

And They Crucified Him

by Art Katz

The sermon calls for a return to a deeper faith, embracing the cross and its power, and abandoning everything for Christ.

Scripture: Isaiah 6:5, Matthew 16:24, Acts 4:13, 1 Corinthians 1:18, 1 Corinthians 2:2, 2 Corinthians 4:10, Galatians 2:20, Philippians 3:10, Hebrews 12:2, James 4:10

Topics: "The Cross", "Suffering Faith"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the need for Christians to embrace the suffering and humility exemplified by the early church in the book of Acts. It challenges believers to confront the avoidance of pain, self-indulgence, compromise of truth, and the lack of correction within the church. The speaker calls for a return to the centrality of the cross and the power of the resurrection, urging a transformation from a comfortable religiosity to a radical, sacrificial faith that stands out in the world.

Transcript

I think every one of us ought to be humiliated or humbled every time we pick up the book of Acts and read the glory that attended the life of that first church. By contrast, the most successful kind of Christianity that we know, the most charismatic, the most to be lauded and applauded, is utterly anemic and does not bear comparison. How is it that these rude men, fishermen and louts who had no advantage of the kind that we have enjoyed, were able to turn cities upside down and shake the earth? Why is it we have not had a corresponding effect in our own generation? The answer, in my opinion, is that in missing the cross, we have missed the power of the resurrection, we have sidestepped the cross as a subject, let alone as an experience, because we have no tolerance or sympathy for suffering.

The denial of self in any form is suffering, and we have not been encouraged to that. We have overindulged and spoiled our youth, compromised truth in our marriages, suffered casualties and losses among our ministers, and given ground to the spirit of independence and rebellion in the churches. All because we cannot stand pain.

We parents who indulge our kids rather than chasten them, are we being loving or self-indulgent? We pastors who condescend to placate men rather than speak the truth to them in love, why are we so sparing? We saints who see the defects and the things that need to be corrected in each other, why are we silent? We are the Pauls of our generation who will confront the Peters, who have compromised the gospel by being one thing with one group and another thing with another. Paul said he would not entertain

that situation to go on beyond the moment, for the purity of the gospel's sake. I call that love.

But you know that that kind of love as an act is painful, and it's humiliating. It's easy to be misunderstood. For which reason we prefer to keep quiet? For which reason the world is running amok with us? And for which reason we move into increasing carnality, not being corrected by one another? The avoidance of pain is a costly avoidance, and the symbol of the cross at the heart of the faith is an invitation to share in his sufferings.

In a word, our Christianity is degenerating into a middle-class culture, a sanctifying cover-up for the status quo, a vacuous praise club, an equating of gain as godliness, a comfortable religiosity that leaves our real interests unchallenged and undisturbed in the avoidance of the cross of Christ Jesus. Somehow am I naive to think that we ought to look different, speak differently, act differently, that there ought to be such a savor and fragrance about us of Christ that it's a savor of death unto death to some and life unto life to us. The fact that the world can so easily tolerate us, the fact of the almost complete absence of reproach, let alone of persecution, is itself a shameful testimony that we are so like the world that we cannot be distinguished from it.

We have lost even the difference, the sense of the difference between that which is sacred and that which is profane. I believe that God could lay at the door of the church the full responsibility for the present condition of the world. And the things over which we cluck our tongues and point our fingers and look the same fruit down our noses about are the things which can be attributed to us for we have not established in the earth a standard and an alternative to which a dying world might have turned.

They simply did not know that there is such a thing as that which is holy and that which is sacred for we ourselves are wallowing in the things that are earthly, common, unclean and profane. The only alternative to that which is earthly, carnal, sensual and devilish is that which is heavenly. And there is no way to attain to that which is heavenly independent of the cross of Christ Jesus.

If the prophet Isaiah, seeing the Lord high and lifted up, cried out, Woe is me, I am undone. I am a man of unclean lips and I live in the midst of a people of unclean lips. What then shall we say, who are not prophets and oracles of God? We need to have our vision and our sight corrected.

We need to address our lives to the plumb line of God, the standard of God, the cross of Christ Jesus. Not academically, religiously or superficially, but in the actual experience of our lives as those who have come willing to abandon everything. Paul said, I'm determined to know nothing but Christ and Him crucified.

We need desperately and urgently to know Him exactly as He is.

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