

Acts of the Holy Spirit – 23
The Cross and Communion - Acts 20:1-12
Week of Oct 21, 2018 - Bay Park Life Groups (Leader)

For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

Apostle Paul (1 Corinthians 1:18)

1. Speaking of the cross . . . (pick one of the following):
 - Do you wear it as jewellery or have it in a tattoo? Why or why not?
 - Why do you think it's such a common and universal symbol (from fashion to the Red Cross)?

Read Acts 20:1-12

2. Here's your chance to let it out. What's the worse thing you've experienced in a church service? What's the longest you've ever heard a preacher go on for?
3. Of all the things to record, why do you think the Holy Spirit guided Luke to include these verses?
4. In Sunday's sermon it was noted that this all-nighter was a communion service (cf *breaking of bread* in vv 7 & 11). We also noted that not even a miracle could stop these believers from remembering Jesus through the lens of the cross and communion. Communion itself has its roots in the Jewish Passover. Read Exodus 12:1-14 and Matthew 26:17-30.
 - What light do these texts shine on the importance of communion today?
 - Can you recall a memorable communion moment? Why was it special?

Don't assume people know the Exodus story. Remind them that Israelites were Egypt's slave labour work force. Slave labour is how the Egyptians built all the magnificent things we admire today. The plagues pronounced on Egypt were for her unwillingness to let her captives go. Likewise sin has a death grip on us and it's only through Jesus' sacrifice that we are passed over and let go. It's also interesting to note that Luke records Jesus as having "eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer" (Lk 22:15).

Although the Romans put hundreds to death by the cruel and degrading method of crucifixion around the time of Jesus, it is remarkable that we know virtually nothing of their deaths. Somehow the death of this man is different.

Derek Tidball, *The Message of the Cross*

Humanity cannot escape God. The race exists in an unavoidable relation to God, either in wrath and alienation, or of blessing and fellowship. Sin places us under the first; the Atonement makes it possible for us to regain the second.

Richard S. Taylor, *God's Integrity and the Cross*

5. Often routine habits like prayer, or driving the same daily commute can lead to going through the motions without thinking. This is true of communion too.
- How might the tragedy turned miracle have impacted how they partook of communion that night (or early morning)?
 - What challenges do you face when it comes to engaging in communion? How do you ensure it's meaningful even though both the message and format can be very routine?

Nothing is more central to the Bible than Jesus' death and resurrection. The entire Bible pivots on one weekend in Jerusalem about two thousand years ago.

D. A. Carson, *Scandalous*

6. It wasn't just in Acts 20 that Paul spoke extensively about the centrality of the cross and communion. Throughout his writings, Paul kept coming back to the how the cross and communion shape who we were, are and will be. On Sunday we saw from Paul's writings how the cross speaks to: Our value - valuable enough to die for (Acts 20:28); Our identity - died to sin not slaves to sin (Rom 6); Our vocation - live for Christ (1 Cor 6:20, 2 Cor 5:15).
- Of these three truths, which one speaks most to you these days and why? What other daily needed truths does the cross and communion drive home for you?
 - Read through Ephesians 1 (also penned by Paul under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit). What other life transforming truths does the cross and communion communicate?

There's a lot of gold to be mined in Ephesians 1 (i.e. reminded we're blessed, forgiven, have a place, a purpose, that it's not what we've done but what's been done for us etc). You might want to consider carving out extra time for camping here by cutting down on time spent on previous questions. One way to do that is to break from the pattern of having everyone answer a question and instead have a only a few share. If you do this, make sure it's not the same few sharing for every question - mix it up. Also, you might consider splitting people up into groups of 2-3 for the Ephesians 1 question. It's a great way for people to get to know each other more while also digging deeper into scripture as it's less intimidating to share with 2 people versus 8.

You were dead because of your sins and because your sinful nature was not yet cut away. Then God made you alive with Christ, for he forgave all your sins. He cancelled the record of the charges against us and took it away by nailing it to the cross. In this way he disarmed the spiritual rulers and authorities. He shamed them publicly by his victory over them on the cross.

Apostle Paul - Colossians 2:13-14

7. Close in prayer by:
- Thanking God for who you are in light of the cross and communion.
 - Asking the Holy Spirit to help you apply one truth to your week ahead.