



MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

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March 13, 2013
Midweek Lenten Worship
Sermon Text: [John 19:16-18](#)
Pastor Randy Ott

Name of Wondrous Love - Christ Crucified

In Christ Jesus, dear fellow redeemed:

What does the cross mean? I suppose it all depends on who is looking at it. To many it's a piece of jewelry, an ornate wall hanging, not much more. To an architect, I suppose it's a symbol that he needs to incorporate into the house of worship he is designing. To a skeptic, to a former governor of Minnesota, it's a crutch, something weak people need to lean on who aren't strong enough to handle life's problems on their own. To the Romans of Jesus' day, it was an instrument of torture. To the Sanhedrin, the ruling body in Jerusalem at that time, it was probably a symbol of victory, a short-lived victory, but a victory none the less as they saw it. To the motley crew that was gathered there on that day at Golgotha, it was a holiday, a carnival and a curse. To the one guy that was besides Jesus, his cross was the door to hell. To the other guy, it was the gate to heaven and blessings that he could never imagine.

So what does the cross mean? I suppose it all depends on who is looking at it. The question you and I need to ask ourselves is, what does it mean for me?

I would assume to us it's a symbol of God's love, God's forgiveness, the depths of which our God loved us and what he was willing to endure simply so that our sins might be paid for, so that we might be forgiven, and so that heaven is ours. It's the altar really when we look at it, where the God-man was sacrificed so that I might have forgiveness.

Today as we continue looking at names of wondrous love, the name we look at is almost more of a term than a name. Christ Crucified. Yet we see in Scripture the apostles called him that. In fact, Paul once said, "I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Christ crucified" ([1 Corinthians 2:2](#)). Tonight we look at these words from John 19 and see exactly why this name is a name of wondrous love.

The word "crucified" is forever connected to Christ. They go together. They crucified him. That's what we are told. Three simple words. Pretty easy to understand. "They crucified him." But there is a lot in that short, simple phrase, isn't there? If you picture in your mind's eye, or if you've seen the movie "The Passion of the Christ," it kind of makes you wince a little bit, doesn't it? Even though it's three brief words. As you and see and think about Jesus, whose back was laid open by those bits of metal that were attached to the leather whip that they scourged him or whipped him with, his back had to just look like hamburger. Then they slam it against this rough wood, stretch out his

arms, hold his arms down, place his feet, roughly, one on top of the other, and then you hear it and you kind of wince, that sound of metal hitting metal as the hammer drives a spike through his hands or his wrists and then through his feet. Then there is a dull thud as those Roman soldiers lift up that cross and it drops into the hole that would have been dug to support it for the time that they would have been on the cross. Then they crucified him there.

The crucifying part went pretty quickly. A few hammer blows, in Jesus' case, lifting a cross and dropping him in, he's crucified. But the dying, that took hours, sometimes even days. It was a gruesome form of death. It was so gruesome that this was one of the privileges of being a citizen of Rome. If you were a Roman citizen, you might be put to death, but you'd never be put to death on the cross. Roman citizens wouldn't be subjected to such a shameful, excruciating death. This was reserved for the worst of criminals, and God himself.

They crucified him. We can see the pain, the physical pain in that statement, right? But that doesn't even scratch the surface of what's really going on. Remember the night before how Jesus had prayed, "Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me. I don't want to drink it. I don't want to suffer for all the sins of the world of all time. So if it's possible, don't let me do it" ([Matthew 26:42](#)). The spiritual pain, the spiritual suffering he endured, I don't think you and I can begin to scratch the surface of what that really was. All of the guilt of all sins of all time...he was in an ocean of spiritual suffering, and wave after wave of the punishment for sin came crashing down on him. He cries out, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" ([Matthew 27:46](#)). There's only a select group of people existing right now that can really understand that. We aren't one of them. The only ones I think that can truly understand being forsaken by God would be the devil, demons, and the souls who are now in hell. They are forsaken by God. They have no connection to any of his mercy or grace and love. We always live under it. I don't think I can understand "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" The depth of what he was suffering right then and there. They crucified him. It's so simple, but I don't think I could begin to imagine the spiritual suffering he was going through.

You and I are left to guess at what the suffering part of "crucified him" was all about. That sentence, "They crucified him," they, that we're a little more certain about, right? In your mind's eye as you picture the scene and you think about it, underneath the cross, the one that they helped lift, are the soldiers that pounded the nails in. They are sitting there drinking their cheap wine and they are rolling dice for Jesus' clothing. Every now and then, emboldened I suppose by the alcohol, they throw some taunts his way. There are some of the leaders of the Jews, the people that moved the crowd to shout "Crucify him" ([Matthew 27:22-23](#)), the people that wanted him dead so desperately, they are taunting him saying, "He saved others. Let him save himself. Let him call on God now and let's see who comes" ([Matthew 27:41-43](#)). They're taunting him, ridiculing him, mocking him, puffing their chests out because they feel emboldened because someone else is suffering, like a group of junior high kids picking on the one that's left out.

If you look a little farther around in your mind's eye as you are picturing this scene, maybe you can see him in the distance. Maybe he's still swaying back and forth in the wind as his body hangs from a tree. Maybe he's already dropped to the ground, his intestines have spilled out all over him, Judas, the guy who betrayed him. He crucified him, right?

Then if you drop back and you look back and around in the darkness, in the corner there, maybe you see Peter weeping, repentant, forgiven, but shamed by his guilt at his denial and his cowardliness in the face of being confronted about his relationship to Jesus. You can see all those guys. They crucified him, right?

But as you look past Peter, you look over his shoulder, from his left to his right, you start seeing it kind of come together. Your eyes start focusing on a crowd, a multitude, people beyond imagining, beyond numbering. As you look a little bit closer, you notice his mom, his dad, a brother, a sister, there's a husband, there's a wife. Then you're struck by it, aren't you, as you look intently into that crowd? All of a sudden, staring right back at you is yourself. "They crucified him" in all honesty becomes "I crucified him." We become confronted with this truth...Christ crucified is a reminder that he was crucified by me. It's my sin. It's my guilt. Don't hide behind the Roman soldiers. Don't hide behind the leaders of the Jews. Look at yourself. Christ was crucified by me. Everyone of us here can say that.

I don't think we want to stop there, do we? We don't want to stop with Christ crucified by me. We need to look back at that cross and look at it a little more intently because there we will find another message...the message that we need. The message that we rejoice in. We look back at that cross. What is holding Jesus to it? It isn't the nails. It's not the threat of a Roman spear if he tries to come down off of it. There is nothing holding Jesus there but love, love for you, love for me, love for every person that has walked the face of this earth.

Christ was crucified by me, but Christ also was crucified for me. That's the message of the cross that we want to focus on, that we need to focus on when we are troubled and when we are discouraged. It's a message that shouldn't surprise us. It's there all over in the Scriptures before Christ came, 700 years before he walked on the earth. Isaiah said "He was pierced for our transgressions. He was crushed for our iniquities" ([Isaiah 53:5](#)). And then a little bit later he said the phrase you all said earlier, moments of incredible comfort. Did you feel that comfort as you said it? Or was it just words to read? Words that are hanging up on a banner in the front of our church all through Lent. "By his wounds, we are healed" ([Isaiah 53:5](#)). Christ crucified for me, 700 years earlier.

A couple decades after Jesus came down off that cross, the apostle Paul wrote, "God made him who had no sin (Jesus) to be sin for us (hung on a cross), so that in him we might become the righteousness of God" ([2 Corinthians 5:21](#)). Christ crucified for me.

John, the apostle Jesus loved, said, “The blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin” ([1 John 1:7](#)). Christ crucified for me.

It’s all over in Scripture. As you read through it, you’ll find that comforting message again and again. God’s love was so great for you and for me that he was crucified for us. Each one of us can say that.

But that’s familiar, right? Most of us have known that all our lives. Sometimes in the urgency of day-to-day life, “I have this to do list I have to get done. I have to run Johnny here. I have to run Suzie here. I have to balance the checkbook. I have to remember to pick up this so we can get that done this weekend.” We have all these things and all these stresses and all these worries and all these anxieties that sometimes the urgency of life makes the familiar of life drop through the cracks. When we hear Christ crucified for me, we say, “Yeah, yeah, I know. Tell me something I don’t know Pastor.” We just take it for granted.

Life is complex. I understand that we are going to fall into that temptation. We all get distracted. But here is one of the things we get to do during the season of Lent. We get to gather together every Wednesday. This year we are reading [Luke 22](#) and [Luke 23](#) to see what Jesus was willing to do for us, for me. But more than that...you, who have the Holy Spirit living in your hearts who has given you the gift of faith that Jesus is your Savior, you couldn’t decide to believe in him, but now you can make a choice. You can make a choice in the midst of all the complexities and the urgencies of life to take 5-10 minutes a day and just shove all the clutter aside, all the clutter of your life, all the stress, all the demands of your life, to shove it all aside and spend a little bit of time reflecting on Christ crucified by me, Christ crucified for me.

Get out [Luke 22 and 23](#). Read them. Read one chapter one day. Read one chapter the next. Break it in half. I don’t care. Whatever works for you. But spend a little bit of time with your eyes focused on Christ crucified, both by me and for me. The more time you spend focused on Christ crucified, the more the Spirit will strengthen you. The Lord will help us put some of the urgency of life in it’s proper perspective. Yes, there is a lot of stuff we have to do. Yes, it’s complex. Yes, there are struggles. But we have someone bigger, stronger and smarter than us helping us. That person is Christ Crucified. What a wondrous name of love. Amen.