

Lake Cities Community Church  
Pastor Craig Schill  
Series: On Your Mark  
November 8, 2009

**“This Changes Everything”**  
Mark 15:16-41

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I imagine when the first person created fire with two sticks they said, “This changes everything – how we cook and keep warm! Our lives are improved.” When the first person put two wheels together and was able to carry a load from the harvest, someone said, “This changes everything humanity will never be the same.” When Isaac Newton discovered principles of gravity, the learned people said, “This changes everything, this progress in knowledge!” The same could be said for the printing press, combustion engine, the cotton gin, the telephone, the radio, the computer chip, the personal computer and Internet, as the world declares, “Everything has changed our lives are so much better.” A pivotal day occurred on January 10, 2007 when we were told of something revolutionary that would “change everything” - Steve Jobs introduced the iphone.

But the truth is that these things *have changed nothing*. Not really. Not at any significant level. Mothers still grieve over dead children today as they did 1,000 years ago. Husbands and wives still fight and struggle with one another as they did 2,000 years ago. We just do it more comfortably. The last time I checked the iphone, as revolutionary as it was, still does not have an app to do away with injustice, discrimination, prejudice, depression, guilt, bullying, lying, stealing, murder, loneliness, despair or death. Nothing that comes from the hand of man can or will ever change the condition of the human heart.

There is only one thing that has the power to change everything, and that is the cross of Jesus Christ. We are on holy ground this morning. We are approaching a sacred

text: the death of Jesus Christ. Jesus dying on the cross is the singular most important thing that has ever happened in the history of our world. Everything in past (from when Eve ate the apple) has looked forward to this event. Everything in the future looks back upon it.

The cross changes everything.

Could you use some change this morning? Do you believe that a person who is angry and who lies and steals; can be changed into a person who is patient and honest and gracious? Do you believe that you can change your attitude, your sins your character? Change is possible! But you can't buy it at Walmart. You will not discover change on the discovery channel or read about it in the self-help books at Barnes and Nobel. Real change at the level of the soul -is only found at the cross of Jesus Christ.

**This is a precious passage to us.**

Turn with me to Mark 15:16-41, the death of Jesus Christ. Let's study this passage together.

In verses 16-20, Jesus is led to the palace, and the Roman soldiers mock him and beat Him. They dress him up as a mock King and put a crown of thorns on his head. They beat his head and spit on him. Mark in particular seems to emphasize the mocking of Jesus. As humans we love to mock other people. The other night Hudson and I brought Taylor to her volleyball practice, and while Taylor and her class were learning volleyball, Hudson was practicing basketball at an open hoop. There was a little boy there who was mocker. When Hudson would miss, he would say, "Are you going to miss again? You weren't even close." When someone is mocked – it makes us angry, and I practiced self-control on this little boy; but I can't imagine the self-control God the Father must have had not to just snuff

out the lives of these arrogant soldiers. In the Disney movie Aladdin, there is a scene where the soldiers are mocking and mistreating the peasants in the marketplace, calling them street rats, and threatening them, and arresting some. And the princess is there in disguise and she throws off her cloak and says, "Stop release him!" And everyone is speechless. We want Jesus to throw off his cloak of humanity and say, "Stop, don't you realize who I am?" But he does not – he submits to the mocking and suffering for us.

Verses 21-22, Jesus is led to the cross; but because of his injuries he cannot carry his cross the whole way and a man, Simon of Cyrene is enlisted to bear the cross to Golgotha, the place of the skull - where the crucifixion is to occur. The Latin is "Calvary."

Verse 23, Jesus is given myrrh, a drug to lessen the pain; but he refuses it. He is going to the cross with his senses intact. Myrrh was one of the gifts that Jesus received at his birth; even at his birth, this death was foreshadowed.

Verse 24, "and they crucified him." Καὶ σταυροῦσιν αὐτόν. In three Greek words, Mark gives us the greatest understatement ever written. Jesus was crucified. It is not my purpose to go into great detail this morning on the mechanics of Roman crucifixion. If you are interested in that, I have provided a medical doctor's description of what occurs on the back of your handout. Suffice to say it is a death intended to accomplish two things – first unbearable physical pain and suffering, and second to subject the criminal to public embarrassment and shame. One way shame was caused was by crucifying them naked, which is probably how Jesus was crucified. The text tells us the soldiers, "divided up his garments among themselves."

Verse 25 – he is crucified during the 3<sup>rd</sup> hour; it is 9:00 in the morning. Do you remember that U.S. Army commercial, "We do more by 9:00am than most people do in a

day.” Jesus did more for the human race by 9am than all the inventions and discoveries of man put together.

Verse 26 – the charge against him (as given by the Chief Priests to Pilate) as “King of the Jews” is put onto the cross. Verse 27, he is crucified between two robbers. Probably, Barabbas was intended to have the middle spot. Verse 28, we are reminded that this is a fulfillment of Scripture (Is 53:12). Verses 29-30, more mocking from passing people. Verses 31-32, feeling brave now, the Chief Priests also mock Christ, “**He saved others, He cannot save Himself. Let this Christ, the King of Israel, now come down from the cross, so that we may see and believe.**” And just so that you understand how complete the rejection and insulting of Jesus was, Mark adds, “**Those who were crucified with Him were also insulting Him.**” Even the condemned criminals mocked Christ. Mark does not give us the beautiful repentance of one of the thieves who comes to saving faith.

Verse 33, from the 6<sup>th</sup> to the 9<sup>th</sup> hours darkness covered the land. Was it dark clouds. A sand storm? We don’t know the cause, but darkness represents theologically sin and God’s judgment. God’s work of punishing sin is occurring.

Verse 34, we have Jesus’ first words in Mark’s account, He cries, “**My God, My God, why have you forsaken me.**” God the Father turns his back on God the Son as He becomes sin for us. Poet Elizabeth Barrett Browning in her poem “*Cowper’s Grave*” has powerfully expressed the meaning of that cry:

Deserted! God could separate from his own essence rather;  
And Adam’s sins have swept between the righteous Son and Father.  
Yea, once, Immanuel’s orphan’d cry his universe hath shaken—  
It went up single, echoless, “my God, I am forsaken!”

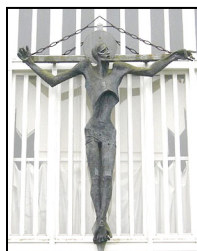
It seems since the darkness has occurred the mocking has either stopped or lessened, as people realize something supernatural is occurring. Verse 35, the people now speculate on whether Jesus is crying to Elijah, verse 36, he is given sour wine to drink, and verse 37, **“And Jesus uttered a loud (mega) cry and breathed His last.”** He did not die a victim of uncontrollable circumstances. With power yet in his body, he gave up his spirit into his Father’s hands.

And that changed everything. Articles from *The Mirror*, London, Jan 7. 2009: “The cross depicts the Christian faith all over the world, but a church in Britain has decided to remove it as it is too scary for kids and also puts people off. Reverend Ewen Souter, of Horsham, West Sussex, decided to remove the crucifix in his church after he found it to be a horrifying depiction of pain and suffering. The 10ft sculpture was removed from St Johns, to the anger and bewilderment of some in his congregation.” There has been a movement in many churches to remove the cross from places of worship – but that was not his goal.

“The crucifix was replaced by an ultra-modern stainless steel cross.”

“The crucifix is the oldest and most famous symbol of Christianity,” said one congregation member. Next they’ll be ripping out the pews and putting sofas in, or throwing out all the Bibles and replacing them with laptops. Its just not right!” But Rev Souter, who has been vicar at St Johns since 2001, believes the modern new cross, which was designed by artist Angela Godfrey, will present a positive message of hope.

Here is a picture of that scary! And I know our tradition



Godfrey, will present a positive

cross and it is admittedly a little would agree with the pastor that a plain cross presents a message of hope and that we like to emphasize the resurrection. But

let us not forget that the work was done on the cross – in the suffering, and with the nails and blood. Looking at a crucifix from time to time would be a good discipline for many of us. Because it was there that everything changed.

### **What Changed?**

What changed exactly? Good question. Look at verse 38: [Mark 15:38](#) **And the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom.** Because of the cross, we now have access to God. The veil referenced here was an elaborate and heavy curtain that separated the Holy of Holies from the rest of the Temple. The Holy of Holies was a 30' x 30' room where God dwelled, and once a year, on the Day of Atonement, the Chief Priest would come on the behalf of the people and their sins. The purpose of the curtain was not to keep God in, but to keep people out. But the business of the cross is the business of atonement. Jesus takes care of our sins, once for all, so we can enter into God's presence freely, without a priest.

Let me give you two examples. The Bible uses the metaphor of covering or clothing to describe atonement. Before we trust in Jesus we are wearing the black coat of sin (put on black sportcoat). Dark with sin – our own failures and poor choices. God is light, sin is darkness they are mutually exclusive. The Bible says: [Gal. 3:27](#) **For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.** [Rom. 4:7](#) **“BLESSED ARE THOSE WHOSE LAWLESS DEEDS HAVE BEEN FORGIVEN, AND WHOSE SINS HAVE BEEN COVERED.** So on the cross Jesus takes care of our dirty laundry. We don't get rid of it – we still have a sinful nature – but we are covered with the righteousness of Jesus Christ (put on

white sportcoat). And with Jesus' good life and perfection on our backs we can walk confidently into God's presence.

Another illustration. God's body language changes toward us because of Jesus' work on the cross. Before it was like this (arms folded) – be careful, don't get too close. I am love, but I am also just, and you have some issues. But now his body language is like this (arms open). Come to me – approach me – spend time with me, because of Jesus Christ.

Everything has changed – our access to God, in Christ is complete.

The cross changes our access to God and our relationship with God. On the day that Jesus died, two very unlikely people came to saving faith – the thief on the cross, and a Roman Centurion, verse 39: [Mark 15:39](#) *When the centurion, who was standing right in front of Him, saw the way He breathed His last, he said, "Truly this man was the Son of God!"*

This Roman soldier had seen many people die, and have perhaps been at dozens or hundreds of crucifixions. Yet, as he saw the way Jesus died, when he looks at Jesus on the Cross – he is given the gift of faith and confesses that there – on the cross – is the Son of God! He was the first of millions of people who would look at the cross and see God's love. Through the centurion we see that the cross redefines how we view suffering. It redefines how we view power and where we should expect to find God. And it tells us that anyone who expresses faith in Christ will be saved.

Some really progressive Christians pooh-poooh the idea of a sinner's prayer. Where a person prays, "Dear Jesus, I know I am a sinner and that my sins deserve to be punished, please forgive me, come into my life. Right now I put my faith in you. Amen." They are falling out of favor with sophisticated Christians. But, I happen to like them – because at some

point you have to decide that you believe in Jesus, and to enter into a relationship with God, just like the Centurion. He confesses Jesus as God.

Finally, the cross changes our fellowship. And this I love – we end on a positive note – an encouraging note, verses 40-41. Mark 15:40 There were also *some* women looking on from a distance, among whom *were* Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the Less and Joses, and Salome. Mark 15:41 When He was in Galilee, they used to follow Him and minister to Him; and *there were* many other women who came up with Him to Jerusalem.

Isn't that awesome!! Mark has led us to believe that *all have abandoned Jesus* – that he was completely and utterly deserted by his followers – but... not quite. Not everyone was gone – these dear, faithful women were there! At a distance, yes – but they were still there! Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Joses and Salome. Their faith may be shaken. They may be confused, but they are there – drawn together in the fellowship of suffering because of the cross of Jesus.

I know that technically the church doesn't begin until Pentecost – but what we have here is a preview service! The Roman centurion is the newest member of this small fellowship group, and it will grow and grow, and grow into the universal body of Christ.

### **Conclusion:**

We have studied this morning the cross of Jesus Christ, the greatest event that has or will ever occur. We have seen that it changes everything. It changes our access to God, gives us a relationship to God and fellowship with God's people. The cross redefines how

we view suffering. Where we see God and how we view power and weakness. The cross changes everything and it can change your life! Let's pray.