Affirming our Faith through the Apostles' Creed
Was Crucified, Dead and Buried

Text: John 19:23-30 -- When the soldiers had crucified Jesus, they took his garments and divided them into four parts, one part for each soldier; also his tunic. But the tunic was seamless, woven in one piece from top to bottom, 24 so they said to one another, "Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it to see whose it shall be." This was to fulfill the Scripture which says, "They divided my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots." So the soldiers did these things, 25 but standing by the cross of Jesus were his mother and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. 26 When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to his mother, "Woman, behold, your son!" 27 Then he said to the disciple, "Behold, your mother!" And from that hour the disciple took her to his own home. 28 After this, Jesus, knowing that all was now finished, said (to fulfill the Scripture), "I thirst." 29 A jar full of sour wine stood there, so they put a sponge full of the sour wine on a hyssop branch and held it to his mouth. 30 When Jesus had received the sour wine, he said, "It is finished," and he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.

Introduction: For several weeks now we've been working through **the Apostles' Creed** as a statement of faith. As I've already shared, it wasn't written by the apostles but is a summary of their teaching that was handed down to us by the early church fathers. **It is not Scripture, but it covers many of the most important doctrines from the Bible that shape our Christian faith**. Today we arrive at the line that says … ***He was crucified, dead, and buried***. **The crucifixion is very important because it explains how Jesus carried out His Father's plan to reconcile us to Himself. It happened on the cross**. You may or may not know, that the Romans didn't create the idea of crucifixion. The Persians invented it around 519 BC, but the Romans perfected it as a very painful form of capital punishment. That's why they reserved it for slaves and the vilest of criminals.

Throughout the past twenty centuries, the whole idea of a crucified Messiah has stuck in the craw of people from other religions that recognize Jesus as a historical figure but something other than the Savior of the world. **Muslims**, who honor Him as a prophet, deny that Jesus died on the cross. Instead, they say that someone who looked like him took his place at the last minute. Then God

cast a spell over Jesus' enemies so that the switch went unnoticed. **Gnostics** who claimed a secret knowledge of the divine only accessible to a few, said that God's son never really died at all. At His baptism, the Holy Spirit entered the man, Jesus, and then left him just before his death. They came up with this theory because, to them, the idea of the Son of God suffering and dying in a physical body was inconceivable. **Jews** agreed. The notion that the long-awaited Messiah would forfeit his life on a cross did not fit with their assumptions of the kind of man they anticipated him to be … a conquering king (**1 Corinthians 1:23a – but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to the Jews**). One of their sacred writings called the **Talmud** refers to Christians as "**worshippers of the hung** (*referring to Jesus' death on the cross*)." That, of course, is not meant as a compliment! And the **Greeks** considered the teaching to be utter nonsense (**1 Corinthians 1:23b – Christ crucified … foolishness to Gentiles**). Just so you know, in 1965, a man named **Hugh Schonfield** (author of ***The Passover Plot***) also denied that Jesus died on the cross. He argued that the Lord merely fainted from physical exhaustion. The Romans, however, thought he was dead and removed his body from the cross. His followers placed it in a tomb not knowing that the cool temperature would revive Jesus and help him regain his strength. When he felt better, Jesus exited the tomb and looked so good that his disciples mistakenly believed he had risen from the dead when, in fact, he had only passed out to begin with.

So, what really happened? **As Christians, we confidently believe that Jesus, as the unique God/Man, came into our world as a human being, lived a life of absolute obedience to his heavenly Father, and then offered Himself on the cross in payment for our sins as our substitute**. ***On what basis do we believe it***? Primarily we base this on the testimony of the Bible. **First**, ***the Old Testament predicted it would happen***. Prophetic passages like **Isaiah 53** describe the suffering servant sent by God **– He was wounded for our transgressions; He was crushed for our iniquities; upon Him was the chastisement that brought us peace and with His stripes we are healed. Psalm 22:16 says – They have pierced My hands and feet. Psalm 22:18 also says, They divided my clothing among them and for my clothing they cast lots. All of this happened to Christ when he was crucified.** In addition to these and other prophecies, the Jewish Scriptures foreshadow (or preconfigure) the death of Christ on the cross in several stories. **One of them is about Abraham who in obedience to God prepared to offer his son Isaac as a sacrifice on Mt. Moriah. Just as Isaac carried the wood for the fire that would consume his body after it had been offered** (**Genesis 22:3**) **so Jesus**

did the same when he carried his cross as an offering for our sin. **There is also the story of the Passover** in **Exodus 12**. **The Angel of Death skipped over the homes of the Jews who sacrificed a lamb without blemish** (*which included no broken bones*). Later when Jesus was crucified, we're told that Roman soldiers did not need to break his legs to speed up his death because, to their surprise, he was dead already. **One more is seen in the story of Moses in Numbers 21 who made a brass snake and lifted it on a pole at the command of God**. Any of the people of God who were bitten by a venomous snake in the wilderness ONLY HAD TO LOOK AT IT (*a demonstration of faith in God*) to be saved. Jesus referred to this story when speaking of his own death and the salvation it would bring to those who believed. "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so the Son of Man must be lifted up that everyone who believes in Him may have eternal life (**John 3:14-15**)." ***Each of these incidents foreshadowed Christ's death on the cross.***

There's another reason why we believe Christ was crucified. Not only did the Old Testament **predict and foreshadow it** hundreds of years before, but the New Testament **reported it** in all four Gospels! As historical documents, if we put them together, this is what we see: **(1) Jesus anticipated His death** (**Mark 10:33-34 – We are going up to Jerusalem and the Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests and the scribes and they will condemn Him to death and deliver Him over to the Gentiles. And they will mock Him, and spit on Him, and flog Him and kill Him**); None of this was a surprise to him; **(2) The leaders of the Jews orchestrated Jesus' death**; they found a way to make it happen (**John 19:12 – If you let this man go you are no friend of Caesar's. Anyone who claims to be king opposes Caesar**); **(3) Pilate condemned Him to die** (**John 19:16**). **(4) Roman soldiers carried it out**. They scourged him and then nailed Jesus to the cross (**Matthew 27:26-31**). **(5) After six hours of suffering and humiliation Jesus died (Mark 15:25-37); (6) To confirm his death, a soldier pierced his side with a spear bringing a flow of blood and water (John 19:34). The water came from the sac around Jesus' heart AND the blood from vessels that were severed by the spear; (7) His body was prepared for burial by Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea as was the custom** (**John 19:38-40**). They cleaned the body and then wrapped Jesus in burial cloths that had been soaked in spices and resins forming a kind of cocoon. **(8) They placed Jesus' body in Joseph's tomb and put a large stone in front of the entrance** to protect the body from any kind of intruder, man or animal (**Matthew 27:60**); **(9)** To further prevent anyone from tampering with the

body of our Lord, **a Roman Guard** (4-16 soldiers) **was appointed to stand watch and the Roman seal was placed on the stone** (**Matthew 27:65-66**); **(10) The day after Jesus was crucified, the Romans, Jewish leaders and the disciples agreed on one thing --- Jesus was dead**. The soldiers had successfully carried out another crucifixion.

Now that we see both the Old Testament and the New Testament CONFIRM THE CRUCIFIXION as a real event that took the life of Jesus, allow me several minutes to talk about its significance. Here's what it means for you and me:

On the cross, Jesus took upon Himself the curse of the Law. Listen to what the Apostle Paul says in **Galatians 3:10 -- All who rely on observing the law are under a curse, for it is written: "Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law**." Anyone who wishes to gain access to heaven based on his own self-righteousness, must not violate God's law even once. Of course, the problem is that no one is capable of doing that! **So Paul goes on to say this in Galatians 3:11-14 -- Clearly no one is justified before God by the law, because, "The righteous will live by faith." 12 The law is not based on faith; on the contrary, "The man who does these things will live by them." 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 hung on a tree.**" When Paul wrote these words, he probably had in mind two passages from the Old Testament. **Deuteronomy 21:23** which mentions the curse and **Joshua 8:33** where we're told that after entering the Promised Land, half of all Israel was commanded to stand before Mount Gerizim while the other half stood before Mount Ebal. **Then their leader, Joshua, read of God's blessings and curses** (*the curses are found in* **Deuteronomy 27:26**) **that come to those who either keep or break the law.** The last curse was "**Cursed be anyone who does not confirm the words of this law by doing them**." The message was not difficult to understand. Anyone who broke God's commandments was under a curse. That brings us to you and me. Since we're all sinners, we're all law-breakers who are under the curse of death. The amazing thing about Jesus is that He redeemed us from the penalty of death by ***taking the curse upon Himself and dying for us on the cross.***

On the cross, Jesus canceled the debt of our sins. Because Christ took the curse for us with His death on the cross, we no longer have a debt ***due to our sin***. That's what it means in **Colossians 2:13-14 – And you, who were dead in your**

trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This He set aside, nailing it to the cross. Our sins represent a mountain of debt that we have no ability to repay. **The debt is one of righteousness. We owed God perfect obedience, but failed in giving it to Him**. And even if somehow we could do what is right for the rest of our lives, it would never cancel the debt we've already incurred through our former acts of disobedience. That's why Jesus had to do it for us by offering Himself in payment for our sin on the cross. Through His sacrifice, our debt has been paid in full.

On the cross, Jesus showed us the way to victory over sin. The cross is a symbol of death. **When Jesus died on it, He destroyed sin's power so that it no longer reigns over us. The connection we shared with our former way of life in the world has been severed. Christ ushers us into a new existence that is profoundly different. In fact, it's not of this world!** (**Galatians 6:14 – But far be it for me to boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me and I to the world**). Some years ago, a **14-foot bronze crucifix** was stolen from **Calvary Cemetery in Little Rock, Arkansas**. It had stood at the entrance to that cemetery for more than 50 years. The cross was put there in 1930 by a Catholic bishop and had been valued at the time at $10,000. The thieves apparently cut it off at its base and hauled it away in a pick-up. Police speculate that they cut it into small pieces and sold it for scrap. **Their total take was probably somewhere around $450**. They obviously didn't realize the value of the cross. That is the problem for many of us—understanding the value of the cross. It was there that Christ paid the penalty for our sin and broke the power of sin.

On the cross, Jesus gave us a lesson in dying. Let me explain myself. **Have you ever felt like you wanted to die**? Perhaps some bad things happened to you and you decided it would be easier and better to pass on now than to endure continued hardship. I don't blame you if you've felt that way. I'm sure there have been times when I have too. ***We all tend to think that to escape pain is better than to endure it***. ***I'm so glad, however, that Jesus didn't take the easy way out***. **In fact, knowing *how* His life would end** (*no person ever suffered the way Jesus did*), **He willingly set his face toward Jerusalem and the cross that awaited him**. John the Apostle tells us that Jesus didn't give up his spirit until he had completed everything that the Father had for Him to do (**John 19:28 – After this, Jesus,**

knowing that all was now finished, said (to fulfill the Scripture) "I thirst." When He had received the sour wine, He said, "It if finished," and bowed His head and gave up His spirit). Listen … this may not be something we normally think about … but … ***shouldn't all of us want to model not only Christ's life, but also his death***? Though it may mean hardship for some of us, being faithful to the end and using up our lives for the purposes of God is the best possible way to **finish the course**.

On the cross, Jesus gave us a lesson on how to love others (**John 15:13 – Greater love had no one than this, that someone lays down his life for his friends**). Our Lord set the standard for measuring our love for one another. ***He laid down His life so that we might have life***. Now we're told by Paul to "**have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus ... He humbled Himself to the point of death even death on a cross**." If love is self-sacrifice for the good of another, then Jesus has modeled it better than anyone. **Eilene Guder** said this of love … "**It is the magic key of life—not to get what we want but to become what we ought (a living sacrifice)**."

Applications: I doubt that prior to this message any of you would have said that the crucifixion didn't matter. I very confident that you know it does! Now I hope you know exactly ***why***. **Let me finish by attempting to lead you to the place I believe these five truths regarding the cross** (**On the cross Jesus took upon Himself the curse of the law; He cancelled the debt of our sin; He showed us the way to victory over sin; He gave us a lesson in dying; and He gave us a lesson on how to love others**) **beckon all of us**. **Here are two questions for you to consider:**

- **Do you want to be forgiven?** Would you like to know that through faith in Christ, God will no longer count your sins against you? The Bible promises us that he will cast them as far as the east is from the west and remember them no more against us.
- **Do you want a fresh start?** Let me ask you a question, "***What's your biggest regret in life***?" A group of students from **Strayer University** in New York City asked this question to passersby near **Lieutenant Petrosino Square in New York City**. At the top of a white chalkboard was written, "***Write your biggest regret***." They provided a supply of colored chalk and set up a video camera to record people writing on the board. Many people walking by stopped to express their regrets. Soon it was filled to overflowing with their failures. These included burning bridges, never speaking up, not being a good husband,

should have spent more time with family, staying in my comfort zone, not saying "***I love you***," not making the most of every day, and not being a better friend. If you were there, what would you have written? I hurt and disappoint people? I'm selfish? I have abandoned those I love? Now imagine God writing this across your list … "**covered by the blood of Christ**." This is what He did for us and it means you can have a clean slate, a fresh start. Do you want that today?

Conclusion: **Forgiveness and a fresh start in life … both are made available to us because of the crucifixion of Jesus Christ**. In the book ***Has Christianity Failed You?*** **The question is asked, "Why is Christ's death so essential**?" This story provides the answer to this all-important question: On **November 26, 2008**, a gang of terrorists stormed the **Taj Mahal Palace in Mumbai, India**. After the carnage had left 200 people dead, a reporter interviewed a guest who had been at the hotel for dinner that night. The guest described how he and his friends were eating dinner when they heard gunshots. Someone grabbed him and pulled him under the table. **The assassins came striding through the restaurant, shooting at will until everyone (or so they thought) had been killed. Miraculously, this man survived**. When the interviewer asked the guest how he lived when everyone else at his table had been killed, he replied, "***I suppose because I was covered in someone else's blood, and they took me for dead***." This is what Christ did for all of us when He died for our sin. **Because he paid the penalty for all of it—we are covered in the blood of his sacrifice and do not experience eternal death, but eternal life**.

NOW JOIN ME AND LET'S DECLARE WHAT WE BELIEVE ABOUT THE DEATH AND BURIAL OF CHRIST BY RECITING TOGETHER THE APOSTLES' CREED.

*****

I believe in God the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth: And in Jesus Christ His only Son, Our Lord; who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead and buried; He descended into Hades; The third day He rose again from the dead; he ascended into heaven and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Christian church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting. Amen.