

# What Draws Us To The Cross

**Introduction.** A magnet is one of the favorite toys of small children because of the fascinating way attracts metal and other magnets. Grownups become more interested in individuals who attract others: politicians, entertainers, writers, and teachers.

The text for this lesson gives evidence as to what draws people to Jesus Christ. If the question, "What draws people to Jesus Christ?" were asked of you, how would you answer? In all likelihood, most people would bring up His teaching or ministry. No one probably would suggest the cross. Yet, Jesus ties His drawing directly to the manner of His death (John 12:32).

Hardly any passage in the New Testament would come as such a shock to those who heard it for the first time as this one. It begins with a saying which everyone would expect, and it finishes with a series of sayings which no one could have anticipated. How could an event like this draw people? The clues are found in John 12:23-33.

## I. ***Glorification In The Cross***

A. Part of the drawing power of the cross is that through it Christ presents a completely new view of life: glorification through sacrifice (vs. 23).

1. This must have excited the people and filled them with a vision of the golden age toward which the Old Testament pointed.
  - a) Events had been building up to a crisis and that crisis had now come.
    - (1) The people of that day could not comprehend the idea of glorification through sacrifice.
      - (a) They believed that the subjected kingdoms of the earth would grovel before the conqueror's feet.
      - (b) However, the new power in the world would be gentle, humane, and gracious.
    - (2) The Jews did not connect the passages in the prophets which deal with the "suffering servant" to Messianic fulfillment (i.e., Psalm 22 and Isaiah 53).
    - (3) Even the apostles were confused at the concept of fulfillment through suffering (Matthew 16:21-23; Luke 9:44-45; 18:31-34; 24:25-26).
  - b) However, Jesus' idea of what that crisis involved was quite different from anyone else's. By "glorified," He meant "crucified."
2. Jesus' analogy of the grain of wheat is a reference to His own death (vs. 24). Just as the grain of wheat had to die in order to give increase, so Christ must die to fulfill His mission of salvation, redemption, and justification (cf. 1 Corinthians 15:36).

3. Jesus makes it clear that those who selfishly grasp at life would lose it, and those who surrender their lives to Christ will inherit eternal life (vs. 25; cf. Matthew 10:39; 16:25; Mark 8:35; Luke 9:24; 17:33).
  4. In vs. 26, Jesus explained what hating one's life means.
    - a) The crucifixion would involve the disciples in the same way it would involve Jesus, and He tells them that He is the model for them to follow (cf. John 10:4).
    - b) "He goeth before them" implies that He does first what He asks them to do and that He confronts the dangers before they encounter them (Hebrews 6:19-20).
    - c) Jesus went on to promise that wherever He might go, His servants would be privileged to accompany Him and share His glory (cf. John 17:24).
- B. In churches where "health and wealth" is taught for biblical faith, the truth of Christ's message is rejected as repulsive and negative.
1. Those who buy books like "Looking Out For #1" and "Winning Through Intimidation" do not understand the cross. The call to service and sacrifice challenges the self-centered life (Matthew 16:24; Mark 8:34; Luke 9:23).
  2. It is the loss of the call to sacrifice, the call to total commitment, that lessens the attractiveness of the church.
    - a) The attitude of many is, "What do you have to offer me?"
      - (1) Some respond by offering beautiful cathedrals, or ornate rituals.
      - (2) Some respond by offering food, institutions, and man-made gimmicks.
    - b) The righteous are satisfied with "Jesus Christ and Him crucified" (1 Corinthians 2:2), and by asking, "Christ gave all; what do I give in return?" (Psalm 116:12).
    - c) Remember, our children watch us! They know if we are half-hearted or if Christ really does come first in our lives.

## II. ***Victory In The Cross***

- A. The cross is the method by which Christ was victorious (John 16:33).
  1. The gospel of John omits the account of Christ in the garden of Gethsemane, but John 12:27 does record its tension (cf. Matthew 26:37-44; Mark 14:33-39; Luke 22:42-44).
  2. This fact ought to rescue us from the false idea that a Christian never has problems or inner conflicts (John 16:1-2; Acts 14:22; 2 Timothy 3:12).

- a) A lot of people (especially the health and wealth crowd) have a hard time reconciling the Christian life with problems and difficulties.
  - b) It is not a matter of whether troubles will come, but how they are dealt with when they do come (Romans 5:3-5; James 1:2-4; 1 Peter 1:6-7).
- B. To Christ and His cross, the emphasis was on obeying God, and not on the miscarriage of justice (Hebrews 5:7-9; 10:7-9).
- 1. To Him, the cross was a necessary act of love, sacrifice, and redemption.
    - a) It was in this context that the sense of victory developed. There would have been no virtue in Jesus' obedience to God if it had come easily and without cost.
    - b) What had been the symbol of death, became the sign of new life. What had looked like humanity's worse mistake, became God's greatest act of love (John 3:16).
  - 2. We are drawn to the cross because it shows God's sovereignty and His ultimate triumph (Acts 2:23-24; Romans 6:21-23; 7:24-25; Revelation 3:21).

### III. ***Communion In The Cross***

- A. The cross draws us because God speaks to us through it (vs. 28; 1 Corinthians 1:18).
- 1. God spoke directly to Moses, Samuel, and Elijah, but by the time of Jesus the Jews had ceased to believe that God spoke directly to man.
  - 2. The voice of God came to Jesus at all the great moments of His life: His baptism, the mount of Transfiguration and now at the ordeal of the cross.
    - a) The voice did encourage Jesus; it was spoken for the Jews to believe on Him, to warn of judgment, and to declare that Satan had been overthrown.
    - b) The Greek word for "judgment" is also transliterated into English as "crisis." The crucifixion was the crisis in the contest between Satan and God (Genesis 3:15).
  - 3. Our trouble is not that God does not speak, but that we do not listen (Psalm 119:105; Hosea 4:1).
- B. The cross teaches that there is a God who cares at the core of the universe.
- 1. The cross demonstrates that we have not been abandoned. God does not want any to perish (2 Peter 3:9). His goodness leads to repentance (Romans 2:4).

2. Jesus speaks of His death three times as a lifting up, a euphemism for being crucified.
    - a) In John 3:14, He speaks of it as a saving sacrifice, a priestly work.
    - b) In John 8:28, He speaks of it as the powerful credential that He is God's prophet.
    - c) In John 12:32, He speaks of it as the King who will pry His kingdom from Satan.
  3. The love of God is manifested through the giving of His Son (John 3:16; Romans 5:5-11). If this love is not sufficient to draw man, then nothing will draw man.
- C. The cross indicates that God takes our sin very seriously.
1. In the cross, both the justice and mercy of God are demonstrated (Romans 3:24-26; 2 Corinthians 5:20-21; 1 Peter 2:24-25).
  2. The cross can draw all men, but it has not drawn all men. There are millions in hell who will never be drawn, and there are millions on earth who are not yet drawn.
- D. The cross is also a word of hope to all who suffer.
1. The cross shows how all the affairs of this earth will finally conclude, with Satan being conquered (vs. 31; Mark 3:22-27).
  2. Thus, the cross is a constant reminder that there has come a day when life destroyed death (1 Corinthians 15:54-57; Colossians 2:13-15; Hebrews 2:14-15).
    - a) Christ's suffering and glory are intimately connected in the New Testament (Hebrews 2:9; 1 Peter 1:11).
    - b) If we are faithful throughout our sufferings, we will also be glorified (Romans 8:17-18; 1 Peter 4:13).
    - c) The joy of being with Christ is the main expectation of a Christian (2 Corinthians 5:8; Revelation 21:3).
  3. There is something in us that wants to hold on to what is real, valuable, and eternal. That is why the cross draws us. Jean Jacques Rousseau once said, "I have suffered too much in this world not to hope for another."

**Conclusion.** One of the best-loved gospel songs over the years has been "The Old Rugged Cross." One of the stanzas contains the line, "O that old rugged cross, so despised by the world, has a wondrous attraction for me ..."

Nineveh and Tyre are only names now, but Christ lives on. The empires founded on force have vanished, having only a memory which grows fainter by the year. But the empire of Christ, founded by the cross, each year extends its grasp (Isaiah 9:7; Ezekiel 37:25; Daniel 7:14).