

The Wonders of the Cross

by William MacDonald

The sermon emphasizes the significance of the cross and the wonder of Jesus Christ, who is God incarnate, and died on the cross to pay the penalty for our sins.

Duration: 31:42

Scripture: Acts 20:28, Philippians 2:5-8, Colossians 1:15-17, Hebrews 1:3

Topics: "The Cross", "Christology"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the profound impact of understanding the reality of Calvary and the total consecration it demands from believers. It explores the transformative power of fully grasping the wonder of the cross, leading to a life of compulsive worship and evangelism. The sermon delves into the unique identity of Jesus as both fully human and sinless, while also being God incarnate, who willingly died for humanity, culminating in a call to deeply reflect on the marvel of Christ's sacrifice at Calvary.

Transcript

I'm Christian. Those words don't fit together. It's like saying you went out to Hawaii on business.

Those who face the reality of Calvary can no longer live for selfish pleasure. Our redemption demands total consecration. What do you think would happen if believers really came into the reality? If they grasped the wonder of the cross and realized more fully what was really happening there? I tell you, they would become overwhelmed by the dimensions of their redemption and they would become compulsive worshipers.

They would go around and talk about the Lord to anyone who would be willing to listen. Day after day, this is what would happen. They would be unashamedly enthusiastic about the one who called them out of darkness into his marvelous light.

Worldly ambitions would perish as they gave themselves without reserve to Christ and to his service. I said to a young man, a friend of mine out there on the west coast recently, Jeff, if people really believe the truth of what happened at Calvary, what would happen? He said to me, the world would be evangelized. Is this true? An un-evangelized world is testimony to the fact that the church has lost the wonder.

The church has lost the wonder. The world takes it all rather matter-of-factly, as you know. The death of the Lord Jesus on the cross at Calvary doesn't impact us the way it should.

In fact, we may be so conceited that we might think it was a jolly good thing for him to do for us anyway. But maybe it was the proper thing, after all, for him to do it. Such vain conceit.

But you know, every once in a while a shaft of light does break through the darkness of some man or woman, some young man or woman, where a believer stands before the cross and prays, Oh, make me understand it. Help me to take it in, what it meant to thee, the Holy One, to bear away my sin. And God hears that prayer in heaven, and he looks down on that dear person.

And that person's life is never the same again. Never the same again. He goes forth, and people think he's lost his mind.

He has, but he's found the mind of Christ. They think he's beside himself, but he is. He's for God.

They think he's out of step, but they don't realize he's marching to the drumbeat of a different drummer. As the significance of what happened at Calvary dawns upon him, he stands there before the cross, and he says, I've seen the vision, and for self I cannot live. Life is worse than worthless unless all are given.

People like that can never be satisfied again with a bland Christian life. They determine that they will never lower themselves again to the chill of their environment, which incidentally, friends, is a very easy thing to do, to lower yourself to the chill of your environment. They realize that the Christianity that they see around them today is not the Christianity of the Bible.

A new drive takes hold of them, and it consumes their waking hours. They don't want anything to come between their souls and total commitment to the Lord Jesus Christ. What is it that has made these people so different? Well, I'd like to suggest to you four things.

Four things. First of all, they've seen who Jesus really is. Secondly, they've seen what he did for them.

Thirdly, they've had a tremendous revelation of who we are, the ones for whom the Savior died. And finally, they think of the tremendous blessings that have flowed to us from the cross of Calvary. We want to consider these life-changing truths this evening.

Who the Lord Jesus is, what he did, the people for whom he did it, and the blessings that have flowed from us as a result of that wonderful work. Who the Lord Jesus is, leave him out, and I tell you, there's no meaning to life at all. Life is a sick joke without Jesus.

There really is. He's the hub of history, the fountain of satisfaction, and he's the embodiment of reality, the central fact of life. Who is he? He's unique.

The virgin-born son of Mary, he was unique from the very outset. Others are born to live, he was born to die. Usually when a baby is born into the world, there's great joy.

When he was born into the world, the king was troubled, and all the people of Jerusalem were troubled with, too. Throughout his life, people were either for him or against him. There was no middle ground.

He's unique, but he's more than that. He's a true man. He's a true man.

He was human. He grew hungry, thirsty, and weary. To his contemporaries, he seemed quite normal in physical appearance.

He was one of us. In his twenties, he was a carpenter in Nazareth. In his thirties, the early thirties, he was an itinerant teacher going around preaching, teaching, and healing.

And no one had any reason to doubt his true humanity. But he was more than that. He was a sinless man.

He was a sinless man. There was something that distinguished his humanity from all others, and that is that it was sinless. Just think of it.

There was once a man who walked the streets of this earth who was absolutely free from sin. Hard to take in, isn't it? Never an evil thought. Never a bad motive or a sinful act in that wonderful life.

Tempted from without, he was never tempted from within. It was not possible for him to sin. He said, I always do those things that please my father.

Well, that precluded sin, didn't it? And he always did those things that pleased his father that left no room for sin. I'm intrigued by the fact that even people who didn't particularly claim to be his friends had to acknowledge that he was without sin. Pilate said, I can't find any fault in him.

Pilate's wife said, have thou nothing to do with this just person? Herod said, I don't see that there's anything worthy of death in him. The dying thief said, this man has done nothing amiss. And Judas himself confessed that he had betrayed the innocent blood.

Yes, the Lord Jesus is unique. He's truly human, and he's sinlessly human, but that's not all. We never can comprehend a fraction of the magnitude of the meaning of Calvary until we remember he's God.

Yes, that one hang in the middle cross, dear friends, is God incarnate. God in a body of flesh. Isaiah identified him as the mighty God, and God the father addressed his son as God.

Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever. John says the word became flesh and dwelt among us. The word was God, and the word became flesh and dwelt among us.

I guess I could only refer to the Lord Jesus as God. And the Lord Jesus himself insisted that everyone should honor him as they honor the father, which means that he's God. He's equal with God in every respect.

Over 100 scriptures leave no room for argument. Jesus Christ is God. In him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.

You know, John Wesley really caught the wonder of the incarnation when he wrote, Our God contracted to a span incomprehensibly made man. What's a span? The difference between your thumb and your little finger there. Our God contracted to a span incomprehensibly made man.

And William Billings, who was a tanner and a musical amateur by trade, he wrote, Come see your God extended in the straw. Another poet now unknown said, Lo, within a manger lies he who built the starry skies. And yet another anonymous author penned these words, Lo, cold on the cradle, the dew drops are falling.

Lo, lies his head with the beasts of the stall. Angels adore him in slumber recalling, Baker and monarch, the savior of all. I like that British hymn writer who wrote, Down from his glory, ever living story.

My God and savior came, and Jesus is his name. My God and savior came. Dear friends, the young Jew of Nazareth was the ancient of days.

It was God the Son who wore that carpenter's apron amid all the sawdust of that shop in Nazareth. It was God the Son who got down that day with his disciples and washed their feet. I have a way of asking questions.

I asked another young friend recently, How would you like it if the Lord Jesus, God the Son, got down and washed your feet? He said, I wouldn't like it. What he meant was, it should be the other way around. There's something improper about that.

He said, I wouldn't like it. I knew just exactly what he meant. It was the Son of God who created optic nerves for that man in John chapter 9 who was blind from birth.

And no one but God would stand up in that boat on the Sea of Galilee and say, Peace be still, and the winds and the waves obey his will. Only God could raise a Lazarus after he had been dead and in a tomb for four days. I don't think we can comprehend the meaning of Calvary until we see that the one who hung there was the one who stretches out the heavens, lays the foundations of the earth, and forms the spirit of man within it.

We tend to make our God in our own image and in our likeness. God said that to his people in the Old Testament. You thought that I was altogether as you are.

We tend to make him in our own image and after our own likeness, but he's more than that. That's who he is. Think of what he did for us.

And I want to tell you, dear friends, if we stop to think tonight of what he really did for us, we'll be just crushed with sensory overload. The death of God incarnate on the cross of Calvary is enough to stagger the imagination. We have been died for.

If we had just been died for by another person, that would be the cause for endless gratitude, wouldn't it? But dear friends, your God died for you. I know I feel some of you are saying, Dr. O, heresy creeping in here. Be patient.

The one who gave himself for us on the cross of Calvary is the second person of the Trinity. It's surprising that we aren't more astonished. Does the Bible really say that God incarnate died for us? Yes, that's why I read Acts 20, 28.

Do you want to look at it again just for a minute? We're back to our verse. We started with Acts 20, 28. So therefore, take heed to yourselves and to all the flock among which the Holy Spirit has made you oversee to shepherd the church of God.

Which he purchased with his own blood. The antecedent of he is God. Now, I know that Garvey, when he translated the scriptures, he changed it slightly.

He said, which he purchased with the blood of his own. Of course, that's true, too. But all the other versions of the Bible translate it just this way.

God, which he, God, purchased with his own blood. You know, I believe that verse is in the Bible just for its shock value. Sort of just shocked the wits out of us.

When we think of something like that. You say, well, is that the only verse in the Bible? No, it's amazing. It's amazing when you look at other scriptures.

Colossians chapter 1. Colossians chapter 1. We're not going to read the chapter, but just let me refer to it briefly. The spirit dwells in this chapter at considerable length on the deity of the Lord Jesus Christ. First of all, he's the image of the invisible God.

The firstborn over all creation. Verse 15. He's the creator of all things.

Verse 16. He's the one who is before all things and by whom all things consist. Verse 17.

Yet different in that same context. After giving this glowing description of the deity of the Lord Jesus Christ. Verse 14.

In whom we have redemption through his blood. The forgiveness of sins. In whom? Whom? And then if you go to Hebrews chapter 1 and verse 3. Hebrews chapter 1 and verse 3. This is really startling, friends.

We're so familiar with these verses. Do we realize what they're saying? Verse 3. Who being the brightness of his glory. And the express image of his person.

And upholding all things by the word of his power. Dear friends, that just spells one thing. Deity.

Doesn't it? Isn't that talking about the deity of the Lord Jesus? Who being the brightness of his glory. The express image of his person. It doesn't mean he was like God.

It means he was God. Upholding all things by the word of his power. This is the next part of the verse.

When he had by himself purged our sins. Who? The brightness of his glory. The express image of his person.

The upholder of all things by the word of his power. When he had by himself purged our sins. Sat down the right hand of the majesty on high.

I think that's marvelous. And of course you have it again in Philippians. It's marvelous how the scriptures open up on this subject when you take a second look at them.

Philippians chapter 2. Philippians chapter 2 verse 5. Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus. Notice. Who being in the form of God.

What does that mean? It means he was God. What does that mean? That's a statement of the absolute deity of the Lord Jesus Christ. Thought it not robbery to be equal with God.

He was equal with God. And in that same context after giving this description of the total deity of the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul writes in verse 8. Being found in appearance as a man he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death.

Even the death of the cross. In some religions men and women die for their God. But I never heard of another religion where their God dies for his creatures.

Not you. I don't think we ever really come to grips with Calvary. Until we stand before the cross and gaze on the Lord Jesus Christ there.

And realize that his God incarnate is dying there. Of course this raises questions. I know they're in your mind already.

You say well can God die? Right. God is spirit and spirit doesn't have flesh and blood. And we read that God purchased the church with his blood.

Spirit doesn't have flesh and blood. No but the incarnation solves that problem. Where God came down and veiled his Godhead in a body of flesh.

Aside he threw his most divine array and veiled his Godhead in a garb of clay. And in that garb this wondrous love display restoring what he never took away. But somebody will say to me.

But Brother McDonald God is immortal. And immortal means not subject to death. And that's true God is immortal.

And he's not subject to death. But in the incarnation the Lord Jesus made himself subject to death. That's why he took on a human body.

So that as man he might die for you and me. Jesus was made a little lower than the angels for the sufferings of death. He by the grace of God might taste death for everyone.

The Lord Jesus is not God minus something. He's God plus something. But that something is humanity.

Isaac Watts I love that man's writings. He realized that the one who died for him was none other than Christ his God. He said forbid it Lord that I should boast save in the death of Christ my God.

All the vain things that charm me most I'd sacrifice them to his blood. He had no trouble with that did he? And neither should you. All right.

A child like that Charles Wesley he faced this fact this problem. God is immortal. How can one who's immortal become subject to death? And he said to his mystery all.

The immortal dies. Who can explore his strange design? In vain the firstborn seraph tries to plumb the depths of love divine. But the mystery didn't deter Charles Wesley because he went on to say.

Dear friends you sing it all the time amazing love. How can it be that thou my God shouldst die? And you know we can sing it and not gasp. Ha ha ha.

We can sing it and not gasp. Well there's another question arises. If Jesus is God.

And God incarnate died for us. Who ran the universe when his body was three days and three nights in the grave? Ha ha. No problem about it dear friends.

Only Jesus body went to the grave. He didn't go to the grave. The moment the Lord Jesus died.

It's in paradise. Today thou shalt be with me in paradise. At one moment he's running all things here on earth.

As a man as a God man here on earth. Then he's running them all in heaven and there's no interlude. So it really isn't a problem.

It really isn't a problem. There was no interval during which he was not in complete control. You know the amazing fact that the supreme being gave himself for us.

Is nothing less than astounding. And I want to tell you that the most brilliant efforts to describe it. Including my efforts tonight.

Are no better than a stutter. That's how marvelous it really is. It strains the brain.

To realize that what happened at Calvary. Was not homicide. That's what one man kills another man.

It was not genocide. That's where men tried to wipe out an ethnic cultural national group. Dear friends.

The death of the Lord Jesus on the cross of Calvary. Was decide. The murder of God.

You have taken. Peter said. And by cruel hands.

Have crucified. And slayed. Spurgeon said.

Who would have thought of the just ruler. Dying for the unjust rebel. There's no teaching.

This is no teaching of human mythology. The son of God. Loved me and gave himself for me.

And yet he said. We can say that and either gasp or weep. And this is marvelous.

That we can say it and neither gasp. Or we reel off similar verses with little or no emotion. We preach this truth so blandly and mannerly.

Or frankly. That it doesn't bring our listeners to their knees. God help us with much of the preaching that goes on today.

In the shadow. Of Calvary. We're guilty of what someone called the curse.

Of a dry eyed Christianity. Constantly we need to come back to the awesome reality. That the one who died.

On the cross of Calvary. Is Jesus. God.

Incarnate. I think F.W. Pitt said it well. When he wrote those memorable lines.

The maker of the universe. As man for man. Was made a curse.

The claims of law. That he had made. Unto the uttermost.

He paid. His holy fingers. Made.

The bow which grew the thorns that crowned his brow. The nails that pierced his hands were mined in secret places. He desired.

He made the forest whence there sprung the tree of which his body hung. He died upon. A cross of wood.

That made the hill on which it stood. The sky that darkened o'er his head by him. Above the earth was spread.

The sun that hid from him its face by his decree was poised. In space. The spear that spilled his precious blood.

Was tempered. By the fires of God. The grave in which his form was laid was hewn in rock.

That his hands had made. The throne on which he now appears was his from everlasting years. And a new glory crowns his brow.

And every knee to him. Shall bow. I want to tell you dear friends.

The marvel. Of the death. Of the one.

Who threw the farthest galaxies. Into space. It's just.

Just strains the brain. That's all I can say. But it's true.

Just the same. It's true. Just the same.

Did you know that isn't the whole story. The third thing is that people thought. When he died.

And I think we'll just wait till tomorrow morning and think about that. But tonight. Before you go to bed.

Just. Think about this. Think of the marvel.

Of the death of the Christ of God. Upon the cross of Calvary. Think of men.

Taking him. And putting him to death. And all the time they're doing it.

Their very lives. Depended on him. For every minute that they were doing it.

Their lives were dependent upon him. The breath that they took. Were dependent upon him.

And yet he submitted to that. It was all for you. And for me.

Wonderful. Wonderful. Jesus.

Dear friends. I hope that. As a result.

Our little conference. If nothing else happens. Week.

Then we'll go away. With a deeper appreciation. Of what happened in Calvary.

We kind of think. Well he died as a man. You know.

We try to soften the blow. But you can't divide. You can't divide the person.

Of the Lord Jesus like that. You can't say. Well it was just his man he died.

He's the God man. You can't separate those parts of him. Jesus.

God. Incarnate. Died.

On Calvary's cross. Shall we pray. Father forgive us.

For so often. Reading the scriptures. And reciting verses.
And their wonder. Doesn't explode on us. We say.
So glibly. The son of God. Loved me.
And gave himself. For me. We really don't realize.
What we're saying. We really don't realize. What we're saying.
Lord. We would pray. That prayer.
To that old. Make me understand it. Help me to take it in.
What it meant to thee. The holy one. To bear away.
Our sin. Help us to remember. Who you are.
Not that you're just someone. Like ourselves. But you're the one.
To whom we owe. Every breath. That we take.
Write these truths. Deeply upon our hearts. We pray.
In the Savior's name. Amen.

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