

Empire Church of the Brethren

Sunday Service Sermons

01 March 2026

A Theology of the Cross

Text: "Jews demand miraculous signs and Greeks look for wisdom, but we preach Christ: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God." *1 Cor. 1:22-24*.

In the text for this morning, the great apostle affirms the uniqueness of the cross of Jesus Christ. Paul strips his message of fancy rhetoric; here he proclaims Christ crucified as the essence of the Christian faith.

The preaching of the cross rejected.

To the Jew the cross was a scandal to the Greek it was an absurdity.

For both the Jew and Greek, a false understanding of God precipitated the rejection.

The Jew could not see how the Chosen One of God could be destined for a cross.

The preaching of the cross did not square with the announcement that Jesus was the Messiah.

Conversely, to the Jew, it proved definitively that Jesus could not possibly be the Promised One of God.

You see, their law was perfectly clear: "Anyone who is hung on a tree is under God's curse."

Now Paul clearly reminded the Corinthians that he had only one message, namely, "Jesus Christ, and him crucified."

The apostle even asserted that he glories in the cross.

This was difficult for the pious Jew to embrace because from birth they had always been taught that anyone who hangs on a cross is cursed of God.

To the Jew this theology of the cross was a scandal, a stumbling block.

For the Greek, God was distant, aloof, unconcerned, apathetic about humankind's plight and the world's problems.

God could not and would not bother himself with mankind's welfare.

For the Greek it was insane to think that God would be so filled with love that he would "become flesh."

It was equally preposterous to think that God could not only care but also hurt and die.

In addition, pivotal doctrines such as creation, incarnation, crucifixion, and resurrection were judged to be absurd.

The Greeks made a methodological mistake, they presupposed that a person's thoughts could define God, rather than God's actions defining himself.

The cross was pivotal to Paul because it teaches what God is like.

He is a foolish God who doesn't do things the way we would expect: he dirties his hands by forming us out of the dirt of the ground, and he takes on the same flesh made from dirt; he believes in us and things that we are worth loving, caring, and dying for.

While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

God is very lavish indeed in his love for us and extravagant with his forgiveness.

He is a gracious God who doesn't deal with us as our sins deserve, and he will not allow our sin to destroy creation.

Rather, as Creator-Redeemer, he destroys our sin on a Roman cross.

The results of preaching the cross.

In the cross of Christ, God accomplishes at least two things.

First, he reveals.

Christ is the wisdom of God; that is, he is the Word of God.

In Jesus Christ we know what God is like.

To see the Father, we look at the Son.

He is the image of God, a snapshot into the reality of God.

Through the cross we learn that God is love and that he will go to any length to show us that love.

The cross of Christ proclaims God's willingness to forgive our sin and his desire to be united with us.

The cross rectifies our mistakes and shows God's forgiveness for deeds we deem unforgivable.

And the apostle John wrote, "This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world."

Second, he redeems.

Christ is the power of God unto salvation.

God is not preached as one who became angry at man for his sin and abandoned him.

On the contrary God wants to win back the rebellious.

We can't be so loathsome that he can't love us.

Again, as the apostle John wrote, "This is love; not that we loved God, but that he loves us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.

Sergeant Joe Friday used to say in Dragnet, "Just the facts, ma'am, just the facts."

Here is Paul's proclamation of the fact; the bare facts.

Here is Paul's message of salvation stripped to its core: Christ crucified.

What is your theology of the cross?

Is it a stumbling block for you?

Do you see it as foolishness?

Or do you believe God when he declares the cross to be the power of God for salvation?

How hard is it to be happy?

Where does happiness come from?

Happiness is not in our circumstances; it is in ourselves.

Happiness primarily concerns not the externals of life, but the condition of our spiritual health and the degree of our intimacy with God.

There are four affirmations that will help you toward an understanding of happiness.

Happiness is a matter of proper balance.

People who enjoy being sad are sick.

One's life must have balance if one is to be happy.

Either extreme is a sign of unbalance.

Happiness is a matter of a true sense of values.

Happiness is the ability to appreciate the best things, the highest values.

Happiness depends on other factors besides merely having a good time.

Happiness cannot be purchased.

It is gained only by those who live by God's principles.

The unhappiest people in the world are those who can pay the price of everything and know the value of nothing.

Happiness is a matter of outgoing interests.

We must be interested in other people.

Happiness is a product of relationships.

It cannot be attained alone.

To be happy we must consider the other person's right to be happy.

No one can build happiness on someone else's unhappiness.

We must be dedicated to a cause worthy to claim our best.

The happiest people are those who are so immersed in some great cause that they don't notice if they are happy or not.

These are people with singing hearts.

When you get to the heart of religion, you will find a song.

True happiness is the most persuasive herald the gospel has in the world.

Millions live unhappily because, while they have something to live on, they lack the supreme condition of a happy life, something to live for.

Happiness is a matter of Christian hope for the future.

If we are to be happy, our lives must be pointed in the right direction.

Deep down in our hearts, we know that we are immortal.

For the Christian the rainbow of a larger hope rims the horizon of eternity.

Blessed (happy) are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness for they will be filled.

All other quests end in futility.

Those who are hungry for pleasure become disenchanted and bored.

Those who hunger for righteousness will be fully satisfied, not once, but again and again as spiritual appetite returns.

At the cross, at the cross where I first saw the light, and the burden of my heart rolled away, it was there by faith I received my sight and now I am happy all the day.

There is a reason the cross is always before us.

It is our redemption and our reason for being a happy believer.

Come to the cross, there is room for you.

It is the door to God and happiness.