



Summer Preaching Series: Questions of Faith

Why Did Jesus Die??



A Sermon By
The Rev. Richard D. Meadows, Jr.

June 25, 2017
Grace Episcopal Church
Silver Spring, Maryland

An audio version of this sermon may be found on the Grace Church website at <http://graceepiscopalchurch.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/2017-06-25-RDM.mp3>.

The Rev. Richard D. Meadows, Jr.
Grace Episcopal Church
The Third Sunday after Pentecost
June 25, 2017

Consecrate me now to thy service Lord by the power of Grace divine, let my soul look up with a steadfast hope and my will be lost and thine, in the name of Jesus I pray Amen.

Why did Jesus die?

There are wonderful biblical answers as to why Jesus died. We find them everywhere throughout Scripture. We also find the answer in the world, you may be sitting at a football game and look into the end zone and see in big letters John 3:16. For God so loved the world that he gave his only son that whoever believes in him will not perish but will have everlasting life.

We also find in Scripture where Jesus came into the world not to condemn the world but that through him the world might be saved. We also know that he came that we might have life and that more abundantly. Jesus is the atonement for sin, he was the sacrifice. Just as the priest would go into the holy of holies he is that sacrificial lamb. With his sacrifice, every sin that we've ever committed has been thrown into the sea of forgetfulness. Another text, therefore being justified by faith we have peace with God through his son Jesus Christ... Knowing that tribulation worketh patience, patience experience, experience Hope, and Hope makes us not ashamed, because the love of God has been shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit.

We also know that, in our readings this morning and especially in our gospel, that it will not be such a peaceful time in which we live, but we are his possession. Jesus is saying that there will be conflict in the world but remember we are God's possession. We are saved, like one drifting on the sea, who was rescued, we are saved. Along with being saved from sin I believe that there are some things that God wants us to do. Yes, Jesus died for our sin, we are saved from sin, we have life and that more abundantly, but I truly believe there are some things that God wants us to do.

God wants us to be busy in the world. He wants us to be witnesses, we are the witnesses who will go into the world baptizing men and women everywhere. We will also teach them things that we have learned through the Scriptures. We will be witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and the other most parts of the earth. We will be witnesses in Washington DC, Bethesda, Silver Spring, in Wheaton and it is our hope that when people see you, they also see God.

In our epistle reading this morning we see that we too are like him (Jesus) in his death, as we go down into the waters of baptism. In the likeness of his death we go down into the water but we rise shouting hallelujah, in the likeness of his resurrection. As the spirit quickens his body from the grave, so it might also quicken our mortal bodies by the Spirit. It brings us or quickens us to action in the world being witnesses. Therefore we have been buried with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.

Why did Jesus die? So that we might walk in the newness of life, so that we may be heir and joint heirs with Christ. Henri Noewin says "Let us look at Jesus because in his crucified and glorified heart we will see ourselves called to share in his sufferings, as well as his glory." One of our greatest examples is when Jesus reminds Lazarus sister that he Jesus, is the resurrection and the life, and whosoever lives and believes in him though they were dead, they shall live forever. We live as creatures of the resurrection Who have been wondrously and gloriously made by God.

However I believe God wants us to do something. I want to take us through the old testament text this morning and tell you what I think. Genesis 21:8-21 this is where we can begin a discussion on what God may want us to do.

So Abraham rose early in the morning, and took bread and a skin of water, and gave it to Hagar, putting it on her shoulder, along with the child, and sent her away. And she departed, and wandered about in the wilderness of Beer-sheba. When the water in the skin was gone, she cast the child under one of the bushes. Then she went and sat down opposite him a good way off, about the distance of a bowshot; for she said, "Do not let me look on the death of the child." And as she sat opposite him, she lifted up her voice and wept. And God heard the voice of the boy...after reading this there should be a steering in your head.

You heard the story of Abraham and his household situation where he and his wife take a servant girl and Abraham has a child by her. As God then brings forward his promise to Abraham, he and Sarah also have a child. Sarah's child grows old enough to be weaned she now wants Hagar and her child removed from their home.

Transpose the story into today's time. Place yourself into the middle of the story as you go about your day, are you stumble across a woman and her boy. Can you see this boy lagging behind his mother because he doesn't have the energy to go forward. The boy may be sick, tired, hungry or all of the above. You see them, you could ignore them or you could help them. I could act as though they were invisible, I could go merrily along my way but there should be something that clicks inside of me. As you're trying to decide what to do, there will be some anxiety, there will be some nervousness, and there may be some fear. You also may be thinking is there something I can do to help this woman? She could be anyone: this young woman could be an immigrant, a dreamer, someone who's lost her job and homeless. She could be a woman who had a husband who died, he was the primary breadwinner, when he died he had no insurance and there was no next paycheck.

So, why did Jesus die? Was it so that we can see her, so are we stirred the action or are we frozen in fear? Do we see her or is she invisible? Or do we go about our business, as if she is someone we would not want to be. I think and this is where I want to conclude this message, why did Jesus die? So that when we see things like this, there should be something stirring inside of us, the Spirit of God should stir inside of you a call to action. Maybe you could ask her her name, what's her child's name. Ask her what's troubling her. You should have something inside of you called Godly compassion. It will make you want to do something, you feel like you have got to do something.

Maybe none of this is possible but you should want to do... Something. Why did Jesus die? I believe he died so that when you see people like Hagar, you will do something. When you see children who are suffering, wearing the same clothes to school every day and when you figure out they have nothing else to wear. Where you meet the man who smells, who is homeless. I think he died, so that you could begin some kind of relationship with people like Hagar. Amen.