

SPECTATORS AT THE CROSS
PROMOTION SERVICE
John 19:16b-27; Acts 8:26-35

Spectacles at the Cross

The Cross is part of the Easter story; it is also at the heart of what makes us Christians! Let's look and see what people saw when Jesus was on cross.

Crowd (The red spectacles!) they had seen things like this lots of times, the crowd who just came to see what was going on; they are not really interested in who or what, they just want to see. Some people did recognise Jesus on the cross but they didn't really care about Him; in fact some of them even laughed at Him. They saw Him hanging on the cross and they heard Him cry out, but it meant nothing to them.

Soldiers (The green spectacles) they have done this lots of times before, and are just doing their job. Jesus was just one of three that day to be crucified. They had probably not even looked at Jesus closely to see what He looked like or how He was feeling. They had taken off Jesus' coat and now wanted to toss a coin to see who would get to keep it! All they saw was the coat, they were people just doing their job. Except one of them did give Jesus a drink and the army officer noticed that Jesus was different from the rest and said that He really was the Son of God.

Family and friends of Jesus (the pink spectacles) they were watching from a distance; it was awful to see Jesus on the cross. They had hoped that He was going make a difference to th world and be the Saviour and they had grown to love Him. They saw Him as the King of the Jews, and the sign above the cross said that too! But Jesus was much more than that to them: Jesus loved and cared for them, He had looked after them. They were very sad to see him die on the cross, because they thought that this was the end of everything for them; all their hopes were gone. But because they loved Him they looked after Him and laid His body in a cave in the garden; they were going to come back on Sunday morning!

People still see Jesus' death in different ways:

- Some are not interested, they are not bothered; it is an old story that doesn't really touch them.
- Some have heard about Jesus, but their lives are too busy, so they don't have the time to think about Him much.
- Some have come to love Him and trust Him and know that He is the Saviour of the world and their Saviour. He has done that because the cross is not the end of the story; on that Sunday morning, His friends came back to the place where they put His body, but it was gone; then they began to meet Him and see Him alive; they began to understand that Jesus was raised from the dead.

Which glasses to wear? Which way to see Jesus? For Christians Jesus is the Saviour and the cross is at the heart of what God has done for us. Learn to love Jesus!

Prayer:

Imagine the crowd – “Father we are sorry that there have been times when Jesus has not mattered and we've not been bothered.

Imagine the soldiers - Father, we are sorry that there have been times when we have been too busy to think about how much you love us.

Imagine the friends - help us to understand the cross and take Jesus' death on the cross more seriously.

Telling the Story:

Meet **Philip**: a friend of Jesus, a leader of the church, ready to do what God wants and to go anywhere; an all round good guy!

Meet the **Ethiopian**: he's come from Africa, has been on a visit to Jerusalem; and is travelling home in his chariot/carriage/caravan! He's an important man in the government, and looks after the Queen's money! He's reading the Bible he bought in Jerusalem as he travels home.

Philip is standing by the side of the road as the caravan goes past, and he runs alongside while the Ethiopian is reading the Bible; he is reading the bit that talks about Jesus dying on cross, but that was written a long time before it ever happened; Isaiah 53. Someone gets killed! The Ethiopian is thinking about what's he's reading; asks Philip "*Who is this story about?*" Philip begins to tell this man the story of Jesus and how Jesus was killed and came alive again; it's a great story.

The story goes on to tell us that the Ethiopian believed the story that Philip told him and not only believed the story but came to believe that Jesus is the Saviour of the world and his Saviour. Some people even think that this man was the first Christian in Africa and that he went on to tell lots of other people the story of Jesus; as Philip had told him the story, so he told the story of Jesus to others and they believed too and so the good news of Jesus spread.

Here's your friend: she lives near you and you get on well with her; she's friendly and you chat a lot when you meet in the park or at the coffee shop. You get on well with her, and you talk about all sorts of things, including Church though she's not a Christian.

Here's you: an all round good person!

What do you talk about? games, toys? I heard of two little boys last week who were talking about their Spiderman pants! Do we talk about Jesus? Do we tell our friends the stories of Jesus? It is such a good thing to do, and is so important, because only by hearing the stories of Jesus on the park bench or in Church can someone else become a friend of Jesus as well.

Cross-Shaped Christians

The Cross is a story, it is also a way of life. Jesus talked about going to the cross, but He also talked to His friends about them taking up their cross and following Him. This is all about the way we see life: it is not about funny glasses, but is about the way we think about life and ourselves and Jesus and other people. We are challenged to be Christians whose lives are cross-shaped. Here are some ideas as to what that means:

Being humble: Jesus "Humbled Himself" to die on the cross. He was the Son of God who shared the glory of God from before the beginning of the world. He gave all of that up for a time to come to live in our world; then more, He humbled Himself to die on the cross for us. Jesus had done nothing wrong; He didn't deserve to die in the way He did, but He gave Himself up; He put Himself in the way of the cross, all for the sake of other people, all for our sake. Cross-shaped people are people who think like Jesus, who humble ourselves to think of other people before ourselves. World says "me-first"; Jesus says "others-first" and to be cross-shaped Christians we need to think like Jesus and put other people first, to love and care for others!

Changing clothes: you put off your old clothes and put on new clothes; we do it all time! How many times will you change your clothes today? Cross-shaped Christians do it with the ways in which we live life, we put off the old and put on the new. Telling

lies, stealing, bad language, bitterness, rage, greed - all of these are old clothes that need to be put off. Kindness, compassion, forgiveness, love - these are the new clothes that we're to put on in place of the old ones. These are all about ways of living life, the kind of people we will be, the way that we will think and behave. We are always needing to put off old ways and put on new ways; we're never finished doing that because we still make mistakes, we still get things wrong, we still fall short of all that God wants us to be. Cross-shaped Christians spend our whole lives putting off old ways and putting on new ways.

Finding strength: on the cross Jesus cried out "*My God, my God why have you forsaken me?*" He felt alone; God had left Him to suffer on the cross; He was not only in great pain, but in the agony of being alone and thinking that God's love had gone away. In fact, God had not gone away completely and God's love was still there supporting Jesus. God was there with Jesus when He suffered on the cross. Because of all of this, cross-shaped Christians find strength and help when life is hard. Jesus has suffered in the way we suffer and so is able to listen to and answer our prayers in the way we need answers. God knows what our suffering is like and so is able to help us in our times of need. We have not been left alone; we are not abandoned by God; He is there with us all of the time, even when our lives are at their hardest.

The cross is the heart of what makes us Christians. Jesus died on the cross to save us, to take away our sin, and we love Him for all that He has done for us. The cross was the very reason why Jesus came in the first place, the heart of His mission to save the world and to save us; we believe Him, love Him. The cross also shapes the way we live our lives: to be humble in the way we think about other people, just as Jesus was humble; to put off the old, bad ways and put on the new, good ways to live life and to do that every day; to find strength to live life well when life is hard, to know the love of God when we suffer because Jesus has suffered on the cross in our world. The cross is the heart of what makes us Christians: the challenge for us is to love Jesus for what He did and let the life we live be cross-shaped!