

Good Friday

March 25, 2016

Prayer of the Day: God Most Holy, look with mercy on this your family, for whom our Lord Jesus Christ was willing to be betrayed, to be given over into the hands of the wicked, and to suffer death upon the cross. Keep us always faithful to him, our only Savior, who now lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever.

Galatians 6:14

¹⁴ May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.

Sermon Text: Galatians 6:14

The 4-year bachelor's degree hanging on your wall. Your slugger of a child who never misses a ball pitched at her. The hard-worked for, much-respected title of your job. You take pride in those achievements, right? You work hard for a college degree. You bask in your child's success. You proudly measure growth by seeing where you started a job and where your career ended. These achievements make up your character. They color your determination. They reveal your inner strength. You boast about these things.

Have you ever boasted about the cross? Do you hold it up as your most priceless treasure for all to see? Does looking at the cross give you strength and comfort? Would you boast about it?

What could ever move you to boast about the cross? It is an object of pain! Two pieces of wood tied together. A living human being is then attached to this cross, left suspended and hanging and cramping and suffocating. Not to mention, this object of torture is reserved for the worst criminals. Parents would not brag about their child being executed. People would not boast about their dear friend being crucified. Those living 2,000 years ago were ashamed of the cross, just like we would never proudly brag about knowing someone on death row.

So why boast in the cross? Shame and death are attached to it! Yes, you will probably never see your friend die on a cross. Yes, our world today does not really see the cross as only an object of shame. Yet, people still see the cross as the sign of a Christian. Even though you will not die on a cross, there will be times when you feel like you are dying on a cross. You will feel pain when what you believe about Jesus is made into the punch-line of a joke. You may feel raw and abandoned as your loved one suffers from a life-taking disease. Life's challenges may leave you growing angry with God, feeling that he has completely forgotten about you. That pain may leave you feeling that it is no longer worthwhile to follow your Savior. In fact, many times it feels that leaving God, severing your relationship with him would make life better. Yet, to walk apart from God will bring pain far more eternal than what you might suffer on earth.

Why would you **PROUDLY BOAST IN THE CROSS**? Well, how are you getting into heaven? Only through the cross. You see, when Paul urges you to “boast in the cross” he is pointing you to what happened on the cross.

There you watch the Son of God Almighty pour out his life for the times you and I wonder if God really cares about us. The Father turns his back on Jesus for the times we feel justified in turning our back on God’s promises. Jesus is punished for our rebellion even though his heart bound itself to obeying God’s every command.

On the cross you see Jesus offer God his blameless life for you. He places his wholehearted obedience on you. He removes every accusation, every loveless thought, every angry word. Only by the cross are you able to stand before the judgment throne of God.

So, **PROUDLY BOAST IN THE CROSS!** Not only do you see your Savior on the cross, but you see that your Savior is connected to you. Paul is also describing your Christian cross. The Christian cross is everything you suffer for the sake of following Jesus.

You can expect suffering— because a non-believing world does not listen to Jesus. So, the world will hate you when we cannot condone its lifestyles. You will be called bigoted, narrow-minded, ignorant, intolerant when you do not open wide our arms of acceptance. Sometimes the words themselves will come from friends; at other times it will come from family. These insults hurt and sting— and may move you to reconsider your relationship with Jesus.

Sometimes your cross may be personal. Your mind might argue with God because it does not appear that he acts fast or good enough. You might question God’s healing hand when you do not see it. Sometimes personal struggles may leave you feeling that God does not care about you—and if he does not care for you, then you do not need to care about him.

Yet, when you feel the pain of your personal cross press into you, look up to the cross. See how God has cared for you. Christ died on the cross to make you a Christian. Jesus dies on the cross to make you ready for eternal life. He dies so that you may rest assured that he is with you always, even to the very end of the age. So, **PROUDLY BOAST IN THE CROSS.**

Paul brags about what Jesus accomplished on the cross, because nothing else was going to get him into heaven. Even if it means that he would suffer because of his allegiance to Christ, he would be proud that he suffers because of his connection to Jesus. Even if it meant that so many tirelessly worked to thrust him into unbelief, he would boast proudly because the cross remained the only way to eternal life.

Have you ever boasted about the cross? Maybe not, but you now can. See the cross, where the priceless blood of Christ is shed for you. See the cross, where Christ makes you his child. See the cross, where God repeats his promise of continual love in your life. The cross may bring pain, but brings even greater comfort. **PROUDLY BOAST IN THE CROSS!**