

Introduction:

- Joshua open this three part series on the cross last week. Sin is killing us, God wants us to live, God volunteers as tribute.
- The cross is a picture of violence, yet the key to peace;
 - A picture of suffering, yet the key to healing;
 - A picture of death, yet the key to life;
 - A picture of utter weakness, yet the key to power;
 - A picture of capital punishment, yet the key to mercy and forgiveness;
 - A picture of vicious hatred, yet the key to love;
 - A picture of supreme shame, yet the Christian's supreme boast. By David Watson
- **APPLICATION** In just one frame, the cross, the most vile act of violence, hatred and shame becomes the scene for the most profound expression of love, mercy and forgiveness. In the cross we have both a portrait of man's hatred for God and of God's love for man. It is the cross of Christ, and it is horrifically beautiful. *"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"* (1 Corinthians 1:18).
- The cross is where the two worlds of man's guilt and God's innocence collides!
- This morning we will look at the dark side of the cross, the bright side of the cross and the center of the cross.

I. The Dark Side Of The Cross...This is what I deserve.

- A. We must see the dark side of the cross in order that we may grateful for what God has done for us.
 1. In the Christian faith, particularly in our culture today we lose sight of what it is about.
 2. The cross to many is just another T shirt logo or piece of pretty jewelry.
 3. Until we experience the terror of the cross we will never enjoy the freedom of the cross!
 4. According to history and archeology the Persians were the first to use the cross, and the Egyptians, and Assyrians adopted later it but it was the Romans who perfected it. The dark side of the cross encompasses four things: Shame, punishment, death, and a message.
- B. Shame - it is not just a feeling of shame but it means to be disgraced.
 1. We did this to ourselves. God had nothing to do with it. We brought it upon ourselves by our own choice. With shame comes: mocking, rejection, alienation/loneliness.
 - le. The pet who has an accident. The child who disobeys. It has to do with something spoken.
 - le. Adam and Eve died as a result of what had been spoken.
 2. The cross brought shame.
 - a) This form of death was also particularly shameful. The victim was stripped naked and nailed to a cross in a public place, often along roadsides so everyone could see them and mock them as they passed by.

- b) The shame did not end with their life either, once dead the victim would often be denied burial and their body would be left on the cross to rot or to be picked apart by scavengers. Crucifixion in itself is a revolting practice that is designed to shame its victims.
 - c) "... *he endured the cross, disregarding its shame*..." (Hebrews 12:2, NLT)
 - d) "...*When he was hung on the cross, he took upon himself the curse for our wrongdoing. For it is written in the Scriptures, "Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree."*" (Galatians 3:13, NLT)
- 3. A curse is an utterance designed to bring harm by supernatural operation.
- 4. The curse/shame of the law initiates the punishment of sin/wrongdoing.
- C. Punishment - the dark side of the cross is that it deals with shame and ...punishment.
 - 1. The Romans perfected the cross.
 - a) Crucifixion does no damage to major organs, nor does it cause severe amounts of blood loss. The benefit of this particular form of punishment is that a person could survive for several days in intense agony.
 - b) It was consider shameful for a Roman to even think about crucifying another Roman. But anyone not a Roman you go right ahead and crucifying them.
 - 2. The curse/shame has come by way of our choices. Punishment comes because of wrong choices.
 - 3. God's holiness demands His wrath to be poured out upon us. Sin can't exist in the presence of God. That is why it must be banished and destroyed. It was never God's intention for us to die. God did not look forward to punishing us.
 - 4. Punishment comes as a way to justice. Jesus in His last few weeks with the disciples taught them.... "*the things that He must suffer.*" He suffered because of us!
 - a) "*But the fact is, it was our pains he carried—our disfigurements, all the things wrong with us. We thought he brought it on himself, that God was punishing him for his own failures. But it was our sins that did that to him, that ripped and tore and crushed him—our sins! He took the punishment, and that made us whole. Through his bruises we get healed.*" (Is 53:3-5 Message)
 - 5. Punishment has to do with making amends but since the debt is so great it can only be satisfied one way...death. Hell is that death for the unsaved. For ever separated from God.
- D. Death
 - 1. The cross has to do with shame (our wrong choices). The cross has to do with punishment. The cross has to do with death.
 - 2. A man sentenced to the cross was sentenced to die.
 - 3. And a only the man sentenced to die carried the cross.
 - 4. Ro. 6:23 The wages of sin is death. Death is what we earned. It is what we deserve.
- E. The Message of the dark side of the cross is: This is for all the law breakers.

1. The message is one of fear and the threat of condemnation.
2. The message is they shall not inherit life but receive death
3. Like Adam and Eve, they shall be driven from the Source/Presence of Life to reap death.

II. The Bright Side Of The Cross...This is what I receive when I believe!

- A. On the bright side of the cross is God's love.
 1. Though the cross speaks of our incredible shame it shouts with power the extreme love of God. *"For God so loved the world!"* Because He loved, he gave His son to take our place.
 2. We are not shamed we are accepted. Jesus carried our shame so we do not have to.
 3. He took our disgrace so that we would be accepted!
- B. On the bright side of the cross is God's mercy. Not punishment.
 1. Though He must punish sin, the cross is where punishment and mercy meet. And guess who wins? James 2:13 *"Mercy triumphs over judgement!"*
 2. We deserve punishment. But we get what we don't deserve when we believe.
 3. *"For God made Christ, who never sinned, to be the offering for our sin, so that we could be made right with God through Christ."* (2 Corinthians 5:21, NLT) *"For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him."* (2 Corinthians 5:21, NKJV)
 4. It is here that we are made righteous! When you believe this is what you receive! God declares us righteous not guilty!
- C. On the bright side of the cross is God's life!
 1. Eternal life! The life that flows from His throne causes us to live.
 2. He died to save us not to kill us.
 3. On one side is death. Death for the Son of God—but life for us. The good Shepherd lays down his life for his sheep. He is willing to die that we might live!
- D. On the bright side of the cross is also a message! This is for all who believe!
 1. *For who ever believes shall not perish but have eternal life.* Jn 3:16
 2. *"...I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.* NKJV (Jn 10:10).
 3. In faith, the bright side of the cross makes the dark side disappear.

III. The Center Of The Cross...This is the One who holds my heart, Jesus!

- A. At the center of the cross we find Jesus!
 1. The Lamb of God.
 2. The sacrifice for our sins. He carried our punishment, and our death.
- B. At the center of the cross is the Heart of God - He gave
 1. God loved so much that He gave...His Son.
- C. At the center of the cross is the Son of God - He chose
 1. *"There is no greater love than to lay down one's life for one's friends."* (John 15:13, NLT)
 2. *"but the free gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord."* (Romans 6:23, NLT)

D. At the center of the cross is where I have anchored...in Jesus.

1. *"This hope is a strong and trustworthy anchor for our souls. It leads us through the curtain into God's inner sanctuary."* (Hebrews 6:19, NLT)

Conclusion:

- *"The heart is defenseless against two things: undeserved mercy and unreserved kindness."* Allen Hood; p.248 Excellencies of Christ.
- The cross is a complete package. When you can see its dark side you are most grateful for what you have been saved from or for the One who lovingly took your place.
- Invitation