

## THE CROSS & YOU

*Series: Easter & You*

Selected Scriptures

Chadron Berean Church

I've learned over the years that my "sacred pathway" of worship to God—where I really connect with God—is through **nature and creation**. I feel like my relationship with God is just always better in the spring and summer because I get out into nature more and out of the office. Here are a couple of recent photos from last week. I found a cliff and almost hurt myself getting down. And one of the things that helps me stay fresh even more is to take a path I've never traveled. Break routine a bit. Get off the sidewalks. Go to a new place. Hike a new trail. I'm determined to mix it up and not get bored or stuck or settled. Sometimes doing something new reinvigorates my walk with God—helps me think different or prayer different.

But when you're out hiking or hunting or something like that, I learned from an old elk hunters that you always want to be looking around you, **marking waypoints** by eye or dropping waypoints on your GPS so that you don't get lost. You're looking around you and behind you for natural or manmade structures to use to navigate. I always look behind me occasionally to see what it looks like going the other way, back to the vehicle or entrance.

Well, life is a lot like that. It's a journey. And just as it's easy to get lost in the wilderness without waypoints, so it's easy to get lost in the wilderness of life without waypoints: we can get turned around or disoriented by the pressure, the worries, the questions... the workload, the emails, the taking the kids to sporting events, home repairs, church programs, doctor appointments... you just kind of get caught up in all of this in the fast pace of life and forget what you're even doing it for in the first place or how you should do it as a Christ-follower.

There's a quote I came across this week from that movie "The Breakfast Club." It's a movie about some high school kids sitting around talking and one girl says, "**Adults have given up. They are content to go through the motions, work, get their stuff... they've just lost heart.**" Maybe that sound like you tonight. You've kind of gotten caught up in the pace of life and paying bills and forgotten what really matters most and what matters forever. That's why we need waypoints back to Jesus and what He did for us. To look back on what He did for us through the cross and the resurrection so that we remember how to live in the here and now. They aren't just events in history; they are waymarks that teach us how to live—we look to them for direction and instruction.

Tonight we're going to focus on the waypoint of the cross and what it means for us personally and why we should always gauge where we're at and what we're doing in life by looking to the cross. The first way that the cross is a waypoint is that:

### **1. The cross is the waypoint to life with Jesus.**

All of us are born sinners, separated from God by our sin. But the cross is where we look—it's our waypoint—back to God and reconciliation with—peace with—Him. For us here and now, the cross means forgiveness of sin; atonement for sin; righteousness; redemption; peace with God, adoption into God's family. It's all through the cross.

**1 Corinthians 1:18** (ESV) says, *“For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.”* Some people wonder why Christians emphasize the cross so much. They think it's weird. And to be honest, it kind of is. It's the cruelest ancient form of public execution; a tool used for the most excruciating torture and humiliation. So it was an offensive thing. And yet as Christians we've taken that symbol and hung it on necklaces, put it on our bumper stickers, gotten tattoos of it, hung crosses in our churches and homes, et cetera. We don't often think that it's something like hanging an electric chair up for all to see and boast in.

But while it may seem foolish to some, as believers, we understand that the cross is where Jesus died for our sins, taking the curse of sin upon Himself so we could be saved and restored to a relationship with God. We deserved that cross and Jesus didn't, but He died for us and it is the power of God unto salvation—to save us. As the Apostle Paul said, far be it from us to boast about anything but the cross (Gal. 6:14). We don't boast in our good works or religious works. We boast in the cross because that's where Jesus paid for our sins in full. The cross is the waypoint to life with Jesus—it enables us to have life.

## **2. The cross is our waypoint point for life with Jesus—for following Jesus once we've been given that new life in Christ. Two ways:**

### **a. We look to the cross for victory over sin.**

If you've been with us in our study of Romans, we've talked about how for those who have been saved from sin and placed “in Christ” as the Bible calls it, we now have a spiritual union with Jesus in His death, burial, and resurrection. **When Jesus died, we also died.** Knowing this is critical for living for Jesus and having victory over sin. So often, I'm convinced, our sin is not primarily a behavioral problem. It's a belief problem. We're trying to live for Jesus on our own without understanding who we are in Christ now that we've been born again and placed into this union with Jesus.

**In Romans 6** says Paul says don't you *know* that *“We have been buried with Him... united with him in the likeness of His death... our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin; for he who has died is freed from sin.”* When we look at that cross, we not only need to see it as the place where Jesus died, but where **we, in spiritual union with Him, also died.** That's what it means for us today. When He died, we died. We now have the Holy Spirit in us, new life, and we no longer must be slaves to the sin nature. When tempted with sin, we can say with confidence, **“I'm dead to that. I've been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live but Christ who lives in me. I live by faith in Jesus and the new life and new power in Christ”** (Gal. 2:20).

**b. We look to the cross for victory over life's difficulties/challenges.**

**Hebrews 12:2** (ESV) says, *“Looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.”*

Jesus endured the cross for the *joy* set before Him. I'm convinced His joy was reconciling you and me with Himself forever so that we could dwell with Him forever. He endured the difficulties because **He knew we would spend eternity with Him**, and that **we would look to His example of suffering in order to become like Him in our own suffering**. I said it last week too, but Jesus never promised an easy life. He promised us *an easy yoke*, and an abundant life, but not an easy life. Part of an abundant life means we can have deep meaning and purpose and joy in whatever circumstances we find ourselves in.

Being a Christian doesn't free you from difficulties. In some ways, it makes life harder because you enter into the spiritual war and there is sometimes opposition. Jesus understood that if you push the limits, the limits push back. If you want to live differently from the world and break the mold the world puts on you—well, the world pushes back (the flesh, the world, and the devil). But it doesn't mean we shrink back. That's why Jesus said we too need to take up a cross:

**Matthew 10:38** ESV

**And whoever does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me.**

**Luke 14:27** ESV

**Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple.**

**Matthew 16:24-26** ESV

**Then Jesus told his disciples, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what shall a man give in return for his soul?”**

So we still look to Jesus and the cross for our model on how to live. We too take up a cross, following in His steps. We too die daily to ourselves ... to live for Jesus. But when we die to ourselves to live for Him—here's the crazy reality—we find life.

As we approach the communion table now, let's look back to the waypoint of the cross that is the way to life with Jesus and the way of life with Jesus. Some of you may need to come to Jesus for the first time tonight and ask Him to save you. All of us need to examine our lives and make sure we're still taking up that cross and following Him.

And we're going to do something a bit different tonight. The worship team is going to play and as they play, come up and gather the elements. As they play, just take as much time as you want to meet with God in your heart and take the elements either individually or as a family when you're ready. We'll close with some Scripture Readings and Songs.