The Meaning of The Cross

If someone rescued you from a burning house fire, you would never forget the one who saved your life would you?

If someone pulled you out of mangled, burning vehicle just before it exploded, you would always remember the brave, heroic act of the person who saved you wouldn’t you?

If a cold blooded killer were about to shoot you and someone jumped in front of you and took the bullet instead, you would never forget the loving sacrifice of that individual would you?

Two thousand years ago the greatest Man who ever lived rescued you from the eternal fires of hell........He pulled you out of the “wreckage” of a life mangled in sin........He stepped in front of you and “took the bullet” that was meant for you.

Do you remember?  Do you remember?

Is it possible we have become so “familiar” with the “factual details” about the death, burial and resurrection of Christ that we have lost our appreciation of what Jesus did for us on the cross?

In these weeks leading up to Easter Sunday, I would like to preach a four-part series of messages on “Remembering The Cross.”
In today's message we are going to be focusing on “The Meaning of The Cross.”

Please turn with me to the Gospel of Luke, chapter twenty three. And let's read verses 32-43.


32 There were also two others, criminals, led with Him to be put to death.

33 And when they had come to the place called Calvary, there they crucified Him, and the criminals, one on the right hand and the other on the left.

34 Then Jesus said, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do.” And they divided His garments and cast lots.

35 And the people stood looking on. But even the rulers with them sneered, saying, “He saved others; let Him save Himself if He is the Christ, the chosen of God.”

36 The soldiers also mocked Him, coming and offering Him sour wine,

37 and saying, “If You are the King of the Jews, save Yourself.”

38 And an inscription also was written over Him in letters of Greek, Latin, and Hebrew:

39 Then one of the criminals who were hanged blasphemed Him, saying, “If You are the Christ, save Yourself and us.”

40 But the other, answering, rebuked him, saying, “Do you not even fear God, seeing you are under the same condemnation?

41 And we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds; but this Man has done nothing wrong.”

42 Then he said to Jesus, “Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom.”

43 And Jesus said to him, “Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise.”
Introduction To Today's Message

We see crosses everywhere. We see crosses sitting atop Church steeples all across our great land. We see crosses along highways marking the sight where someone died in an automobile accident.

We see little gold crosses hanging from gold chains around the necks of precious, innocent little girls as they enter their Sunday School class with their Bible tucked under their arm.

We also see gold crosses hanging around the necks of lewd, gyrating rock stars who are role models of everything vulgar and indecent about our society.

We see thousands upon thousands of white crosses in Arlington National cemetery marking the graves of brave men and women who gave their lives for our country.

There are crosses everywhere. But what does it all mean? Has the cross been reduced to nothing more than a “religious symbol” or “a decoration” or a “piece of jewelry?”

What Is The Meaning of The Cross?
First of all........

I. The Cross Is The **MEASURE** of Man's **SIN** (vs. 39-41)

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1. Just how bad is sin? We might point to the Holocaust and Hitler’s extermination of over 6 million Jews. Or we might point to serial killer John Wayne Gayce’s murder of 33 innocent boys. Or we might point to the brutal beheadings of innocent people by the Islamic terrorist group known as ISIS and say, “that's how bad sin can be.”

2. When it comes to “sin” we can easily identify the awfulness of someone else's sins. In fact, we tend to use someone else's sins to “measure our own.”

   If you stand an “ugly woman” next to an “uglier woman” does that make the ugly woman pretty?

   If you stand a sinner next to someone who has committed seemingly worse sins, does that make the sinner not a sinner? Absolutely not!
4. We excuse our sins. We rationalize our sins. We blame others for our sins. We minimize our sins. But if you and I want to see just how bad sin really is, DON'T LOOK AT THE SINS OF SOMEONE ELSE, LOOK AT THE CROSS.........LOOK AT THE CROSS!

5. Think back to Calvary's hill that day: 3 MEN.......3 CROSSES......3 EXECUTIONS.

   * Two were CRIMINALS. One was THE CHRIST.
   * Two were GUILTY. One was PERFECTLY INNOCENT.
   * Two were GETTING WHAT THEY DESERVED. And One got WHAT WE DESERVED.

6. When we look at THE CROSS OF CHRIST we see the true measure of just how bad our sins are in the eyes of GOD. GOD hates SIN! GOD hates ALL SIN! There is NO SIN God hates “less” than any other sin.

   From GOSSIP to GRUMBLING......From PRIDE to PROFANITY.....from LUST to LAZINESS.......from STEALING to SEXUAL IMMORALITY.......GOD HATES ALL SIN!
7. The cross exposes the truth that everyone of us are sinners. Everyone of us has broken the commands of God. Everyone of us has rebelled against God. Everyone of us were once enemies of God.

8. **The Cross Is The MEASURE of Man's SINS.**

Secondly......

II. **The Cross Is The MESSAGE of GOD'S LOVE (vs. 46,47)**

*Luke 23:46,47 (NKJV)*  
And when Jesus had cried out with a loud voice, He said, “Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit.' Having said this He breathed His last. So when the centurion saw what had happened, he glorified God saying, “Certainly this was a righteous Man!”

1. Last fall our son-in-law did such a sweet thing to express his love for our daughter Tammy. In the huge “grassy” lot out behind their house, he took his push lawn mower and mowed the words “I LOVE YOU” in the grass.

Talking about “melting someone's heart!”
2. When GOD wanted to express how much He truly loves us He left His message on THE CROSS.

   John 3:16 (NKJV) “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.”

   Romans 5:8 (NKJV) But God demonstrates His own love toward us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

3. How can anyone look at the cross and not see God's handwriting saying, “I LOVE YOU” in big, bold, BLOOD RED letters?

   God's message is CLEAR: “I hate your sin, but I love you, the sinner.” “I don't want you to perish in your sins, I want to save you.”

4. How could God's message of love be any clearer than to offer His precious, only begotten Son as the sacrifice for our sins?

   The Cross is the MEASURE of MAN'S SIN.
   The Cross is the MESSAGE of GOD'S LOVE.
Thirdly........

III. The Cross Is The **METHOD** of Our **SALVATION**

1. If one of our local judges here in eastern North Carolina were to allow a murderer to be set free with no prison time or punishment, we would think that judge was corrupt wouldn’t we?

2. How then can GOD set a sinner free from the penalty of His sins and not be unjust or unfair? He can do it because He is both the Law giver and the One who justifies those who break His laws. How does He do it?

   **Hebrews 9:22 (NKJV)** And according to the law almost all things are purified with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no remission.

3. That word “remission” means to “send away.” The idea of “sending away our sin” is a reminder of something that was practiced in Old Testament times.

   The High Priest would select a “scape goat” and sprinkle blood on the animal, symbolizing the sins of the people. The scape goat was then sent out into the wilderness never to be seen again because it would attract wolves who would devour it. And thus, symbolically, the sins of the people were “sent away” or “carried away.”
4. That is what Jesus Christ did for you and me. He became “our scapegoat,” “our substitute.” And by the shedding of His own blood, He “sent away” or “carried away” our sins.

5. And it is only through Christ's shed blood on the cross that you and I can the forgiveness of our sins and the salvation of our souls.

The Cross Is The MEASURE of MAN'S SIN.
The Cross Is The MESSAGE of GOD'S LOVE.
The Cross Is The METHOD of Our SALVATION.

And finally....

IV. The Cross Is The MEANS to Our VICTORY

I Corinthians 15:57 (NKJV)  But thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our LORD Jesus Christ.

O victory in Jesus, my Savior forever. He sought me and bought me with His redeeming blood. He loved me 'ere I knew Him, and all my love is due Him. He plunged me to victory beneath the cleansing flood.

1. How do we overcome the POWER and PENALTY of SIN?

   By the precious blood of the Lamb!
2. How do we overcome the **POWER and DOMINION** of SATAN? By the precious blood of the Lamb!

3. How do we overcome the **STING and SORROW and GRIEF of DEATH**? By the precious blood of the Lamb!

4. Jesus won the victory over these three great enemies and through the **POWER OF THE CROSS** we can live in victory!

**CONCLUSION**

In Oklahoma, someone saw this poster promoting a Red Cross blood drive:

"I gave my blood.
Christ gave His.
I gave a pint.
He gave all.
The needle is small, sharp.
The nails were large, dull.
The table soft, restful.
The cross rough, painful.
The nurses kind, gentle.
The soldiers cruel, mean.
The crowd applauds my sacrifice.
"They that passed by reviled him."
Mine is for O Positive.
His for positively all.
Mine, at best, will prolong a Life FOR A WHILE.
His, without doubt, can save ALL forever."

To the world the cross may be nothing more than a religious symbol or a piece of jewelry. But to us the cross means the difference between **LIFE and DEATH******TRIUMPH and TRAGEDY******HEAVEN and HELL.

1 Corinthians 15:57 (NKJV) But thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our LORD Jesus Christ.