

Jesus, Savior & Lord (Soteriology)

Session Outline

1. Intro
2. Three Essentials of the Cross
 - a. Essential #1: Intentionality – Jesus was born to die on the cross to save the lost
 - b. Essential #2: Innocence – Jesus was sinless before God and man
 - c. Essential #3: Incidents – Jesus died, was buried, and rose from the dead three days later
3. The Implications of the Cross
 - a. Reconciliation Accomplished
 - b. Restoration Available
 - c. Restoration by Adoption
 - d. Relationship Assured

Say This small group gathering is pivotal. In this session, we see all the emphases of the prior topics culminate in the person of Jesus at the cross. It is at the cross where God’s great love intersects with mankind’s greatest need. It is at the cross where we see the great purposes of Jesus are expressed in the unequalled manner that changes lives and transforms the world. In our last session, in seeking to understand Jesus, we discussed that Jesus came to preach the kingdom of God and to reveal His identity.

Ask We discussed that one of Jesus’ priorities was to reveal that He is the Savior of the world. What does that mean to you? *(Answers will vary, but typically reflect the human need to be saved (rescued) from sin and death, and the unique ability of Jesus to rescue man from the penalty/wages of sin).*

Say The fact that Jesus identifies Himself as the promised Savior helps us understand a third purpose of Jesus - **Jesus came to restore the broken relationship between God and man.** *(repeat this purpose)* This was accomplished by Christ’s death on the cross. In revisiting the event of Christ’s crucifixion, we seek to understand *how* and *why* His death fulfilled this vital purpose.

Three Essentials of the Cross

Essential #1: Intentionality – Jesus was born to die on the cross to save the lost

Say Though it may not happen as often today as it used to, it used to be common for children to be “born into the family business.” In fact, some of today’s common surnames originate from occupations that were associated with families. For example, the name “Smith” originated from families where the common family occupation was blacksmithing. Additional occupational surnames include Taylor, Skinner, Shepherd, Cook, Miller, and Baker. It was expected that male children would, at the appropriate age, learn their dad’s craft and join him in his labors.

Ask Does anyone in your group have an “occupational surname?” Have you ever thought of it that way? *(discuss)*

This practice was a cultural norm in Ancient Near East life, preceding and including Jesus’ time. Occupations tended to be multigenerational, and it was uncommon for a man to leave his father’s occupation. Shepherds beget shepherds, fishers beget fishers, carpenters beget carpenters, and so on. At the same time, for hundreds of years,

the Jewish people had been anticipating the arrival of their Messiah, the man who God had announced in His Scriptures who would be their liberator. Jewish religious experts had scoured their sacred texts to identify what was foretold about the identity of the Messiah: *(read together)*

Old Testament Details of the Messiah

It is estimated that there are more than 570 verses in the Old Testament, offering dozens of prophecies that provide some aspect of insight to the person of the Messiah. This allowed the Jewish people to prepare for his coming, and to recognize Him when He arrived. These prophetic revelations included:

- He would be a human male. *(Genesis 3:15)*
- He would be Semitic *(Genesis 9:27)*; specifically, Abrahamic *(Genesis 12:3)*; more specifically, Jewish (a descendant of Jacob's son Judah – *Genesis 49:8-12*); even more specifically, from the house of King David *(2 Sam 7; Psalm 132)*
- He would be born of a virgin *(Isaiah 7:14)*
- He would be born in Bethlehem *(Micah 5:2)*
- He would be preceded by John the Baptist *(Isaiah 40:3; Malachi 3:1)*

These are just a few of the earliest details of the Messiah (many more exist about his life, his reception, and the details of his betrayal, death by crucifixion, and resurrection). These prophetic details revealed essential details of the identity of the person who was uniquely God's Messiah.

Ask Which of these prophecies did Jesus satisfy? *(answer: all of them)*

Say Notice that these prophecies were not details that Jesus could have manipulated or controlled. For one person to satisfy these prophecies (as well as all the others) cannot be dismissed as coincidental. It is nothing short of miraculous. As such, for the person who fulfilled all these prophecies, his intended role in life was predetermined, regardless of his human father's occupation.

Jesus clearly understood this premise, and even affirmed it from a young age. His human dad was a man named Joseph, who was a carpenter (Matthew 13:35). Jesus, according to the cultural norms, was Himself trained as a carpenter (Mark 6:3). However, when as a 12-year-old, Jesus "went missing" during the family's Passover journey to Jerusalem, they found Him in the Jewish Temple, engaged in a decidedly different family occupation: *(read)*

Now so it was that after three days they found Him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, both listening to them and asking them questions. And all who heard Him were astonished at His understanding and answers. So when they saw Him, they were amazed; and His mother said to Him, "Son, why have You done this to us? Look, Your father and I have sought You anxiously." And He said to them, "Why did you seek Me? Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?" (Luke 2 :46-29, NKJV)

Not only did Jesus know who He was, and what He was doing, but He also supernaturally understood the timing related to the inevitability of His appointment with the cross. During the three years of his earthly ministry, the crowds regularly collaborated or conspired to advance their own agendas for Jesus to be advanced as a politically reactionary or religious figurehead. Yet, Jesus was never derailed by these premature plots. The Scriptures reveal that these plots were unsuccessful because they deviated from God's ordained plan for Him (see John 2:4; 7:6, 30) Yet, He regularly foretold His impending death and resurrection (see Matthew 16:21 17:12; & 20:17), and in the

week preceding His death, He prepared His arrival into Jerusalem on the back of a foal in fulfillment of prophecy (Zechariah 9:9), specifically because the time had come (John 13:1; 17:1).

Ask How does it impact you to know that Jesus fully understood who He is, what He was doing, and when it would happen? (*discuss*)

Say One more key detail of the intentionality of the cross is found in Jesus' disclosure of His willing participation of these heartbreaking events. Jesus said: (*read*)

"No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from my Father." (John 10:18)

Ask Why is it important that Jesus fully, willingly participated in the unfolding of His progress to the cross? (*answers will vary, but should include an awareness of the deity of Jesus – that this didn't "happen" to Him as events that spiraled out of control, that He came purposefully to accomplish this purpose*)

Essential #2: Innocence – Jesus was sinless before God and man

Ask What is something you have sacrificed or given for the benefit of someone else (or that someone has given for your benefit)? (*answers will vary but may include things like: sacrificing promotions to keep children in their community, sacrificing buying something for yourself so someone else can have something they need*).

Say Last time together, we discussed how Jesus was fully God and fully man. It is important to understand that both aspects of His identity were necessary for Him to accomplish His work on the cross. The Bible reveals that the cost (or consequence) of sin is death (Romans 3:23), and the forgiveness of sin requires the shedding of blood (Hebrews 9:22). The sacrifices of animals in the Old Testament were purely symbolic of the blood that would be shed by the singularly, truly innocent creature sacrificed to satisfy God's wrath against sin (see Hebrews 10:4, 19).

Ask What do you think of when you think of something that is truly innocent? (*Answers will vary, but typically include images of babies or animals*)

Is it difficult to think of a grown adult who is completely innocent? Why? (*it's difficult to comprehend true adult innocence because there's no other example of adult innocence, and everyone is intimately familiar with the impossibility of maintaining innocence into adulthood because of our fallen nature and powerlessness over sin*)

As fully God, Jesus alone is truly innocent because He was not born with a corrupt nature that enslaved Him to sin. However, as fully man, He was tempted in every way a person can be tempted, even to the point of suffering (Hebrews 2:18). In resisting temptation to the point of shedding His blood (His death), Jesus' innocence allowed Him to assume your guilt for your sins and therefore in dying—paying the full cost for your sin—He brought to you the victory over sin and death (2 Corinthians 5:21; Hebrews 2:14)

Ask What are your thoughts and reaction to the implication that Jesus was completely innocent, yet bore the full consequence for the guilt of your offenses before God? (*discuss*)

Essential #3: Incidents – Jesus died, was buried, and rose from the dead three days later

Say This brief point simply makes clear that the events of the cross are established fact. They are not myth or legend, hyperbole, or misinterpretation of the actual events. The four gospels record the sordid details of the cruel crucifixion of Jesus:

- On the evening of Passover, Jesus hosted a Passover meal with His followers and later dismissed Judas to accomplish his conspiracy to betray Jesus to the Pharisees and Scribes (Mark 14:1, 12-26)
- He was arrested in the Garden of Gethsemane, where Judas arrived and completed his betrayal. (Luke 22:47-53)
- He was unfairly prosecuted in front of multiple courts for crimes He didn't commit. (Matthew 26:1; Mark 14:53; Luke 22:54; John 18:13)
- He was declared innocent by Pontius Pilate (John 18:38) but gave in to the demands of the same people who had earlier in the week celebrated His arrival as Messiah but now demanded His death. (John 18:39-40; Luke 23:23-25)
- He was mocked, beaten, whipped, and tortured as part of His punishment. (Matthew 27:26-31; Luke 23:38-39; Mark 15:16-20; John 19:1-3)
- He was nailed to the crude wooden cross (see John 20:25), crucified around 9 AM. (Mark 15:25)
- About six hours later that same day, He died. (Matthew 27:46-50)
- He was taken down from the cross and buried in a borrowed tomb. (Luke 23:50-56)
- A large stone was rolled in front of His tomb so His body couldn't be removed, and it was guarded by Roman Centurions. (Matthew 27:57-66)
- Three days after His burial, women who went to care for His body found the stone rolled aside, the tomb empty, and His body not there. (Luke 24:1-3)
- He appeared visibly and physically...first to His followers that day, and over the next 40 days, in the presence of more than 500 people before ascending to the Heavens, as He had promised. (1 Cor. 15:1-8; Acts 1:6-11)

Ask Why do you think it is important that these incidents of the cross are historically recorded and have been faithfully communicated throughout the generations? (*discuss*)

The Implications of the Cross

Say The completed incidents of the cross, accomplished intentionally by Jesus and successfully because of His innocence as being fully God while also fully man, have resulted in implications impacting everyone God has created, including you.

Reconciliation Accomplished

Ask What does it mean to you to reconcile? (*Answers may include the concept of no longer being at odds with someone to whom you were previously opposed*)

Say When Jesus died on the cross, His final words were "It is finished" (John 19:30). The Greek word from which this declaration is translated has at its root the idea of "paid in full." This indicates that Jesus' self-sacrifice was acceptable to God and accepted by God. God's wrath against your sin was satisfied, making it possible for you to be once again in right standing with God.

Read *And you who were once estranged and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, he has now reconciled in his fleshly body through death, so as to present you holy and blameless and irreproachable before him (Colossians 1:21-22)*

For if while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, much more surely, having been reconciled, will we be saved by his life. (Romans 5:10)

Ask What stands out to you in these passages? (*discuss*)

Restoration Available

Say Though the reconciliation has been accomplished it is not automatically applied to people. A response to the completed work of Jesus on the cross is required: (*read*)

*For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so **that everyone who believes in him** may not perish but may have eternal life. (John 3:16, emphasis added)*

Ask Why do you think God requires every person to choose whether or not to believe, rather than imposing this upon them? (*discuss*)

NOTE: This is an opportune place to invite people to respond to the Gospel, by admitting the need for forgiveness, asking for Jesus to save, and trusting Him to lead.

Restored by Adoption

Say For those who receive the free gift of reconciliation back to the Father through faith in the Son, a new relationship begins: (*read*)

For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received a spirit of adoption. When we cry, "Abba! Father!" (Romans 8:15)

As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus. And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to the promise....So you are no longer a slave but a child, and if a child then also an heir, through God. (Galatians 3:26-29; 4:7)

Ask Why is it significant that you are no longer a slave to sin, but have been adopted as a child of God? (*discuss*)

You are described as an heir of God through faith in Christ. What do you think you can anticipate inheriting? (*Answers may include: heaven, holiness, God Himself, eternal responsibilities, authority over angels, among many others*)

Relationship Assured

Say In receiving Jesus, the Bible makes bold promises that your relationship with God is eternally secure: (*read*)

For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor

powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 8:38-39)

Ask How does it feel to know you can never lose your position as a child of God through faith in Jesus? *(discuss)*

Say To recap, we see that because of what Jesus perfectly completed on the cross, He reconciled humanity back to God by satisfying God's demand for judgment against all sin. This reconciliation makes it possible for all people (including you and me) to respond to the invitation of Jesus to believe in Him and receive His free gift of heaven and eternal life. For those who do, adoption into God's family is immediately provided, and in it, the adopted child is eternally secure. What an amazing God! What an incomparable feat of grace and mercy!

Close in prayer with and for one another, making sure to attend to the needs of your group, planning for serving together, or other details relevant to the group. Confirm your next time and location to meet.