

Sermon: Jesus Died for You – March 27, 2016 (Scripture is from the ESV)

Location: New Philadelphia Church, Sillim Campus – 1:15pm service

Allow for a moment of people greeting each other before starting the sermon...

Introduction

Happy Easter, everyone! Today is the day we celebrate the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Today is the day that Jesus rose from the dead, overcoming death for all of us. Now we no longer have to fear our death here on earth, knowing that through Jesus' sacrifice on the Cross and through His resurrection we too will also rise from the dead in our new spiritual bodies and be with God in heaven for eternity. Praise the Lord!

Explaining Our Beliefs

The title of today's sermon is, "**Jesus Died for You.**" Today I am going to teach about the Cross and why Jesus had to die on the Cross for us. My hope is that through this teaching that each and every one of you will be able to communicate the basic beliefs of Christianity to anyone. I'm going to teach these basic beliefs to you all in similar way that I do on the mission field to people who have never heard about Jesus.

I'd like for 아버지 (Sky's father) to come up to the stage and to stand here. Sky's dad is going to represent God for us. The very first core belief of Christians is that there is God, one God, who is the creator of all things. God is eternal, the beginning and the end. God is almighty. God is love. God is good. God is holy. Holy means, "set apart." Holy means God is completely clean, completely pure, and that there is no evil about Him. Holy is like a clean white shirt with no spot or blemish on it. If something were to mark it, it would no longer be holy. For God, He cannot be marked or stained. He is pure and holy. He is clean.

The first verse of the Bible is, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." So our first revelation of God is as a Creator. On the first day He created the heavens and the earth (Sky's dad can pretend he is creating things) and He also created light out of darkness. On the second day He created the sky, the seas, and the dry land. On the third day He created vegetables and fruits and trees and plants. On the fourth day He created the sun and the moon. On the fifth day He created the fish and the birds. Then on the sixth day He created all the animals of the earth. And then for His last creation, God made mankind.

Slide 1

Genesis 1:26 – Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth."

Now who was God speaking to here? God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness." This is the first revelation of the trinity in the Bible. God is one God, but has three different persons about Him represented as God the Father, God the Son, and the Holy Spirit. These persons aren't separate, but are all one. They all have the same attributes: holy, eternal, all powerful, all knowing, everywhere, and infinitely loving.

Why is God a trinity? Why is He three persons in one? Personally, I believe God reveals Himself as a trinity to reveal His character to us. God is a relational God. God is not alone. God is not a loner. God is not by Himself. God loves relationship. And God loves unity. God

loves oneness. Through the trinity we are able to understand God more and understand His love more.

So God is a relational God. That is an important revelation for all of you. If you're taking notes please at least write that down today: **God is a relational God. God loves relationships.** And His last creation was His most important. His last creation was mankind. Why was mankind so special? Because mankind was made in the image of God. The sun, the moon, the plants, the animals, the water, and the sky, none of those things were made in the image of God. Only mankind was made in His image.

I could make many different things with my hands. I could paint a painting. I could make something out of clay. I could write a sermon. And while all those things would be my creation and something that came out of me, none of them would be fully made in my image. But if I were to have children with my wife Sky, they would truly be in our image. While they might not be an exact replication of us, you would see similar attributes, not just in their physical appearance but also in their character and their interests.

God made mankind, both men and women, in His image. So I'd like for Sky to come up on the stage. She will represent mankind to us. At creation mankind was made to have relationship with God and with each other (have Sky and her dad hold hands on the stage).

If you look at Sky and her dad, you can see similarities. Sky isn't a perfect image of her father, but she was clearly made in his image. You can see the similarities in their faces. If you get to know them you can find many similarities in their personalities and the way they act. Both Sky and her dad are great with their hands and are very artistic. Both Sky and her dad are sensitive to the Holy Spirit and cry easily.

The reason why most parents have children is to have a relationship with them. That relationship is meant to be one of the greatest joys in life. When Sky's dad is old and about to die, Sky's dad isn't going to want to see the physical work he has made or meet with random people. Instead Sky's dad is going to want to see Sky and his son Steven. They will be the most important people for him to see. If Sky's dad were given a choice between receiving millions of dollars or having Sky and Steven in his life, Sky's dad would choose Sky and Steven. Sky's dad's relationship with them is priceless. It's meant to be the most valuable thing to any loving father.

God is a relational God. God is a loving father. While some fathers here on earth are not loving and abandon their children, God would never do that. God's love endures forever. He is a good good father.

We were made in the image of God. That means we were made for relationship. And the greatest relationship we can have is with God, our loving Father and Creator. There is nothing more valuable or precious than this. Amen?

Now after God created all things God gave man just one command: "Do not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil." God allowed man to eat anything else and to do anything, with the only exception being that they could not eat from that one tree. Now why would God allow this one option for disobedience? While there are different interpretations, I believe God allowed this one option for disobedience **because love requires proof.**

I could make a robot that could answer to all of my commands and never make any mistakes. But I could never say that the robot loves me. Why? Because I programmed the robot to be perfect. The robot has no options or choices but to obey. The robot has no way of proving love.

In Sky's relationship with her dad though there are many ways for her to prove her love to him. Sky could obey him or disobey him. Sky could do nice things for him or could be mean to him. Sky has options. She is not a robot. And when God made mankind He made us not as robots, but **as humans with a free will and an ability to make choices**. So in the garden there was just one tree that was bad, while everything else was good.

Sadly, man in his selfishness, disobeyed God and ate of the fruit. Man sinned by disobeying God. Man, which was made in the image of God and had no flaw about him, suddenly became sinful. Man was once holy like God, pure and clean. But after the sin, man became unholy, a sinful being. And because what is clean cannot be connected to what is unclean, the perfect relationship man had with God became cut. A divide came between man and God. While God could still talk with man, they could no longer be connected (have Sky and her dad separate).

This picture of the separation between God and man is a picture of Hell, which is the opposite of heaven. Heaven is a perfect sweet relationship with God our Father. Heaven is filled with love, joy and peace. But Hell is the absence of God our Father. Hell is eternal separation. Hell has no love, joy, or peace, but rather hate, sadness, and fear. While here on earth we can still at least hear from God despite our sin, once we die if we have not been saved we will go to Hell. In Hell we will have no connection with God.

Hell is this: eternal separation from the Father (have Sky turn away from her dad). When we sin we are choosing our selfishness over God. We are actually turning from Him. And Hell is separation from God. Hell has no relationship. Hell has no love or peace.

God wants true worship, which is our choice to love Him and give Him praise. That is why sin is in this world. That is why bad things happen in this world. Not because God is evil, but because many people do not want God. They want to do their own thing. They want to live for their own selfish desires. So they choose themselves rather than love, and they grow farther away from God. So there is sickness, evil, and death because of our sin and because of our choices. By choosing their own selfish sinful ways, they are rejecting God. The truth is, by their sin they are choosing Hell over heaven. They would rather live for themselves apart from God than live for others with God.

Every Other Religion

Now we have come to the point in our story where almost all religions agree on. Almost all religions teach that there is a God or gods who are higher beings than us. Because of our sin and our condition, we cannot reach relationship or power with them. Almost all religions teach that if you do evil you will be punished and face something like Hell after your death.

But here is where Christianity and every other religion are different. Islam, Buddhism, and every other religion teaches that man must do work to get to God. If you pray enough, maybe God will accept you. If you love other people enough, maybe God will accept you. But Muslim priests and Buddhist monks will admit to you that they don't know how much is enough to really get into heaven or enlightenment. Muslims teach if you die for Allah you

will go to heaven, so that is one sure way for them to get in. That is why some radical Muslims do suicide bombings out of believing that their god will accept them for their sacrifice.

But the truth is, because of sin we are not holy. And no matter how hard we work and sacrifice, we cannot get rid of the stain of our sin. We cannot make ourselves perfect again. There is nothing we can do to cleanse ourselves. We are inherently imperfect, sinful people. None of us are perfect. None of us can become perfect by our own efforts.

Two Covenants

Now in the Bible we have two parts of it: the Old Testament and the New Testament. Testament means “covenant.” Jews today believe there is still just the Old Testament, or old covenant. Christians believe God has given us a New Testament, or a new covenant.

The old covenant was that God, in desiring relationship with man, instructed that they make sacrifices of lambs, goats, and bulls, to atone for their sin. So the priests in the Old Testament would take a bull and kill it and the blood of the sacrificed animal would represent the forgiveness of our sins.

Blood represents life. Blood is our lifestream. Without blood living and moving within us, we will die. So the sacrifice of an innocent animal and the shedding of its blood was meant to atone for our own sin and unholy bodies. Innocent blood represents atonement. By it we can say that we are clean.

The Old Testament also had many laws for the people, including the 10 Commandments, for the people to obey in order to be accepted by God. The laws were meant to help show the people what it is to live a life honorable to God. God doesn't want us to steal, or to lie, or to commit sexual sin. God wants us to worship Him and Him alone.

Sadly, **because we are not perfect people, mankind could never fully keep the law of the Old Testament.** Man still struggles with lying, with coveting or being jealous, or with lustful thoughts or other sins. So in the Old Testament this blood sacrifice had to keep happening. Because we are sinful people and we keep sinning they had to keep sacrificing animals. The blood sacrifice of animals was never enough to fully cleanse us. There needed to be a perfect, eternal sacrifice to fully cleanse us and enable us to have close relationship with God again.

The Old Testament was meant to show that we cannot earn salvation. We cannot earn our healing or our redemption. No matter how hard we might try, we can never become holy by our own works. The Old Testament was meant to show that **we need a Savior.** And this is where the New Testament begins...

God is a relational God. God made us in His image to have relationship with us. God wants this relationship, but He wants us to understand that good only comes from Him. So He sent His Son Jesus to be that sacrifice for us (ask Daniel to come up and put his arms in the shape of a Cross with his hands cupped upward).

Jesus came to the earth as a baby born of the Virgin Mary. Jesus grew from a boy into a man. At about the age of 30 He began teaching about the kingdom of God. While Jesus here on earth was a man and lived as we do, felt what we feel, and experienced what we experience, He was also still fully God. He was completely pure and completely holy. Jesus committed

no sin while He was here on earth. He lived the perfect life that we as sinful people are unable to live.

After about three years of teaching Jesus then became the perfect, eternal sacrifice that no animal or sinful human could ever become. Jesus, despite being the true Son of God, was rejected by man and was nailed to the Cross. Jesus died on the Cross willingly, to be the perfect sacrifice for us. While in the Old Testament animal sacrifices took the sin of people temporarily, Jesus, our eternal God, was able to take our sins on Himself for all eternity.

Jesus endured the consequences of sin for us. Sin brings rejection, shame, and separation from God. Jesus was rejected by mankind. They mocked Him, spat on Him, and whipped Him. Jesus was nailed to the Cross naked, enduring our shame. And Jesus experienced separation from God while on the Cross.

Slide 2

Matthew 27:45-46 – Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land until the ninth hour. And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”

The darkness over the land while Jesus was on the Cross represented the absence of the Father. Jesus, on the Cross, was enduring our sin and the consequences of it. Jesus was experiencing Hell. He was experiencing separation from God (have Sky's dad turn away from Daniel); the punishment that we deserve for our sins Jesus took on Himself through the Cross. This burden was too heavy for any human to bear. Only God Himself could take our sins for us.

Every other religion states that we have to work our way up to God. But Christianity is different. We believe that instead **God came down**. God came down to make a way to connect us back to Him. Through Jesus' sacrifice and death on the Cross He overcame sin and all of its consequences. That means if we confess that Jesus is Lord and put our faith in Him, confessing our sin and turning from our sin to Him, we are able to reconnect to God (have Sky turn to Daniel and take his hand).

Jesus overcame sin and death and remained pure, victorious over evil. By overcoming sin there is no longer any separation from God (have Sky's dad turn to Daniel and take his other hand).

By Jesus and by the Cross, we are able to have a close relationship with God again (have Daniel connect Sky's dad's hand and Sky's hand so that they are holding hands like at the beginning and then have Daniel stand behind them with his arms around both of them). Through Jesus' sacrifice on the Cross we are redeemed, if we put our faith in Him. And this redemption is eternal. So even if we sin again here on earth, as long as we repent of our sin and turn back to God, His sacrifice keeps us pure.

I want you to look at this picture here (of Sky's dad, Daniel, and Sky together). God is a relational God. God made us to have relationship with us. While our sin separated us from God, God sent His Son Jesus to be the sacrifice for our sins so that we could be reconnected with Him. And now because we are clean again we are able to receive the Holy Spirit in our hearts. That means when we confess that Jesus is Lord we receive His Spirit into our hearts. God lives within every Christian by His Spirit. So here you see Father God (Sky's dad),

Jesus (Daniel), and us (Sky) filled with the Holy Spirit. We are now one with God again. God wants us to know Him. God wants us to know His love and to share His love with others. (Have the three go sit down now).

Conclusion

The title of today's sermon was, "Jesus Died for You." Jesus didn't die for the earth. Jesus didn't go to the Cross for the animals or the plants. Jesus died for people. He died for relationship with people. He died so that you and I could be with Him for eternity.

God loves you. When we see the Cross we need to remember just how personal His sacrifice was for us. His arms were open wide at the Cross so that we could be embraced by Him. God wants to speak to each and every one of you. God wants you to hear His voice and to know the plans He has for you. God wants to bless you. God's greatest joy is for us to have relationship with Him and with each other.

Altar Call

If while listening to this sermon you have felt a stir in your heart, whether to give your life or simply a desire to reconnect with Him, I want to give you a chance to receive prayer. Please come up to the altar to receive prayer if that is you... (have CG leaders and other leaders come up to pray for people). As you come to the altar I want to give you a chance to pray first to God, whether you want to know Him or whether you want to reconnect with Him and be close again. Please go ahead and say your prayer and then a leader at the altar will pray for you.

Abraham wanted Isaac and would have traded everything for him