

The Essential Cross

The Lord's Table

By Mark Fitzpatrick

sermonaudio.com

Bible Text: John 12:31-33

Preached on: Sunday, April 6, 2008

Arann Reformed Baptist Fellowship

8 Hillview Grove,
Ballinteer, Dublin 16,
Republic of Ireland.

Website: www.markbarryfitz.blogspot.com

Online Sermons: www.sermonaudio.com/arann

Just turn briefly to John's gospel chapter 12 as we turn our attention to the Lord's Table. I am just going to read a couple of verses from John chapter 12. Just three verses: John 12 verses 31 to 33.

Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me. This he said, signifying what death he should die.¹

The cross is not only an important part of our faith, it is the part of our faith. It is the central part of our faith.

Someone has said, "Remove the cross and Christianity is meaningless."

As we meet together—and especially now as we come to the Lord's Table—this is the great high calling as Mick has reminded us in the message this morning. Our great calling is to proclaim the cross of Jesus.

Notice, first of all in these verses, the prediction of the cross. And you will notice the similarity in the lettering of my outline. But first of all we have the prediction of the cross. It was always in the mind of Jesus from the earliest days of his life right to the end. More than any other man he was a man born for death. The whole purpose why he came into this world was to die. And here we have Jesus just days before the cross predicting his death in this manner, telling his disciples, "I am going to die."

I think one of the reasons why we are not like Jesus—adding [?] very much true in what we have heard already this morning—is that we don't have the cross in our view. Jesus lived as he did because he lived in the context of the cross. We will only live like him if we live in the same way.

But then notice, secondly, the preeminence of the cross. There were thousands of crosses along these Jewish and Roman roads, thousands of them. It was almost something that was an every day event. It was an every day event. But there is something different about

¹ John 12:31-33

this cross, something preeminent about this cross, something central about this cross. All the other crosses just spoke of shame, just spoke of a crime. Christ's cross speaks of something far greater. It not only speaks of shame, but it speaks of victory over that shame, triumph over that shame and it is not... it does not speak of the shame of the one who hangs upon the cross, but it speaks of our shame, for the cross he bore did not belong to him. It was rightfully yours and rightfully mine. We are the ones who should have been stripped naked. We are the ones who should have been beaten. We are the ones who should have been exposed on that cross. Therefore Christ's cross is preeminent because of what it speaks.

Thirdly, the purpose of the cross; the prediction, the preeminence, the purpose of the cross. Three purposes of the cross: One, the defeat of Satan, verse 31. "Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out."² By what means? By an army of heaven? No, by the cross. Now the prince of this world will be cast out by the cross. The purpose of the cross is the defeat of Satan. Therefore when we read in the book of Revelation, "And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire,"³ it is all because of the cross.

The purpose of the cross, also, was the salvation of God's people. His will, his purpose was our blessing, to bless us. "Therefore I have come into the world to give life in all its fulness." And as he spoke those words he knew his life would have to be given that we would have that life in all its fulness. Every time Jesus spoke words of blessing, every time he healed, every time he raised Lazarus and others from the dead, he knew that all this meant that the cross was absolutely necessary.

We do good things. Sometimes we don't see, necessarily, an exit for us. Every time Jesus had done a good thing it mean the cross was essential.

Thirdly, the honor of God. Jesus desired to honor God. And when Jesus went to that cross that was his way of honoring God, even as God was pouring upon him the judgment of the law and the judgment of God. Jesus never stopped loving his God, never was bitter, never second guessed God. Even being showered with God's judgment and being filled with God's judgment he lovingly bore it just like someone who might be in—and it is impossible to give and maybe I shouldn't give an illustration—but as we will take the bad from those we love because we love them, Jesus never stopped loving his God.

The prediction of the cross, the preeminence of the cross, the purpose of the cross, the power of the cross. "If I be lived up from the earth, [I] will draw all men unto me."⁴ The power of the cross.

Men in Israel, men in Europe, men in America, men in Africa, men in Australia, "[I] will draw all men unto me." The power of the cross.

² John 12:31

³ Revelation 20:10

⁴ John 12:32

The penalty of the cross. He bore in his body my sin. He bore my sin in his own body on the tree.⁵ Every sin I committed this day, every sin I committed while sitting in that seat this day he bore on the cross in his own body.

The Scriptures talk about when we see him that there shall be a glory revealed within us. That is only true because when he was on the cross our shame was not just put upon him, but revealed in him. The penalty of the cross.

We suffer with sin. We hate sin, don't we? But there is a sense in which we love sin. Therefore sin is not a great burden to us. When we think of the penalty of the cross we must think of one who hated sin with such a passion that it was impossible for him to commit it. He is the one who bore all our ugliness, all our vileness, all our emptiness in himself.

The provision of the cross. God provided him Romans tells us. We had no way of getting to God. God's provision was his Son.

Abraham and Isaac as they walked over the mountain and Isaac says, "Father, we have the wood. We have the fire. But where is the lamb for the offering?"⁶

"God will provide."⁷ It is interesting the way it puts it. "God will provide himself a lamb. God will provide himself a lamb."⁸

Finally, the proclamation of the cross. Paul in Corinthians tells us, "For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew,"⁹ or literally you do proclaim, "the Lord's death till he come."¹⁰

The cross' prediction, its preeminent, its purpose, its power, its penalty, its provision and now let us turn to its proclamation. Amen.

⁵ See 1 Peter 2:24

⁶ See Genesis 22:7

⁷ Genesis 22:8

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ 1 Corinthians 11:26

¹⁰ Ibid.