

Near The Cross: John The Disciple and Restoration

The Cross: A Place of Restoration For All Who Come.

Introduction

Today is an awesome day to serve the Lord! Good morning and to all who are joining us for the first time we welcome you into the House of the Lord. I the lead pastor and we are so glad you have taken the time to join us this morning.

Today is the 3rd and final part of a series called "Near The Cross." We have been looking at three people who were near the cross when Jesus was crucified and discovering what the cross might have meant too them personally. We have talked about Mary Magdalene and how the cross was a place of redemption. We also looked at Mary the mother of Jesus and how the cross was a place of reward for her faithfulness. This morning we are going to look at John (the disciple of Jesus) and discover that for him the cross was a place of restoration.

Let's look at John 19:25-27...

*John 19:25 Near the cross of Jesus stood **his mother, his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene.** 26 When Jesus saw his mother there, **and the disciple whom he loved** standing nearby, he said to his mother, "Dear woman, here is your son," 27 and to the disciple, "Here is your mother." From that time on, this disciple took her into his home.*

(ME)

Most of you today see me as I am now but most of you have only known me after I knew Jesus. You see a guy who is called to be a preacher, has a great family, a

beautiful wife & marriage (17 years yesterday). You see the guy whose life has been blessed of God. What you do not see is the guy who at one time was pretty messed up, no direction and very little hope. You never knew the man I used to be you only know the guy I am today.

I was a nice guy who did a lot of nice things for people. If you were to go to my hometown today and speak to people I went to high school with they would tell you I was a good guy. As a matter of fact I was voted "Most Likely To Succeed" by my graduating class. I was a Boy Scout and I earned the highest rank scouting offers: the Eagle Scout. Yet I was carrying a great secret.

Behind the scenes my family was in turmoil. There was physical abuse in our home and my parents were having marriage problems. All of this was killing me on the inside. I watched my brothers deal with the pain of our family situation in a variety of different ways but I just kind of kept it inside. I had an injury during a football game and the doctor prescribed me painkillers. I noticed these painkillers helped me to forget some things so I just kept taking them. After the injury healed I was still taking them because I was addicted.

One day I received a phone call that my father was sick and that I needed to come home. He had been taken to the hospital and they had diagnosed him with cancer. Although my father and I were not close I did not want to see him suffer. So I just kept taking the pills and trying to block it all out. After a few months the emotional pain in my mind was more than I could stand. The pills were no longer working, alcohol did not soothe the pain and I thought I was going to go nuts!

That's when I had an encounter with the Cross. A friend of mine had been telling me about her church and God but I just pushed it away. I thought, "What could

God do about all these problems? If He was really God then why was allowing these things to happen to me, my dad and my family?" I had almost convinced myself that God was not real and all this "Jesus stuff" was just a joke but I just couldn't get it out of my mind. Then my friend invited me to church and before I could even think about it I agreed to go. Well, let's just say that night was the turning point of my whole life. I walked into that church messed up in my head, contemplating whether or not God was real, addicted to painkillers but that is not how I left.

Before the night was over I had fallen on my face in repentance, was baptized in Jesus Name and filled with the Spirit of God. I left that church a new man with new hope and new freedom. My mind was clear for the first time in years. My feet felt like they were not even touching the ground. No craving at all for the pills was in my body. I was a new man! Why? Because I had met Jesus and He restored me!

All my questioning, all my anger, all my problems and all my sins were laid out before God at an altar. He didn't look the other way, He didn't say, "Come back later when you've got it together." No! He said, "I love you" and wiped away my tears, forgave my sins and washed me clean. After all the terrible things I had done He just took me in and made me His son!

(TRANSITION) What about you?

(YOU)

- What is the worst thing you have ever done?
- What is the absolute worst sin you have ever committed?

- What is most horrible thought you have ever had?
- What is the worst thing you have ever spoken?

Many here this morning are dealing with problems so big you don't know how to get around it.

- Thoughts of homosexuality – maybe you have even acted on those thoughts.
- You've traded sex for money or favors.
- You are addicted to pornography – its on your cell phone, its in the magazines you read – some of you have even been sending naked pictures of yourself to others using your cell phone.
- You've stolen money from family and friends.
- Some have been witness to rapes and murders and now you are afraid of what might happen to you.
- You have back chatted your mothers and grandmothers – even to point of saying you hate them. Even worse you have hit them.
- You are abusing drugs (daka, tick, glue...) and you just don't know how to break the habit.
- You may have even lifted your fist into the sky and in anger told God, "If you are real then do something about all this stuff!"

And today you sit in this audience and you are thinking one of two things. 1) So what? I do not have a problem and none of what this preacher is saying matters because I am not a sinner! Or, you are saying, that's me! I have sinned, I have messed up and I need a way to make things right – I need a savior!

(GOD)

The third option you may be thinking about this morning is simply: what's this got to do with John or God? Well, I want to you to think about the events that happened before the crucifixion of Jesus.

- The trial
- The false witnesses
- The beating
- The crowd screaming – CRUCIFY!

Now ask yourself a question, "Where was John?" After all he calls himself "***and the disciple whom he loved.***" Where was this beloved disciple? Why was he not standing by Jesus' side and defending Him against all the beatings? When the hammer dropped and the people turned against Jesus – John ran and hid like all the other disciples! In the moment of Jesus' worst anguish and pain. When Jesus needed the comfort of a beloved friend John was hiding in fear.

If you read the scriptures about the life of John you will find that at one time Jesus nicknamed him (and James) "the sons of thunder" (Mark 3:17)! No one really knows why John and James are given this nickname because the scriptures never directly tell us. It could have been because John and James were so bold and hotheaded – for instance look at how they reacted when the people of Samaria refused to welcome Jesus...

Luke 9: 54 *When the disciples James and John saw this, they asked, "Lord, do you want us to call fire down from heaven to destroy them?"*

Who do these guys think they are – call fire down from heaven? If you read on you will find that Jesus rebuked them for their hotheadedness. Now here is John,

who once wanted to call fire from heaven, hiding and running when things get really rough.

In the end though we find John no longer hiding – no longer running – now he is near the cross. What happened? Well, we really don't know. Possibly somewhere along the line John realized this was the thing Jesus had told them about and tried to prepare them for. Perhaps in his running away he figured out that the only hope and the only friend he really had was Christ.

Somehow John woke up to the fact that Jesus would forgive the worst thing he could have ever done!

John stood at the cross restored. He, along with the other disciples, had forsaken Jesus and fled for their lives at the garden of Gethsemane. But, John came back to the cross. He was restored and forgiven.

(YOU)

Remember earlier when I asked you what is the worst thing you have ever done? Can I now give you the good news about the worse thing you have ever done? YOU CAN BE RESTORED! YOU CAN BE FORGIVEN! As Christians we may stray and deny our Lord, but we can still come back to the cross. It doesn't matter what we've done. The cross is the place to go for forgiveness, deliverance and restoration.

For those who have never been born again Jesus offers you a place of hope, forgiveness and restoration, where? At the Cross! You will never be able to make yourself right with God! The only way you can make your peace with God is to come to the cross and let the work Jesus did make you right!

For John to stand at the cross was probably not the safest place to stand or the easiest place to stand. It would have taken courage and love for John to come back to the cross. But remember what John wrote years later...

1 John 1:9 *"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness".*

I urge you today Christian and non-Christian – look to Cross and repent of your sins. In so doing you will find.

- Rest for you mind
- Rest for your soul
- Joy
- Peace

You will find LIFE! And life to the fullest! I cannot promise you that all the problems will vanish or an immediate end to suffering. I can promise you this – you will never again face your problems and suffering alone! Being born again puts you into the family of God and it makes you His son. Now you have a DADDY that will never leave you alone or abandoned. You will have a family that will walk this journey with you all the days of your life.

(WE)

What must you do to inherit eternal life? What must you do to be born again?
What must you do to become a son or daughter of God?

(SHOW PICTURE AND GO THROUGH THE EASTER PROCESS)