

Prestonwood Connection 2004 #1

A Commitment To Serve

Communion Service and Deacon Ordination

Near The Cross

Galatians 6:14

Wednesday, January 7, 2004 • Dr. David McKinley

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And Rick thank you and thank our praise team tonight for helping us to honor the Lord Jesus Christ as we come together and a..., we just thank God for you and the gift that He's given to you and what a joy it is to be back together in the Connection Service tonight. What an incredible gathering this is. It's great to see you and I'm so thankful that you're here.

If you entered the building this evening on the chapel side a..., you had to come near the cross and a..., that's one of the great things about the way that our buildings have been designed and about the way in which they are presented to our community is that to drive near Prestonwood now, is to drive near the cross and to walk in through the main entryway of this church is to come near the cross.

If you happen to come in on the chapel side of the building and you came in on the west side of the chapel you passed a cornerstone that is there and that cornerstone a..., has in it one of the great a..., Bible verses that really is been a life theme for the life and the ministry of Prestonwood. It's found in Ephesians chapter 3 and verse 20 and the Scripture says:

²⁰Now unto Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we could ask or think, according to the power that is in us, ²¹to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus a..., to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

And I think that without a doubt we all know tonight that the testimony of this ministry is that it has been nothing more and nothing less than God doing exceedingly abundantly above anything that we could have ever dared to imagine or to dream. And so that is the reason that that is found in the cornerstone of that chapel and at one of the points of entry on the west side.

But if you came in on the east side, which is the side here nearest the entry a..., the main entry to the church, there's a cornerstone there on the chapel that bears these words, and if you have your Bible I would invite

you to join with me in the book of Galatians chapter 6 and verse 14, because here we hear the personal testimony and the passionate heartbeat of the apostle Paul in his relationship with Jesus Christ. And this is what he says:

But God forbid that I should boast except in the...

What?

...cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.

But God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ by whom the world has crucified to me, and I to the world.

The cross is the centerpiece of the Christian faith. Everything about who we are and what we believe is all centered on the cross and for the Christian life is all about the cross and it is always about the cross and tonight as we gather in this place we have come together to understand again the significance and the centrality of the cross in our lives as believers and followers of the Lord Jesus Christ. You cannot open the book that I hold in my hand and many of you hold in your hand tonight, the Bible, without coming to the realization that this is the all encompassing theme of the Bible. From the earliest images of the Old Testament sacrifices, to the most explicit and the most detailed expressions of New Testament theology, the message of the Bible is the message of the cross and because the message of the Bible is the message of the cross it is the one and the only message of the church. In the book of Colossians chapter 2 and verse 13 we read again of the work and of the ministry of Christ for us upon His cross. Colossians chapter 2 and verse 13 and I'm actually going to read this text from the New International Version, it says:

¹³*When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ, He forgave us all our sins,*
¹⁴*having canceled the written code, with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us; He took it away, nailing it to the cross.*
¹⁵*And having disarmed the powers and authorities, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.*

It's all about the cross, Jesus Christ died to reconcile sinners to God by Himself. Jesus Christ died to reconcile sinners to God by Himself and the only reason that any of us can come and gather in this gathering and partake of these elements tonight is not because we are good people or righteous people, but we are people who have been graced and who have been blessed to know the saving power of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ the One who has reconciled us to God the Father. And that's why Paul said:
[Galatians 6:14]

...for this reason the world has been crucified unto me and I to the world.

When the Bible uses the word or the phrase, the world, it can be used in

several ways. Of course the Bible tells us that: [John 3:16]

God so loved the world that He gave His only Son...

And when the Bible speaks of the world in that sense it's talking about human beings, mankind, God loves people. But the Bible also speaks of the world as being the very system that has established itself in opposition to God. The Bible speaks of the world as being, as though it were, a... a human system of operation that denies and defies God the Creator. And therefore when Paul says: [Galatians 6:14]

...I have been crucified unto the world and the world has been crucified unto me.

He's simply say that because I now live the cross life there will be no rival affection, there will be no rival allegiance, there will be no rival action in my life save this, surrender to Jesus Christ. It's all about the cross.

And so tonight as we gather together we come together to come near to the cross, to remain near the cross. It was for this very reason that Jesus gave us these elements, these symbols, that they would constantly proclaim to us the Lord's death until He comes again. Jesus said, there's something I want you to remember, it's what you saw in the Old Testament, it's what you've seen and witnessed, that is among His disciples in My live and ministry and it's what it was proclaimed to all of the world, it is the message of the death, the burial and the resurrection of Jesus, all focused around the work and the finished work of the cross and therefore tonight as we come together we come to remember, we come to reflect and we come to renew, to renew the passion for the cross and the passion for the Savior that is so vital to our hearts and to our daily living as followers of Jesus Christ. And if we want the flame in our heart to be kept alive then we have to keep coming back to the source and that's why I can think of no more important time than right at the beginning of a new year, as we're beginning to make commitments and, and entanglements of our lives in a variety of different directions, that we would come again to this place and to this table and in this spirit to say Lord tonight I want to come near to the cross.

It was John R. W. Stott who said:

"The cross is the blazing fire at which the flame of our love is kindled. But we have to get near enough to it for its sparks to fall on us."

And I don't know about you, but tonight more than anything else as I look at whatever may lie ahead on the horizon of this year I want my heart to be ablaze, afresh and anew with love for Jesus, with passion for the cross and I want my testimony to be: [Galatians 6:14]

God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ by whom the world has been crucified unto me and I unto the world.

C. J. Mahaney said:

"To grow in your passion for what Jesus has done, increase your understanding of what He has done."

And tonight we've gathered to increase that understanding as we hold these elements, as we look beyond the symbols to the Savior for which they stand and together we make our boasting in the cross.

Lord, I thank You tonight for the message and the power of the cross and I pray in this moment and in these moments that You will help us fresh and anew to embrace the cross, to embrace its humility, to embrace its power, to embrace its cleansing and Lord to embrace its hope is my prayer tonight in Jesus' name. Amen.