

Title: Our Journey to the Cross

Call to Worship: Ezekiel 34:16

Scripture Reading: Luke 15:3-6; 8-9; 22-24

May the words of my mouth and the meditation of our hearts be acceptable unto You O Lord on this Your day.

Have you ever been lost or have you ever lost something of value. If we're lost we'll try to find our way home and if we loose something of value we'll try to find it. In Jesus' parables about lost items that _____ read---the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the lost prodigal son, notice the emphasis in these parables is not only on the lost items but also on the joy that results from finding that which was lost.

In each of these parables something was lost. Just like Zacchaeus was lost, Luke 19:5-6 & 9, 'When Jesus reached the spot He looked up and said to him---Zacchaeus come down immediately for I must stay at your house today. So he came down at once and welcomed Him gladly. Jesus said to him---Today salvation has come to this house because this man too is a son of Abraham.

In all of these cases something was lost that needed to find its way back to God. The prodigal son, Zacchaeus both were lost and needed to come home to God. Jesus said in Luke 19:10, 'For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost.' And the Good News of the Bible is we can come home to God. A person is not saved by a good heritage nor is he condemned by a bad one. Jesus still loves to bring the lost into His kingdom no matter what their background or previous way of life. Through faith the lost can be forgiven and made new. 1 Peter 1:3, 'Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. In His great mercy He has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.'

Heaven rejoices each time a person comes to know Jesus as Lord and Savior. Look what Luke 15:7 says, 'I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent.' So we should be filled with excitement, joy, and appreciation whenever a lost person comes home to the Father.

Jesus' journey to the cross was to seek and to save that which was lost. That includes people like the prodigal son, Zacchaeus and people like you and me. Take a good look at the palm of your hands and now imagine you are a deaf person and listening to a speaker. You'll notice that the sign language interpreter points to the palms of her hands. This is the sign for Jesus Christ. How appropriate of all the signs that might have been chosen for Jesus they chose the nailprints in the palm of Jesus' hands to symbolize who He was.

If you really want to get close to Jesus. If you really want to know who Jesus was and what He was doing then you do it through the Crucifixion. You do it through your journey to the cross. Because there is no Easter, there is no Resurrection, there is no new life except by way of the Cross.

Jesus had made it unmistakably clear that if we want to identify with Him and make His life a model for our own then we must be ready and willing to journey to the cross. To accept suffering, pain, even death for the sake of Him and others. Jesus said in Matt. 16:24, 'If anyone would come after Me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me.'

The Cross that Jesus says we must take up each day, if we are to follow Him, is not a cross made of wood. But it is a cross made of love. And each day we are called in many ways to love as Jesus did. Jesus gave us the two greatest commandments in Matt. 22:37-39, 'Jesus replied--- Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And

the second is like it. Love your neighbor as yourself.' Jesus loved us so much that He journeyed all the way to the Cross.

Our journey to the cross is what discipleship is all about. It means adopting a life style in which we care about others so much that we are willing to sacrifice on their behalf. You see we are not required to take up the cross and follow Jesus. We are free to journey to the cross or we may choose to ignore the cross. Jesus tells us in Matt 10:38, 'Anyone who does not take up his cross and follow Me is not worthy of Me.' However when we choose to journey to the cross we will discover that the new life we have chosen is the most glorious, the most fulfilling and the most joyous life that a human person can know just as the prodigal son and Zacchaeus found out.

Many people can remember what they were doing when you heard the news about some great tragedy. However when we hear the Good News of Jesus Christ and His journey to the cross we must remember this, John 3:16, 'For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.'

Our journey to the cross helps us to realize that the wounded Christ is looking down upon us with death in His bleeding hands and feet but life in the light of His burning love for us. Heb. 12:2 tells us, 'Let us fix our eyes on Jesus the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, scorning its shame and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.'

Our journey shows us that Jesus will not let us alone. Jesus will not go away. The wounded Christ is going to drive us to a decision. The wounded Christ is demanding from all of us a decision. Either take up our cross and follow Jesus in love or indifference to the cross of Jesus. Our Christian life is not a destination but it is a journey a journey to the Cross of Jesus.

Jesus came from Heaven on a mission a rescue mission. Jesus came to reunite sinners with God through His atoning death on that old rugged Cross. John 19:17, 'Carrying His own cross He went out to the place of the skull called Golgatha.'

Early explorers navigated their ships by following certain stars in the sky in order to find their way safely home. Like these explorers we who are Christians navigate our lives by this journey to the cross. Just as the early explorers allowed stars to point them to a safe harbor we must allow the Cross of Jesus Christ to guide and to point our way safely Home. To Heaven our eternal home.

As long as we navigate by the Cross of Jesus Christ and continue on our journey to the cross we are guaranteed to arrive home safely, to our safe harbor, Heaven, our eternal Home.