**Christ Alone – Week 2 (The Cross)**

**April 6-7, 2019**

**Today, we are continuing our series called Christ Alone and we are taking a much closer look at the person of Jesus Christ. We have looked at who he was and what his ministry was about, and for the next two weeks, we are going to look at the two most definitive events of his life: this week, it will be his death…specifically his death on a cross.**

In ancient Greco-Roman culture, the cross was associated with execution. Jesus was killed on a cross because it was the most excruciating type of death for a criminal and certainly the most humiliating one. I mean…can you imagine that? Everyone just sitting there and watching you die. The people watching Jesus die took it much further…they mocked him, taunted him, and beat him before they ever nailed him to a cross. Jesus was known as the Messiah by the people who followed him. These people thought it was ridiculous…”Ha! Some Messiah this guy is…he can’t even fight back or prevent his own death.”

**This is Jesus in his weakest moment, right? Or is it?**

Many of you may be familiar with the musical or movie called Les Miserables (pronounced Lay Miz-er-obb). For those of you who DO NOT like musicals, there is a non-musical version and it is a great film! The main character is a man named Jean Valjean (pronounced “John Val-John”). Valjean is a criminal who is released on parole after several years in prison. He has nowhere to go, no money, and is starving. A priest and his wife take him in for the night, feed him, and let him sleep there. Valjean is incredibly thankful and you would think that such an act of kindness right after he is released would cause him to start living his life differently. Check out what happens…

**(Leaders Note: Show “Jean Valjean” movie clip)**

**That’s a pretty powerful act of forgiveness and love. In our THP I’m going to teach you two “SOS” acronyms. Here it is!**

**THP: The cross Shows Our Sin and Shows Our Savior. Just remember SOS!**

Jean Valjean’s sins were forgiven by the priest. However, all of us have sinned against God and through Jesus’s death on the cross, we are forgiven. Since Jesus was the Son of God, he lived a perfect life (the life we can’t live on our own), but then took on the sins we commit and have committed and then took the punishment that we should have received. The cross SOS…Shows Our Sin and Shows Our Savior.

When Jesus died on the cross, he wasn’t just being a martyr or someone who dies for a specific cause. He was showing us the way that God works…just like the priest, Jesus wanted to “give us back to God.” It didn’t matter to the priest that Jean Valjean had stolen from him. He knew that Valjean was a broken man and needed to be shown grace (grace means unconditional love) and forgiveness. Jesus lived a life of forgiveness and it was on display all the way until he died.

**In the Gospel of Mark (who we talked about last week with Jairus’s story along with many others about Jesus doing miracles and telling parables), there is a story of what**

**happened to Jesus when he was on trial shortly before his death.**

Read Mark 15:1-5 – *“Very early in the morning, the chief priests, with the elders, the teachers of the law and the whole Sanhedrin, made their plans. So they bound Jesus, led him away and handed him over to Pilate. ‘Are you the king of the Jews?’ asked Pilate. ‘You have said so,’ Jesus replied. The chief priests accused him of many things. So again Pilate asked him, ‘Aren’t you going to answer? See how many things they are accusing you of.’ But Jesus still made no reply, and Pilate was amazed.*

**Now check out this next part…this is the part I want you guys to focus on.**

Read Mark 15:6-15 – *“Now it was the custom at the festival to release a prisoner whom the people requested. A man called Barabbas was in prison with the insurrectionists who had committed murder in the uprising. The crowd came up and asked Pilate to do for them what he usually did. ‘Do you want me to release to you the king of the Jews?’ asked Pilate, knowing it was out of self-interest that the chief priests had handed Jesus over to him. But the chief priests stirred up the crowd to have Pilate release Barabbas instead. ‘What shall I do, then, with the one you call king of the Jews?’ Pilate asked them. ‘Crucify him!’ they shouted. ‘Why? What crime has he committed?’ asked Pilate. But they shouted all the louder, ‘Crucify him!’ Wanting to satisfy the crowd, Pilate released Barabbas to them. He had Jesus flogged, and handed him over to be crucified.*

Barabbas was a criminal. He was actually GUILTY of the very thing that Jesus is being accused of! They thought Jesus was trying to lead a rebellion against the government, and yet, Barabbas is set free even though he was guilty of that very crime. We never hear what happens to Barabbas, but Jesus had a chance to defend himself and say he was innocent…and yet he did not. You see guys, even before he went to the cross, Jesus forgave people… including Barabbas.

Jesus eventually carried his cross all the way to this huge hill and was mocked along the way. He was made fun of when he was on the cross. The people thought he looked completely foolish. How could he possibly be the Son of God? A King? A Messiah? A Savior?

In Jesus’ weakest moment, he took every sin that had ever been committed upon himself. He substituted himself for every person guilty of a crime. He substituted himself for YOU and for ME. We’ve been given a second chance. He prayed for and forgave those who killed him AS THEY WERE KILLING HIM! He gave them a second chance.

**Alexamenos worships his God (image on screen)** – in 1857, there was a picture discovered on a pillar underground in the city of Rome. It is a picture of a man raising a hand up to a person hanging on a cross. The person on the cross has the body of a human, but the head of a donkey. Historians dated the picture back to 200 AD in ancient Rome (over 1800 years old!)…the earliest depiction of Jesus on the cross. In Greek, the words are translated to say “Alexamenos worships his god.” Let’s put up the 2nd image so that we can see it a little more clearly **(2nd image on screen)**. This picture makes fun of and mocks the fact that people would worship someone who had been put to death as a criminal. How could that person be God?! He’s dead now! However, we know through Scripture that over 500 people saw Jesus after he was resurrected. Jesus died and THEN ROSE AGAIN!

1 Corinthians 1:18 –“*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.*

Colossians 2:16 –“*And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross”*

God forgives us! The cross may seem foolish to other people, but Christians must take it very seriously because we are directly impacted by it. The cross SHOWS OUR SIN and SHOWS OUR SAVIOR. Through the cross, we have been forgiven. Let me illustrate it like this…

**(Leaders Note: Do the Water/iodine/bleach illustration. Please refer to this YouTube clip to understand the illustration –** [**https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yYQ076BgbGM**](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yYQ076BgbGM) **Once you watch the clip, please recreate the illustration and share the Gospel message…in the paragraph below…in your own words. Have the illustration set up beforehand so you don’t take extra time during the message.)**

Jesus Christ willingly gave his life and died on a cross because you and I have sinned (pour iodine into water). Romans 3:23 in the New Testament says ALL of us have sinned in some way or another. However, since Jesus Christ died as a perfect man…a perfect sacrifice…it washed away all the sins you and I have ever done and will ever do (pour bleach into iodine water). Even though Jesus was fully God, he was also fully human. He was tempted to sin and disobey God just like you and me…except sin never made an impact on Him (pour iodine into bleach). His death and perfect sacrifice showed us God’s unconditional love and because of that, God doesn’t see us by our sin – how we disobey him, our weaknesses, the times we don’t believe in Him. Instead, He sees Jesus as a perfect Savior…someone who was willing to give His life for all of the lost sheep just so He could rejoice when those people decided to come back and follow Him! (Pour the rest of the bleach into the iodine)

Many of you here have become Christians because of this very message: the message of Jesus dying on the cross for the forgiveness of your sins and saving you. It is a message that has changed your life. Maybe you’re here today and you’ve never accepted the free gift of forgiveness that Jesus has given you. You can have that today!

**I want every head bowed and every eye closed. I’m going to close us in prayer and I want you to repeat it silently to yourself. *Dear Jesus, thank you for saving me. I know that I have done things that are wrong in my life. I can’t live this life on my own. I need You. Please forgive me of my sins. I commit to follow You for the rest of my life. Thank you for loving me no matter what. I place my faith and trust in You and You alone. In Jesus’ Name, Amen.***

If you just said that prayer for the first time, this is your first step as a new follower of Christ. That is awesome! It is the best decision that you will ever make! I want you to do three things for me if you made that decision…

-Tell someone (family, friends, leaders)

-Get a Bible (if you need one, let your leader know and we can get you one!)

-Get baptized during the next baptism service!

If you ever need someone to talk to, all of the leaders are available to listen to you and help you in any way that we can. Love you guys! Let’s go to our group discussions!