

Monday Morning Rewind - January 19, 2009

Good morning! On Sabbath we considered the nonsense of the cross and discovered the deep and personal meaning it has for each of us. The cross doesn't make sense because it is so unexpected, so un-godlike from our perspective. After all, gods don't die for their wayward creatures, they crush them. They don't forgive them, they forget them. They don't atone they attack.

But what appears to be foolishness is in reality, the "power of God" (miraculous power which means not only a power able to perform the miraculous, but a power that is a miracle itself). The miracle begins with the foolishness of man.

When our first parents chose independence from God-the source of their eternal life-sin and death entered the world. (See Romans 5:12.) The virus of sin damaged human's genetic code and allowed the hacker, named Satan, to download files of selfishness and rebellion into their spirits. Embedded into the human DNA that was to be passed down to all generations was doubt instead of belief; relying on self instead of relying on God; death instead of life. (Rom. 3:10, 23; 6:23).

The foolishness and fate of man is that we are sinners and we cannot save ourselves. That's the bad news. The good news is that God is merciful and gives us grace. (Eph. 2:8,9; Titus 3:5) But this wasn't going to be "cheap" grace. It would cost God everything to save us. God is merciful, but He couldn't just pretend that sin never happened.

In his book, *The Jesus I Never Knew*, Phillip Yancy writes:

God's character did not permit the option of simply declaring about this defective planet, 'It doesn't matter.' God's Son had to encounter evil personally in a way that perfect deity had never before encountered evil. He had to forgive sin by taking on our sin. He had to defeat death by dying. He had to learn sympathy for human beings by becoming one..Because of the Incarnation, Hebrews implies, God hears our prayers in a new way, having lived here and having prayed as a weak and vulnerable human being.

In one of his last statements before dying, Jesus prayed, "Father, forgive them"-all of them, the Roman soldiers, the religious leaders, his disciples who had fled in darkness, you, me, who have denied him in so many ways-"forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing." Only by becoming a human being could the Son of God truly say with understanding, "They do not know what they are doing." He had lived among us. Now, he understood."

Jesus was our Passover lamb. 1,500 years before Calvary, Jesus' sacrifice was foreshadowed in the blood that the captive Hebrews applied to the doorposts of their homes in both vertical and horizontal strokes-the strokes necessary to form a cross. All who were "under" the blood, were spared the lethal stroke of the death angel that night in Egypt. Death "passed over" those identified by the blood of a lamb. Jesus is the true "Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the whole world" (John 1:29). All who accept His blood as an atonement for sin "pass from death to life" (John 5:24). Jesus said of

Himself, "I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved" (John 10:9).

Jesus tasted the second death on the cross so that we'd never have to. The crowd didn't understand. They wanted Him to prove His divinity by saving Himself. By staying on the cross, Jesus proved His divinity by sacrificing Himself. He couldn't come down from the cross, but He did come down from the throne. By staying on the cross, Jesus was refuting every lie ever told about God.

Common sense would dictate that the cross and the resurrection are too outrageous to be believed. And if that were the case, we'd still be in our sins and this world of woe would be all there is. But I'm so thankful that we have a God who makes no sense, because if He made sense-if He acted the way we did, or the way we would expect a God to act, we'd be toast.

And that's what's so amazing about grace. We get what we don't deserve. The nonsense of the cross is that we have a God who cares instead of condemns. A God who loves rather than leaves. And thanks to Christ, this earth can be the nearest we ever come to hell. But apart from Christ, this earth is the nearest you'll come to heaven. The choice is ours.

Have you chosen the "foolishness" of the cross for yourself? If not, don't hesitate a moment longer. If so, how can you be so calm? Praise Him and celebrate God's amazing grace! -Pastor Randy

p.s. Join us Wednesday night at 7:00 PM to continue the conversation on this week's topic of the cross. Next Sabbath's topic: "Lord, Save Us From Your Followers (Why religion ruins everything)." Tell a friend.