

LORD'S SUPPER SERVICE
Grant's Creek Baptist Church
July 29, 2012

Today we are going to take a journey back to the Old Rugged Cross. We are going to camp out there and pray that God gives us spirit eyes to see afresh and anew just what happened there almost 2000 years ago, that we might come to love the cross and worship the One Who hung there with a passion like we've never had before.

The journey to the cross actually began for Jesus ages before He died in 30 A.D. John writes in Revelation 13:8 that Jesus was slain from the foundation of the world. Peter writes in 1 Peter 1:19-20 that Jesus was foreordained to die before the foundation of the world. Somewhere back in the timeless past in a divine council meeting of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, God the Father unveiled His plan to save the world from sin. It was a radical plan, the most radical rescue operation that has ever been conceived in Heaven or earth. God the Son would step off of his throne in Heaven, condescend to the earth, be conceived in a virgin's womb and be born and lain in a manger. He would be fully human and yet remain fully God, Son of God and Son of Man. And as the sinless God/man, He would suffer the pangs of hell for every human being that would ever live. He would die on a cross, and then three days later He would rise from the grave, defeating death and hell forever more.

Now, from the dawn of human history mankind has marveled at the infinite love of God that would cause Him to go to the limit of His own omnipotence to demonstrate such love for us. And God has inspired them to write about His love. Moses wrote in Exodus 34:6: "...The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering and abounding in goodness and truth..." Deuteronomy 10:15: "The Lord delighted only in your fathers, to love them; and He chose their descendants after them, you above all peoples, as it is this day". But God's love was not limited just to His chosen people. Deuteronomy 10:18: "He...loves the stranger, giving him food and clothing". David writes, "Because Your lovingkindness is better than life, my lips will praise You" (Psalm. 63:6). Jeremiah 31:3: "...yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore with lovingkindness I have drawn you." 1 John 4:8: "He who does not love does not know God, for God is love". Paul prays for the Ephesians in Ephesians 3 that they might know the love of Christ, which passes knowledge (Ephesians 3:19). But the most cherished statement of God's love in the entire Bible comes from the lips of God the Son, the Lord Jesus Christ: "For God so loved the world..."

I want you to think about the love of God this morning. Grapple with the wonder, that God would send His sinless Son to the cross to die in our place, we who have rebelled against Him and are filled with sin.

Great is the measure of our Father's love. I want us to consider three great truths that unite to show us the greatness of God's love for us. The first is Jesus' great condescension. Paul writes in Philippians 2:6-7 that in His pre-incarnate state Jesus was in the form of God, and "did not think it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of man". That means that Jesus, though equal with the Father in every way; equal in timelessness, equal in power, equal in knowledge, equal in holiness. Yet Jesus did not cling to His rights as Deity and refuse to leave Heaven and come down to the earth. And when He came He came not as a king, but as a slave. Think of the condescension of Jesus!! More than if the Queen of England would leave Buckingham Palace and become an ant outside the Palace walls. Think about His love.

There is another truth to consider this morning. Not only Jesus' great condescension, but also salvation's great cost. There is a spiritual danger in the Bible belt that I'm not sure is sometimes worse than living in other parts of the country, such as where we went on our mission trip this year; Vermont. There many have never heard the pure gospel of Christ, but to some, when they do hear it, it is as a drink of cold water in the desert, or a piece of bread for a starving man. They gladly embrace the precious truth that Jesus would lay down His life for them. But when many in the South hear the gospel they must fight to hold back a yawn. And beloved, more than anything in the world, the world needs to behold the sufferings of Jesus on the last day of His life, before and after He was nailed to the cross.

How much did Jesus suffer? Well, that is a holy mystery that only the Triune God would understand. But we do know this. Many men died from the brutal scourging that Jesus received before He was crucified. Psalm 129:3 prophesies that Jesus' back was like a plowed field from the lacerations of the metal and bone tied to the end of the whip. In fact, Isaiah writes that Jesus' appearance was marred more than any man. But somehow Jesus survived the scourging and was led out to Calvary's hill to be crucified. And crucifixion was such a horrible practice that the historian Cicero wrote, "Let the very name of the cross be far away not only from the boy of a Roman citizen, but even from his thoughts, his eyes, his ears".

But the physical suffering of our Lord Jesus was but a thimble full compared to the ocean of His spiritual suffering. How can you measure the suffering of an eternity in a lake of fire? How can you measure being in a place where you know that God has forsaken you? You are suffering beyond measure and God's heart is as cold toward you as a block of ice. Friends, that is what Jesus suffered for you when He died on the cross. For that is what you would have suffered had you not trusted Him as your Savior and Lord. And if you have not yet trusted Him, that is what awaits you should you die today.

But friends, think about the love of God for you! Of the 50 billion plus people who've lived on the earth, God allowed His Son Jesus to suffer more than any one of them, just for you!! Isaiah writes, "But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities, the chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed" (Isaiah 53:5). Whoever you are, make that verse personal today. But He was wounded for my transgressions, He was bruised for my iniquities, the chastisement of my peace was upon Him, and by His stripes I am healed. Look to the cross and rejoice!

There is a final truth that magnifies the love of God I want us to see this morning. In addition to the **salvation's great cost**, see now **God's great invitation**. God showed us salvation's great cost through Isaiah, and just two chapters later He inspires Isaiah to show us His great invitation. Listen to Isaiah 55:1: "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price." Notice that three times God says to all who will read, "Come, everyone! Come to the waters, come buy and eat, come buy wine and milk". What a great invitation. God invites everyone who is thirsty for Him and His salvation to come to Him and drink. Drink, eat, and be satisfied. But here's the best part. Come without money, come without price. God's salvation will cost you nothing. Oh, there was indeed a great cost. The cost was Jesus' blood. But the cost has been paid! Jesus' blood has been shed, and God was satisfied with the blood of His Son (Romans 3:24-25). And for all who will trust solely in Jesus' blood, God grants to them His perfect rest. Hebrews 4:10: "For he who has entered His rest has himself also ceased from his works as God did from His".

Friends, that old hymn writer had laid hold of the most precious truth known to man. In Jesus we are truly safe evermore! Satan cannot touch us. And for all of us who've entered that haven of rest, who've placed our faith in Jesus as our Savior and Lord, we are about to celebrate. We are about to celebrate His great sacrifice that secured our forgiveness from sin and our home in Heaven. So let it be a time of rejoicing and thanksgiving to God in your soul.