

Maximum Impact – Part II
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John 12:28-33
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Turn with me in your Bibles please to John 12. We've been in this passage for some time, but we started a series of messages last week which we titled 'Maximum Impact'. I'm borrowing Dr. Mack's title, 'Maximum Impact', from his book on love in 1 Corinthians 13. We borrow it here because we see in another way the Lord makes clear to us that one of the ways that we can make the biggest difference in the world is to lift up the cross of Jesus Christ. Psalm 11, if you read that psalm, it is the psalm, somewhat familiar, where the psalmist is lamenting his circumstances, and he says, "You say to me, flee as a bird to your mountain. You know, things are so bad that what you are saying to me is I ought to flee as a bird to my mountain." Then he says, "When the foundations are destroyed, what can the righteous do?" He's looking at the hopelessness of his world around him. He sees the inevitability of just the downward direction, unstoppable progression toward destruction. When the foundations are destroyed, what can the righteous do? Many people feel like that for many different reasons. Many Christians feel like that oftentimes, for many different reasons.

We can feel like that because we look at our culture, and we look at the decay in our culture, and we wonder, "How can it have happened so quickly?" "Is it possible for it to change direction?" We know ultimately that it is, but how are we to go about it? When the foundations are destroyed, what can the righteous do? We sometimes feel that measure of despair in a more personal and intimate way when we think about the conditions closer to home, even in our homes, and our families. Sometimes we find ourselves in struggles, crises that are so deep, and so puzzling, which we feel so inadequate, so weak, so unworthy, and yet there seems to be such power. Sin, and the damage that sin does, bitterness, brokenness, hurt, that we find ourselves feeling something, that same sense of despair. When the foundations are destroyed, what can the righteous do? "What can I possibly do to fix this situation?"

Even more perplexing is when we look in our own hearts, and when we see that the condition of our own hearts are in such a state that we find ourselves looking and saying, "What is going on in me? I can't deal with the apathy in my heart toward the things of God. The power of the sinful desires in my heart that causes me to run to all the wrong places in my life. What can I do? It seems that nothing makes a difference." When the foundations are destroyed, what can the righteous do? What



do you do? I believe the passage we are looking at in John 12 gives great hope, incredible hope. It is a hope that is, again, such a surprising hope, because we are in the life and ministry of Jesus, we are in the very shadow of the cross.

We are at the moment in His life that comes closest to the greatest despair. Jesus knows that the cross looms ahead of Him. We have Him cry out in His anguish in that perplexed, semi-prayer. He didn't really pray it, He was thinking it, "What shall I say then? Father, deliver Me from this hour," but then He talks to Himself. "But no, for this hour I came." But that moment of darkness that looms ahead of Him seems to be so terrible, so terrifying, that He wants to turn and run from it, and He feels something of the despair of the psalmist, "What can I do?" He reminds Himself of what the Scriptures teach, and what He knows. "It is for this very hour that I came. No, this is not the hour of defeat, this is the hour of victory." And in His example, we find the path to our own dilemma. No matter what we are despairing, if we are despairing the fate of society, can America be saved? I don't know. Well what can we do? There is something we can do. You say, "Well, we can vote." Yeah, we can vote. We can try to convince people of the better way politically, but that is only using a water gun.

We have an ocean of power at our disposal, and the ocean of power is to lift up the cross of Jesus Christ. That is the only thing we're going to see that really reveals the power of God. Jesus is going to teach us in Verses 31-33, the incredible power of the cross. We are going to look at in subsequent weeks, its power to judge, its power to destroy the works of the devil, and its power to attract unbelievers. That is the cross, it is the moment of greatest weakness, when the Son of God hangs in abject, apparent weakness that He is actually winning. He is revealing the greatest power. He is demonstrating the greatest power. He's making a public spectacle of Satan. And as we learn to lift up the cross every way we can, people around us, it is the power of God, it is not the foolishness that people think, it is the power of God unto salvation. It's the power of God and the wisdom of God. It transforms. It doesn't need to be hidden away, we don't need to make excuses for it. We don't need to try to hide it because it is not culturally relevant. We need to lift it up! It is the power of God!

So as we do that, we're going to make a difference in people's lives. Not everyone is going to receive it with joy. Many will be hardened by it, but others will be broken by it. For it is the cross of Jesus that breaks the pride of sinful man, and it is the cross of Jesus that breaks the hold of the devil himself. It is the cross of Jesus that brings hope and restores life. So in the world, in our family, what needs to happen? We need to lift up the cross. In our own soul, as we despair of the

condition of our own soul. When we have a moment of sudden awareness and realize where we are, what do you do? How do you get out of the mire that you are in? You look to the cross.

Really there are two things I want us to think about as we go through these points over these next few messages. Really it is the centrality of the cross. I'm going to read the passage and we're going to talk about a couple preliminary observations before we get into, we're really going to cover one major point that Jesus talks about, and it's going to be our sermon today, but I want us to read Verses 20-36. We're going to be focusing on Verses 21-33. So when we come to those verses, listen to what He says about the power of the cross.

*John 12:20-36 ~ Now there were some Greeks among those who were going up to worship at the feast; 21 these then came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida of Galilee, and began to ask him, saying, "Sir, we wish to see Jesus." 22 Philip *came and *told Andrew; Andrew and Philip *came and *told Jesus. 23 And Jesus *answered them, saying, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. 24 Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. 25 He who loves his life loses it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it to life eternal. 26 If anyone serves Me, he must follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also; if anyone serves Me, the Father will honor him.*

27 "Now My soul has become troubled; and what shall I say, 'Father, save Me from this hour'? But for this purpose I came to this hour. 28 Father, glorify Your name." Then a voice came out of heaven: "I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again." 29 So the crowd of people who stood by and heard it were saying that it had thundered; others were saying, "An angel has spoken to Him." 30 Jesus answered and said, "This voice has not come for My sake, but for your sakes. 31 Now judgment is upon this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out. 32 And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to Myself." 33 But He was saying this to indicate the kind of death by which He was to die. 34 The crowd then answered Him, "We have heard out of the Law that the Christ is to remain forever; and how can You say, 'The Son of Man must be lifted up'? Who is this Son of Man?" 35 So Jesus said to them, "For a little while longer the Light is among you. Walk while you have the Light, so that darkness will not overtake you; he who walks in the darkness does not



know where he goes. 36 While you have the Light, believe in the Light, so that you may become sons of Light.”

These things Jesus spoke, and He went away and hid Himself from them.

Let's pray together.

Father, we ask that Your Spirit might grant, that Your word might have its effectual purpose in each and every life. That You might grant clarity, that You might grant conviction, that You might grant repentance, and faith. We pray this in Jesus' name, Amen.

Now one of the things we see in this passage is that it is all about the cross. That the Christian life is all about the cross, that the Bible from Genesis to Revelation, is all about the cross. You feel something of the momentous nature of it as the passage unfolds. Remember these guys just come asking to see Jesus. “Sir, we wish to see Jesus,” but it is Gentiles who want to see Him, it is non-Jews. This marks a decisive moment in Jesus' ministry. Apparently He understands that the Father has told Him that, “When Greeks begin to seek You,” and as He's read the Old Testament, when the Gentiles come to the light of the nations, when the nations come to the light, the Messiah must be lifted up. The moment of His cross is at hand. He struck immediately and He says, “Now is the Son of Man glorified? This is the time. This is the hour. The hour has come.” And then He continues to emphasize this momentous nature of this particular hour. Look what He says in Verse 31:

John 12:31 ~ Now judgment is upon this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out.

You see the emphasis on the moment, ‘now’ twice there in the text. In fact, the English in this particular instance, the English represents the Greek very well. You know Greek word order can be moved around like many other languages. English is less flexible. The Greek can put things around and they just automatically know to put the subject and verb together, it doesn't matter what order it is in. But here, the Greek actually, and the English agree. ***‘Now is judgment upon the world,’*** it reads in the Greek. ... ***now the ruler of this world will be cast out.*** Just like it says here. ‘Now’ is the first word, and the emphasis in the original is on the ‘now’. This is the decisive moment. Jesus had just said earlier, “The hour has come.” We talked about in previous messages how He was often saying, “My hour is not yet. The hour has not come. It is not the hour yet.” They were trying to seek and kill Him, but His hour had not yet come. We've read this a number of times in John's

Gospel, and here this moment is now here. Now is the hour for the Son of Man to be glorified. Now is judgment, now He is the ruler of this world. What this says is everything is about the cross. The whole ministry of Jesus is just a prelude to this moment. This is the reason He came.

This is why it is so foolish for professing Christians to say things like, you know, it's not so much, "Why do you talk so much about the cross?" It's really, "Let's listen, let's talk about Jesus' teachings. Let's talk about His life, His exemplary life. Let's talk about His miracles." Well, we can talk about all those things, but you realize they are secondary, that the one thing that is primary is the cross. Look up at the words of Jesus, "Now is the moment." And every attempt that Satan can use to deceive, well-meaning people even, he wants to dilute the power and the emphasis on the cross. What could he do to water it down? But this is why Paul says, "Listen, if you want to know what we preach," as we read earlier, "we preach Christ and Him crucified. This is the substance of our preaching. We don't just preach Christ, we preach Christ crucified. We preach the cross." It is the decisive moment, it is the place where dramatic things happen. We see that it is the place where the power of God is unleashed.

The world is a mess. You think about the darkness that the world was in when Adam fell into sin. You think about the darkness that was over the world when God had to judge it with a flood. You think about the darkness of Sodom and Gomorrah, the darkness of Assyria, the darkness of Jerusalem before the Exile, the darkness of Babylon, and Egypt, all of the darkness in the world. What can God do to deliver men from darkness? This is the moment when God delivers. There is only one moment. It is the cross. Jesus' miracles, as wonderful as they were, were not decisive to save anyone. The fact that He gave the blind man sight didn't save him. What was going to save him was this moment. All of the things that God did in the Old Testament didn't save anyone. I mean, He was saving people, please understand I'm not saying that people weren't saved, but they were saved by looking ahead to this moment. That is the only way anyone has ever been saved, is looking to this moment, the moment of the cross. Abraham saw it and hoped in Christ. David saw it and hoped in Christ. He was hoping in the moment that Jesus is now saying is here.

Now what does that mean? Well it means that our lives should center around the cross. It means that our worship should center around the cross. It means that our day to day lives should be about the cross. We should glory in the cross continually. I mean, this is to be our focus. You know when you read the Scriptures, you know we need daily to remind ourselves of the importance of the

cross. We are sheep, we forget. Every day we should be in the Scriptures and the reason we are there is to remind ourselves how much we need God. I shared with you how the Lord has been helping me in that area, to remember for my own self, my own soul, I need to be in the word, not just to teach others.

One of the things I find is so encouraging as I read through the psalms, and I mentioned this I know, I'm going to make sure that you don't forget. I'm going to keep reminding you of this. Today I was reading one of the psalms, I forgot if it was 6, 36, 66, 96, or 126. I think it was 36 or 66. My system is to read the day of the month, six, start with Psalm 6, then add 30 to it, 36, 66, 96, 126. You read five psalms, and in 30 days you've ready through the entire psalter. It has been encouraging to me because one of the things that is just so neat is the Lord gave us this book to show us how to worship. God inspired these men to write down these prayers so that He could show us how to pray. He could show us how to focus our hearts on Him. It is a daily guide to say, "How can I forget what is around me and focus my eyes on Him?" So you get in the psalms and you see that.

Today, one of those psalms again, I noticed three times in five verses the word '*lovingkindness*'. The lovingkindness of God. It is talking about how sinful we are, how much need we have, how much broken we are, but my hope is in the lovingkindness of God. "I'm hoping that You are what You say You are. That You are a God that looks at people in their misery, and You are moved with compassion." Our misery, self-inflicted. We would expect that the God of the universe would say, "Well, you made your bed, lie in it." Wouldn't you expect that? Doesn't that seem reasonable? And we've all made our beds, we're all so sinful, so selfish, and yet the reality is it is not about, "Well, I did better yesterday than the day before, Lord, so bless me." That is not going to receive a blessing, that attitude doesn't. "I'm not as bad as I used to be, Lord, so bless me." It's good that you aren't as bad as you used to be, but that is not the basis for receiving a blessing. Your own help for receiving a blessing is that God is a God of lovingkindness, that He is a God that when He looks at us in our misery, is moved. So with the psalmist, I was thinking about this, this morning, the psalmist is sitting there saying, "Lord, I treasure Your lovingkindness. I glory in Your lovingkindness. I just can't quit thinking about Your lovingkindness." What it means is we run to God because of who He is, and His lovingkindness.

I was reading a word study of this a few weeks ago, and the author of the Hebrew word study was saying that basically the word '*chesed*', '*lovingkindness*' in the Old Testament, which is used so many times, 127 in the psalms itself, that it is basically the Old Testament equivalent of the New Testament verse, "God is love."

This is who He is, He is love, He is compassion, He is mercy, so run to Him. Now where do you see that more clearly displayed than the cross of Jesus Christ? This is where He brings in the most full and beautiful, I mean it is all of the rivers of the streams of love that we had in the Old Testament, now empty into this one incredible ocean at Calvary. “This is who I am. I am a God of lovingkindness and compassion.” So everything points to the cross, everything before in the Old Testament points to the cross. Everything after the apostles, they are always pointing to the cross, and this is what Jesus is saying here.

So Christian ministry, Christian living should be pointing to the cross. Are you pointing each other to the cross? Are you continually reminding yourself of the cross? If you are not, you are living a powerless, vacuous, Christian life! Because it is the cross that is the point, the access point for power. So we need to glory in the cross continually, we need to go to the cross daily. We glory in the cross by reflecting on it, meditating on it, reading the word about it, thinking about it, and we go to the cross by dying ourselves, to our own, because when you glory in the cross, the next thing that happens when you really glory in the cross is you go to the cross. We stop living for our own priorities. We stop living for our own desires. The love of Christ constrains us, compels us to lay down like Jesus said, “If anyone serves Me, he must follow Me.” You must learn to hate your life. You can only hate your life when you look at the cross because it is the cross that says, “I only want You, Lord.”

When I understand that He looks at me, when you understand that He looks at you in your sin and your misery and He loves you, there is something incredibly compelling about that. And you realize that, “What would I want more than to be in Your presence? You who made this beautiful world, who made sunsets that capture our attention from time to time.” You know how often we miss those, right? We’re driving, we don’t even notice it. Do you ever think about that? How much we miss? So much beauty around us all the time. If we stop and reflect and we do well. But God is making these every day all over the world. Every creature is a picture of His incredible wisdom, and His design, and a God like that who is so wonderful, yet it is His lovingkindness that is most amazing and most beautiful. This God of holiness, and righteousness, is a God of tenderness, who invites us in. Glory in the cross and then go to the cross.

When I see that the cross is everything to me, then I don’t care so much about my own agenda, I stop being so easily offended, and I lay down these things so that I might have more of Jesus. When that happens, when you and I glory in the cross, and when we go to the cross, this is the way that we unleash the power of the cross.



This is the way, in the same way that this moment was the moment that everything was going to change, in the Christian life, God has willed that as you and I live in the cross, that we glory in the cross. We die to self, those moments are the moments when we are glorying in the cross, when we're going to the cross, those are the moments where the power of God is released in our life, to us, and through us. So I said, "What is the hope for the world?" The hope for the world is that you and I glory in the cross. The hope for the world is that you and I go to the cross, that we die to ourselves. The hope for our families, we're always looking at, "I wish, Lord, you would change them." That is not the way. God says, "Go to the cross, glory in the cross, so I can change you," and then the power of God comes and changes us.

Now I want us to look at, in the purpose of glorying in the cross, we're going to look at these three major points—the power to judge today, the power to destroy the work of the devil next time, and the power to attract, we may do both of those next week, we'll see. But anyway, today, the rest of the time we have, the power to judge. Verse 31:

John 12:31 ~ Now judgment is upon this world;...

Behold the power of the cross to judge.

John 12:31 ~ Now judgment is upon this world;...

He's saying, "The cross brings judgment." At the moment of the cross was the moment that the world was judged. First of all, there's incredible irony here, because if you really think about it, it seemed that the world had passed judgment on Jesus when He died on the cross, did it not? Rome executed Him. The Jews basically said He's worthy of death. They exercised judgment upon Jesus, and it seemed as if they judged Him, but the reality is that *He* had judged *them*. That's what this is saying. Jesus has passed judgment. The moment of decisive judgment has happened. In fact, this word translated *judgment* is the Greek word κρίσις (krisis). Our English word *crisis* is basically a transliteration of that word. *Krisis* in its original meaning is a decision. It comes from the word to judge, to separate, and the word to judge meant to give a careful assessment, to separate, to distinguish, to look at, to assess and to give, to render a decision, to pronounce a judgment. So the word *krisis* here is not the process of judging, but it's actually the moment that the process has been—it's already been completed, and now it's made known, okay? So he's saying that there may be a long deliberation process. A jury meets for sometimes days, don't they?

The crisis, the crisis, is the moment when they finally read, “We find the defendant guilty.” That’s the moment. The cross was that moment. The cross was the moment when Jesus judged the world. He rendered a verdict on the world at the cross, and the wonder of this is when you and I lift up the cross in our lives, when we share the cross with other people, He still is rendering the verdict, even bringing that verdict that He rendered then in a fresh way to that moment. The cross is a declaration about the world. Now, let’s think about this.

First of all, let me point out that when He says the judgment has come upon this world, what He means is not so much the world as the earth or the planet, of course, but the world as the place, the dwelling place, of people. And so what He’s saying is now is judgment upon all the people of this world. God is rendering judgment about all the people of this world. Well, think about this for a moment. People ask the question: *Are people basically good? Aren’t people really at the root level basically good? Or at least wouldn’t you acknowledge that people are born morally neutral?* Many people wonder about that, but what does the cross say? What is the verdict of the cross about what people are like? Someone was talking the other day about one of the stars, one of the Hollywood personalities and whose lifestyle is very ungodly, but they do so many good things, and the statement was, “They have a good heart.” You know, they don’t and I don’t either. None of us do. The cross renders a verdict about our hearts. The cross is a decisive moment and a declaration of what the heart of man is, and what it says is the heart of man is exceedingly evil.

Now, the Old Testament had told us this. Jeremiah 17:9 says, “The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked. Who can know it?” Romans 3 tells us that no man seeks God. There really are no honest, earnest seekers of God. It seems that there are, but there are not, according to the Scripture. “No one does good, not even one. Together they have turned aside and become corrupt,” Romans 3:10-18 says. How does the cross make that so clear? Well, think about it. I mean, are people really seeking God? Well, think about this. When God came in flesh, God left the glory of heaven. People say, “I wish God would be more clear, that He’d speak more clearly. Then I would believe in Him.” God left the glory of heaven, became a baby, He came in absolute humility, He didn’t try to overall but He came and He revealed Himself. He revealed the heart of God to us. Every day of His life the Lord Jesus was revealing the heart of God to us. His ministry, His healing, “I’m concerned about you,” His teaching that the way of salvation is through Me.



“I am a God of compassion. Look how humble and lowly I am. I left glory to come down and save you, because the only way you could be saved was for Me to come, and the only way you could be saved was for Me to die in your place, and so here I am. I’m loving you.” Did people appreciate that? No, He was despised and forsaken, a man of sorrows acquainted with grief. People were continually rejecting God. But some say people are seekers. No, they’re not. When the true God is made known, we don’t seek. We do seek all kinds of other things. We seek idols that we make in our own image. We seek to make God our servant, but when the true God came, what was the world’s verdict? What was the world’s heart? It was hatred of God. That’s one way we see the verdict of the cross.

The second way we see that the cross judges is that it says this is what you and I deserve. When Jesus hangs on the cross, experiences the wrath of God for sin, think about the incredible agony He went through, the hatred. He’s come as a Savior. The Jews say, “Crucify Him! Crucify Him!” “You don’t want Barabbas. Wouldn’t you rather have Jesus?” Pilate is trying to get off the hook. He gives them this terrible no-account Barabbas to choose between, and Jesus. They say, “Give us Barabbas.” “Well, what shall I do with Jesus?” “Let His blood be upon our heads and upon our children. We want to kill Him.” That’s the heart of man. But when He’s there experiencing all of that hatred, experiencing all of that rejection, He is experiencing the wrath of God, and then on the cross He becomes sin. God turns His back upon Him. The sky gets dark. Jesus hangs in absolute aloneness like no man has ever been alone before or since, and the wrath of evil is unleashed upon Him, people despising Him, spitting on Him, beating Him, mocking Him, and that says that is what you and I deserve.

That’s why we should never say, “Lord, I did better yesterday than the day before.” Yesterday’s performance still deserves that cross, and so the cross judged. It judged then and it still judges today. In fact, the word judge, the judgment, doesn’t mean just to make a statement, but the word that comes from κρίνω (krinō), to judge, means to separate, and there’s a sense in which Jesus is saying the cross is the great divider. It is the ultimate fork in the road. It’s the determining factor. It’s the cross that divides like nothing else divides. It judges the intention of the heart, and it judges us all guilty, but also some people come to run to God and some people turn away from God. It’s the cross that pushes that.

Patti and I were talking recently about just family concerns and stuff, talking about nieces and nephews and cousins and stuff that we had spent some time with from out of town, and we were talking about how hard it is to get things to really see where people are spiritually. You know in the south so many of us are cultural

Christians, or at least older folks, like we grew up in the church, and so many of our extended family profess faith, and we were talking about how can you get through to see where they really are? How can we help them? How can we bless them? We feel like it just doesn't seem like they're really clued in. We talked about, you know, if you say, "Well, you know, we really believe the Bible," and they say, "Well, we do too." "We really believe that it should be a part of our lives and everything should be about God." "Certainly, I do too." How do you really help find out where somebody is? Nowadays it's really helpful when even when the cults come. We had a visit from a couple of Mormon girls a few weeks ago. I didn't know the girls came out like that. That's the first time I'd ever had Mormon girls—two girls showed up at our door. "Well, I believe the Bible." "Well, we do too." "I love Jesus. I believe He died for us." "We do too."

How do you get there from here? I think one of the most important things that we can do is let's really talk about the cross. Let's talk about what God did in the cross. Let's talk about what it means that He is the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. Let's read some Scripture together and talk about the cross. And so as you're talking to loved ones, if we can just find a way to put the focus—always put the focus on Jesus, and Lord, if we're able, I want to put the focus on the cross. Isn't it amazing that God left the glory of heaven and He died in our place for our sins, for the sins of everyone who would ever believe? Isn't that astounding? What does that mean to you? If you ask a question like that, that gets a little closer to home, doesn't it? What does it really mean that He did that? How does that impact your life? I'd love to hear about that. It always blesses me to hear someone to talk about that and you say that to your friend or your loved one.

It's the cross that divides. It's the cross that separates. It still divides today. I've commented before on one of the ways I saw this most clearly publicly in a surprising way was watching a Larry King show some ten or twelve years ago. Larry King on CNN was hosting a panel of religious leaders talking about terrorism shortly after 9/11, and he had just an array of religious leaders. He had Deepak Chopra, New Age guru. He had a Muslim Cleric. He had a Catholic Priest. He had a Jewish Rabbi and he had John MacArthur. Now, think about it. He had a Muslim Cleric, he had a Jewish Rabbi, and he had Deepak Chopra. You wouldn't think he'd get along really well with Muslims. I mean, Muslims would have—well I won't go into that, but what happened in the course of the discussion, as they were discussing things, it became really clear the division was between John MacArthur and everybody else. Everybody else was on one side and John was on the other side.



Why? Because he was lifting up the cross. He was lifting up Christ. It makes strange bedfellows. What is a Jew doing sitting there locking arms with a Muslim? The only thing that can bring them together is hatred of the cross, and in moments like that, those are moments where you see that really the cross is the ultimate continental divide. It is the one thing that separates. It cuts to the quick. It exposes the true condition of the heart, and it still does that today, not just as we share it with people, which we're supposed to share it with people, because the cross not only separates and divides, but it brings people to the kingdom. We're to do it to ourselves. How does the cross continue to divide and separate in my own heart? If I keep looking at the cross, if I spend time meditating on the cross and I'm looking at the wonder of what Jesus has done, I'm thinking about the wonder of His death for me, meditating, continually feasting on that, what it does is it exposes my sinful pride like nothing else. I mean, think about this.

All the problems we have in our lives come from, at their root, pride. The reason we have relational conflict is at some level it's about pride. "You know, I deserve more respect. Look what I do around here. My wife doesn't appreciate me. My husband doesn't appreciate me. I just deserve to be happy. I'm not going to put up with this anymore. I deserve better. I'm going to let them have it. I'm going to give them back some of their own medicine." When you look at Calvary, all of those things strangely seem ridiculous. "I deserve respect." No, I don't deserve respect. If Jesus who really deserved adoration and worship is hanging there at Calvary getting no respect, getting only hatred, what do I deserve? I deserve worse than that. I have no rights. If Jesus gave away, laid aside His glory and His honor, why am I concerned about mine? If He laid aside His agenda, His purposes, how can I have an agenda? How can I have purposes? My only agenda and my only purpose should be to lift up Christ, and the cross judges us in that way.

When we start glorying in the cross, when we start living at the foot of the cross, when we start realizing, "Lord, here I am again, and the reason I'm having this problem is not because this person is not cooperating with me..." Certainly they're probably doing things wrong. I mean, we're all sinners. The odds of there being some sin in the other person are really good, almost 100%, and probably are 100%. There's some sin over there, and if I focus on it, I can react to it, but the bigger issue is what does the cross mean to me? Lord, bring the cross to me, and what I see when I look at that is the biggest issue in my life is my sin, and when I become refocused, when I become aware of the fact that my biggest problem is my sin, and I become aware of the fact that my biggest problem being my sin has been dealt with in such a glorious way, such a sufficient way, when I realize that the Lord should cast me away from His presence because here I am judging this other

brother or this other sister, how wicked am I to be standing in judgment? I have no rights. I am a slave of Jesus Christ. What am I doing? Who do I think I am? When I see that, I begin to be cut to the quick. “You are the man. You’re the one,” and just like that wonderful hymn we sing, “When Satan tempts us to despair, and tells us of the guilt within, upward I look and see Him there, who made an end to all my sin.” We look at the cross, we look at Christ lifted up, and we realize He died for me. He died for this. He paid for this.

Here He’s looking at me in the self-inflicted misery that I’m in right now, and He is full of lovingkindness, abounding in lovingkindness, and if I doubt it, look at Calvary. And here we are in this conflict, and suddenly I’ve become aware of my own sin. I’ve become aware that my biggest problem is me, and my biggest solution is Jesus, and now I’m filled with His love. I’m filled with wonder. I lay down my rights, and in this interchange what has happened is the power of God has come in a mighty way. The power of God has been unleashed. It’s not just some little miracle. I mean, miracles are wonderful, and God did that to vindicate, but the greatest miracle is when a heart is changed. 2 Corinthians 4 says that it likens the salvation of a soul to creation out of nothing—ex nihilo.

2 Corinthians 4:6 ~ For God, who said, “Light shall shine out of darkness,” is the One who has shone in our hearts to give the Light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.

There was darkness and He said, “Let there be light,” and suddenly there was light. He said that He in the same way has spoken to our souls to shed abroad the light of Jesus Christ so that when someone goes from darkness to light, it’s as if an act of creation has happened. I mean, I think it was a pretty big day when there was no world and the next day there was. It wasn’t a non-eventful moment. When salvation happens, that’s what happens. And listen, when sanctification happens, it’s an echo of that moment. When you and I lay things down, when we lay down our agenda and we say, “You know what? We were having a fight. It was escalating...” You know how it is when things start escalating in our conversations. We start and really the battle lines are being drawn. There’s a harsh word that starts. Maybe everything’s going great for me and then Patti’s having a bad day and she says something. Or maybe everything’s going great for her and I’m having a bad day and I say something, and so wait a minute, the tone changes. Things begin to escalate, and we can start being amazingly hurtful to each other because of the wickedness of the sinful heart.



“I want what I want, and you’re in the way of that, and therefore, I will have what I want.” But when we remember the cross, and suddenly we look at here I am wanting what I want, here I am doing evil, here I am, it’s me, it’s me, it’s me, oh Lord, standing in the need of prayer, when that moment happens and we don’t just stop there but upward I look and see Him there, we look to Christ, then the flood of His forgiveness, the flood of His grace, captures our heart and we lay things down again, and the moment, at least on one person’s part, it’s defused at that moment, and you really can’t have a fight with only one person fighting. It’s not a fight. It might be a massacre but it’s not a fight. When that’s happening with two believers, there’s something that happens. When the power of God comes into one and transforms one, here the other was just getting warmed up and angry, and now they’re working it up, and then something’s happened over there, and it’s like the tuning fork. There’s a note that rings and it so often captivates the other person. They may have to leave the room for a minute. “I’m mad and I’ve got to get away from you. I’m not ready to surrender, but I can’t keep doing it to you, because you look too much like Jesus.”

The power of God, that’s the power of God. This is how God wants to release His power on a daily basis, and when you and I learn how to do this with unbelievers when they’re being rude, when they’re being mean, when they’re just being who they are, and God uses the power that comes into our lives and just transforms the situation, and they see that, it’s like I said last week. Remember we talked about how Elijah was expecting God to speak in the fire, and the earthquake, and the kind of the whirlwind? We expect God to do it in such clear and visible ways, but where did God speak? He spoke in the still small voice. These are miracles like that. When God changes hearts, He’s speaking in this quiet way, but it is not something to be thought of as little. It’s huge, and when you see that, now think about what we talked about in the beginning.

I’m in despair because of the state of the world. What can I do? You can do a lot. You have opportunities, and the good news is you have opportunities every day this week. You’re going to have so many opportunities. You usually think of them as problems, but they’re really opportunities. You’re going to have opportunities every day to lay down, to remember to see your sin welling up, and to realize how ugly it is. “Oh, here it is again. Woe is me. I’m undone. I’m a man of unclean lips, but I have a wonderful Savior,” and as you look at the Savior, the power of God comes in, transforms you, you glory in the cross, you’ve gone to the cross, and now you’re ready to tell people about the cross, and your life is a living testimony to the cross, and that’s exciting.

It's amazing how God transforms everything, isn't it? The cross, the moment of abject weakness, is the moment of greatest power of all eternity. Just like the song we sang earlier: *Towering over the wrecks of time*. There's the cross, and when you and I live in the shadow of the cross, the Lord is going to make His power known in the same way, and from glory to glory, what a wonderful Savior. My prayer for you is that you know Him in a personal way, that you have repented of your sins, or that if you have not, you will today. Look to Christ. Look to Christ. God in flesh, crucified on your behalf, and then risen victorious, seated at the right hand of God. What a Savior.

Let's pray together...

Our Father, we praise You and we exalt Your Name. We thank You for Your infinite wisdom. We thank You that the weakness of God is stronger than the strength of men. We thank You that the foolishness of God is wiser than the wisdom of men. We thank You for the word of the cross. What a glorious and wonderful treasure. May it only grow sweeter every day of our lives, and to know that when we are in eternity, those who You have redeemed will never tire. It will only grow more precious every moment forever that You, God, have done such a great work. May our lives adorn this precious reality. May we make attractive our doctrine, our message of the cross by the way we live. We pray this in Jesus' Name, Amen.

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