

Christ Reformation Church

Tillamook, Oregon

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The Gospel of Matthew

The Cross

August 9, 2020

Sermon Text: Matthew 27

Scripture Reading: Hebrews 10:1-18

Last time we came to the 27th chapter of Matthew which is the account of the crucifixion of Christ. Before we move on to the 28th and final chapter of this Gospel, I want us to consider further the meaning of the cross.

If the cross was the most heinous crime ever to be found in history, which it was, it is also the most profound. Christ was crucified by wicked men, but His death was also ordained by God as the greatest victory and gift in history.

Acts 2:23 ESV this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men.

What does the cross of Christ mean? What happened in that event? Wicked people today hate the cross and offer up all kinds of false explanations of it.

1 Corinthians 1:18-24 ESV For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. (19) For it is written, “I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the discernment of the discerning I will thwart.” (20) Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? (21) For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe. (22) For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom, (23) but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, (24) but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.

Isn't it interesting that we see the emblem of the cross used today by

people who detest it? The most evil people are often seen with a necklace and cross around their neck. What they hate, they wear! To them it is a good luck charm, or merely a meaningless piece of jewelry.

What then is the cross? What happened there? I suspect that much more was accomplished than I comprehend, but I want us to consider two major things Christ accomplished for us at Calvary.

1. He met the demands of the Old Covenant
2. He opened the way for the New Covenant to be instituted

What Jeremiah announced centuries before, the Cross effected:

Jeremiah 31:31-33 ESV “Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, (32) not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, declares the LORD. (33) For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the LORD: I will put my law

within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

First then, Christ met the demands of the Old Covenant – the Law – on the cross. Paul says it very simply and plainly –

2 Corinthians 5:21 ESV For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

In fact, as we will see, this short verse identifies **BOTH** major accomplishments of the cross.

Christ *became sin* and He did it *for our sake*. The one who knew no sin, the spotless Lamb of God, was declared by the Father to be sin. Listen again to Paul-

Colossians 2:13-15 ESV And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, (14) **by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross.** (15) He disarmed the

rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him.

We will not consider this morning that third thing the cross accomplished – the defeat of Satan and his hordes – but you see that the Cross has many facets to it.

But notice particularly there in verse 14. How did God save us? How did He forgive us and raise us up with Christ? How did He do all this and still remain just? Did He *cancel the record of our debt* by just saying “Oh, let’s just forget about that”? Hardly. That would be something that it is impossible for God to do because He is holy and just.

We had a “record of debt” against us. God’s record books recorded all of our sin. “Accounts payable.” And what was the amount owed? *Death*. That was the Law’s demand.

Romans 5:12 ESV Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned—

Romans 6:23 ESV For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Galatians 3:10 ESV For all who rely on works of the law are under a curse; for it is written, “Cursed be everyone who does not abide by all things written in the Book of the Law, and do them.”

Cursed. That is man’s condition outside of Christ. To be cursed is to be cast out of Eden. It is to be cast away from God. It is to be in a hopeless condition without God. It is to be the object of all the Law’s pronouncements of guilt and condemnation. All who are without Christ are in this fearful state. Everyone is in it the moment we are born into this world. Hopeless. Haters of God. Slaves to sin and in spiritual darkness. That this is true is evident:

Romans 8:1 ESV There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

But obviously then those who are NOT in Christ Jesus are condemned.

Now, look at what Paul wrote to the Galatians:

Galatians 3:13-14 ESV Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree”— (14) so that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promised Spirit through faith.

See it? Christ was made to be sin for our sake, and here Paul puts it this way – *Christ became a curse for us*. This is one reason for the manner of His death – “on a tree.” It meant “cursed by God” to the Jews, according to the OT Scriptures.

So, what the Law pronounced US as – cursed by God – Christ became. Why? To meet the Law’s demands.

Look at Colossians 2 again:

Colossians 2:14 ESV by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross.

What was that “record of debt”? It was an entry, you might say, into heaven’s accounting books that said we owed God’s justice. Namely, that our debt for

sin was *death* – The wages of sin is death.

Now, I have always found this verse very interesting. Especially that phrase, *this he set aside, nailing it to the cross*. There was only one thing nailed to that cross – the Lord Jesus. There was no accounting paper nailed to it. No IOU paper. Christ was nailed to the cross and this is what Paul means. *Christ became our record of debt. Christ became that debt in that he took it upon Himself so that the penalty stood against HIM. So that the legal demands of the Law which cursed us and demanded our death, were required of Him. Not for his sin, but for ours*. You might say, and I think accurately, that Christ became guilty of OUR sin. Cursed.

And in all of this, by this means, Christ paid our debt and set us free from the curse of the Law. Which brings us then to the second thing the Cross effected:

The Establishment of the New Covenant

Matthew 26:27-28 ESV And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, “Drink of it, all of you, (28) for this is my blood of the

covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.

Christ's blood, His sacrifice and death on the Cross, not only satisfied perfectly the demands of the Old Covenant, but as you see here, His blood was also the blood of the New Covenant.

Now, I don't claim to fully understand this aspect of the Cross, but I do know that the Cross made it possible for the New Covenant to be made with Christ's people. The good news of the gospel, the blessings we enjoy in the New Covenant, could never have been brought about apart from the Cross.

Listen to it in Hebrews:

Hebrews 9:8-10 ESV By this the Holy Spirit indicates that the way into the holy places is not yet opened as long as **the first section** [ie, the Old Covenant] is still standing (9) (which is symbolic for the present age). According to this arrangement, gifts and sacrifices are offered that cannot perfect the conscience of the worshiper, (10) but deal only with food and drink and various washings, regulations for the

body imposed until the time of reformation.

And again"

Hebrews 9:11-15 ESV But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things that have come, then through the greater and more perfect tent (not made with hands, that is, not of this creation) (12) he entered once for all into the holy places, not by means of the blood of goats and calves **but by means of his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption.** (13) For if the blood of goats and bulls, and the sprinkling of defiled persons with the ashes of a heifer, sanctify for the purification of the flesh, (14) **how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God.**

(15) **Therefore he is the mediator of a new covenant,** so that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance, since a death has occurred that redeems them from the transgressions committed under the first covenant.

are forgiven and restores us to the original state Adam forfeited.

It is this second part of the Cross that is neglected by most professing Christians. Largely what is being taught in the churches is forgiveness of sins, Christ paying our debt and so on. And while there is much mention of being born again, in practice the new birth is pushed aside. The result is that:

1. People continue to live with an Old Testament mindset, striving to earn merit with God by works,
2. People deny the reality of the new birth, insisting that they can be genuine children of God because their sins are forgiven, despite the fact that they are walking in sin just as they always have.

But Jesus said that His blood is the “blood of the new covenant.” His work on the cross not only effects forgiveness of sins, but *establishes an entirely new identity for all who are in Christ. That is the difference between the Old and the New.* Look at it again:

2 Corinthians 5:17 ESV Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.

Hebrews 10:10-18 ESV And by that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. (11) And every priest stands daily at his service, offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. (12) But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God, (13) waiting from that time until his enemies should be made a footstool for his feet. (14) For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified. (15) And the Holy Spirit also bears witness to us; for after saying, (16) “This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, declares the Lord: I will put my laws on their hearts, and write them on their minds,” (17) then he adds, “I will remember their sins and their lawless deeds no more.” (18) Where there is forgiveness of these, there is no longer any offering for sin.

See it? Christ on the cross not only met the demands of the Law for us, He also established the New Covenant – an entirely new basis for our relationship with God. Not like the old one that condemned, but one in which our sins

2 Corinthians 5:21 ESV For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

Understand? The Cross effected an entirely new covenant which now defines our relationship to God AND who we now are. Christ was made to be sin to meet the Law's demands, BUT His blood also made us become "the righteousness of God." That was something entirely new, which the Old Covenant could never accomplish. And we are NEW creations. The new has come. We are not who we were.

Consider this passage again in this light-

Galatians 3:13-14 ESV Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree"— (14) so that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promised Spirit through faith.

"So that...". Christ fulfilled the Law's demands *so that* all of the promises God

made to Abraham and his Seed are ours! We are heirs of the Promise. Heirs of the New Heavens and Earth. Heirs of eternal life. Heirs of every blessing heaven can give. Freed from sin. Freed from bondage to Satan. Free to love God and love one another. Free to obey Him. Free to have the Holy Spirit take up residence in us and lead us. In other words, *free from the curse and now recipients of God's blessing.*

Every time therefore that we participate in the Lord's Table, these things should be on our minds.

1. Christ died on the cross to be cursed for me,
2. Christ's blood established a New Covenant for the new people of God, the genuine children of Abraham, heirs now of all the promises God guaranteed Abraham and his Seed.