

The Spectators of the Cross

by Peter Brandon

The sermon emphasizes the significance of the cross as the means by which people can be forgiven and reconciled with God through Jesus Christ's sacrifice.

Duration: 36:23

Scripture: Matthew 27:31

Topics: "The Cross", "Responses to Christ"

Description

Peter Brandon's sermon 'The Spectators of the Cross' reflects on the various responses of people witnessing the crucifixion of Jesus. He emphasizes the indifference of some, the mockery of others, and the deep love of Mary, who stood by the cross. Brandon argues that the significance of the cross is timeless, as it represents the ultimate sacrifice for humanity's sins and the profound love of God. He urges listeners to confront their own responses to the cross, whether through indifference, fear, or adoration, and to recognize the call to repentance and faith. Ultimately, he highlights that the preaching of the cross remains a powerful medium through which God communicates His love and salvation.

Transcript

I trust that this may be a lovely Easter Sunday, and I want to speak tonight on the spectators of the cross, and I do trust that this might be a blessing to you all. Another thing that pleases me, it's lovely to see young and old. Now we're going to read from Matthew 27.

And we'll start reading from verse 31. And they crucified him and parted his garments. And in Bethesda did they cast lots.

And sitting down they watched him there. This is Jesus, the King of the Jews. Then were there two thieves crucified with him, one on the right hand, and the other on the left hand.

And they that passed by resisted him three days. Save thyself, if thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross. Likewise also the chief priests mocking him, and the scribes and elders said, He saved others, himself he cannot save.

If he be the King of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him. He trusted in God, let him deliver him now, if he will have him. For he said, I am the Son of God.

With him cast the same in his teeth. Darkness over all the land until the ninth hour. Now Jesus cried with a loud voice saying, Eli, Eli, lama, sabachthani.

That is to say, my God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? This man calleth for Elijah. And straightway one of them ran and took a sponge and filled it with vinegar. Let be, Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, was read in twain from the earth.

And the earth did quake, and the rocks ran, and came out of the graves after his resurrection. And when the centurion and they that were with him, watching Jesus saw the earthquake and those things that were done, they feared greatly, saying, This was the Son of God. Were there beholding afar? Someone said the other day, very abruptly, and it was a question, I believe, that needs to be answered.

Why do they make so much fuss? The Son gave his life for the country. A little said about him. Why so much about the cross? How can the cross that's two thousand years old have any relevance in the twentieth century? My dear friends, I do want to say this.

If Jesus Christ was an ordinary man, then the cross has no significance. If Jesus Christ be dead, the cross has no relevance. As Christians, we would have to be honest and fold up the book, put it back in the library, and we would have to say to our own deceived souls, we must find another philosopher.

But you see, dear friends, the Bible makes it quite clear that he did die. He was buried, but he was raised again from the dead. And there is real evidence in the history of the resurrection.

And so you can see that the one who died is now risen. In fact, we believe that very soon he is going to break his silence and come. And that's how relevant the cross is.

But there is one thing that I must say that is absolutely final. When Jesus Christ was hanging on that accursed tree, from the sixth to the ninth hour, the greatest event in history took place. For the first time in the whole world, God brought sin together, and we can't measure that.

Then in a very meticulous way, he measured its judgment. And instead of bringing that judgment upon the sinning world, he brought that judgment upon his son. And that is why he cried, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? He was taking the place of the sinful man and the sinful woman.

And when he said finished, that work was complete in such a wonderful way that God now can come to us and give us a righteous and just forgiveness. So that when we are forgiven, we can have complete peace. Now that's the most important thing that I want you to remember.

But then someone will say, and rightly so, How is that cross going to come to me tonight? You're standing on the platform, that is correct. I'm sitting in the pew, that too is correct. How is the cross going to come to me tonight? In fact, God's medium of communication is not vision, it's not dream, but it's through the preaching of the cross.

And that's how God speaks to the world, through the preaching of the cross. If you had heard Peter preaching, the center of his message would be the cross. If you went back to the time of the Reformation and you heard dear old Martin Luther preaching, right at the pith of his message, the cross.

If you were alive in the 18th century and you heard Wesley and Whitefield right at the center of their preaching, the cross. And here tonight in Sydney, in this simple gospel hall, the cross is going to be

preached. As far as we know, when the Lord Jesus was on the cross, in order to accomplish the great work of the atonement, only two people were saved.

One was a penitent malefactor, and the other was a centurion. But when Peter preached the cross on the day of Pentecost, three thousand were saved. And through the preaching of the cross, millions have been swept into the kingdom of God.

And I feel sure tonight, as I uplift the cross, some here will be drawn to him for the first time. Now this is a very interesting thing, but the same people that surrounded the actual cross are the same people that sit and hear the cross preached. And therefore I'm going to speak on those spectators, and I'm quite sure of this, that there will be the same spectators sitting in the seat, listening to the gospel tonight.

There were those, dear friends, that sat down and watched him indifferently. Couldn't care less. There were those that passed by revilingly.

They were filled with anger. There were those who watched the far-off nervously. They wanted to come near, but they were afraid.

And then there was the mother that stood by the cross, adoringly, looking at her son. And they will be my simple remarks tonight. The Lord Jesus was scourged.

I wish we could have seen that scourging. If I had a scourge tonight, a Roman scourge, and I brought the scourge across this platform, you would see it splintering in all directions. The Lord Jesus was tied to a doorpost.

By one side of him there would be a bowl of salt, on the other side a bowl of vinegar. Before him there would be a thick set of centurions. And then there would be 39 Syrian Roman soldiers that were picked out because of their might and mean to heap the heaviest blow on the victim that was possible.

And each man will step forward, and with all his might he would bring it on the victim's back. And the blow would move the body, and the centurion would move the body flat back into the bow. And after the wound that was deep and rugged, he would pour salt and vinegar in.

The Lord Jesus received 39 scourge marks. It was a living miracle he was alive after the scourging. After the scourging, the Roman soldiers would put down their whips, and then they would go through a session called the buffeting.

One by one would step forward, and it hurts me to say this, and with a clenched right he would smash it into the face of the victim until his face was marred. More than any man's, beyond recognition. Then they would plunge a cross of wood on the saviour's back, and they would cause him to march down the little valley called Hinnom.

And then he would march up to the green hill, and then you would see something that was mingled with vulgarity. Four of these soldiers would throw him to the ground, and then with mighty hammers they would smash spikes into his hands and feet. And as they were crucifying him, he quietly said in holy dignity, Father, forgive them, they know not what they do.

And then they sat down with a few others, and they stripped the garment of course from his back, and they tore it to pieces, and with a dice they were gambling four parts of his garment. And these men were

blinded by indifference. That lovely call of passion, the greatest love prayer that ever fell from human lips, was like water on a duck's back as far as they were concerned.

All they were concerned with was a souvenir. All they were concerned with was the gambler's dice. Their eyes were glued to the cement.

If those men had lifted their eyes from the dice and from the garment, and given their eyes five seconds of vision, there would have been a transformation. They would have seen the glory and the dignity of the one that was dying. They probably would have said with the old penitent maleficent, Dost thou not see a God? But you see they were so blinded by indifference, so deceived by the beggarly elements of this world, that they had no vision whatever.

The blindness of indifference. He was breathing upon them the love of God. He was pouring upon them the waters of compassion.

He was opening his heart and showing them the very love of God. But they were brutal. They couldn't care less.

And can I use the language of a brilliant poet that said something that was ungrammatical? That was the unkindest cut of all. You say how can you prove that? There was a church in Laodicea that used to gather around the Lord's supper. And they used to taste the bread and the wine with an indifferent heart.

Couldn't care less. They were hooked, mesmerized, upon the material things of this earth. They were rich and increased with goods and need of nothing.

And the Lord looked down and he said this, that indifference makes me sick. And the Almighty God uses vulgarity. And this is what he says, I will spew thee out of my mouth.

Beloved friends, we are now in the process of lifting up the greatest love story in the world. God is breathing upon you his eternal love. What's your reaction? Are you sitting there indifferent? Test your temperature, for that's the sin that wounds the very heart of God.

Downright apathy and indifference. There was another group that stirred on the people to crucify the Lord Jesus. They didn't know it of cost.

All they had was religion on their brow. But dare I say it, hell in their hearts. They were the ones that said to the people, cry out crucify him, crucify him.

His blood be upon us and our children. They were wicked men, clothed in white and draped in religion. They had the form of religion, but their hearts were far from God.

They had seen the scourging, they had seen the buffeting, they had even seen the crucifying from a distance. And now they were moving toward the cross itself. Their hands were in their own cloaks.

Their hearts were filled with bitterness. But they were getting nearer to the cross. And when they came face to face with the cross, they heard the Master saying, Father, instead of breaking them and melting them, instead of these men falling on their knees saying, Oh God, we have committed an abomination.

They reviled, whacked their heads and challenged him saying, If you are the Son of Man, we will believe. Friends, God is engineering the circumstances of the whole world. This night is infinitely holy.

I say something to you from my heart. He was the one that put the desire in your heart. He put you in that seat that you might pass through that preached cross.

We do not make a decision, We make the decision before Mount Sinai where he gave the Ten Commandments. We make the decision before the cross where he breathes out this cry. These men looked and their hearts were filled with bitterness.

Little did they realize they had moved down a road called the Broad Road. Those men are in hell. People say to me it's very easy to go to hell.

Don't you believe it? The hardest thing in the world to go to hell. You have to come heart to heart with the Savior or sit there in cold. I think this is dramatic, but it's perfectly true right now.

And his writing down this sermon that I am now preaching and his writing down this opportunity that he's given you so that you might fall in repentance. May God save you from doing it. Then there was another company that had seen the mighty miracles.

That moment when he touched the leper and he was instantaneously healed. Probably there were some there that had seen the resurrection of Lazarus when he came out of that sepulcher all bound with grey clothes and they had seen the mighty miracle. They loved him.

They loved him deeply. But they were afraid. There was the cross in the distance.

There was the suffering Savior. Coming from his lips and heart he was expressing the very love of God. But between the cross and them were the Jewish soldiers, the scribes and the Pharisees and they were filled with fear.

They wanted to come near They felt the mighty induction of the love of God. They felt its drawing power. But there was a barrier.

The soldiers, the scribes and the Pharisees and they were afraid to come. The cross is being lifted up as we see the Savior there by faith dying for our sins that we might be forgiven. All of us feels the induction of that love.

I can tell by your faces. Why tonight there are tears. And write this down.

But some of you are saying something like this. I would like to come and associate myself with the Lord Jesus. But I'm scared.

You see it's my husband. If I come it could break up my marriage. Or it's my boss if I come and tell him I've become a Christian.

He might render me unemployed. Or it's the friends that I've worked with. If I told them that I was saved I would become the object of their laughter.

Perhaps there's a husband here. And you're saying this tonight. I would like to come.

What was my wife? My mother would have come to Christ years before the day she did. But she was afraid of my dear father. My dear friends I have no doubt in saying this.

If those ladies themselves with the people around the cross the Lord would have defended them. But he would never defend himself. He was going to be an offering.

And therefore they were defeated. Are you there? Something holding you back. But then we pass from the passionate statements in John's gospel is this.

They are stood by the cross. Don't raise your hand. Answer this in the shrine of your soul.

And you know how you feel. As she saw the soldiers baffeting his face they were doing it to her. She was never a perfect woman.

When she saw the soldiers and as she drew herself nearer to the cross one moment there would be an anger. And she would say something like this. He healed them.

He ran errands of mercy and they pierced his feet. He gave them words of love and justice and they bruised his neck. That face shown once with the sun.

Now it's marred. As he fought for breath she would fight. Woman.

Madam. It means a lady of a high degree. Behold thy son.

Mother don't break your heart. Look. And look.

And look until you understand. Can we do that tonight? May I ask you to do something that's quite unique? Would you forget everyone else in the building? Would you come alone at the cross and pray that prayer that we have sung together? Give me a sight O Saviour of thy wondrous love. And as she looked she would hear something.

Thou shalt call his name Jesus for he shall save his people. She would hear something like this. His name shall be called Wonderful Counselor the Mighty God the Everlasting Father the Prince of Peace.

And then she would hear His name shall be called Emmanuel God without. And she would see through the gloom and she would see the holy dignity of her son. And may I say now with Bishop Lightfoot it was not God who died but he who died.

Oh the reverence as we gaze upon the son. And my dear friends we must now leave the mallum and we must ask some questions. Lord Jesus forgive our crudeness and rudeness but on the cross there is darkness and around the cross there is darkness.

Why this darkness? Lord Jesus why this voice? My God my God why has thou forsaken me? And it will come to us like a revelation died for our sins. Forgive the shock it will hit you like this and you'll say My sins Lord Yes My sins put you on the cross Yes My lying my lust my bad temper my irritation my gossiping tongue put thee on the cross Yes My awful evil nature where it all comes from does it mean that you're being condemned for that? Yes Oh my God I never knew that And you're broken You see my dear friends the cross levels us all You can't come to the cross and say I'm religious You can't come My sins And then I look through those misty eyes and I say Lord again forgive my crudeness But are you saying to me that you love me? You know all about my sins and you're bearing them but you infinitely love me You're not loving me through an oration You're not loving me by words but you're loving me in the reality of the cross And when that comes to you, you will say He loved me and gave himself A young man there in London was only 12 years of age when he received his first class honour from the London School For the second

year he won it again in that brilliant public but he would never invite his mum Never And for four years running in his particular form he got that first class honour When he was 16 his mother challenged him You never invite me to that special prize giving He said no mother Why? She knew why Mother he said I didn't want to say this But your body is terribly mutilated And he said I'm ashamed to introduce you And then she quietly said this to him John when you were three you were very rebellious And there was an old fire for he had lost his mother And I found you burning almost to death on that fire And I covered you with my dress And saved your life And then she did a thing that she had never done before She pulled down the neck of her dress And she was all scarred She lifted up her long dress And her arms were all And with tears she went out of the room And this is what he said When I saw my mother's scarred body I said My disobedience When I saw her scars I said her love And you know what he did He went up for the first time and hugged her You're the most beautiful person in the world And there will be surrender Would you mind there now If I gave you my testimony My father took me to a meeting like this And I heard old Philip Mills preaching the cross And as I sat in that meeting Where there were hundreds of people And as that man preached the cross The wickedness of my sins And as they were not so deep His death And I saw the reality of God's love And in a little box room With just one bed I knelt down In that little room I surrendered to the Lord Would you mind if I point Is there someone there There Then tonight come to the Lord Jesus As a poor sinner

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