

Glorying Only in the Cross

by Zac Poonen

The sermon emphasizes the importance of the cross and the danger of pride, calling listeners to cultivate humility and sacrifice their lives for the sake of others.

Duration: 31:15

Scripture: Matthew 23:12, John 13:34-35, Romans 14:13, 1 Corinthians 1:18, 1 Corinthians 11:28, Galatians 6:14, Philippians 2:3, Colossians 3:12-14, 1 Peter 5:5, 1 John 4:19-21

Topics: "The Cross", "Humility"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the significance of the cross of Jesus Christ, highlighting the need to move from admiration to following Jesus, the danger of pride hindering spiritual growth, and the importance of sacrificial love for others. It challenges believers to humbly focus on the sacrifice of Christ, avoid prideful judgment of others, and prioritize selfless living in light of the cross.

Transcript

When we come to the Lord's table, I thought of this beautiful hymn, which was written many, I don't know, maybe two or three hundred years ago. But boy, that man really saw something. Think of those words and just think about it.

We are going to take part in a bread and a cup that symbolizes the greatest sacrifice the world has ever seen. It was a great sacrifice because the one who sacrificed was God himself. I think of a lot of groups who don't recognize Jesus as God.

I say, you haven't understood a thing about God then. You call yourself a Christian. If Jesus was not God, then our sins are not forgiven.

When we take part, there are two things we can do to Jesus. One is admire him and the other is follow him. These are two different things.

Never did Jesus say, admire me, admire me, admire me. He always said, follow me, follow me, follow me. Even though he said, follow me, follow me, follow me, most Christians only admire him, admire him, admire him.

When I survey, that means when I look carefully at that wondrous cross on which the Prince of Glory died, my richest gain I count but loss and poor contempt on all my pride. If there's anything that can humble you,

it's the cross of Jesus Christ. There is a tremendous temptation to pride in every child of Adam.

We are constantly tempted to be puffed up by something or the other and the devil is saturated with pride and he knows exactly what to remind us of to make us proud. You can look into the mirror and be proud. Thank you, Lord, that I'm not like others.

I'm good-looking or maybe you're clever. Maybe you're highly qualified and you congratulate yourself for working hard, that you got a good job, etc. Or maybe you know the Bible or maybe you are in some ways spiritually above others and you congratulate yourself.

Or maybe your children are all believers, unlike some other poor families. Don't ever compare yourself with them. If you see a family with even one child not following the Lord, if you can't do anything, keep your mouth shut.

Don't criticize and never compare them with your family. If you want to do something, pray for them. That's all.

Pride is so close to us and I'm absolutely convinced that the reason why many believers, even in CFC, have not grown as much as they should have by now, after all the wonderful messages they've heard, brothers and sisters, there's only one reason. Deep down in their heart, they are proud of something. I don't know what it is.

You know. Many years ago, I understood one thing, that God is the enemy of the proud and there's no partiality with God. It's like the law of gravity.

If you jump off the roof, the law of gravity doesn't first check out whether you're a believer or whether you speak in tongues. It just pulls you down. God resists the proud.

It doesn't matter who you are. You can be the most useful person on earth. God will resist you.

Pride is what makes us disobey God's commandments. Pride is what makes us look at some verses in the Bible and say, oh that's not one of the major commandments. Boy, you must be a very important person to dissect God's Word and decide which are things that you should take seriously and which are things you don't have to take seriously.

Do you see the pride there? Almighty God has given His Word and you decide what is important and what is not important. I see the smallest little commandment which may be written in half a verse. I want to obey it.

I obey it. If it says, when you come to pray or give an offering to God, you remember that you've hurt somebody. Leave your offering.

Stop praying. Stop doing anything. Go and settle that first.

I do that first. I stop praying. It's no use praying.

It's a waste of time. No use serving. No use preaching.

I will not do a single thing before I settle that because Jesus said go and do that first. If you read Matthew 5, that word first is there. Do that first, then come back to God.

We may say, yeah, it doesn't matter. I can do it a little later. Exactly.

You have decided that you are the one who decides. Even if Jesus has said it, it's okay. You are cleverer than him.

Do you wonder why your life is so stagnant and shallow and why you're gloomy so often and discouraged? I'll tell you honestly, I've never been discouraged for nearly more than 20 years. That's the truth. I'm telling you the truth, not a single day.

It's not because I'm better than you. I was far more depressed and discouraged than you in early days as a believer. I'm tempted even today.

But God's grace is sufficient. But he gives his grace to the humble. And one mark of pride is you dissect God's word.

You decide which are the big commandments, small commandments. I know there are big commandments and small commandments. There are definitely.

Don't commit murder is much more important than smaller commandments. But I say, I'm not here to say I have to only do the big ones. Now, if you have not seen a commandment, that's okay.

Then God doesn't hold you responsible. And the other thing, the Bible says don't judge others. That's very, very important.

When you keep a commandment, don't judge whether somebody else is keeping it or not. That's not your business. That's another revelation God gave me many years ago that saved me, that there is only one judge in the whole universe, and that's God.

Do you know how much that one single truth liberated me, that there is only one judge in the whole universe? It's a truth all of you know. It's not a great revelation. It's a truth, but it has to come to you as a revelation that there is only one judge.

I mean, think if you went into the high court in Karnataka and you sat there. You know, some visitors can sometimes sit. But while the court is going on, you get up and try to say, hey, I'm going to pass a judgment on this.

You wouldn't dare to do it because you respect that in that court, in that hall, there's only one judge. I want to tell you something. In this universe, there's only one judge.

That's where pride comes in. You do something and then you judge other people who don't do it. It's not your business.

You do it, leave other people to God. They don't do it your way. It doesn't matter.

I meet churches where they have pastors. I don't believe in that title at all. But if he wants that title, okay, I'll call him pastor.

I have no difficulty in calling him. I have no difficulty in calling anybody sir or whatever it is. I don't believe in it, but I won't judge him.

I don't say he's not as spiritual as me because I don't take that title. I will destroy myself. I'll lose the grace of God.

But I won't take that title because God's given me life. Many things in our church, we ask the sisters to veil their heads because it's a commandment. But I don't.

I go to churches where they don't veil their heads and I tell you before God, I do not judge them. Some of them may be more spiritual than me. They may not have light on it.

That's all. I remember hearing of an old godly man. He was a Roman Catholic.

There was some wonderful godly man among the Roman Catholics a thousand years ago. He was a disciple of Francis of Assisi. And Francis of Assisi and his brothers who worked with him had taken a vow of poverty and to live very simply, dress simply, everything live simply, eat simply.

They were monks. And there was this brother whose name was Juniper, one of the disciples of Francis of Assisi. And he one day saw another one of the brothers in the brotherhood dress in a little finer coat.

Not the simple coat he was wearing. And he said to himself, perhaps under that fine coat, he has a humbler heart than I have under this simple coat. That's a man of God.

My wife and I got light on not wearing any gold ornaments years ago. Our conviction remains the same today. But we don't force that on others.

We look at sisters who wear ornaments and I say, perhaps that sister wearing ornaments is more godly than I am, who don't even wear a wedding ring. I don't judge. I hold my conviction because I see it in God's word clearly.

I see perhaps she hasn't seen it in God's word. So I'm not here to judge anyone. There are little things like this, we must do what we are convinced is right.

But it's pride when you look down on somebody and say, hey, look at that person. Perhaps that person has got a humbler heart than you and I have, who are doing something so correctly. Take that attitude.

When I survey the Wondrous Cross on which the Prince of Glory died, my richest gain, I count as loss. What is your richest gain, my brother? What is the thing you feel you've gained through the years? Maybe you've accumulated intelligence. Maybe you've done business well and earned money and you're a smart guy.

Maybe you lived a good life. You're not like these other people who messed up their life. You're not like the Samaritan woman who divorced five times.

You never divorced once. You're pretty good, right? What shall I say? Divorce? No, but don't despise those who are divorced five times or sleeping around with a man who's not even her husband. Jesus never despised her.

He didn't say it was okay. I don't say it's okay either. I don't believe it's okay even to divorce once.

I don't despise him. I say, I don't know what all suffering that poor sister or brother went through. I don't know.

I was not in his shoes. I thank God I'm not his judge. Like that with so many, when you see children growing up in this church, they're not all that you think they should be.

If you want, pray for them. Otherwise, mind your own business. And if your wife or husband talked to you about somebody else's children, okay, listen to it because they don't have light on it.

Don't judge your wife or husband. But once you've heard it, you say to yourself, it's none of my business. I will not judge.

Don't judge another person even for judging someone. They may not have light on it yet. Like I have.

I look at some people passing judgment on others. I do not judge them even for that. I say maybe they haven't seen it so clearly as I've seen it.

I want to say in the past few years, it's gone exceptionally well with me in my relationship with Jesus. Because I've decided not to judge anybody. Jesus said in John 8, 15, you judge according to the flesh.

I judge no one. I pour contempt on all my pride. What is your richest gain? Whatever it is.

When you look at the cross of Jesus and see he who had everything, he who had more intelligence than you, he who could have got 25 PhDs compared to your degrees, he who could have had the whole universe, leave alone a little money you earned with your business, gave up everything for you and me. How much have you given up for somebody else? I know you've given up things for your own children. Every godless atheist in the world gives up for his children.

That's not a sacrifice. How much have you given up in your life for people who are not related to you at all? Because you love Jesus. For the poor and the weak.

You know, we can be Christians and only seek our own spiritual advancement. Spiritual advancement comes when you have the Spirit of Christ. Where you don't seek your own.

Where you don't seek your own name or fame or gain or honor or anything. You don't despise anybody who doesn't have what you have. You don't compare yourself with others.

You consider others as more important even though they may not be spiritual. Because I look at the cross of Jesus and I pour contempt. Oh Lord, have you ever felt really like a filthy rotten pig because of your pride? Oh, I feel like that.

Sometimes God gives me a revelation of a little bit of pride there. I say I'm stinking Lord. Have you ever got a revelation like that? Most of it for me has come by looking at the cross.

I'm very thankful that very early in my Christian life I started meditating on the cross of Jesus and his life. And I saw so many things in the cross of Jesus. I've shared some of it with you.

God showed me that Jesus suffered hell on the cross for three hours. It broke me. God showed me his love, Jesus' love for him in Gethsemane.

That the cup which he didn't want to drink was break of fellowship with the Father. I never read that in a book but God showed it to me. God will show you the most amazing things if you meditate on the cross and the suffering of Jesus.

And it'll humble you. It'll break you. It'll show you you're nothing.

Verse 2, Forbid it Lord that I should boast save in the cross of Christ my God all the vain things that charm me most I sacrifice them to his blood. Forbid it Lord. Forbid it.

Don't let it ever happen. Don't let it ever happen that I will boast about something I am or I have done or I have accomplished. It says about Nebuchadnezzar one day he looked at Babylon and said isn't this great Babylon that I have built by the power of my hands and for my majesty.

You can look at your family and say look at this family that I brought up all born again believers. You can look at a house you built or see what I have accomplished in my life in my job. Forbid it Lord that I should boast in anything except the cross of Jesus where Christ my God allowed himself to be stripped naked just with an underwear, humiliated, despised, mocked, ridiculed, the demons laughing at him, looking as if his whole ministry was a failure, looking as if his life accomplished nothing.

He was a dead loss as they say and saying nothing. Never trying to justify himself but even there concerned what will happen to these people. Oh Father please forgive them.

They don't know what they're going to suffer if they, I want to forgive them. What will happen to my mother? I know I've got other brothers and sisters but I don't know if they'll care for her. I want to take care of my mother.

Tells John please take care of her. What about this thief? He's lived a terrible life. What about him? Yeah I want to save you before I die.

Boy what a life. Hanging on the cross and not one bit worried about his own pain and agony. Still thinking of others.

You know that's why you read in the Gospels. I don't have time to show you. The first time they put the wine to his mouth he said no.

You know that was like an anesthetic, a type of myrrh that would give you to the type of olden days anesthesia where at least they don't feel the pain so much. The Romans had a little bit of mercy. They knew it's terrible agony.

You know you had to lift yourself for every breath when you're hanging on three nails. You have to lift yourself up on that nail and breathe and breathe out. Can you imagine the tearing pain for every breath? To relieve that pain they gave him this anesthetic.

The thieves took it. Jesus said no. Why? Is it wrong to take a little anesthesia, a painkiller? No.

The Holy Spirit said don't take it. Okay. No I don't want it.

If he had taken it he'd have been half sleepy on the cross. He could not have forgiven one thief. He could not have made provision for his mother.

He could not have asked the Father to forgive those people there. He could not have told us it is finished. You don't have to worry about your sin anymore.

I've taken it all. I thank my Savior that he did not take an anesthetic because he cared for others. There's a lovely song I often like to sing to myself.

Lord help me live from day to day in such a self-forgetful way that even when I kneel to pray my prayers shall be for others, not for myself. Others, Lord yes, others. Let this my motto be, help me live from day to day in such a self-forgetful way that even when I kneel to pray my prayers shall be for others, not for myself.

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Let this my motto be, help me to live for others, that I might live like Thee. All the glory and honor that you can get in the world or all the glory and honor that you can get in the church, forbid it Lord that I should boast. Let me look at the cross and every time we break bread, we get a fresh opportunity to meditate on the cross and to sacrifice everything to his blood.

The last verse, where the whole realm of nature mine. Some of us may think we have given a lot to the Lord. Really? You feel you've sacrificed a lot for the Lord? You feel if you come for two meetings a week, oh you've sacrificed so much for the church.

You don't come for one meeting, you come for two meetings and you gave some money in the offering box and you did something, you helped in the conference time. Did you ever take leave without pay to do something for the Lord? I think of conference time when people from far distant places spend so much money, take leave and come here and many people in CFC won't even take one day's leave without pay. Oh they have to go to work, they'll come for the evening meeting.

Fine. I have never in 35 years told any of them to come but I see their development. I see how they are.

I see brothers who have businesses who will not close their shop during those days and I see how it goes with them and I see other brothers who also have got shops who close it and I see how it goes with them. I never tell them. Were the whole realm of nature mine, that were an offering far too small.

Love so amazing, so divine, demands my soul, my life, my all. When we break bread, drink the cup, that's what we're saying. I said it to Jesus when I was 21 years old, when I took baptism.

Baptism was a crisis in my life. I began to really take my Christian life seriously after that and it's been 51 years now, 50 years since I got baptized and I can say it's been wonderful years and I still meditate on the cross today and this hymn, I've sung it 50 years ago. I sing it today and it moves me.

I tell you it moves me and God forbid that a day should come in my life when I can sing that and it not move me. In heaven they sing, worthy is the Lamb for he was slain and he was purchased with his, we are purchased with his blood, redeemed by his blood and it says they sing a new song. How can it be new? It's new means they never sung it before.

You know I got some light on that, that every time they think of the blood of Jesus shed for their sins, it's as if they are hearing it for the first time. I prayed a prayer, Lord help me to sing it also as a new song here on this earth. It says the 144,000 learned to sing that song on the earth.

That means whenever they thought about the death of Jesus and the blood of Jesus, it was, oh Lord, really? It was as if it was the first time they heard that somebody died for me, somebody shed his blood for a filthy wretch like me. God is my witness that I seek to sing like that. Sometimes there are tears in my eyes, there are always tears in my heart when I sing.

I stand amazed in the presence of Jesus the Nazarene and wonder how he could love me, a sinner condemned, unclean and I pray it'll be like that for all of us as we break bread today. All the things that you boast about, my brother, sister. Look at the cross.

Look at Almighty God becoming a man, living on earth in such simplicity and you'll be ashamed of the things you're proud of. You'll be ashamed of the things where you compare yourself with others, even in the church. You'll hang your head in shame and say, Lord, I have not seen the cross yet.

I criticize others, I judge others. Lord, forgive me. If it has gone well with me, it's because you hung there on the cross.

Otherwise, where would I be today? You hung on the cross. Let me never forget it. Let me never think there's a single thing in my life that what I accomplished.

Let me never glory in what I do for God, but only in what God has done for me. Let me find my joy in what God has done for me. Not in my authority over evil, but in God's authority over my life.

Some time ago, the Lord said, don't even say you get victory over sin. Say, Jesus kept me from falling. There's a lot of difference.

The same thing, but slightly different emphasis when I say, I got victory over sin and I say, Jesus kept me from falling. Oh, we have missed so much in our life because we have touched the glory of God, which we should not touch. You will not touch a live 220 volt electric wire.

No, we're very careful. You will not put a metal pin into a plug point. How careless we are when it comes to touching the glory of God, taking the credit to ourselves for something God did.

Daring, daring to compare ourselves with other people and imagining we are better because we made ourselves better. You have touched 220,000 volts with your live fingers. Thank God you're not dead yet.

God's mercy. Brothers and sisters, there's only one way I can come to the breaking of bread today. It's with my head bowed in shame for my pride and deep gratitude to God for his tremendous mercy that has kept us alive to today.

Forget about everybody else. Think about yourself. Let a man examine himself and let him take part of that bread and that cup, remembering what it symbolizes.

When I survey the wondrous cross on which the Prince of Glory died, my richest gain, all the things I boast about, I count as loss. It's not a zero. It is minus.

What I think is plus is not a zero. It is minus. It's a loss.

And I pour contempt on all my pride. It's bar heads for God.

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