

Sermon: The Cross of Christ in All Its Glory

The Humility of the Cross of Christ Jesus

The humility of crucifixion between two malefactors is the humility to which we are called.

December 23, 2007

The Rev. Mrs. Dr. Carolyn Cole

Scripture: Luke 23.32-43 Gospel Reading

Psalm 117:1-9;144; 104

I Samuel 14.16-30

Acts 9.10-19

I. Luke 23.34: Forgiving all who were a part of crucifying Jesus is the love to which we are called.

I did not know that Jesus was crucified between two thieves was a response I heard after their watching the Biblical movie, Jesus.” That struck a chord with me in light of the Scriptures that we have read over and over again. Seeing Jesus, experiencing Jesus being crucified is horrific, and knowing that He was crucified for my sins that I might be forgiven of my sins now and forevermore is beyond my comprehension. That is a love beyond knowing.

You see, you and I love our pets, we love food, we love . . . But we are talking about love, The Love of God in Christ Jesus, the giving of His only begotten Son, who came and dwelt among us (John 1.1-14).

Too often we read the Bible and we just read words. We are not able to step into the Scripture to experience with the disciples, the prophets, what it was to live for the Lord at all costs. And, yet, that is exactly what you and I are called to do – that we might walk the way of the cross, the Via Dolorosa with Simon of Cyrene that awful day when Jesus fell beneath the cross. Simon was pulled in by a soldier and told to carry the cross of Jesus. (Mar 15:21) "And they compel one Simon a Cyrenian, who passed by, coming out of the country, the father of Alexander and Rufus, to bear his cross."

I wonder what would that have been like to carry the cross of Jesus – no, I mean carry it for Him with love and pain, with joy and sorrow as Jesus experience on the cross because of His love for you and me.

The cross! Scripture says in I Corinthians 1.18, “For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God.” This is true today. The cross of Christ, His blood spilled upon the Cross of Calvary is no longer preached. You hear words from those standing on pulpits who tell you that God loves you, wants you to have lots of worldly goods, just be happy in the world, think highly of yourself . . . and on it goes. We do not hear them preaching the Cross of Christ, not the way of salvation through repentance and walking with Jesus at all costs.

I believe most televangelists are ashamed of Jesus, of the Cross of Calvary, of King Jesus.

Let's go back to where we started. I did not know that Jesus was crucified between two malefactors, two evil doers - one has said.

Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:

Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God:

But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men:

And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name:

That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of [things] in heaven, and [things] in earth, and [things] under the earth;

And [that] every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ [is] Lord, to the glory of God the Father (Ph 2.5-11).

It came to me as I heard this statement how much greater was his humiliation to be crucified between two evil doers. Pilate made it clear that Jesus had done no wrong. He continued questioning what it was that the Jews wanted – why crucify Jesus? But Pilate did not have the backbone to deny them what they wanted. He was a politician who wanted to please. We have plenty of those today. Some stand on the pulpits!

But Jesus, dying on the cross of Calvary prayed, “Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do” (Luke 23.34).

II. John 10.17-18: I lay down my life, no one takes it - is the submissiveness to which we are called.

But this goes beyond just that Jesus was crucified between two evil doers, two criminals. Let me tell you a story of an experience that I had as a clinical chaplain in Department of Corrections.

Walking in lock-up there were some from another religion that were there. I was talking to one of the men behind bars when I heard another inmate holler at me, Hey, Chap, I should not be here. You know this ain't fair. What do you have to say about it. I ain't done nothing wrong.

I walked over to his cell and said, You know, I do not know much about your religion, so let me tell you something that is in my experience, and with you being so very intelligent and capable, I am sure you can translate it to your religion somehow. Would that be alright?

To To which he responded, Sure, Chap.

I have a friend who just loves people. I mean He loves everyone. He does not care who they are or how bad they are. He just has so much love that

He reaches out desiring to touch their lives. You know what happened to Him?

No, Chap.

Well, they nailed Him to a cross just because He loves people and is good and kind and caring.

The inmate knew then that I was talking about Jesus. I asked the inmate, Was that fair?

You see, He was not hung up on whether He was being treated fairly. He did what needed to be done so that you and I could experience His love and be forgiven of our sins and live with Him forevermore. -end

Jesus said in John 10.17-18 "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father."

This is a surrender of the will that I do not know. It is laying it all down as the Roman soldiers are nailing Jesus to the cross, saying in their hearts and maybe one to another, we won! We got Him. He is going to die! All the while, Jesus has surrendered His will to the Father and is letting them nail Him to the cross. Do we understand that He could have called ten thousand angels, but He died alone on Calvary?

Oh, listen to this passage in Revelation 5.9-12,

And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation;

And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth.

And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the beasts and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands;

Saying with a loud voice, **Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing.**

He surrendered His will to the Father all the while the world looking on thought they had won. How would you have responded?

III. Acts 7.55-56: Stephen, "I see Jesus." is the eyes that we should have to behold His glory.

Oh, Beloved, when we are walking with the Savior, when we are willing to be humiliated for Jesus Christ and let the world mock us that He shall receive the glory, and we shall see Jesus.

When we are willing to surrender our will while the world believes they have taken us down, we will see Jesus. We must remember II Corinthians 4.7-12

But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.

[We are] troubled on every side, yet not distressed; [we are] perplexed, but not in despair;

Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body.

For we which live are alway delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh.

So then death worketh in us, but life in you.

IV. Acts 7.60: Stephen, "Lord lay not this sin at their feet." is the heart of forgiveness we are to receive.

Scripture tells us that Stephen was full of the Holy Ghost. He was preaching the Gospel and speaking forth the truth which the world hated, so they set out to kill him. Oh, how like the world today. All the legislation about not saying the name Jesus or Christ, about pleasing other religions at the expense of Jesus. But, Beloved, Stephen did not care. He was faithful and loved his Lord Jesus Christ. He was willing to die for Jesus just to get to preach the Gospel, the Truth of the Lord. They stoned Stephen, and he died – but not before he could say, "Lord, lay not this sin at their feet." Beloved, that is a love that comes only from knowing Jesus Christ.

People in other countries who are being tortured horrendously for Jesus Christ have that same love.

An experience that says it all is "Give Them A Gem at Christmas" in the Voice of the Martyrs (VOM) monthly publication of 12/98. I suggest that you request a copy of the story from them.

Oh, do you know my Jesus? Have you heard that He cares and that He will abide to the end?

Oh, the world believes they have won, but one day the world will realize they lost and their souls are doomed to hell unless they repent of their sins and come to know Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior through the Blood of the Lamb on the Cross of Calvary. You and I are called to have that same love that these of whom I have shared had for their Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Our calling? To be willing to be humiliated by the evil doers. No, not to walk with them in their ways, but to always live for Jesus and to walk the Via Dolorosa, the way of the cross, that His name shall be glorified and others shall come to know Him as Lord and Savior. What will you and I do with the humiliation of the Cross of Christ in our lives?

Do you really want to live out Philippians 3.10 (5-11)?

Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:
Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with
God:
But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a
servant, and was made in the likeness of men:
**And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and
became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.**
Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which
is above every name:
That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of [things] in heaven,
and [things] in earth, and [things] under the earth;
And [that] every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ [is] Lord, to the
glory of God the Father.

(Mt 10.37-39).

He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he
that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. **
And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of
me.
He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake
shall find it.

I Have Decided to Follow Jesus. Have you?

** It would be insightful to read The Triumphant Church, compiled by The Voice of the
Martyrs