

Mid-Week Lent 2

February 17, 2016

Sermon Text: Luke 23:27-31

If you had one word to capture what the Christian life feels like, what would that one word be? “Forgiveness?” “Commandments?” “Rules?” “Morality?” “Heaven?” Would you ever say: “Fun?”

Is that the very first, very best word that comes to your mind— that being a Christian is “Fun?” That your mind is always only filled with pleasant thoughts? That you being a Christian means that you never sense

tension between your beliefs and the beliefs of your friends? That you never watch the news with a sorrowful sigh? That you never feel a pull between the evil you want to do and the good God wants you to do?

It is not as though that you should strive to make sure your Christian life is never “Fun” or that you should feel guilty when life does not feel “Fun.” You know that Jesus’ resurrection gives you peace, happiness, security. Still, you may not always sense that continual joy. Sometimes you might feel the best word to summarize your Christian life is “Pain.”

At times it appears that following Jesus brings more pain than fun. Jesus recognizes that too. In today’s reading you see him suffer miserable pain. Yet, with just one sentence he sets your eyes on the unending joy you already have as a Christian. **WHY WEEP AT THE CROSS?** *It removes judgment. It stimulates growth.*

Jesus knew a real cross was coming. Last week you heard him tell his disciples *that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and after three days rise again* ([Mark 8:31](#)). That cross no longer stood off in the distance. Today see the cross placed squarely on Jesus. The elders, chief priests, and teachers of the law got their way; Pontius Pilate approved Jesus’ crucifixion-death sentence.

Early Good Friday morning, Roman soldiers steer Jesus up a hill with the cross dragging behind him. **A large number of people followed him...** The crowds which once shouted “Crucify!” had exited Pilate’s courtyard and now stream to the place of crucifixion. Bystanders line the path, watching to see if this kind religious teacher would actually be crucified. **[W]omen [came out], mourned and wailed for him.** Not just crying, but

Luke 23:27-31

²⁷ A large number of people followed him, including women who mourned and wailed for him. ²⁸ Jesus turned and said to them, “Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me; weep for yourselves and for your children. ²⁹ For the time will come when you will say, ‘Blessed are the barren women, the wombs that never bore and the breasts that never nursed!’ ³⁰ Then

“ ‘they will say to the mountains, “Fall on us!”

and to the hills, “Cover us!” ’

³¹ For if men do these things when the tree is green, what will happen when it is dry?”

beating their chests, shoulders heaving; some collapsed on the ground, crumpled under heavy emotions; others with faces looking to the heavens as if trying to find some answer for this horrific scene. Some mourn simply to show respect for this pitifully dark scene; others mourn at the injustice. What had Jesus done wrong? Why must he suffer this cruel punishment? He was not stirring up a rebellion. He had not undermined Roman authority. He was a model citizen, a caring man teaching about God and life. What a mournfully tragic ending to such a gentle life!

Piercing through the heaving sobs, **Jesus turned and said to them, “Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me; weep for yourselves and for your children.”** With just one sentence Jesus flips this chaotic scene completely upside down. Yes, the very fact he faces death as an innocent man is cause for sadness. Yet, his fate is not the reason to be sad; the dilemma you confront is the real reason to mourn.

You see, Jesus does not suffer because he was in the wrong place at the wrong time. Rather, by nature we lay dead in God’s sight ([Ephesians 2:1](#)). Our failures only illuminate the separation that exists with a God who set absolute failure-free standards for you to keep. The tears flow, not to pity Jesus, but to mourn the awful truth: *all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God* ([Romans 3:23](#)).

To downplay the seriousness of sin will make Jesus’ death small. To believe that the pain we cause or the hurt we bring are really justifiable, declares that Jesus did not need to suffer and die. It proclaims that you, by your own very power and ability, are able to stand before God without a Savior. It can lead you to strip away at Jesus’ journey to the cross because you see enough in yourself to remove hell’s punishment. If Jesus’ work appears unnecessary, then hear his warning: **For the time will come when you will say, ‘Blessed are the barren women, the wombs that never bore and the breasts that never nursed!’ Then “ ‘they will say to the mountains, “Fall on us!” and to the hills, “Cover us!”** Failure to see that forgiveness comes only through Jesus will bring about an inescapable, eternally devastating punishment.

WHY WEEP AT THE CROSS? After all, what does Jesus accomplish on the cross? He knows he will suffer, he knows he will die, and he knows that by his wounds you will be eternally healed. So, he carries the cross and carries your sins in order to remove eternal death. At the cross, he lays down his life in order to give you eternal life.

WHY WEEP AT THE CROSS? It is not an object of pain. *It removes judgment.* Because Jesus suffers on the cross, you have forgiveness. Because you have received what Jesus wins on the cross, you are connected to him. So, **WHY WEEP AT THE CROSS?** *It stimulates growth.*

Jesus unveils what the cross means to you. **“For if men do these things when the tree is green, what will happen when it is dry?”** If you ever started a campfire or lit up your fireplace, you know the kind of wood you use. Dry wood has no moisture to stifle the flame; it ignites easier and burns quicker. However, you can burn green wood. Even though it has life, you are able to destroy it.

Jesus refers to himself as green wood. Not only is he alive physically, but his heart beats with spiritual life. He is like a tree planted by streams of water, his God-pleasing life remaining anchored in the pages of God’s Word. Yet, men still kill him. Why? Because they

wanted nothing to do with his Word. More than that, they believed that sin carried no real consequence and they sought to silence the One who reminded them of their accountability before God.

Just as they killed the tree when it was spiritually green and living, you also might suffer because you side with Jesus. Sometimes the best word to describe your Christian life might not be “Fun.” You might experience crushing guilt when you do the evil you ought not. God-pleasing actions left undone may burden your mind. Remember the purpose of the cross. Jesus dies to remove guilt, to unburden your heart; the sight of a cross assures you that you are made perfect in God’s sight because of him.

Remember the purpose of the cross you bear. The Christian cross is everything you suffer for the sake of following Jesus. It reminds you that you belong to God and what pleases him is what pleases you.

When you remember that your Christian life means that you continually remain connected to God, it stimulates you to grow in love for God. So, you do what is right and run away from evil— not because you must, but because you want to. Love for God prompts you to thank him with your life. So, you read the Word. You take it to heart. Your thoughts become: “It is written.” Sometimes your mind might oppose what God says. Sometimes your relationships might argue with what you believe. One thing you can be sure of: If Jesus suffers as a Godly man, you also will suffer as children of God.

Yet, do not despair. Does Jesus die only to remain dead? Is he in hell, suffering? No! He rises again on the third day. He enters heaven. There he sits on a throne, holding power over the entire universe.

When he rises, he points your eyes up to the heavens so you can see the new life awaiting you. Heaven is yours because Jesus died on the cross for your sins. Heaven is yours because you trust that his forgiveness has opened heaven’s gates for you. If Jesus had not died, you would have no confidence. Since he did die, heaven is a certain reality. **WHY WEEP AT THE CROSS?** *It stimulates growth*—you continue remaining connected to him and his victory.

It is the crossroads we face: the purpose of the cross. Because we follow Jesus, we grow more aware of the consequences of our sins. We catch how Jesus rescued us from a hell we will never have to face. The purpose of that wooden cross was to remove judgment.

Because you are a Christian, there might be times when you sense a separation between what is God-pleasing and what society (or your mind) considers pleasing. Sometimes you might feel the best word to summarize your feeling as a Christian is not “Fun.” Yet, by reading God’s Word you grow in appreciating better the new life he has won for you. Now spiritually alive, you grow in your relationship of trust, comfort, and joy with God.

Life with Jesus brings no sadness. You might stand at a crossroads where you see life as easier apart from him. By faith, you live with him and you continue walking the road leading to a place free of tears, sorrow, sadness, pain, or agony. **WHY WEEP AT THE CROSS?** *It removes judgment. It stimulates growth.*