

GLORY IN THE CROSS

1. TRUE GLORY - John 12:20-33

Our society glories in success. It might be the Australian cricket team beating the Kiwis in the tests series in January. They won. They are now the world top test team in the world. We glory in this achievement. If you follow some other sport think of how you feel, win.

An Aussie athlete wins an Olympic event, they stand on the top podium, the National anthem is played and our flag is raised. We glory in such success.

It may be our own achievements: Study, work, sport or making something. It may be our children's achievements, walk, school, sport and so on. These things give us joy, pride, a sense of personal worth.

We applaud success, we even worship success but we don't want to admit failure. We try to hide it. We feel ashamed of failure. We feel the opposite of joy, pride and worth.

In Bible times the cross was the ultimate symbol of shame. To die on a cross was to be held up as a complete failure as a person. It was reserved for the most serious of crimes. A Roman citizen could not be crucified it was too degrading. To be hung naked on a cross so that everyone could jeer at you as you die a slow painful death was the ultimate humiliation.

In John 12 Jesus says, *"The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. ²⁴ Very truly I tell you, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds."* (12:23-24)

Jesus is certainly glorified in his resurrection and exaltation. We can understand how resurrection as returning to glory in the presence of his heavenly Father is glorification. But here he talks about being glorified in his death. *"The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified."* The kernel of wheat is to fall into the ground and die.

He goes on talking about this 'hour', ²⁷ *"Now my soul is troubled, and what shall I say? 'Father, save me from this hour'? No, it was for this very reason I came to this hour."* ²⁸ *Father, glorify your name!"* (12:27-28)

Jesus is deeply troubled by what this 'hour' holds for him. Obviously he is talking about his death. Jesus will be glorified in his dying and the Father will be glorified through the cross also. How can such a humiliating event be so glorifying?

I often have to get spots of sun damage frozen off my face. It is a quick procedure that stings a bit at the time. They are not dangerous if dealt with like this. Other people have life threatening cancers. They may need significant surgery to remove it and then chemotherapy that has serious side effects.

The point is - you can tell how serious the condition is by how drastic the treatment is.

If you need major surgery and aggressive chemotherapy then it is obviously a life threatening condition. The cross is God's treatment for sin. If you want to know how serious sin is, look at the cross.

If God sends his only Son to suffer not only great physical pain but also the spiritual pain of separation from his Father then you know that sin must be deadly serious. We have all sinned. We all have this disease. Sin separates us from God. We can't cure ourselves. Nothing we do can change this. There is no good looking to Doctor Google for answers.

There is only one cure, Christ's death on the cross for us.

If your doctor prescribes major surgery and chemotherapy it means there is no other alternative. Look at the cross. It shows there can be no other way to be right with God.

In 14:6 Jesus says, *"I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."*

The cross shows that there is no other cure.

But the glorious fact of the cross is that it is the perfect, effective cure.

We can come to the Father, because of the cross. We glory in the cross because by it God has fully dealt with our sin.

The cross reveals the depth of God's love for us. Jesus says, *"¹³ Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends."* (15:13)

It shows us his grace in giving us complete forgiveness. The cross is no failure. It is a victory over sin and death and Satan. God's glory is demonstrated, not in power and aggression but in pain, humility, and amazing grace. Look at the cross. There you see God's true glory displayed.

Spend a few moments thinking about the glory of the grace of God revealed in the cross.

2. TRUE KING - John 18:28-40

When Jesus died Tiberius was the Emperor of Rome. He ruled the enormous Roman Empire. He had proved himself as one of Rome's greatest generals. He had conquered what today we call Austria, Hungary and parts of Germany. Here was a true king, a mighty ruler of a great empire.

His representative in Judah was Pontius Pilate. And before Pilate stood a man with no army, no great power or following. Yet Jesus stood before Pilate accused of claiming to be king. What sort of king can he be? Pilate asks, *"Are you the king of the Jews?"* (18:33)

Jesus replies, *"My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jewish leaders. But now my kingdom is from another place."* (18:36) His kingdom is very different to Tiberius' kingdom. He has no army. It is not a political kingdom. He is no threat to the Emperor's rule.

Pilate wants to dismiss the charge but the Jews keep insisting that Jesus should be crucified. In the end Pilate gives in. The soldiers mock Jesus as king by putting a purple robe on him and a crown of thorns.

Pilate mocks the Jews by calling Jesus their king. He places a sign on the cross, "The King of the Jews". Jesus is a king, crowned with thorns and hanging on a cross. He is king but very different to any earthly king. The contrast between his rule and earthly power couldn't be clearer. Jesus didn't shed the blood of his enemies but his own blood. He willingly gives his life for our salvation. He tells Pilate, *"You would have no power over me if it were not given to you from above."* (19:11)

Jesus said, ¹¹ *"I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep..."* ¹⁸ *No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord.* (10:11, 18) He is not a king who rules by force and violence. He is the Servant King who gives himself totally to the point of dying for us.

Look at the cross. There you see clearly the nature of Jesus' kingship.

But he is not just a king to be admired. He calls us to follow the pattern of his example, to live lives of sacrificial love, to be a servant people.

Look to the cross as a guiding pattern for your life. Let the cross shape how you live rather than worldly success or glory. Here you see your true King. Follow him.

Spend a few moments thinking of how the cross should shape your life.

3. TRUE VICTORY - John 19:61b-30

Have you ever tried to book a plane ticket on line? You see an offer. That's a good price! So you go online to book. Then you find out if you want to take checked luggage you have to pay, extra! Well I need more than carry on so I'll pay.

They offer to let you choose where to sit. Good. I need an aisle seat and we want to sit together. Oh. But you have to pay extra to choose seats. You go through all the extras then you come to finally pay for the ticket. You have to pay by credit card. There is no other way but they charge you an extra percentage to use a credit card!

You thought you had a good deal but there are all these hidden extras.

You read, *"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."* (John 3:16) Just believe and you have eternal life. It sounds good but is there a catch? What else do I have to do?

Or you read, *"Very truly I tell you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be judged but has crossed over from death to life."* (John 5:24) Can we really trust that if we truly believe: we are completely forgiven? We have eternal life? We will suffer absolutely no judgement or purgatory? That God will always hear our prayers? That he will be with us always? That nothing can separate us from his love?

Jesus says as he dies, *"It is finished."* (19:30) Here is Jesus' victory cry. He has done everything that is needed for our salvation. There are no hidden extras for us to do. He has completed it all.

Elsewhere he uses the same word, *"I have brought you glory on earth by finishing the work you gave me to do."* (17:4) He has done all that the Father sent him to do. All we have to do is put our trust in his completed work. Look at the cross. There he did it all for us.

All other religions say, "DO". They tell us what we have to do.
The cross says, "DONE". Jesus has done it for us. "Finished"

Jesus has won a true victory over sin, death and Satan. Our salvation is signed sealed and delivered. Complete.

But there are times when we might doubt this. What could make us doubt our salvation?

a) Guilt

When we feel especially guilty for something. We feel we have done something that is too bad for God to just forgive us. We think, God couldn't love me now. I've blown it. But look at the spotless Son of God dying on cross for you. Hear again Jesus solemn promise.

"Very truly I tell you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be judged but has crossed over from death to life." (John 5:24)

Hear again his dying words, *"It is finished."* He has done everything that is needed to forgive you. To take away all guilt, no matter what you have done.

b) Death

As we approach death we may start thinking, "Am I good enough?" Will I go to be with God?

None of us are good enough. We have all sinned. None of us deserve to go to heaven. But Jesus has done all we need.

Look to the cross. Put your trust in what he has done. The cross gives us full confidence as we approach death.

c) Suffering

When we suffer, especially when it goes on for a long time, and when our desperate prayers for relief aren't answered we can start to think God has forgotten me. We can start to believe, "God doesn't love me, he doesn't understand what I'm facing" You may doubt God's goodness and love for you.

In times of difficulty, suffering and loss look to the cross. God has suffered. He knows what you face. There he has demonstrated his undying love for you. When nothing else makes sense look at the cross.

John who himself watched Jesus die says, *"The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth."* (1:14)

The grace and truth of God are above all revealed in the cross. There we see the true glory of God. We see Jesus reign as the true King and we see his true victory displayed.

And so more than any sporting event, more than any success in life we are to glory in the cross. It is the cross that shapes our faith and the way we live.

Spend some time in reflecting on how the cross assures us of God's love and salvation when we are tempted to doubt God's goodness.