

The Power of the Cross

At the very center of the Christian faith is the cross of Jesus. Unmistakable in its power, unlimited in its results, and unbending in its access to the eternal grace of God, the cross offers hope.

It speaks from the hill of Calvary outside Jerusalem, from its spot inside the church or at the top of the steeple, of the unlimited love of God, and makes suffering a way of life rather than death. The cross. It is love in action. It is a reminder of the most important things to do.

John Wooden, one of the most famous basketball coaches of all time, was speaking at a gathering later in his life. He pulled a silver cross from his pocket, something he always carried, and talked about his faith.

“Sharing your faith with others” he said, “is the most important thing you can do since you can’t have peace until you’ve found your Master. When the valleys are deep and the mountains high, it’s easier with the Master.”

He went to explain about the silver cross, given to him by a South Bend, Indiana minister in 1942:

“I keep this cross in hand in times of stress, at basketball games, and times of speaking.”

He smiled as he spoke, addressing a crowd who had come to participate in a communion service led by a local pastor.

Given the nature of the gathering, Wooden finished his talk by looking at the crowd with humble approval. “I’m glad you’re here today, glad because of a purpose you have, a purpose much more important than even basketball.”

Do you know, dear reader, that the cross of Jesus gives us a purpose higher than any other thing that we do? Above business, family, government, or any other thing?

Our country, sadly, has lost this vision. All over the United States, churches which once were full are empty. Many have closed. People have lost respect for one another, morality has sunk to a level not unlike that of the Roman Empire just before it fell. Faith, which must be in the foreground, has sunk to the background for many, but not all.

What we need is a comprehensive revival, a national and personal soul-searching for a faith which is rooted in the cross of Jesus. To be able to say “I love You,” to the world even with our last breath, to be able to suffer and die for those who misunderstand and even hate, that is what we need.

“To some, the image of a pale body glimmering on a dark night whispers of defeat. What good is a God who does not control his Son's suffering? But another sound can be heard: the shout of a God crying out to human beings, "I LOVE YOU." Love was compressed for all history in that lonely figure on the cross, who said that he could call down angels at any moment on a rescue mission, but chose not to - because of us. At Calvary, God accepted his own unbreakable terms

of justice. Any discussion of how pain and suffering fit into God's scheme ultimately leads back to the cross.” ~ Philip Yancey

What I love about the cross, whether formed into a necklace or just a simple drawing in the sand, is that it simplifies everything, and makes nothing impossible. God turned it from the most terrible sight of the Roman Empire to the most beautiful thing in the world.

The cross turns the idea of suffering and grief upside down. If we have suffering or pain, that is the place where God can meet us and bring us healing. If we become downcast, we must merely lift our eyes to the cross. It reminds us of the suffering that Jesus went through for us and empowers us to rise from even the most dark moment to see God's love and grace.

As Ann Graham Lotz, the daughter of Billy Graham, has said, “If God can bring blessing from the broken body of Jesus and glory from something that's obscene as the cross, He can bring blessing from my problems and my pain and my unanswered prayer.”

So see the cross as drawing you to church, to the arms of God, to the best love you can ever experience. See the power of the cross not in what it can destroy, but in what it can make possible.

The power of the cross you see, only gets stronger as it is used. It will never wear out or disappear. And neither will the God who loved us enough to send his Son Jesus there.

Before the cross is death. In the cross is love. After the cross, anything is possible.

With a blessing like that, we don't ever have to worry.