



Sermon Growth Guide

October 4, 2020

The Beautiful Story – Broken Beauty

John 19:16–30

Key Verse: John 19:30

“When He had received the drink, Jesus said, “It is finished.” With that, He bowed His head and gave up His spirit.”

Big Idea: Beauty was broken that I might have life.

Foundations

Here in the eighth week of *The Beautiful Story*, we wrestle with the climax of human rebellion against God, the moment we crucified God. “It was my sin that held Him there” writes Stuart Townend in the well-known hymn, *How Deep The Father’s Love For Us*.

Pastor Tim explains, “Here at the cross is a distillation of the horror of human rebellion against God ... the hammer falls, the cross goes up, beauty shatters.”

Moreover, a way is made. Reconciliation. Restoration. Redemption. We learn this week that it is nothing short of the very love of God that finds the Son of God hanging on a cross.

“How deep the Father’s love for us,” the hymn continues, “How vast beyond all measure / That He should give His only Son / To make a wretch His treasure.”

“But God demonstrates his own love for us in this,” reflects the apostle Paul. “While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” You are so loved by God that He stopped at nothing to make a way for you to come back home.

Open and close your time of further study and application in prayer. Ask the Spirit of God to guide and guard your time in His Word.

Understanding God’s Word

Christianity affirms that Jesus is the Son of God, fully God and fully man. Discuss the ugliness and hatred of God dying on a cross.

In what ways does Jesus care for His mother in verses 25–27?

Discuss in length what Jesus means when He says, “It is finished” in verse 30.

Applying God’s Word

This week we process that God the Father gave His one and only Son to die the death that we deserve. How do we apply such extravagant love to our daily walk?

Take time to process in community how your moment-by-moment decision-making ought to be impacted by the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross. What situation in your life would you like to give over to God for His good purposes even more?

Witnessing God’s Word

Think of one person who has yet to grasp the true sacrifice of Jesus for them personally. Take a moment to close your time by praying for this person. Discern a sacrificial action you can take to demonstrate the love of God to them.

A butterfly flaps its wings in Argentina. Sometime later a tsunami develops off the coast of Japan. All things are interconnected. Have you heard of this? The Butterfly Effect. The atmosphere is a single, delicately interdependent system and the slightest change in one part can impact a totally different part. One move can change everything. Careful when you sneeze! That might change the hurricane season on the east coast! I'm poking fun at it, but it is a fascinating view of the system we live in. One small change. One small event. One moment. Everything changes. The cross of Christ is such a moment. The crucifixion of Jesus. It is the lynchpin, the hinge of history, the pivot point around which everything turns and bends around again. It is the climax of ***The Beautiful Story***. The day beauty was broken.

Beauty was threatened by the curse and the fall, but the threat landed on the shoulders of Jesus when He died on the cross. Here, at the cross, beauty is truly broken. There is nothing beautiful here. Ugliness and hatred win the day. We get to see what it truly looks like when God's beauty is destroyed, and we take over the world. Here at the cross is a distillation of the horror of human rebellion against God. The wages of sin is death. I can only imagine the disciples as they watched it all unfold, thinking time and again that this was the moment Jesus would flip it, turn it, slide out of it and show His power. They were sure everything would turn out fine. They slept like babies on Thursday night. At the arrest, Jesus let it happen. At the trial. Still no surprising intervention from God. At the beating and public shaming by Roman guards in the courtyard, they watched as Jesus was whipped

and bruised. But He's not dead. This is horrible, but He isn't dead. Surely not all the way to Calvary, surely not all the way to the cross. The hammer was raised over the nail, and still they must have been thinking, "Now! Now Jesus! Do it!" No. The hammer fell. The cross went up. "Now, Jesus!" No. The bowl breaks. The silver cord is severed. The pitcher shatters on the floor.



"When he had received the drink, Jesus said, "It is finished." With that, he bowed his head and gave up his spirit" (John 19:30). Sometimes it doesn't work out for the best. You have been there. The health never takes a turn. The recovery doesn't come. The accident takes his life. The addiction doesn't turn around. The bomb goes off. The cancer wins. The crisis is not averted. The ship is not saved; it sinks to the bottom. Beauty broken. That's where Jesus went that day on the cross. One event that changes everything.

"Finally Pilate handed him over to them to be crucified. So the soldiers took charge of Jesus. Carrying his own cross, he went out to the place of the Skull (which in Aramaic is called Golgotha). There they crucified him, and with him two others—one on each side and Jesus in the middle" (John 19:16–18). "There they crucified him." John doesn't go into a lot of detail and leaves us to do our own research on crucifixion, the shapes of crosses, tied and nailed or just nailed, palms or wrists, where were the nails exactly? It doesn't matter. There they crucified Him. Just like that. It's often lamented that Jesus' whole life and ministry is summed up

with only a comma in the Apostle's Creed: "He was born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead and buried." Hey, there was a lot of life in that comma! The whole thing! But this is what Jesus came to do. He came to die. That's why the suffering and crucifixion of Jesus takes up about a third of the chapters of the four Gospels. One week. No biography would spend a third of its pages on how the person died—but that's what we do with Jesus. Why? Because His death changes everything.

Why did Jesus have to die? He had the power not to. But He carried his own cross. "Carrying his own cross, he went out to the place of the Skull (which in Aramaic is called Golgotha)" (John 19:17). Of course He's forced, but it does remind us that Jesus did this. It reminds me of when Jesus is arrested in Matthew and said, "Do you think I cannot call on my Father, and he will at once put at my disposal more than twelve legions of angels?" (Matthew 26:53). Jesus talked about this moment earlier in His ministry, trying to teach the disciples that He intended to lay down His life for the sheep. "'I lay down my life,' he said. 'No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again. This command I received from my Father'" (John 10:18). Jesus gave His life. It is a ransom to pay off the blood price and invalidate the claim dark forces make on us, trying to lay their chains over our souls, trying to pretend they own us, and trying to convince us they do. No, I'm bought

by Jesus. It is a covenant of blood to bring us into right relationship with God. It is a substitutionary sacrifice to pay the debt of our sin, sin that deserves death. It is an atonement. It is an act of unfathomable love, an example, divine love. God loves us so much He gave His only Son; that Jesus loves you so much, He came to die. No cost too high. No pain too much. He gave His life, the day of broken beauty.

We want ***The Beautiful Story***. We said before, sometimes we tell shrunken stories of God. That's true about the cross too. Who is this God who watches His own Son die? What kind of archaic, old-religion thing is going on here when a Father God needs the Son God to die to solve the problem? Dallas Willard said, "One of our main problems about the way the gospel is presented is it is often presented as if God were a pretty angry and mean Person, who is going to let you off the hook because someone else took your beating, namely Jesus. And we miss the point that it was the heart of love that sent Jesus. The death of Jesus on the cross did not make God happy, when he was unhappy. The death of Jesus on the cross was God's effort to reach human beings with his love. And because of what One member of that divine community did, God is enabled to reach out to human beings, and to say to them, 'The war is over. You don't need to keep fighting.' You don't need to carry on the battle any longer, because peace comes simply by accepting Jesus Christ and the God of Jesus Christ as real." Sin has separated us



from God. God solves that. God creates the cure. Jesus took on flesh to stand in our place as a human being, die as a human being, pay the cost as a human being, so we could have relationship with God again through Him.

I don't want us to miss the ugliness. Jesus entered the ugliness. Jesus our **Beautiful Savior** submitted Himself to all the ugliness and cruelty of the perverted human condition. This is what it looks like when we are in charge. This is what it looks like when we name ourselves "god" and try to fix things on our own. This is what it looks like when we walk away from God's Word. The cross stands as a reminder and a monument—this is humanity in control. Jesus submitted to the Roman guards. Jesus submitted to the false trial of the Sanhedrin. Jesus submitted to the authority of Pontius Pilate to take a life. He submitted to human power. This is us in power. The cross. Broken beauty. But, for those who can see it, there is beauty even there. One of the most beautiful moments in all of history. God, in Jesus, gives His life out of love. "Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends" (John 15:13).

So, the butterfly effect. One moment, one event, changes everything. The cross itself, an instrument of horrific and tortuous execution, a symbol of the worst of human ugliness, a terror instrument of Roman violence and will to power, the cross itself is transformed. How many crosses are there in the world today? What are they now? They are markers of beauty, sitting on top of awe-inspiring cathedrals, or in outdoor camp chapels, or on hilltops over

cities, or around necks as reminders. They are beautiful things, these crosses. They are beautiful! Billions of them. In Asia, in Africa, in South America, in New York City, on the foothills over Denver. Beautiful monuments to a **Beautiful Savior**. The cross. Jesus changed it. Jesus transformed it from a symbol of terror and murder and ugly human hate, to a symbol of love and hope and eternal life! If Jesus can transform the ugliness of the cross into a global and universal symbol of life ... well, He can change you. He can change your life. He can change the ugly, transform the deformed, restore the broken and make it beautiful.

On the cross was a message from Pontius Pilate. "Pilate had a notice prepared and fastened to the cross. It read: JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS" (John 19:19). Some didn't like it. "Pilate answered, 'What I have written, I have written'" (John 19:22). There is a notice to go out about this cross. The cross is, in a way, a message posted forever and for all people. Like a signpost someone nails a message to—here is Jesus, look on Jesus, here is where He gave His life; here is where ugliness, hate, evil spent all its energy; right here. And now, because of what happened next, now it is a signpost of beauty. There is news attached to the cross, and now we have a message to share. On World Communion Sunday, we see that this message has gone around the world. On CityServe Sunday we practice sharing this message with others through loving acts, and kind words. Post the message. Post the message. Beauty itself was broken for us.

