

Sermon File # 1081

Scripture Text: John 19:31-37; Scripture Reading: verses 28-37

Sermon Title: *I Believe Jesus Suffered and Died on a Cross* (4th in a series on the Apostles' Creed)

Manuscript written by Roger Roberts and

Sermon preached at International Baptist Church, Brussels, Belgium

On Sunday morning 1 August 2010

Scripture references, unless otherwise noted, are from the New International Version

For additional information regarding this manuscript, contact Roger.Roberts@ibcbrussels.org.

All Rights Reserved.

I Believe Jesus Suffered and Died on a Cross

Introduction:

Open your Bible with me to John 19:31-37 as we continue this summertime sermon series on the Apostles' Creed, the earliest confession of faith of the Christian church. In reaffirming our foundational beliefs, we have already considered the first three statements of the creed. We believe in God the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth and in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord. Last Sunday we affirmed that we also believe that he was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the young virgin, Mary.

This morning we assert that "we believe that Jesus suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, was buried and descended into hell." In considering the Scriptural basis of this creedal statement we will look at the cross of Christ in those moments after Jesus' death. Matthew and Mark tell us about an earthquake occurring and the reaction of the centurion and those with him who were guarding Jesus. "They were terrified, and exclaimed, 'Surely he was the Son of God!'" (Matthew 27:54). "And when the centurion, who stood there in front of Jesus, heard his cry and saw how he died, he said, 'Surely this man was the Son of God!'" (Mark 15:39). "The centurion, seeing what had happened, praised God and said, 'Surely this was a righteous man.' When all the people who had gathered to witness this sight saw what took place, they beat their breasts and went away" (Luke 23:47-48).

Our text from John's gospel gives us the report of Evangelist John, the Beloved Disciple (verse 35). Jesus had given John the assignment of caring for his mother, Mary, as one of the "relationships at the foot of the cross" (19: 25-27). John no doubt lingered near the cross to observe these events in our text. Follow as I read what John says about "the sight of the crucified."

Read **John 19:31-37**.

Let me read from evangelical author Philip Yancey's *The Jesus I Never Knew*, since his background and experience are so similar to mine:

The church I grew up in skipped past the events of Holy Week in a rush to hear the cymbal sounds of Easter. We never held a service on Good Friday. We celebrated the Lord's Supper only once per quarter, an awkward ceremony in which solemn ushers monitored the progress of trays bearing thimble-cups and broken Saltine crackers.

Roman Catholics did not believe in the Resurrection, I was told, which explained why Catholic girls wore crosses "with the little man on them." Mass, I learned, they celebrated with burning candles in a kind of cultic ritual, a symptom of their fixation with death. We Protestants were different. We saved our best clothes, our rousing hymns, and our few sanctuary decorations for Easter.

When I began to study theology and church history I found that my church was wrong about the Catholics, who believed in Easter as strongly as we did and in fact wrote many of the creeds best expressing that belief. From the Gospels I also learned that, unlike my church, the biblical record slows down rather than speeds up when it gets to Holy Week. The Gospels, said one early Christian commentator, are chronicles of Jesus' final week with increasingly longer introductions.

Yancey continues with the observation that few biographies he has read devote more than ten percent of their pages to the subject's death—"including biographies of men like Martin Luther King Jr. and Mahatma Gandhi, who died violent and politically significant deaths. The Gospels, though," writes Yancey, "devote nearly a third of their length to the climatic last week of Jesus' life. Matthew, Mark, Luke and John saw death as the central mystery of Jesus" (Pages 187-188, *The Jesus I Never Knew*, Zondervan, 1995).

Through the years, Roman Catholics and Protestants have debated the relative merits of crucifixes and crosses. Catholics traditionally say that the crucifix is an important reminder of God's love and Jesus' suffering for us. Protestants argue that the cross without a body is an important reminder that Jesus is no longer on the cross but is risen. I viewed an Internet ad for equipment used by military chaplains, who must minister to both Roman Catholic and Protestant soldiers. Displayed in the ad was a crucifix, with the similitude of the body of Jesus on one side, and simply a bare cross on the reverse side. Indeed, we know that Jesus' body was taken down, was buried,

and raised on Easter morning. We believe in and are saved by a risen Savior. But yet we must always see Jesus as the crucified, the Lamb slain for sinners.

This morning, to affirm our belief that Jesus suffered and died for us, we look at the crucified, dead Jesus on the cross, just before his body is taken down for burial in the borrowed tomb. John wants us to note the significance of “the sight of the crucified.” Notice first...

The Lamb that was slain

The religious leaders wanted the body of Jesus removed before sundown, observing their religious scruples of not allowing a dead body to remain unburied on the Sabbath, particularly the Sabbath Day of Preparation for the Passover Feast. They requested the customary way of guaranteeing the death of victims of crucifixion by the breaking of their legs. Large iron sledgehammers crushed the victims’ legs, disabling the victims from using their legs to thrust upward to gasp for oxygen. Thus they quickly died of suffocation. These religious leaders wanted the body of Jesus put away, but God wanted his body on display as...

The sacrifice of the perfect Lamb of God

Ironically, the religious leaders wanted Jesus’ body dead and buried before Passover, the annual celebration of God’s delivering the Israelites from Egyptian bondage. Following the other plagues, during which Pharaoh continued to refuse to release the Israelites. God sent the final plague, the death of the firstborn in every household in Egypt. God spared the Israelites from this death plague as every Israelite household sacrificed a lamb and spread the blood over the doorframe of their houses (Exodus 12:21-30). The sign of this sacrificial blood averted the plague of death. Every year, at this most sacred and important feast, this deliverance was celebrated. Ironically, these religiously observant people, who insisted the body of the crucified be taken down from the cross, failed to “behold...on the cross...the Lamb of God” who would take away their sin and give them salvation (John 1:29).

When the soldiers came to Jesus to crush his legs as they did the two criminals on his either side, they noted that Jesus was already dead. No doubt the Jewish leaders wanted Jesus’ legs crushed as further humiliation, but the soldiers defied their wishes and perhaps also Pilate’s orders. They were unwittingly under a higher supervision. God the Father did not will that his legs be broken. Jesus died as a perfect Sacrifice, and a “lamb without blemish, whose legs were not to be broken, as required of Passover lambs (Exodus 12:46; Numbers 9:12). Sovereign God fulfilled his word about his Son:

“He protects all his bones,
Not one of them will be broken” (Psalm 34:20).

The deception of religion

Even the disciples had difficulty accepting a crucified messiah. And certainly the religious leaders could not. Yet Jesus said his cross was the reason he came into the world (John 12:27).

The Law prohibited the hanging of a dead body overnight, which would contaminate the ground. In fact, anyone who was hung on a tree was considered cursed (Deuteronomy 21:23). These religious leaders who refused to believe in Jesus did not have eyes to see that he was the Sacrifice of God to bear the curse of and punishment for our sin.

CH Spurgeon said, "Religious scruples may live in a dead conscience." It's almost frightening how religious devoted and disciplined we can be, while at the same time almost cruel and heartless. I think of the priest who preached a sermon while 16th Century Bishops Ridley and Lattimer were being burned at the stake!

In our most recent US hometown, a serial killer was captured after going undetected and living in the community for 30 years after his first of a string of eight or ten murders, right in the very city where he continued to live for those 30 years. He would even occasionally send letters and tips to the police, and urge them to hurry up and catch him so his name could be in national news. One of the reasons this murderer was undetected for so long was the fact that Dennis Rader was such a normal, average guy. In many ways he was a good citizen, with a college degree, and a civil service job devoted to the quality of life in his city. He was also a Boy Scout troop leader and the president of his church's council!

A religious façade can hide the truth of one's heart and character. And a person can have a mild dose of Christian influence and be deceived into thinking (and deceive others into thinking) that he or she has the real thing. Hypocrisy is one of Satan's most effective devices. Perhaps one way to keep our hearts from self-deception and hypocrisy is to keep the sight of the crucified central to our faith. Notice, the ones who wanted Jesus dead and done with were those who refused to believe in him and who incited his crucifixion. They avoided the sight of the crucified.

We should beware of a cross-less Christianity, one that promises eternal life without the reality of sin and the necessity of the cross, repentance and taking up our cross. Beware of accepting a "feel-good-about yourself gospel" and of using Christianity for self-aggrandizement. It's dangerously possible to fit in with church life, accept the propositions of the faith, and be thought of as a good church person and worker and yet avoid the cross. We have reduced the gospel, even in many of our evangelical churches, to accepting certain doctrinal tenets, giving verbal assent, yet giving no evidence of a life-changing confrontation with the cross. The way of the cross leads to true repentance and even a life of total dependence and self-denial.

These religious leaders were spiritually blind to the truth about Jesus and were blinded by their religious legalism. How deceptively easy it is to devote oneself to observing religious scruples and laws, which make an effective smokescreen to the true condition of a cold, faithless heart. Religious observance and practice, even within the Christian faith, can be done apart from a converted heart. And loveless, graceless legalists do great damage to the cause of Christ and deny the way of the cross.

Those who avoided the cross, hiding behind their religious scruples and superficial practices, missed out on...

The life-giving flow

John sees as important the mysterious phenomenon that occurred when the soldiers, seeing Jesus was dead did not crush his legs. Rather, one of the soldiers thrust a spear into Jesus' side, causing "a sudden flow of blood and water" (verse 34). This flow was...

Made possible by his death

In giving this report of the soldier's thrusting the spear into Jesus' side and heart, John is giving witness to the fact that Jesus died, and did not as some unbelievers purport, simply swoon on the cross and revive in the coolness of the tomb! John also shows that Jesus was fully man who really died, to address the heresy of the Docetic Gnostics, which he did more specifically in his first letter (1 John 4:1-6; 5:6-9. See Raymond E Brown, page 1173, volume II, *The Death of the Messiah*).

John and the other Gospels give united witness to the necessity of Jesus' death for us. Unlike a liberal Protestant seminary professor in my alma mater who said he refused to believe that our salvation "required a killing," we must believe that Christ had to "die for our sins according to the Scriptures" (1 Corinthians 15:3).

The Apostles' Creed says that after he died Jesus descended into hell. I don't claim to understand what the Apostle Peter meant about Jesus' preaching to the spirits in prison after his death (1 Peter 3:19), but I do know that when he suffered and died on the cross he experienced our hell for us. When he "became sin for us" (2 Corinthians 5:21) he was separated from the Father's love for the first time in eternity (Mark 15:34). Jesus suffered in our place and endured the hell we deserve in order that we might be forgiven and restored to a right relationship with God. Jesus' cross was a finished work with eternal results (John 19:28-30).

Again, as Philip Yancey points out, "The balance of power shifted more than slightly that day on Calvary because of who it was that absorbed the evil. If Jesus of Nazareth had been one more innocent victim, like King, Mandela, Havel, and Solzhenitsyn, he would have made his mark on history and faded from the scene. No religion would have sprung up around him. What

changed history was the disciples' dawning awareness (it took the Resurrection to convince them) that God himself had chosen the way of weakness. The cross redefines God as One who was willing to relinquish power for the sake of love." Quoting Dorothy Solle's phrase, Yancey says Jesus became "God's unilateral disarmament" (pages 204-205, above reference). The life-giving flow made possible by Jesus' was one...

Providing forgiveness and life

The flow of water and blood from Jesus' side has prompted a lot of speculation from medical science. Perhaps the most plausible physiological theory is the one that explains how a spear could have ruptured the fluid-filled pericardial sac around the heart, producing a sudden and profuse flow of blood and water. (See George R Beasley-Murray, volume 36, *Word Biblical Commentary: John*, and numerous other commentaries that elucidate similar physiological theories).

In his first letter, John may have referred to this phenomenon of the flow of water and blood from Jesus' side when he writes that Jesus "is the one who came by water and blood—Jesus Christ. He did not come by water only, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit who testifies, because the Spirit is the truth. For there are three that testify: the Spirit, the water and the blood: and the three are in agreement" (1 John 5:6-8). John saw symbolic significance in this phenomenon that pointed to a personal reality in every believer. Perhaps he was thinking also of Jesus' telling the crowd who had enjoyed his miraculous feeding of the bread and fish that they must also eat of his flesh and drink his blood. These hard sayings the crowd was unwilling to accept. Jesus was referring to the spiritual reality of a life-changing relationship made possible when we receive him as Lord and Savior. The presence of Christ in us is as real as the bread and wine we imbibe in our Communion.

The flow of the blood of Christ speaks of his cleansing our sins. We are washed in his blood. Again John writes in his first letter, "the blood of Jesus...purifies us from all sin" (1 John 1:7). This life-giving flow from the side of the crucified was prophesied hundreds of years before by the Prophet Zechariah, who is quoted in verse 37 in our text for today:

"They will look on me, the one they have pierced, and they will mourn for him as one mourns for an only child...On that day the weeping in Jerusalem will be great...On that day a fountain will be opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, to cleanse them from sin and impurity" (Zechariah 12:10-11; 13:1).

The flow of water speaks of the life-giving flow of the Holy Spirit. Jesus spoke of this on a feast day when priests were ceremoniously carrying water jars to commemorate the provision of water for the Israelites during their wilderness wanderings. "On the last and greatest day of the Feast, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, 'If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from

within him.' By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive" (John 7:37-39).

And participation in his death and resurrection

I noted in the introduction that my evangelical background was thin on emphasizing the crucifixion during Holy Week. We did hear many sermons on the cross, but also we heard very little about the cross life, or the way of the cross. In quoting Galatians 2:19-20, we hurried on to the "living by faith," ignoring what it means to be crucified with Christ. Paul says that we participate in the work and even the life of the cross. "I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me" (Galatians 2:20).

We are called to join Christ in his death, taking up our cross to follow him (Matthew 16:24-26). God chose the way of weakness as the means to save the world. And Paul speaks of the cross life as one of our weakness in exchange for Christ's power (1 Corinthians 1:18-2:5). Our lives before the world appear weak, like that of the body of Christ on the cross. And our lives are to share in his sufferings as we take the way of what John Piper calls "weak power," and walk in the pattern of his sacrificial love (John 15:18-16:4; Philippians 3:10).

In our weakness we simply trust God to deliver and vindicate and resurrect us in his time. Look how God protected the lifeless body of his Son, in fulfillment of David's prophecy (Psalm 34: 20). So we trust God protects and delivers us today from Satan's attacks. Because we are crucified with Christ, we have nothing to fear. We don't have to be protective of our feelings and pride. We have died to these, and need to consider ourselves so ("considering" ourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus. ESV gives a better translation of Romans 6:11 than does the NIV). We must also trust that God will deliver us from all evil, even as he did the lifeless body of his Son. The body of Jesus was totally helpless against those who would have assaulted and mutilated it; yet, it was protected by Sovereign God, who controlled the actions of the soldiers.

In our identification with Jesus in his death, we are not free from the attacks of our sinful flesh and from others as well. When we are assailed by temptations to our flesh, we must remember that Jesus died for and because of our sins and in order to free us from sin's power. Consider that a dead corpse doesn't engage in immorality. Perhaps this is something of what Peter refers to when he writes that, "He who has suffered in his body is done with sin" (1 Peter 4:1). We are dead with Christ. Consider that a corpse doesn't get hurt or become resentful when we are treated unkindly and unfairly. We are dead with and in Christ. We are crucified with him (Galatians 2:20).

Paul seemed to have in sight the Crucified, even though he probably didn't carry with him a crucifix, when he wrote, "May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to

me, and I to the world” (Galatians 6:14). He kept in mind that because he was in Christ, and identified with him, he was allowed to participate in his death on the cross. Satan had no more power over him. Temptation has fled from the crucified, dead corpse of Jesus. So also, we who are in Christ are to consider ourselves dead to sin’s power. When temptations around us gather, we are to flee to the cross.

Paul also reminds the Galatians, who were tempted to resort to legalism, that “what counts is a new creation” (Galatians 6:15). In Christ we are also alive to righteousness. We are to consider ourselves alive in Jesus’ resurrection power that allows him to live in us and as us, with his love and all the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23). This life-giving flow was expressed by the flow of water from Jesus’ side. No doubt John connects this with Jesus’ promise of the Spirit (John 7:37-39). This is the life-giving flow from the “pierced One,” prophesied in Zechariah 13:1.

As with those in our text, we are given the choice of...

The look of faith or fear

The other gospels tell us that, following the death of Jesus and an earthquake, even unbelievers, like “the centurion and those with him” became aware that Jesus was no mere man, exclaiming, “Surely he was the Son of God!” (Matthew 27:54; Mark 15:39; Luke 23:47-48). Luke says specifically how the centurion and the people who came to remorse “saw what had happened” and “witnessed this sight” of the crucified Savior (Luke 23:47-48). Others, including those who incited Jesus’ crucifixion, determined not to see the true significance of Jesus.

Notice...

The choice of how we see

The religious leaders and mob that incited Jesus’ crucifixion made a choice of how they would see Jesus. They left the scene of the cross and wanted the sight of the crucified One removed from them. They wanted Jesus buried in a guarded tomb. As Jesus had told the Pharisees after he had healed the blind man on the Sabbath, their spiritual blindness was willful (John 9:35-41). Our vision of Jesus can be willfully selective and blinded to his reality and to his claims.

The unavoidable sight

Jesus on the cross simply could not be ignored, even by his worst enemies. The last verse of our text says, in quoting Zechariah 12:10, “They will look on the one they have pierced.” They were compelled to remove him from the cross, which stood as a perpetual reminder of their own woeful inadequacy. And to the degree we have opportunities to look in faith we will be held responsible on the Day of Judgment (See also Revelation 1:7).

Just as with the Oberammergau Passion Play in Bavaria, Germany, so the movie, *The Passion of the Christ* raised the issue of ant-Semitism. Although the religious establishment of the day instigated Jesus' crucifixion, unbelief is rampant even in today's "Christendom." And Jesus died because of sin, which infects the entire human race. He also died for his elect, which includes all of us who believe and who ever will believe. So, he died for us and because of us. Your sins and mine contributed to his unjust condemnation, abuse, shame, and excruciating death.

In an art museum in Munich hangs 17th Century Dutch master painter Rembrandt's "The Raising of the Cross." The Roman soldier who is hoisting the cross is Rembrandt himself, who understood the meaning of Jesus' crucifixion. Rembrandt had faith to see that he also was guilty of Jesus' death (from Charles Colson's editorial on *Breakpoint*, February, 2005). Also, Rembrandt did a sketch of the trial scene, "Christ Presented to the People," which included the crowd who called for Jesus' execution. Curator Suzanne McCullagh of the Chicago Art Museum explains that Rembrandt later erased the crowd which he had drawn in his first draft, which he determined had distracted from focusing on Jesus himself. In his revision he left the crowd out of the picture so that we, the viewers, would realize that we were part of the mob who called for Jesus' crucifixion (*Religion and Ethics Newsweekly*).

So, we cannot avoid the sight of the crucified, whose cross looms over all of us today. The question is, will we...

Dare to look in faith

Scripture speaks of faith as a simple looking to Jesus with openness to God's revelation. When the revelation is considered, then God gives grace for true comprehension and repentance and trust. It's not enough to give a superficial assent to the facts about Jesus and the cross. There must be a looking to Jesus as our only hope for salvation. As Jesus said in John 6:40: "For my Father's will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day." This is the childlike faith Jesus says is a requisite for eternal life, the looking to God in total helplessness and dependence. Just as a child looks to/depends on his parents for every need, so we look to our heavenly Father.

Jesus, in speaking with Nicodemus, a religious teacher, said that saving faith is like that of the Israelites in the wilderness who had rebelled against God and were experience the just judgment of an attack by poisonous snakes. But God provided a remedy. We read in Numbers 21:8-9: "The Lord said to Moses, 'Make a snake and put it on a pole; anyone who is bitten can look at it and live.' So Moses made a bronze snake and put it on a pole. Then when anyone was bitten by a snake and looked at the bronze snake, he lived." And so Jesus explained to Nicodemus that he himself was God's new and everlasting remedy for sin and guilt. Jesus' being lifted up on the cross was prefigured by Moses' raising the bronze snake for people to see. And just as by looking in faith and in desperate dependence the Israelites were healed, so

our looking in faith and dependence on the crucified Jesus brings forgiveness and eternal life. “Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life” (John 3:14).

Saving faith is looking to Jesus as our perfect sacrifice, as the one who can take away/remove our sin. John the Baptist announced to his disciples when Jesus began his public ministry, “Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!” (John 1:29). To say the Apostles’ Creed is to declare that we have seen, have looked to the crucified Jesus as our only hope for salvation.

Conclusion:

Our text ends with a reference to Zechariah’s prophecy, cited earlier: “They will look on the one they have pierced” (verse 37 and Zechariah 12:10). Hundreds of years before Jesus’ incarnation and cross, this prophet foresaw the day when the nation would look on the one whom they pierced. And this prophecy was partially fulfilled at Calvary. God’s Spirit of grace and supplication was poured out on those at the foot of the cross. Mary and John and the other followers at the foot of the cross mourned for Jesus “as one mourns for an only child.” And, the centurion and others who saw Jesus with eyes of faith saw him for who he is and realized the depth of their sin and need for his grace and forgiveness.

The great 19th Century London preacher, CH Spurgeon, relates his conversion as a simple looking to Jesus, the crucified and risen Lord. He noted how he was blessed during his childhood and early youth by reading his grandfather’s theology books, but says he was converted by a simple look that took place on a snowy morning in a Primitive Methodist Church. The weather had prevented him from going to the intended place of worship. The 15-year-old Charles ducked into that little Methodist Chapel, only to hear an untrained layman (“a poor, uneducated man...who did not even pronounce the words rightly”) repeat Isaiah 45:22: The Authorized Version he was using says, “Look unto me and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth.” Spurgeon reported, “Then, lifting up his hands, he shouted, as only a Primitive Methodist could do, ‘Young man, look to Jesus Christ. Look! Look! Look! You have nothing to do but to look and live.’” Spurgeon said, “I saw at once the way of salvation. I know not what else he said—I did not take much notice of it—I was so possessed with that one thought. Like as when the brazen serpent was lifted up, the people only looked up and were healed, so it was with me.” Spurgeon then quoted from William Cowper’s great hymn, *There Is a Fountain*:

“E’re since by faith I saw the stream
Thy flowing wounds supply,
Redeeming love has been my theme,
And shall be till I die.”

(Pages 87- 88, volume 1, *The Early Years*, by CH Spurgeon)

Scripture tells us we will look all look on Jesus when he returns again. And then Zechariah's prophecy will have its total fulfillment. For those of us who have looked on him with eyes of recognition, repentance and faith, it will be glory to see him face to face (Zechariah 12:10-14; 13:1; 1 John 3:2). For those who reject him as Lord and refuse to see him as Savior, it will be with mourning and everlasting regret. This looking on Jesus with dreadful fear is prophesied in the *Revelation*.

“Look, he is coming with the clouds,
and every eye will see him,
even those who pierced him;
and all the peoples of the earth will mourn because of him.
So shall it be! Amen” (Revelation 1:7).

So, as I mentioned at the first, we should have our empty crosses to say Jesus is indeed risen. The empty tomb is a powerful symbol of our faith. But we are to not focus on a symbolic cross or crucifix but rather on the word of God, which tells us all we need to know and shows us all we need to see. And the Holy Spirit enables us to see the truth of Jesus and his death and resurrection for us and our need to repent of sin and to follow Jesus as Lord.

So the sight of the Crucified is not for Roman Catholics alone nor the cross for Protestants alone. This sight is for us all. And by looking at the crucified we are renewed in our repentance. We hate the sins that crucified Jesus, including our besetting sins of religious hypocrisy, legalism and pride and self-centered indifference to the needs of others. We also are reminded that we are to identify with Jesus in his death, by which we are crucified to the world and the world to us. And we are renewed in our sense of overwhelming gratitude for the love and grace of the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

When we affirm our belief that Jesus suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified and died, we join the centurion in declaring our faith in the Son of God (Mark 15:39), who now lives as our Redeemer and Savior.

Our two “action” symbols are baptism and the Lord's Supper, which remind us of our death to sin and new life in Christ and also of Jesus' sacrifice for us. Let's prepare our hearts to receive Christ anew as we partake of the bread and wine of his Last Supper.

Questions for personal reflection and/or group discussion:

1. Why do you think that the Gospel writers devoted so much of their content to the last week of Jesus' earthly life?
2. Is it important for us to continue to see Jesus on the cross? Why or why not?

3. Religious leaders were the most active in bringing about Jesus' crucifixion, and their religious observance of the Sabbath and Passover motivated them to hasten Jesus' death and burial. In what ways can religion lead to hypocrisy and legalism that miss the real meaning of Jesus and salvation?
4. What do you think might be the significance of the flow of blood and water from Jesus' side?
5. In what ways does the biblical expression of "looking to Jesus" convey what is meant by "saving faith"?
6. As evangelicals we witness and preach about the importance of Jesus' death as well as his resurrection. But it seems that we speak little of the crucified life, such as Jesus speaks of in Matthew 16:24-26 and Paul in Galatians 2:20, and Galatians 6:14. Do you agree? Why or why not?
7. What practical difference should it make in our lives if we consider ourselves dead to sin, as Paul says in Romans 6:11-14?
8. Revelation 1:7 refers to our text and to Zechariah 12:10 in the context of the Day of Judgment. What does this say about those who are outside of Christ?
9. Read 1 John 3:2. What does this say about our hope for seeing Jesus when he returns?
10. Pray for those you know who need to look to the crucified and who need to trust him as Lord and Savior.

All Rights Reserved