIPE, the upright portion of the cross.

Once Jesus was fixed in position upon the cross, a soldier would then place one of JESUS’ feet on top of the other and force the feet straight downward in a 90 degree angle.

Holding JESUS’ feet in that painful and uncomfortable position, another soldier would take a mallet and another construction spike and drive it through both feet into the STIPE.

In order to breathe, JESUS would either have to pull himself up with HIS arms or push Himself up with HIS feet. Either of these motions would cause excruciating pain because the entire weight of JESUS’ body was centralized at the points of those three nails.

For SIX HOURS ………from 9:00 in the morning until 3:00 in the afternoon, Jesus suffered on that cross.

The weight of the body, pulling down on the outstretched arms and shoulders of Jesus, would cause the intercostals muscles lining the chest to fix in an inhaled state making it almost impossible to exhale.

This would cause an onset of a condition known as hypercarbia which is the presence of dangerously high levels of carbon dioxide in the blood.
As the hours drug on, Jesus’ legs and arms would have become so cramped it would have been virtually impossible for Jesus to push Himself up to take in oxygen.

Covered in blood and sweat, insects were drawn to Jesus’ eyes, ears, mouth and nostrils. And predatory birds lighted upon His shoulders and picked at His open flesh.

As Jesus’ lungs filled with pericardial fluids, His heart had to work harder and harder to pump blood. Finally at 3 o’clock in the afternoon, Jesus drew His last breath……..and committed His Spirit into the hands of His heavenly Father.

IV. THERE THEY CRUCIFIED HIM. vs.33

Many great men have died in the past. Many great men and women have given their lives for others on the battlefields of this world.

Many innocent men and women have been martyred for their faith. And although they were NOT sinless, they were not guilty of anything worthy of death.

But there was something UNIQUELY DIFFERENT about JESUS.

Perhaps no one said it better than that ROMAN CENTURION who had played a key role in the execution of Jesus. Here was a rough, calloused, hard-hearted soldier. A man who had participated in and witnessed the deaths of countless numbers of men throughout his military career.

And yet when Jesus died, the Centurion saw something different than he had ever seen before. When Jesus drew His last breath, the Centurion said……..

“Surely this man was the Son of God.”
For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever should believe on Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that through His Son, the world might be saved.

For God demonstrates His own love for us in this, that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us.

There

They

Crucified

Him

On a hill far away, stood an old rugged cross, the emblem of suffering and shame. And I love that old cross, where the dearest and best, for a world of lost sinners was slain.

So I’ll cherish the old rugged cross. Til my trophies at last I lay down. I will cling to the old rugged cross, And exchange it some day for a crown.
If you are not a Christian you need to know something.

You need to know JESUS LOVES you.

In fact JESUS LOVES YOU SO MUCH He was willing to die on that cross for all the sinful things you have ever done ..........and all the sinful things you have ever said........and all the sinful things you have ever thought.

JESUS LOVES YOU SO MUCH He was willing to DIE so you could live. He was willing to SUFFER the agony of the CROSS so you wouldn’t have to SUFFER the agony of Hell.

Won’t you come to THE CROSS OF CALVARY today/tonight......just as they did two thousand years ago, NOT to crucify JESUS, but to CONFESS His wonderful name?

Won’t you come to THE CROSS OF CALVARY, not to spit upon JESUS, not to MOCK HIM and RIDICULE HIM, but to be baptized into Christ for the remission of your sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Won’t you come to THE CROSS OF CALVARY, not to place a crown of thorns upon Jesus’ head, but to crown Him as the KING OF KINGS and the LORD OF LORDS in your life?

Jesus loves you.......Heaven is prepared for you.... Won’t you come and accept Jesus as your personal Savior today/tonight?