

GOOD FRIDAY

Crossroads Church, Albert Lea, MN

April 2, 2010

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In the Garden of Gethsemane Jesus had to deal with a terror more frightful than we can imagine.

No one ever encountered the sheer horror that Jesus faced in Gethsemane as he prepared to take the final, decisive step in the consummation of his earthly mission.

Oh! the unimaginable cost of the salvation we receive free of charge!

There is no way we can calculate the intensity of anguish and dereliction that Jesus struggled with in the garden.

- Jesus experienced the full impact of what the incarnation meant. For God to be confined in a human body was a self-imposed limitation that chafed his divine nature. But in Gethsemane Jesus groaned under the full weight of a burden totally foreign to God's essential nature.

The sin of the world was placed on the Son of God, and he was immersed in the vileness of the fallen human condition. He endured the full fury of the ugliness of all the evil in the world. He did it for us.

- And that wasn't all of it. For the first time in eternity the unity of God the Father and God the son would be ruptured.

Jesus didn't recoil from the prospect of physical torture. No. It was the awareness that he would be alienated from God the Father—forsaken to endure the absolute contradiction of his holy nature in isolation from the Father. Jesus would die alone.

It is idle for us to speculate on what that experience was like for Jesus. All we can affirm is what the Gospel reports; it was excruciating beyond imagination.

The Gospel of Luke gives a graphic description of the physical effects of Jesus distress. His sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground. (Luke 22:44)

Jesus didn't go to his death with the calmness that we read about in the stories of some of the great martyrs. That's because Jesus wasn't a martyr. When the sin of mankind was laid upon Jesus, it also meant that as God he laid aside the glory that was his divine prerogative.

He experienced the horrendous intimacy of sinful decadence in the extreme, and it pounded his holy perfection.

- All the wrath of God against sin was aimed at Jesus. That's what happened in Gethsemane. Jesus fell to the ground under the weight of it all.

Everything in his holy nature screamed out to be spared the assignment.

From Gethsemane the non-verbal scream of God incarnate sent shockwaves through the universe he had created.

- Does this give you a glimpse of the staggering cost to God of the forgiveness of sins and eternal life we have through faith in Jesus?

Jesus paid it all. We owe everything to Jesus.

- Nothing in the entirety of human history is anywhere near as significant as what happened in the garden, on the cross, and in the tomb.

This is the pivot of history. It's "number one." There is no place for obscurity. We must get to the point!

- You have probably seen the television show, "Deal, or no deal?" I watched it for a while, then I quit because it was maddening. It took the host, Howie and his ladies forever to

get to the point everyone was waiting for. It was aggravating. I wanted to shout, “For crying out loud, just open the case!”

I appreciate the way the Apostle Paul gets right to the point about Christ’s death on the cross. *For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures,* (1 Corinthians 15:3)

- This is an uncomfortable truth. All people are sinners. Lots of people resent being labeled sinners. But it’s the truth, whether it’s offensive or not.

Sin alienates people from heavenly glory and went to the cross to take judgment of a holy God on our behalf.

Jesus Christ sacrificed himself for us; he suffered the judgment we all deserved because God is holy and his righteous nature demands no tolerance of sin.

That is the price that was paid for our forgiveness—for salvation from God’s wrath. It staggering, and sobering.