

April 11: EASTER – the Cross

Gather: Bible, paper, pen

Introduction: It is that time of year when we celebrate how Jesus died and rose again to save us from our sin and give us a way to be with God once more. Today, we will focus on Jesus dying on the cross and what it means for us.

Review

Last week you put Jesus on trial to see if he should have been convicted and sentenced to death. Do you remember the conclusion you came to?

Jesus' Death

Have you ever been accused of doing something you didn't do? Have you ever punished for something you were innocent of? What was that like?

If you could have gotten out of that punishment, would you have?

Today we read about Jesus' crucifixion, how he was sentenced to death for crimes he did not commit and how he suffered the punishment.

Read the story of Jesus' death on the cross in **Mark 15**. (The other readings of this are Matthew 27, John 19, and Luke 23). Take a minute and write down your initial thoughts, reactions, and questions from this passage:

Can you imagine being in his place? People torturing you, mocking you, spitting on you, taking your things, and trying to kill you for things you didn't do. People would rather release a ruthless murderer into their midst than you, someone who has healed many and taught peace. As you are suffering, they yell at you to save yourself and you know with certainty that all you have to do is say the word and you would be free. You could save yourself; you could escape and show them your power.

But you don't. Instead, you endure unimaginable pain until you breathe your last breath. You cry out to God who has turned his face from you as you take on the sin of the whole world from the beginning of time to the end, as if one man's sins aren't enough to bear. You die a criminal's death, in the worst way imaginable, so the ones who've put you there might know God the Father.

Reflect on that for a minute: what he must have endured, why he didn't save himself the pain and humiliation. Would you suffer a horrific death such as this to save someone who repeatedly mocked you?

What His Death Means for Us:

The love that Jesus shows us by dying this death is unimaginable. There is no greater love. Though we are broken and continue to sin, Jesus gave his life so we could be free, so we could have eternal life with God, and so we could know God right now. What does this mean for you right now?

Here are some thoughts on what it means. Circle or highlight the ones that strike you or you hadn't thought of before and add your own thoughts below.

- No matter what you do, you are loved. No matter how many times you mess up, he will still love you.
- He is always there for you and will never leave you.
- You don't have to live in fear but can trust in Jesus. We can trust the promise that Jesus will return because of all he has already done.
- You can look forward to heaven and eternal life with God.

Prayer: Read John 17:3. Pray through it and pray your response.

Memory Verse: John 17:3. "'He himself bore our sins' in his body on the cross, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; 'by his wounds you have been healed.' For 'you were like sheep going astray,' but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls."

Challenge: Each day, pick a song or verse to meditate on/worship through about the cross and Jesus' sacrifice for us:

- Lead Me to the Cross – Hillsong United
- In Christ Alone – Kristian Stanfill
- This is Amazing Grace – Phil Wickham
- Jesus Paid it All – Kristian Stanfill