

**TEXT: Colossians 2:13-15**

**DATE: April 17, 2011**

**TITLE: "THE GIFTS OF THE CROSS"**

**Series: "WHY WE HAVE HOPE!" #2**

\*\*\*Trevor – Good Sunday to use "Victory in Jesus" and other songs on the cross

We are praying during this special season of outreach opportunities.

We will be asking three questions that will help us to answer the question of Why We Have Hope. The first question was "Why Did Jesus Come?" The second is "Why the Cross?"

**INTRODUCTION: (\*Prop – a cross I can hold – I believe I have one)**

A very large crowd had gathered.

On Palm Sunday, Jesus came riding into Jerusalem on a donkey.

The crowds cried out, "Hosanna to the Son of David!" "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!" "Hosanna in the highest!"

As Jesus entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred and asked, "Who is this?"

On that day, Jesus was simply passing through the crowd on His way to the cross.

Why the cross? The cross is a symbol or central icon of the Christian faith.

Through the centuries, the cross of Christ has produced varied reactions among people. Many have struggled with the cross and some have sought to replace it. Concerning the cross, the Apostle Paul said the preaching of Christ crucified was a stumbling block to the Jews and foolishness to the non-Jews.

We cannot sneak by the cross or subdue its significance, for the cross is located in the very center of God's redemptive plan.

We cannot silence the cross, for it screams out God's love in a noisy world

**ILLUSTRATION: Creative wordsmith and author, Max Lucado wrote, "The cross. It rests on the timeline of history like a compelling diamond. Its tragedy summons all sufferers. Its absurdity attracts all cynics. Its hope lures all searchers... History has idolized it and despised it, gold-plated it and burned it, worn it and trashed it. History has done everything to it but ignore it. That's the one option that the cross does not offer. No one can ignore it! You can't ignore a piece of lumber that suspends the greatest claim in history."**

Why the cross?

I want to focus this morning on three gifts of the cross that help to answer that question.

**I. (v.13) THE GIFT OF ETERNAL LIFE**

**"When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ." (Colossians 2:13)**

1. Because of the cross, Paul is writing to a people who are not what they once were.
2. They had been spiritually dead because of their sins.
3. Their very nature was uncircumcised or, in other words, separated from God.
4. Sin is the cause of spiritual death and separation from God.

**ILLUSTRATION: A young boy was explaining basic Christian theology to his younger sister. "You see, it was Jesus' job to die for our sins; it's our job to sin."**

5. Mankind has done its job well.

**"For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." (Romans 3:23)**

6. Scripture reveals that sin is serious and must be taken seriously.

**ILLUSTRATION: "Sin takes us farther than we want to go, costs more than we want to pay, and keeps us longer than we want to stay." (Unknown)**

7. God is not the problem but sin is, for it defiles us for communion with God.
8. The word translated as sin refers to an overstepping or crossing the line of God's boundaries.
9. They had been without Christ, living life as if God did not exist, dead in their state to God, ignoring or blind to God's hope-filled plan.

**10. The Apostle Paul wrote a similar message to the Ephesians when he said, "As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world..." (Ephesians 2:1-2)**

11. They had no more power than dead men to overcome the sin problem, remove it, break its bondage, or atone for it, but what men could not do, Christ has done on the cross.
12. The Apostle Paul was teaching that Christ is sufficient to give spiritual life because, "**For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form.**" (Colossians 2:9)

13. Christ is the fullness of God so He could fill our emptiness caused by the draining destruction of sin.
14. Because of the cross, Christ does something in us, for though we were spiritually dead, he made us alive.
15. God, in mercy, had raised them from spiritual death, and through their union with Christ, had made them spiritually alive.
16. Through God's saving action in Christ alone, we are brought to new life.
17. Salvation is not the improvement of the old nature, but is the impartation of a new nature and new life.
18. This is the miracle of the new birth, for we are saved because God speaks a life into our lives.

19. Because of the cross, they are spiritually alive.

**"But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions-it is by grace you have been saved." (Ephesians 2:4-5)**

20. The cross reveals the great love of God.

**ILLUSTRATION: \*\*\*"Here's the gospel: you're more sinful than you ever dared believe; you're more loved than you ever dared hope."—Tim Keller, pastor of Redeemer Presbyterian.**

21. God loves us as we are, demonstrating that love on the cross.

**"But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us." (Romans 5:8)**

22. God's love is greater than our sin.

**ILLUSTRATION: \*\* "The Cross of Christ does not make God love us; it is the outcome and measure of His love for us." (Andrew Murray)**

**ILLUSTRATION: History records the story of a popular monk in the Middle Ages who announced that in the Cathedral that evening he would preach a sermon on the love of God. The people gathered and stood in silence, waiting for the service. When the last glint of sunlight had faded from the windows, the old monk took a candle. Walking to the life-size figure of Christ on the cross, he held the light beneath the wounds of the feet, then on His hands, then His side. Still, without a word, he let the light shine on the thorn-crowned brow. Without speaking a word, He preached his sermon. They realized they were looking at the love of God, a love greater than words could express.**

23. Love interrupts and steps in to deal with the sin.

**"For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Romans 6:23)**

24. The cross is God's love gift of eternal life.

**"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believe in him shall not perish but have eternal life." (John 3:16)**

**ILLUSTRATION: Thelma Gruber's four-year-old grandson was memorizing John 3:16. He quoted what you would normally read until he made a slight manuscript change. He said, "Whoever believes in him should not perish, but shall live happily ever after." Not a bad paraphrase.**

25. Why the gift of the cross?

26. It is so we could be made alive with Christ now and eternally.

27. Eternal life refers both to the quality of life that we have now through Christ and the quantity of life of being with Christ in heaven for eternity.

28. Jesus is the antidote for sin and the hope of new life.

29. We are not made spiritually alive or have eternal life or go to heaven by being religious, but by a relationship with God through faith in Jesus Christ.

30. We are not made spiritually alive or have eternal life or go to heaven by being sincere in what we believe, but by believing in Jesus

31. We are not made spiritually alive or have eternal life or go to heaven by the good works we do, but by the work Christ did for us on the cross.

32. We are not made spiritually alive or have eternal life or go to heaven by giving up things, but by receiving the gift of God's Son.

33. We are not made spiritually alive or have eternal life or go to heaven by a Christian heritage, but by our own personal relationship with God through Jesus.

34. We are not made spiritually alive or have eternal life or go to heaven by being somehow better than others, but by receiving the gift of salvation from the God who loves us all as we are.
35. We are made spiritually alive and have eternal life through God's plan and God's plan alone, for there is not a plan B.
36. The cross gives hope, for it speaks of God's provision of eternal life so we need not fear death.
37. The cross gives hope, for we can be made alive with Christ.
38. Hearing or knowing that we can be made alive through Christ is not enough.
39. We must receive the life God offers through faith in Christ.
40. The cross is the symbol of hope.
41. It provides the gift of eternal life.
42. His death on the cross gives the gift of life.

**ILLUSTRATION: On November 26, 2008, a gang of terrorists stormed the Taj Mahal Palace in Mumbai, India. After the carnage had left 200 people dead, a reporter interviewed a guest who had been at the hotel for dinner that night. The guest described how he and his friends were eating dinner when they heard gunshots. Someone grabbed him and pulled him under the table. The assassins came striding through the restaurant, shooting at will, until everyone (or so they thought) had been killed. Miraculously, this man survived. When the interviewer asked the guest how he lived when everyone else at his table had been killed, he replied, "I suppose because I was covered in someone else's blood, and they took me for dead." Christ's death on the cross provides life. He gave His life so that by His death, we can have eternal life, for we are covered by His love. (Ravi Zacharias, *Has Christianity Failed You?* (Zondervan, 2010), p. 42;)**

43. Why the Cross? So we could have the gift of eternal life.

## **II. (vs.13-14) THE GIFT OF FORGIVENESS OF SIN**

**"...He forgave us all our sins, having canceled the written code, with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us; he took it away, nailing it to the cross." (Colossians 2:13-14)**

**ILLUSTRATION: (\*\* John draw cartoon of this, second one with punch line) Story of little Johnnie who was sitting on his front porch, enjoying his candy bar when a so-called friend came by and took it from him. The friend ran down the street, eating the candy bar without shame. Johnnie chased him down, tackled him, and sat down on his chest. Looking into his friend's chocolate covered face, he said, "I could forgive you for stealing and eating my candy bar, but it would be easier to forget it if you would wipe the chocolate off your face!"**

1. Forgiveness is God's response to our sin.
2. On the cross, Jesus said "Father forgive them."
3. The cross is about forgiveness.
4. He went to the cross not to give us a religious symbol but to provide forgiveness.
5. God wants everyone to experience His forgiveness of sin.

6. The word "forgiven" is not the typical word used for forgiveness.
7. It means "to forgive out of grace" (charisamenos).
8. Forgiveness is the gift of God's mercy and grace.
9. Sin separates us from God, for God is holy.
10. Forgiveness does not mean ignoring the sin but that the sin is no longer a barrier to the relationship.
11. We do not find release from the burden of sins through emotional release, psychological manipulation, or positive thinking.
12. Forgiveness is not achieved, it is received.
13. It comes only through God's action of mercy, for God wants to forgive.
14. The purpose and power of the cross is to forgive and restore our relationship with God.

**"All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name." (Acts 10:43)**

15. One theologian said, "Forgiveness of sins is synecdoche for salvation or, in other words, "the part is for the whole, the whole for the part."

16. God is able to forgive all our sins

**"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness." (1 John 1:9)**

17. The only sure place to bury sin is at the foot of the cross.

18. Jesus' work on the cross was complete, so He offers complete forgiveness.

**ILLUSTRATION: There was a king who had suffered much from his rebellious subjects. One day, they surrendered their arms, threw themselves at his feet, and begged for mercy. He pardoned them all. One of his friends said to him, "Did you not say that every rebel should die?" "Yes," replied the king, "But I see no rebels here."**

**"He forgave us all our sins, having canceled the written code, with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us;..."**

**(Colossians 2:13-14)**

19. In discussing the nature of forgiveness, Paul refers to a hand-written certificate of indebtedness, similar to a bond or IOU.

20. The giving of a certificate of indebtedness to a person from whom one borrowed was a common practice in Paul's day.

21. Such a bond bearing one's signature stands over against the debtor until paid or canceled.

22. It is what we call an IOU.

23. We face the totally hopeless IOU of God's righteousness.

24. Apart from Christ, both Jews and Gentiles were viewed as being continuously in debt, neither able to catch up with their payments.

25. The law stands against us because it makes demands which we cannot meet.

26. The law has a certificate of requirements that puts us in debt to God because of sin.

27. Because we cannot live up to the standard of the law, it works against us and opposes us.

28. The charge was against us, that is, against our peace.

29. The law of God has declared us spiritually bankrupt.

30. We have a debt we cannot pay.

**ILLUSTRATION: The newspaper article reported that a Utah businessman had filed for bankruptcy and declared his debts to be \$613 billion. It seemed ridiculous! What's more, the man claimed assets of only \$7,310. In other words, if all debts were honored, his creditors would receive about one-millionth of a cent on the dollar. There was no way he could begin to pay his debts.**

31. Without the cross it would be hopeless.

32. Through the cross Christ took care of it.

33. A Holy God cannot ignore sin but he dealt with sin through Christ work on the Cross.

34. Christ death on the cross decisively and completely took care of humankind's indebtedness to God.

35. His main point is to emphasize the decisive and complete way Christ's death on the cross took care of Humankind's indebtedness to God.

**"Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the sinful nature, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering." (Romans 8:1-3)**

36. Through the work of Christ on the cross, God wipes out the list of charges against us.

37. Because of the cross, the IOU is no longer valid.

38. It has been paid in full by Jesus Christ on the cross of Calvary.

39. God not only forgives our sin but He blots out the record of it.

40. Paul declares God has blotted out the bond against us as if it had never been there.

41. The word 'canceled' means 'to erase or obliterate.'

42. Hence, the cancelling of the bond meant the removal of that which hindered fellowship with God.

43. The word is a word of God's mercy.

44. Christ did not come to rub it in; He came to rub it out.

**"For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him." (John 3:17)**

45. Jesus came to deal with the sin problem.

46. Jesus met the perfect demands of God's holiness.

47. There is power in the cross. Our sin was blotted out as if it had never been there.

**ILLUSTRATION: (\*PROP I think I have one.) Those of you who are baby boomers, do you remember having an Etch A Sketch? Etch A Sketch is a registered trademark for a mechanical drawing toy manufactured by the Ohio Art Company. An Etch A Sketch is a thick, flat, gray screen in a plastic frame. There are two knobs on the front of the frame in the lower corners. Twisting the knobs moves a stylus that displaces aluminum powder on the back of the screen, leaving a solid line. The knobs create lineographic**

images. The left control moves the stylus horizontally, and the right one moves it vertically.

The Etch A Sketch toy was invented in France in the late 1950's by André Cassagnes. The Etch A Sketch was introduced in 1960 near the peak of the Baby Boom, and is one of the best known toys of that generation. In 2003, the Toy Industry Association named Etch A Sketch to its Century of Toys List, a roll call commemorating the 100 most memorable and most creative toys of the 20th century. When I was a kid, they were the item. I remember one birthday I received several of them, for they were the big thing. What happens if you mess up the picture? You flip it, shake it, turn it back over, and there's a clean slate. This is God's Etch A Sketch verse in the Bible. He wants to wipe our slate clean. Only there are no marks left.

48. God, in His amazing mercy, banished the record of our sins so completely that it was as if it had never been; not a trace remained.

49. The wonder of the atonement is that God has wiped away, as one erases writing from a book, the awful indictment which stood against us.

50. Have you gone beyond the symbol of the cross and trusted the Son of God who died there?

**"...He took it away, nailing it to the cross." (Colossians 2:14)**

51. This is one of two references in scripture to the nails at the crucifixion.

52. The word 'nailing' is aorist tense, signifying a finished work.

53. Jesus took away our sin and nailed it to His cross so that it would be entirely removed and out of our way.

54. We are not to hold on to it but we are to leave it nailed at the cross.

55. Jesus settled the sin issue at the cross.

56. It was customary to nail charges against the felon on his cross.

57. Pilate had written on the cross, "Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews."

58. This was the charge Jesus was paying for as far as Rome was concerned.

59. But in reality, there was another certificate of debt affixed to the Cross of Calvary.

60. Our sins were nailed on the cross, for our sin is the reason Christ died on the cross.

61. Nailing it to His cross is vivid language to indicate how truly and fully Christ identified with sinners, being made sin for us.

**"God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God." (II Corinthians 5:21)**

62. On the cross, the debt was fully paid and it was finished.

63. This is God's pardon program.

64. Someone observed, the purpose of the cross is to repair the irreparable.

65. Jesus nailed it all to the cross, stamping "Cancelled" on the debt of our sin.

**ILLUSTRATION: In the 14th century, Robert Bruce of Scotland was leading his men in a battle to gain independence from England. Near the end of the conflict, the English wanted to capture Bruce to keep him from the Scottish crown. So, they put his own bloodhounds on his trail. When the bloodhounds got close, Bruce could hear their baying. His attendant said, "We are done for. They are on your trail, and they will reveal your hiding**

place." Bruce replied, "It's all right." Then, he headed for a stream that flowed through the forest. He plunged in and waded upstream a short distance. When he came out on the other bank, he was in the depths of the forest. Within minutes, the hounds, tracing their master's steps, came to the bank. They went no farther. The English soldiers urged them on, but the trail was broken. The stream had carried the scent away. A short time later, the crown of Scotland rested on the head of Robert Bruce.

66. The sin opposed to us and out to destroy us has been stopped by the cross.

67. The crown of forgiveness is ours to wear because Jesus nailed our sins to the cross.

68. Why the cross? So we can have the gift of forgiveness of sins.

### **III. (v.15) THE GIFT OF VICTORY**

**"And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross." (Colossians 2:15)**

1. Much has been written and discussed about this verse.
2. Clearly, Christ's death was manifested power.
3. The cross was no surprise to Jesus. It was all part of God's plan.
4. Paul tells what took place because of the cross.
5. The cross was a strategic victory.
6. To most observers, it would seem that any crucified person had been conquered and publicly humiliated.
7. Paul reverses that image, proclaiming that Jesus was the one who really won the battle.
8. Because His death freed us from our debts, the "powers and authorities" lost the power they had over us and we owe them nothing.
9. The term, "disarmed" means 'to strip off, to put off.'
10. Metaphorically, it may refer to the stripping away of weapons, and hence, the removal of authority and power.
11. 'Power' is a term of dignitaries or surpa mudane beings who exercise rule.
12. Jesus discarded demonic powers and stripped them of their power.
13. 'Authorities' is a term of executive authority.
14. Jesus won for us an inestimable and final spiritual victory on the cross over Satan's forces.
15. The cross declares the power of the devil null and void.

**"Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death-that is, the devil- and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death." (Hebrews 2:14-15)**

16. The cross was the battlefield and Christ was the victor.

17. The battle belongs to the Lord and the decisive blow has been struck at Calvary.

**ILLUSTRATION: Martin Luther, a 1483-1546 reformer and founder of the Lutheran church, wrote these profound words...**

**"Did we in our own strength confide, our striving would be losing?  
Were not the right Man on our side, The Man of God's own choosing.**

**Dost ask who that may be? Christ Jesus, it is He;  
Lord Sabaoth, His name, from age to age the same,  
And he must win the battle.”**

18. Jesus, on that Cross, achieved overwhelming and eternal victory over the dark personal powers of evil

**“And his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is like the working of his mighty strength, which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come.” (Ephesians 1:19-21)**

19. At the cross, the battle was publicly won over Satan and his powers.

**“For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.” (I Corinthians 1:18)**

**ILLUSTRATION: We have a socket in the bathroom that we use a lot. There is a night light which leaves one plug. We charge up the cell phones, shaver, and other things there. If we were to take out the fuse or shut off the power to that outlet, the outlet would be worthless to us. If we don't live in the way of the cross, we remove the fuse from our lives and block the high voltage of the power of God. To release the power of God, we need an uninterrupted connection to the source. We need to be closely identified with the cross.**

20. There are no powers anywhere in the universe that Christ has not conquered and made a public spectacle of Satan and his powers.

21. Jesus' death is evil's defeat.

22. The cross is why we have hope.

**“He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed.” (I Peter 2:24)**

23. Through the cross, there is power to live for righteousness.

24. Through the cross, there is power to experience His healing.

**ILLUSTRATION: There is a cross known as the Victory Cross, an early 10th century ornamented processional cross made in 908. It is covered with gold and precious stones. On August 9, 1977, the Victory Cross was stolen and suffered serious damage after the thieves tore off its precious stones and gold plating. Its current appearance is the result of careful reconstruction carried out in 1978.**

25. There is a cross that has not been stolen but still stands in its place of victory.

26. There is a cross that has not been stripped of the riches of its power.

27. Keep focused on the Christ of the cross.

28. Through the Crucified One, there is hope.

29. The power of the cross is that your past no longer has a say against your future.

30. So many feel powerless to take care of the things that weigh them down.

31. Powerless to save or improve a relationship.
32. Powerless to break a bad habit.
33. Powerless to get out of debt.
34. Powerless to balance and manage time.
35. Powerless to be the parent you want to be.
36. No situation is hopeless through His power.
37. There is a power greater than ourselves.

**“But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.” (I Corinthians 15:57)**

38. The positive side is Christ triumphs over the evil power.
  39. We were not meant to live life on our own power.
  40. It is the victorious power of the cross that is our resource for victory.
- “No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.(Romans 8:37)**

41. Christ the Victor can bring victory in our lives through the cross.
42. There is victory over sin as we yield to the cross.
43. In Christ alone, by virtue of His work on the cross, the evil rulers no longer have control over the believer.
44. The cross liberates us victoriously.
45. Through Christ the Victor, there is power to be victorious in your life through Christ.
46. Why the cross? So you could experience the victory of Christ in your life.
47. We need the cross

**ILLUSTRATION: Helicopter pilot, Iain McConnell, along with the rest of his air station crew, was summoned at 4 a.m. on the morning of August 30, 2005, to the Coast Guard Aviation Training Center in Mobile, Alabama. The Center soon became one of the first bases of operations for Hurricane Katrina relief. McConnell and his crew were told to keep five H-60 helicopters airborne on missions at all times, around the clock.**

**The first airborne relief teams arrived in the affected areas before any news crews, and were completely unprepared for the devastation they saw. A train track running parallel to the ocean had been pushed inland 15 feet off its gravel bed. A houseboat was floating down U.S. Highway 90. The entire city of New Orleans stood under water.**

**McConnell's crew got right to work, airlifting stranded people from their rooftops and out of windows and delivering them to the Superdome helipad. To their chagrin, however, they were only able to help a relatively few amount of survivors. In an interview, McConnell shared why. “On our first three missions, we saved the lives of 89 people, three dogs, and a cat. On the fourth mission, to our great frustration, we saved no one—but not for lack of trying. The dozens we attempted to rescue refused pickup! Some people told us to simply bring them food and water. ‘You are trying to live in unhealthy conditions, and the water will stay high for a long time,’ we warned them. Still, they refused. I felt frustrated and angry, since we had used up precious time and fuel, and had put ourselves at risk during each**

**rescue attempt. I felt like they were ungrateful. But, in truth, they did not know how desperate their situation was.” (Lieutenant Iain McConnell, as told to Jocelyn C. Green, "A Rescuer's Journal", *Today's Christian* (January/February 2006))**

Will you respond to the cross?

**CONCLUSION:**

Why the cross? So we can have hope.

Why the cross? So we can have the gift of eternal life.

Why the cross? So we can have forgiveness of sins.

Why the cross? So we can experience the victory of the cross.

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