

## **“At the Cross”**

This past Sunday morning, I shared with the congregation here at Columbus Avenue what I determined was the “message of the cross.” One of the statements I made was that we often speak of God's love and grace that sent Jesus to the cross. I continued to say that we preach on the effect of the sacrifice Jesus made on the cross, and the change we must undertake because of our acceptance of the saving power of the cross. But we seldom speak about the sacrifice itself.

The motivation for the sermon and for this NEWSLETTER article was my and Toni's visit to Groom, Texas this past week. In Groom, there is a cross, some 200 feet tall. Around the cross are bronzes recreating the events that led to the crucifixion itself. Much like “The Passion of the Christ,” a movie made several years ago by Mel Gibson, it gave me somewhat of an eyewitness to the event itself. It was extremely moving and impactful.

Toward the end of the message on Sunday, I read scripture that to me proved that the telling of the actual event itself was central to the preaching done in the first century. I want to share those scriptures with you in this article.

In Acts 2, Peter says this to the crowd gathered for the celebration of Pentecost:

“Men of Israel, listen to this: Jesus of Nazereth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders, and signs which God did among you through Him, as you yourselves know. This man was handed over to you by God's set purpose and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put Him to death by nailing Him to a cross.” (Acts 2:22-23)

Peter then speaks of Jesus' resurrection and their need to repent and be baptized as evidence of their faith. They were “cut to the heart” by the story they had been told, and the church was born.

In Acts 5, Peter speaks directly to the people who had sentenced Jesus to be nailed to the cross. “The God of our fathers raised Jesus from the dead—whom you had killed by nailing Him on a tree.” (verse 30) Peter's statement came after the Sanhedrin's complaints that those who were preaching were “determined to make us guilty of this man's blood.” (verse 28) Obviously, they forgot their own statement found in Matthew 27:35: “Let his blood be on us and on our children.”

In Acts 10, Peter spoke to Cornelius about Jesus having been executed by the Jews by “hanging Him on a tree,” (verse 39) and then spoke of Jesus' resurrection and Cornelius' need to repent and be baptized. Paul boasted in the cross in Galatians 6, spoke of man being reconciled to God by the cross in Ephesians 2, and tells of the humility Jesus displayed by going to the cross in Philippians 2. He tells the Colossians 2:13-15 that our debt to God because of our sin was taken away by Jesus, “nailing it to the cross.” Jesus triumphed over all of God's enemies “by the cross.”

The Hebrew writer says that Jesus scorned the shame of the cross in order to set an

