

## **The Death of Christ (6)** Out of the Cross Intensity

KSBC 03.29.09

Luke 23:26-43

**INTRO** We need constant renewal of focus and intensity regarding the message of the cross. Both experience and the scriptures warn us that we are never far away from distortion, superficiality, externalism, distraction and foolishness in the matter of focus and intensity on the cross. Our cleverness and fondness for the unimportant lead to our powerlessness in the ministry of the gospel.

The Corinthian church lost focus on the cross by giving into the influences of superior wisdom that denied the simple power of the preaching of the gospel. The Galatian churches fell under the spell of teachers that promoted works and obedience to rules over the simple power of living the gospel. Losing our cross focus is incredibly easy and certainly does not register as one of our top felt needs. We come to the cross today to renew our focus and intensity on the simple and powerful message it proclaims. Both focus and intensity are terms related to and encouraged by pain.

Excruciating pain. Do you see in the word 'excruciating' a link to 'crucify'? The term that describes the intensity and extent of pain is derived from the term 'to crucify' and literally means 'out of the cross.' The extent and intensity of pain experienced by a person being crucified was of such magnitude that no other word came close to describing it. Thus it is set apart from all other pain as a term of its own. Some pain, such as childbirth, severe burns or kidney stones is used to define or describe because they stand out as defining pains. Crucifixion is at the top of the list. It is excruciating.

In this kind of pain on the cross, Jesus models a focus and intensity that challenge and satisfy our hearts. Excruciating pain typically causes a person to focus on pain relief in some form. A noticeable feature of Jesus crucifixion according to Luke's gospel is that not only did Jesus not focus on pain relief; he focused more intently on his mission of announcing good news. He was about proclaiming freedom for the prisoners and releasing the oppressed through his final breath.

### **Luke 23:26-43**

Jesus warns/instructs the crowd	26-31
Jesus prays for those who crucify him	32-34
Jesus saves one who repents	35-43

Our attention is drawn by Jesus remarks away from the mourners, the crowd, the insults, the taunting and the pain to the significance of what he is accomplishing in his suffering. Our focus is narrowed as he warns bystanders of certain coming judgment. Our senses are sharpened as he prays for mercy for those who are killing him. Our intensity is strengthened as he grants life to a dying thief while being mocked as one who cannot save himself.

Suffering and pain are incredible attention getters. Jesus teaching from the cross should mold our thinking and behavior in the following ways.

## Renewing your focus on the message of the cross calls you to . . .

### 1. Get serious about coming judgment. 23:26-31

Note how Jesus points out that the women and the crowds were concerned about all the wrong things. He directed their concern in a direction totally opposite to what they were currently engaged in. Jesus saw people through the lens of the Father's love for them and wanted them to be warned about coming judgment on those who reject his love. They, like us and our world pronounce themselves as irrelevant when they lose sight of God's judgment on those who reject his love.

The reality of God's judgment on those who reject Him and His anointed one.

- Call for the wailing women! Jeremiah 9:13 - 25
- Call for the mountains to fall on us! Hosea 10:8; Rev. 6:16
- Green wood/dry wood lesson v.31

Cmp. John 3:36

Getting serious about coming judgment is evidenced by brokenness and sobriety.

Brokenness L 19:41

Sobriety 1Peter 4:1-7

### 2. Show mercy to rejecters of God's love. 23:32-38

Note that one of Jesus first responses to the agony of being nailed and hung on a cross was pointed at the need of those crucifying him. He focused on the people's need for mercy and forgiveness by actually praying for their forgiveness while hanging on the cross. Showing mercy to people as they reject God's love in various and sometimes disgusting ways is a required behavior of a renewed focus on the gospel. Jesus models the ability to not be shocked or shamed into distraction while suffering.

Jesus was numbered with transgressors. 32-33; 22:37; Isa. 53:12

Cmp. Luke 5:27-32

Jesus prayed for those who mistreated him. 34

Cmp. L 6:29, 35; Acts 7:60

Jesus was not defensive to insults and mockery. 34 – 39

Cmp. 1Peter 2:19-23

Showing mercy to rejecters of God's love is measured by your active involvement in their lives without being distracted from their need of Christ by their ways of rejection. It begins with compassionate prayer.

Renewing your focus on the message of the cross calls you to . . .

1. Get serious about coming judgment. 23:26-31
2. Show mercy to rejecters of God's love. 23:32-38

### **3. Announce that Jesus does save people from coming judgment. 39-43**

Note that what all the mocking, sneering, taunting and insults were declaring as truth, Jesus quietly and powerfully demonstrated as false while suffering in agony on the cross. He saved someone. The reason he did not save himself was so he could save others. The foolishness and idiocy of unbelief is exposed as God's love for the unbeliever keeps Jesus on the cross to accomplish salvation for the one actively rejects that love.

Note the power of gospel truth spoken in pain, against strong opposition by one impressed with Jesus. The thief's statement of recognition and repentance draws a pronouncement of salvation from Christ.

A question . . . do you fear God's judgment?

Statement . . . we deserve death for our actions.

Statement . . . Jesus is innocent and yet suffers death. He is unlike us.

Confession . . . Jesus, you rule, remember me at the judgment.

Response/Assurance . . . a call to Jesus yields immediate results.

Today you will be with me in paradise. L16:23; Rev.2:7; 2Cor. 12:4

A renewed cross focus is a renewed commitment to speaking the simple gospel truth knowing it is the power of God to save and transform lives.

### **Take Aways**

1. Renew your enthusiastic allegiance to the message of the cross today.

Boast in the cross of Christ to someone this week by sharing a brief summary of this sermon.

Invite someone to hear the rest of this series on the death of Christ in the coming weeks.

Pray that people will repent and trust Christ as a result of this sermon series.

2. Cry out from your heart today . . . 'Jesus remember me . . . '

## Study Questions

1. What questions, observations or thoughts do you have from the study of Luke 23:26-43?
2. Read Lk. 23:26-43 as a group. Comment on observations or questions about the reading.
3. What are some specific ways that our cleverness and fondness for the unimportant in gospel ministry are obvious? What are ways that we insert our wisdom and cleverness that essentially removes the power from the truth of the cross?
4. How does the context and background of excruciating pain impact/color the words and reactions of Christ from the cross? Do you think his intense focus in suffering on the souls of people should impact your life focus? Why? How?
5. Review Jeremiah 9:13-26. What are some observations from the passage that help you understand how to live in light of coming judgment? What are some specific ways that you can grow in living soberly or with greater alertness according to 1Peter 4:1-7?
6. Who was Jesus praying for specifically in verse 34? Who is the 'them' he was praying for? Was their ignorance a lack of knowledge or a wrong judgment about God's love in Christ? Why? What is your current response to people who consistently and disrespectfully reject God's love? What should it be?
7. Evaluate the thief's rebuke and confession of faith in verses 39-43. What is so powerful about it? What made the light come on for this thief that caused him to recognize who Jesus was and what Jesus was doing? What do these verses identify as the essential elements of the gospel? Share an example of a recent time when you struggled to share the simple truths of the gospel with someone.
8. Share some ways you will renew your focus and intensity regarding the message of the cross this week. What do you want to do, use or remember from today's study?