

Decorating the Tree – Part 2

Today we start a new sermon series titled: “*Decorating the Tree – Part 2*”! But **the tree we will be decorating during this season of Lent is the cross!**

But some may say, “Does the cross actually qualify as a tree?” The 3-part definition in the Merriam-Webster Dictionary implies that it does

What else makes a tree a tree?

- A tree is a **living thing!**
- A tree produces and reproduces!
- Trees provide oxygen which makes life for us possible!

Do these characteristics also apply to the cross as well?

- The cross may not be a living thing, but **it provides for the opportunity of life – eternal life!**
- The cross produces the gospel, which is how believers are reproduced!
- The cross is our very lifeline! We need what it provides as much as we need oxygen to live & breath.

This tree isn’t decorated with glass ornaments & lights, but with Jesus Christ - the Light of the world! The Christmas/evergreen tree may symbolize eternal life, but the cross is the only tree that actually makes it possible!

This is the reason why as Christians the cross is attractive! We hang them in our homes, make crosses out of jewelry, even wear crosses on our clothing!

How many of us have a cross displayed in our home or on our person? We know what the cross makes possible, but do we know what it truly is?

The cross is the most universally accepted symbol of the Christian faith, but what it symbolizes is - a curse! And from God no less!

Galatians 3:13 – “Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us – for it is written, ‘Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree.’”

The Apostle Paul connects the image of the cross to the OT image of a criminal being executed & his body hung on a tree for being a law breaker!

Deuteronomy 21:22-23 – “... for a hanged man is cursed by God.”

The cross is a lot of things, but **pretty** is not one of them!

Sin is so serious, that it warrants death! God is so Holy, that His justice requires payment on the debt owed for sin! Death is that payment & being hung on a tree is the symbol of God’s judgement upon such transgression!

This curse of death originates with God, all the way back in the garden of Eden. But why include in the curse this part of being “**hanged on a tree**”?

Remember the two trees God placed in the middle of the garden? **The “tree of life” which gave life, & the “tree of the knowledge of good & evil” which would take it away!** Adam chose disobedience by eating from the latter.

It was in this act that God’s curse upon the earth came into existence. It only seems fitting that God’s judgment on sin would include a tree when the transgression also originated with one!

Mankind literally impaled themselves on the tree of the knowledge of good & evil! & from that point forward the knowledge of mankind’s sin would be known, by man himself being hung on a tree! I told you it wasn’t pretty!

But... when Christ was hung on the cross (the tree), **He became the curse for us!** The good news only comes by first understanding the reality of the bad!

The beauty of the cross is not found in what it is made of, but in what it represents! The cross is ugly, brutal, it is a curse of the worst kind, but what comes after it, what comes because of it, is what is truly beautiful!

There are some ugly curses out there, but none of them come close to this curse of the cross! But none of them also come close to **the joy that comes when the curse is lifted!** But the price of lifting the curse was Jesus’ life!

That is true sacrifice! Giving up meat on Friday’s or sacrificing another luxury during Lent may have it’s place, but true sacrifice is what we see in Jesus!

He allowed Himself to be an ornament of sin, the sin of the whole world placed upon Him, and He Himself placed/hanged upon that tree!

Jesus literally became the curse of God hanging there on the cross. But that was what was required for the curse to be lifted!

The decorations on the tree for Easter are far less flashy than the ones for Christmas, but **the decorations on the cross bring eternal life!**

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