

BEYOND *The Cross*

March 27 & 28

Overview

Of everything that goes BEYOND in the Christian life, probably nothing is as significant as the BEYONDS of the Cross and of Easter. We will be looking at the central events of the Christian faith and how they affect our lives today.

Goals of the study guide:

- To understand that the Cross is not just an event from the distant past, but it also affects our lives today.
- To recognize that the Cross takes us beyond ourselves and opens a way for God to work in our lives.
- To review the significant events of Easter week.

Key points:

- The death and resurrection of Jesus Christ set Christianity apart from all other religions.
- The sacrifice of Jesus on the Cross opens the way for each of us to have a personal relationship with God.
- A life that is beyond our own ability is now possible.



Take a second look ... Sermon Summary

There was a parade that took place over 2,000 years ago that was surrounded by more expectation than any other parade in history. News of Jesus' miracles had spread rapidly. His miraculous raising of Lazarus from the dead had just recently taken place, and now that the crowds had descended on Jerusalem for the Passover, everyone thought that He would make His move against the Roman government.

1. The Cross takes us beyond *human expectations*.

Expectations were running high as the people came into Jerusalem for the Passover. People thought that this might be the time when Jesus actually staked His claim as King in the face of the Roman authorities.

- **They were expecting a *revolutionary for Israel*.
But the Cross gave them a *Savior for the world*.**

God had gone way beyond that specific nation's situation and had sent His Son to die for the sins of the whole world.

John 3:16, This is how much God loved the world: He gave his Son, his one and only Son. And this is why: so that no one need be destroyed; by believing in him, anyone can have a whole and lasting life. (The Message)

God still exceeds our expectations today. In *Ephesians*, Paul calls Him the God *who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine...* His power is limitless, and His love is limitless.

2. The Cross takes us beyond *human religion*.

The Jewish people were thrilled with all that Jesus said in His teachings, but again the Cross of Jesus Christ took the people way BEYOND what they thought they had.

- **They thought they had found a *great teacher*.
But the Cross showed them the *love of God in the flesh*.**

Every aspect of the Jewish religion was centered on the idea of trying to please God and making atonement for their sins. Their attempts to be righteous included deciding how far they could travel on a Sabbath, and how far the tassels should hang down on their prayer shawls. They had worked up this enormous set of rules and regulations with the ultimate goal of appeasing God and somehow gaining His favor.

But the death of Christ took their idea of trying to reach God and turned it completely on its head.

Romans 5:6-8, You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

3. The Cross takes us beyond *human potential*.

We live in a time when everyone is trying to offer an answer for all the problems of humanity. Every time we turn around there is a new book, a new talk show telling us how to reach our full potential or get in touch with our inner divine force or some other mystical, magical thing.

- **We think we can *improve our old nature*.**
The Cross gives us the power to be *transformed into a new creation*.

When we make the decision to follow Christ and actually accept all that He has done on our behalf, we get the chance to start over, to get a whole new life.

2 Corinthians 5:17, Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come.

Today the work of the Cross is just as real as it was over 2,000 years ago. The greatest thing about the *death* of Christ is that it is the first step on the way to the *resurrection* of Christ.



Take it to the source ... Bible Study

Introductory question: Can you remember a time when somebody gave you something or did something for you that went far beyond your expectations? How did that experience affect you?

Opening thought:

The work of Christ went far beyond everybody's expectations. The impact His life had on the world was much more than the people of His day could have ever imagined. Use this question to get your group thinking about things that have surpassed their expectations.

Read *Ephesians 3:14-21*.

1. What part of Paul's prayer in verses 14-19 strikes you the most? Why?
2. What part would you pray for yourself? Why?
3. After offering this prayer for the church, Paul breaks out in praise of God and all that He is able to do. Why do you think Paul follows his prayer with the recognition that God is able to go BEYOND our greatest expectation?
4. Have you had a situation in your life where God did immeasurably more than you asked or imagined? How did that encourage you and those who saw God at work in this way?

Key points:

- Paul prayed for several things: 1. That God would strengthen them with power through His Spirit in their inner being. 2. That they may have power to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ. 3. That they may be filled to the measure of the fullness of God.
- Paul then goes on to say that God is able to do much more than all we ask or imagine. After we pray, we should know that God can still go far beyond that and exceed our greatest expectations! Encourage your group to really consider the implications of this in their own lives and in their prayer for others.

Read Romans 5:6-8; 2 Corinthians 5:19; and 1 John 4:10.

1. What do these verses say about God's active love toward us?
2. How do these verses affect your view of God and, more importantly, His view of you?
3. If you had 60 seconds to describe the impact that Christ's death on the cross has had on your life, what would you say?
4. How does the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ set Christianity apart from all other world religions?

Key points:

- God doesn't wait for us to somehow reach Him; He takes the initiative and reaches out to us. The life, death and resurrection of Jesus is the visible sign that God has moved toward us. He has taken the steps to reconcile us to Himself.
- Many of us have been raised to see God as the mean, bad God and Jesus as the nice, caring God. This is not a true representation. God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself. He loved us before we ever loved Him. This should be a cause of assurance and rest in our relationship with Him.

Read 2 Corinthians 5:17 and Galatians 2:20.

1. How important is it to you to know that you are able to put all your past behind you and truly start all over again with God as your source of power?
2. One writer calls this the "new Christ-in-us life." How might such a life be made evident in your own situation and circumstances?
3. What practical steps can you take to live by faith in the Son of God? In what areas of your life do you struggle with fully trusting God?
4. How might these verses be used to bring hope to people who feel that they are at the end of their rope and that there is nothing more they can do to help themselves?

Key points:

- A new life in Christ doesn't mean that we now don't have to do anything while God does everything. Instead, it means that we learn to cooperate with God as He fills us with power by His Holy Spirit and gives us the strength to change into the people He has called us to be.
- Many of us repeatedly try to correct our bad habits. We feel like we fail and fail again. But if we understand that we now live a "Christ-in-us life," we can trust Him to transform us into something that goes far beyond what we could ever do in our own strength. This is the hope that comes with being a new creation, with being something that is from God rather than from us.



Take it deeper ... Spiritual Exercise

In this week leading up to Easter, read through *John 18-21* in your devotional time. Ask God to show you the reality of all that Jesus did for you during that final week, and ask Him how you can make His gift of new life a reality in your day to day living.

Sermons are just a click away! Watch or listen to sermons online @ ConnectionPointeChurch.org.

All Bible references are from the New International Version unless otherwise stated.

© Connection Pointe Christian Church 2010