



grow. pray. serve.

Reveille UMC Weekly Guide

January 18-24, 2021

Sermon by Lead Pastor Pete Moon

Week 2: Sermon Series from *Grace Still Works* by Peter Moon

Chapter 2

Sermon Title: "Why a Cross?"

Notes from sermon on 01/17:	Things For Which to Pray This Week:
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Family Focus Question:

Why is it so important to see Jesus through the "yes" of the Roman centurion (i.e.: through the cross)?

Questions for Small Groups

1. How do you explain the need of the cross to someone? In the words of our study, how do you explain the "spiritual physics?"
2. Do you find that the raw nature of the cross helps make the Christian faith more real and authentic?
3. How has the cross changed your life? How does it reveal God's love?

Monday, January 18: Read 1 Corinthians 1:18-25

"Why did Jesus have to DIE?" is a question almost every pastor has heard. Why couldn't God just forgive everyone through grace without such a horrible, violent sacrifice of an innocent? What is the big deal about the cross, and why is it the central symbol of our entire faith? Can't we just focus on God's love, Jesus's teachings, and forgiveness? The cross is truly a "stumbling block" for many of us, as we read in today's scripture.

As we begin the second week of our study "Grace Still Works," we will explore why the cross is truly the central tenet of our faith, and how it is the key to God's love and grace. As we read the second chapter in pastor Pete Moon's book by the same title, we will encounter a powerful illustration of a central truth: that sin must be paid for by someone. "If I choose to steal something from a store, somebody must pay for my crime," Pete writes on page 23. "Even if I am never caught and punished, the storeowner must bear the cost of my crime...." He follows by several more examples that illustrate what Lutheran pastor Nadia Bolz-Weber calls "spiritual physics" – how a God of love and forgiveness is also a God of justice, and how "something has to die for something new to live." Take time to carefully read this chapter this week, especially if you are one of the many of us who has asked "why the cross?"

Tuesday, January 19: Read Mark 15:33-39

This week, we are being called to take a “front row seat” at the foot of the cross and examine Christ’s incredible and horrific sacrifice that balanced the scales of all the sins of everyone willing to accept this free gift. We are invited to be the unnamed Roman centurion, who very likely could have had a role in Jesus’s death, yet was the first person in Mark’s gospel to recognize Jesus as the son of God. Too often we remain in the “upper balconies” of Good Friday, staying far away from the pain and sin, instead focusing on just the gifts that the cross provided us. So many of us struggle with the guilt of our own sins and shortcomings – all of the times that we missed the mark. What changes when we see Jesus through the eyes of the centurion, from his vantage point, and recognize our sins nailed to that cross and ourselves truly justified with God?

Wednesday, January 20: Read Genesis 22

We turn to one of the most shocking stories in the Bible for many of us, the account of Abraham almost sacrificing his only beloved son, Isaac, on what is likely the very same geographic hill Jesus would be sacrificed hundreds of years later. We sigh with relief when God stops Abraham just in time, wondering what kind of God...or dad...would even consider such a thing? We can turn to cultural differences and ancient beliefs in blood sacrifice to separate ourselves from the painful truth that we, too, have been bought by blood on that very same hill. God’s love for Isaac and Jesus never wavered. What does that say about how much God loves us?

Thursday, January 21: Read 1 Peter 2:22-25

Today’s passage celebrates the incredible fact that the cross has broken the power of sin in our lives. Our sins were nailed to the cross and died there. Let us all pause for a moment and meditate on this fact, as we may not have done in a while. Every sin we have committed, no matter how horrible, and every sin we will commit (because we will!) has already been nailed to a cross and paid for. Yes, we will have earthly consequences for our sins, which cannot be dismissed and why we so desperately need Christ’s teachings, prayer, and the power of the Holy Spirit to guide our thoughts and actions. But we can live in perfect peace that God’s amazing grace through Jesus’s sacrifice on the cross has washed our souls clean.

Friday, January 22: Read Ezekiel 36:26-29

“And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put with in you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh” (verse 26). How many of us have hearts of stone, built up over years of pain and defensiveness over the mistakes we have made, the sins we’ve committed, and our own need to justify the terrible things we have done? What if we truly recognized that our actions have already been justified through grace and this gift is available to us not through our own efforts and hiding our sins, but by our Triune God’s actions and our confession of sin? What parts of our heart are still “hard” in our lives? Let us lay down our sins at the foot of the cross today, confess them, feel our souls washed clean, and gaze up at our Savior in awe and wonder, saying “Truly this man in the son of God!”

Saturday, January 23: Scripture Memorization: 2 Peter 2:24

“He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed.”

Sunday, January 24: Let us prepare our hearts and minds for worship in praying our Prayer of

Common Confession: *Lord, we confess that we take the cross for granted. We presume that Jesus would die such a hard death for us. We overlook the sacrifice and the love given that we might have this relationship with you. Teach us once again the power and the wonder of what happened at Calvary. By your grace, renew our faith and our love of you, for we ask it in the name of the One who gave it all for us. AMEN*