

“The Power of the Cross”

Prepared by Patrick J. Griffiths © - pastorpat@waukeshabile.org
March 30, 2008

*“Jesus said to her, ‘Stop clinging to Me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father; but go to My brethren and say to them, I ascend to My Father and your Father, and My God and your God.’”
John 20:17*

Often in reading the Scripture, we skim past great oceans of truth and thus fail to appreciate the height, depth, width, and breadth of what we just read. I believe John 20:17 is one of those untapped “oceans.”

In the words of our Lord, something powerful happened because of the cross. The alienated become brethren, the orphaned become adopted and the wayward become worshippers. Jesus uses an Old Testament formula to speak of the relationship His people have to their God, “My Father and your Father, and My God and your God” (Ex. 6:7; Lev. 26:12 [‘I will also walk among you and **be your God, and you shall be My people**’]; Jer. 7:23; 30:22; Ezek. 36:28). “His words are reminiscent of Ruth’s words to Naomi: ‘your people shall be my people and your God my God’ (Ruth 1:16)” (F.F. Bruce, The Gospel of John, p.391). The language is that of the covenant made with Israel and promised to Israel. Let us not miss the slight alteration in our Lord’s expansion of this idea. Jesus identifies Himself with His people. Jesus includes us in His family. Let us for a moment recall the statement of our Lord in John 15:14-15.

¹³ “Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his **friends**. ¹⁴ You are My **friends** if you do what I command you. ¹⁵ No longer do I call you slaves, for the slave does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you **friends**, for all things that I have heard from My Father I have made known to you” (John 15:13-15).

He identifies His disciples not only as friends but also as brothers, family. “We may compare his words to the women in Matthew 28:10, ‘go and tell my brothers . . .’, where the reference (according to verse 16) is to ‘the eleven disciples’. Such coincidences between Matthew and John are sufficiently rare to be particularly noteworthy when they occur” (F.F. Bruce, The Gospel of John, p.390).

He calls us “children.” Such a word is one of “familiarity and affectionate kindness.” He calls us “brothers and friends.” We share a common Father. New Testament scholar Lightfoot correctly notes the distinction between His Sonship and ours when he wrote, “His Sonship to the Father is by nature and right, theirs is only by adoption and grace, in and through Him.” (Lightfoot as quoted in Leon Morris, The Gospel According to John, Rev., NICNT, p.743). This is what the cross does. This is its power. It restores fellowship, reconciles the distant, satisfies anger, declares righteous the guilty, and adopts the orphaned. There is nothing like the cross anywhere at any time. John continues with this idea in 1 John 4:17 when he wrote, “because as He is, so also are we in this world.” Even Paul recognizes the unique nature of this union in two notable passages: Romans 6:2, 3 and Galatians 2:20.

Continued on the other side...

³“Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? ⁴ Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life” (Rom. 6:3, 4).

“I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me” (Gal. 2:20).

This is the often overlooked but potent power of the cross. We are a part of His eternal family. He calls us brothers. He signifies a common Father and a common God. We hold this in union with Him.

Consider also, it is to a woman the responsibility of the message to His disciples has been entrusted. “We should not miss the significance of the fact that these important messages were entrusted to women. Among the Jews, women were not permitted to bear witness (Mishnah, *Rosh Ha-Shanah* 1:8) (Leon Morris, The Gospel According to John, Rev., NICNT, p.743). The scope of the family is inclusive. It is broad and sweeping as to who is included. This is Paul’s point in Galatians 3:27-29.

²⁷“For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. ²⁸ There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. ²⁹ And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's descendants, heirs according to promise” (Gal. 3:27-29).

Truly, this thought is staggering. Are you beginning to see just how marvelous the cross is? I trust as you stand on the shores of God’s ocean you are seeing just how magnificent He truly is. Let us not hold lightly the cross, let us not cheapen it with glib speech, let us muster up all the energy we can in speaking of the cross and seeing its shadow cast across the canvass of our lives.