

PROCLAMATION

... making a statement on the Lord's Death
1 Corinthians 11:26
December 7, 2008

There are times when it is appropriate to make a statement – to make a declaration – to proclaim – announce – publish – give a clear, ungarbled explanation of what has happened.

The **United States Declaration of Independence** is a statement adopted by the Continental Congress on July 4, 1776, announcing that the thirteen American colonies then at war with Great Britain were no longer a part of the British Empire.

Written primarily by Thomas Jefferson, the Declaration is a formal explanation of why Congress had voted on July 2 to declare independence from Great Britain, more than a year after the outbreak of the American Revolutionary War.

The birthday of the United States of America—Independence Day—is celebrated on July 4, the day the wording of the Declaration was approved by Congress.

In no uncertain terms they proclaimed what their intentions were.

It was Jesus Christ who first explained what happens at this Table.

Then one of the later Bible writers made this statement concerning the very event we are approaching.

1 Corinthians 11:26

For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

Two simple little acts – eating bread and drinking from a cup – speak ... and it is important for us to know what they say.

This TABLE makes a proclamation.

It contains compressed truth which is to be unpacked.

It is God's short-hand - a message in a meal – the Reader's Digest version of THE most important event in history.

This TABLE announces, points to, proclaims one primary truth ... that Jesus Christ's death was a "successful" death.

Key Thought:

Jesus desires to be remembered primarily by His death.

His life was amazing, His present efforts in heaven are of great importance, but Jesus wanted us to never forget what His death was about.

It was so important that it became the number one event for all of time.

It is one thing to know the detailed information; it is another to let it shape our lives. That is why we have the Lord's Table ... to let its message shape our lives.

The number of places we find His death mentioned in God's Word goes to prove what we have been saying.

As we dig into it, there is no one section of God's Word that itemizes in a convenient list all the benefits that result from Christ's death.

To get that kind of information requires that we move from place to place in God's Word, gather the information, put it together ... and then find out how to work it out.

Ephesians 1:7

In him (Jesus) we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace that he lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding.

The Lord's Table Proclaims:

1. Jesus' death: The only effective currency by which old and continuing debts are paid.

Redemption addresses the matter of funds paid to bring about a person's release.

People can be bought. We can pay a sum of money for a person ... or for the damage they have done.

But when the damage done exceeds our bank account, then we know that we are deep trouble.

Paying for our sins is one enormous bill. No amount of money can wipe out the debt and damage done by either our anger, insincerity, jealousy, unresponsiveness, laziness ...

There are many debts that we have incurred that money cannot ever touch.

It is impossible to put a redemption price on a person's reputation that has been falsely attacked; on a

Long ago, God established in His Word, that SINS were not paid for monetarily, either by cash or credit.

Sin was so expensive and damaging that there was not enough money that one could throw at it to correct it.

Sacrifices were required – one's entire life ... the price was high because the damage done by sin was extensive ...

But God permitted that instead of the offender's life being taken, a substitution could be made. The life of an animal, primarily a sheep, bull or goat was an acceptable substitute.

It was not enough, but it was an indicator that sin was so expensive that it took a life.

That animal was killed ... its blood was poured out ... its life was taken ... a vivid proclamation that sin is very costly.

The debt created by sin was so immense that declaring personal bankruptcy was not enough. It had to be paid for as best we could, but even that wasn't enough, ... by the taking of the life of a clean and acceptable animal.

When Jesus came, He knew that He was going to put an end to sacrifices for sin by Himself being the ultimate payment for sin.

Jesus death on Calvary, was the ultimate sacrifice, the ultimate death, a life worth far more than any sin or the combined debt of all sins put together for all of time.

We have redemption through His blood ...

This is not something God pulled off by accident. There is no accounting error here, not a shystering of the figures or a cooking of the books.

God is not writing down our debt to 10 cents on the dollar.

God has given our sins their full and accurate value. But Jesus' death is more than sufficient to pay the entire debt incurred by our sin.

Make certain that we do not miss the next couple of phrases ...

In him (Jesus) we have redemption through his blood, ... in accordance with the riches of God's grace that he lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding.

God worked this all out **with all wisdom and understanding**

Knowing item by item all that we had done, seeing who we truly are, having all the facts, knowing every sin ... God still chose, not because He was sentimental, but **with all wisdom and understanding ... he lavished on us the riches of His grace.**

This is an informed act.

It is deliberate.

It is planned.

Having taken into consideration all the facts, Jesus still chose to die for us and our sin.

That is what we proclaim at this Table.

It is a proclamation that tells everyone ... all debts paid legitimately.

We gather at this table ... because of Jesus' death ... the only sufficient "currency" that takes care of all human debt.

We are debt-free; guilt-free because of Jesus.

Christ's death secured for us, not sympathy, but immunity.

The reason Jesus' life can work as the ultimate currency is because ...

PROCLAMATION:

2. Jesus death: The perfect sacrifice is a sinless person

2 Corinthians 5:21

God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

1 Peter 1:19

... with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.

1 Peter 2:22

He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth.

This Table proclaims a point that is difficult to accept.

There is one Person who has lived on this earth and has never sinned.

This is major.

In taking the bread and the cup we proclaim that in the midst of this messed up world and our fragmented lives, there is One who is perfect and all put together – Jesus Christ.

There is one who is without sin ... not just for an hour, a day, week or month, but for his entire life.

While that seems like a stretch to our minds, the Word of God indicates its reality.

We do not understand perfection.

We are far more in tune with imperfection.

It was the day before Christmas and little Bobby was in his room trying to be good. He was being so quiet that his mother called into him,

"Bobby, what are you doing in your room?"

Bobby replied, "Nothing, with you and God and Santa Claus watching me all the time, I can't do anything."

Sinlessness, to us, is a dream – unrealistic.

Since we are so stained by sin and live in it daily, we find it difficult to comprehend that anyone could be sinless.

The only "successful" sacrifice that would be able to pay for all the debt that sin had incurred, would need to be a PERFECT, SINLESS sacrifice.

That was Jesus.

Gandhi wrote:

(Gandhi, the founder of modern India, who while working in South Africa, as a young lawyer was attracted to Christianity, yet wrote of himself while there in 1894 ...)

I could accept Jesus as a martyr, an embodiment of sacrifice, and a divine teacher, but not as the most perfect man ever born. His death on the cross was a great example to the world, but that there was anything like a mysterious or miraculous virtue in it, my heart could not accept.

The only way that sin could be adequately handled was through a perfect sacrifice.

The sacrifice itself had to be such because it had to "outdo" sin.

There had to be proof that sin could be faced, endured, and defeated.

That is what Jesus did ... through His life and especially His death.

Jesus not only outdid sin, He used His perfect life as the payment for it.

As we approach this Table we are saying, "We are meeting the Perfect Son of God ... who though perfect, did not waste His life in dying for sin, but use His perfect to pay for all our sin."

We proclaim that not only is the debt fully paid, it is perfectly paid.

Our Savior was perfect.

PROCLAMATION:

3. Jesus' death: Not an act extracted from God, but generously and loving given by God.

Don't roll your eyes at this point because you may have heard this for the umpteenth time.

Love and death do not go together in our brains.

Love should lead to life.

But God's Word adds an extremely rich reality into our warped world.

John 3:16

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son ...

To love the undeserving, those who have not earned it, goes against our grain.

To "reward" a rotten, sinful person with blessing and goodness, just does not make sense.

It messes up how the things should work.

But that is the point of God's work.

It would be far more natural to read that we had been abandoned ... because we deserved it.

God could have said, "You reap what you sow."

... or He could have said, "What you did was disgusting. You created the mess. Now get out of it yourself."

He does not do that.

God does not fit the ordinary mold from which people create the gods of their worlds.

This is an uncreated God, who defines Himself ... and He is so delightfully different.

Knowing the awfulness of our sin, He did more than LOVE us, ... He GRACED us.

GRACE is love super-sensitized.

It is “contradictory” love ... love that does not make sense ... loving what is not worth loving ... making time for that which could legitimately be brushed aside.

This is a Table that does not make sense ... that is, us standing together with a perfect God ... unless we begin to see that this is the God who has GRACED us with the unexpected.

This Table proclaims ... we stand here, saved, because of super-sensitized, super-sized love ... called grace.

The Scottish soldiers, forced by their Japanese captors to labor on a jungle railroad, had degenerated to barbarous behavior, but one afternoon something happened.”

A shovel was missing. The officer in charge became enraged,. He demanded that the missing shovel be produced, or else. When nobody in the squadron budged, the officer got his gun nd threatened to kill them all on the spot. ... It was obvious the officer meant what he had said. Then, finally, one man stepped forward. The officer put away his gun, picked up a shovel, and beat the man to death.

When it was over, the survivors picked up the bloody corpse and carried it with them to the second tool check. This time, no

shovel was missing. Indeed, there had been a miscount at the first check point.

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Key Thought:

Jesus desires to be remembered primarily by His death.

We are ready to proclaim ... not with our voices, but with our acts of eating and drinking.

We proclaim that we are a saved and safe people because of only one reason - Jesus Christ.

It is one thing to know the detailed information; it is another to let it shape our lives. That is why we have the Lord’s Table ... to let its message shape our lives.

We ... **proclaim the Lord’s death** ... not just once, but continuously, **until he comes** ... remembering what it is that has set us free – a perfect Savior paying our entire debt because He super-sized His love for us.

A little girl one morning was reading with her mother the verse,
“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son,
that whosoever believeth I him should not perish, but have
everlasting life.”

Stopping for a moment in the reading, the mother asked, “Don’t
you think it is very wonderful?”

The child, looking surprised, replied in the negative.

The mother, somewhat astonished, repeated the questions, to
which the little daughter replied, “Why, no, Mama; it would be
wonderful if it were anybody else; but it is just like God.”

There is more that is proclaimed by Jesus' death, but not less than what has been mentioned.

1. Christ's death secured for us, not sympathy, but immunity.

Normally, a death means that everything is done, finished, buried.

... and that is where Jesus' death is so different. It has the elements of done, finished, buried, but it also

Why we should listen to this sermon

We are making a statement when we gather at this table, whether we realize it or not.

This message is to remind us of what statement, what we are proclaiming.

We PROCLAIM THE LORD'S DEATH

The defining mark or note

The rally point

This DEATH OF JESUS CHRIST carries with it much value, accomplishment, encouragement

(Time-expiring emphasis - to remind people of the LORD'S DEATH.)

What Golgotha secured for us was not sympathy but immunity.

Only when we have seen it as such – as the most awesome expression of both human viciousness and divine permissiveness (Acts 14:16) – can we begin to reflect on it as the focal point of redemptive grace.

Consequently, to quote Luther again, 'No one ever feared death so much as this man. He feared it because for him it was no sleep (1 Thes. 4:13), but the wages of sin: death with the sting; death unmodified and unmitigated; death as involving all that sin deserved.

Luke 23:46

The reason for labouring these details is that they underline the fact that Jesus was not forsaken all the time he was on the cross. The dereliction was only a moment in the long journey from the immolation to expiry. Yet it was the climactic moment, and a moment of incredible density; and it was so precisely because its agony was so compacted—so infinite—as to be well-nigh unsustainable. As an eighteenth-century Gaelic hymn expressed it, the whole entail of sin (pains and agonies it would have taken the world eternity to endure) were all poured on him in one horrific moment.

Corresponding to the loss of the sense of sonship there was a real abandonment by God. No-one was ever less prepared for such an experience than Jesus. As the eternal Word he had always been with

God (John 1:1). As the incarnate Son the Father had always been with him (John 16:32). When he most needs encouragement, there is no voice to cry, 'This is my beloved Son.' When he most needs reassurance, there is no-one to say, 'I am well pleased.' No grace was extended to him, no favour shown, no comfort administered, no concession made. God was present only as displeased, expressing that displeasure with overwhelming force in all the circumstances of Calvary. Every detail in a drama which walked a fine line between chaos and liturgy declared, 'This is what God thinks of you and of the sin you bear!' He was cursed (Gal. 3:13), because he became 'the greatest thief, murderer, adulterer, robber, desecrator, blasphemer, etc., there has ever been anywhere in the world'.

The death of Jesus Christ is proclaimed until his so-called coming, until his so-called return, until his "parousia" (1 Cor. 11:26). Christ's cross and Christ's death are proclaimed in the celebration of the Supper until the complete presence of Jesus Christ in the entire creation. In this way the power of sin over the world is recognized. It becomes clear that the world is unconditionally dependent on god's saving action.

The celebrations of the meal creates a memorial for Jesus Christ. Jesus' life, death, and resurrection are not simply internalized individually and communally. They are publicly proclaimed so that the memory of Christ is carried further and spread abroad.

Particularly the Reformed traditions have repeatedly highlighted this certainty:

- Christ has promised "that his body was offered and broken on the cross for me, and his blood shed for me, AS CERTAINLY as I see with my eyes the bread of the Lord broken for me, and the cup communicated for me."
- Christ has promised me that "with his crucified body and shed blood he himself feeds and nourishes my soul to everlasting life, AS CERAINLY as I receive from the hand of the minister, and taste with my mouth, the bread and cup of the Lord."

- Finally, we read that "by this visible sign and pledge Christ acts TO ASSURE us that we are really partakers of his true body and blood, through the working of the Holy Ghost, as we receive by the mouth of the body these holy tokens in remembrance of him: and that all his sufferings and obedience are as certainly our own as if we had ourselves suffered and done all in our own persons."

The fact that a cross became the Christian symbol, and that Christians stubbornly refused, in spite of the ridicule to discard it in favour of something less offensive, can have only one explanation. It means that the centrality of the cross originated in the mind of Jesus himself.

Jesus' death was violent, premature, purposeful ... the most focused death, the most analyzed, most powerful, meaningful death in all of humanity.

Purposeful death:

- not because he was helpless
 - nor the victim of circumstances
 - nor the loser to evil forces
 - nor because of fate
- ... but of death as revealed about Him in Scripture

Gandhi wrote:

I could accept Jesus as a martyr, an embodiment of sacrifice, and a divine teacher, but not as the most perfect man ever born. His death on the cross was a great example of the world, but that there was anything like a mysterious or miraculous virtue in it, my heart could not accept.

... though Jesus was brought to his death by human sin, he did not die as a martyr. On the contrary, he went to the cross voluntarily, even deliberately.

The Cross is an exposure of human evil and at the same time a revelation of the divine purpose to overcome the human evil thus exposed.

Bible everywhere views human death not as a natural as a penal event,

In that case the cup from which he drank was something different. It symbolized neither the physical pain of being flogged crucified~ nor the mental distress of being despised and rejected by his own people but rather the spiritual agony of bearing the sins of the World

In both the Wisdom literature and the prophets the Lord's cup was a regular symbol of his wrath.

... the cross enforces three truths - about ourselves about God and about Jesus Christ.

First, our sin must be extremely horrible.

Secondly, God's love must be wonderful beyond comprehension.

He could quite justly have abandoned us to our fate, He could have left us alone to reap the fruit of our wrongdoing and to perish in our sins. It is what we deserved. This is more than love. Its proper name is 'grace', which is love to the undeserving.

Thirdly, Christ's salvation must be a free gift.

We resent the idea that cannot earn it or even contribute to our own salvation.

the divine
the cross divine mercy and justice were equally expressed and eternally reconciled.

David Wells has elaborated this succinctly: In Pauline thoughts man is alienated from God by sin and God alienated from man by wrath. It is in the substitutionary death Christ that sin is overcome and wrath averted so that God look on man without displeasure and man can look on God without fear. Sin is expiated and God is propitiated.

Fourthly, the cross of Christ is the hope of final glory.

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Consequently, to quote Luther again, 'No one ever feared death so much as this man. He feared it because for him it was no sleep (1 Thes. 4:13), but the wages of sin: death with the sting; death unmodified and unmitigated; death as involving all that sin deserved.

Luke 23:46

The reason for labouring these details is that they underline the fact that Jesus was not forsaken all the time he was on the cross. The dereliction was only a moment in the long journey from the immolation to expiry. Yet it was the climactic moment, and a moment of incredible density; and it was so precisely because its agony was so compacted—so infinite—as to be well-nigh unsustainable. As an eighteenth-century Gaelic hymn expressed it, the whole entail of sin (pains and agonies it would have taken the world eternity to endure) were all poured on him in one horrific moment.

Corresponding to the loss of the sense of sonship there was a real abandonment by God. No-one was ever less prepared for such an experience than Jesus. As the eternal Word he had always been with

God (John 1:1). As the incarnate Son the Father had always been with him (John 16:32). When he most needs encouragement, there is no voice to cry, 'This is my beloved Son.' When he most needs reassurance, there is no-one to say, 'I am well pleased.' No grace was extended to him, no favour shown, no comfort administered, no concession made. God was present only as displeased, expressing that displeasure with overwhelming force in all the circumstances of Calvary. Every detail in a drama which walked a fine line between chaos and liturgy declared, 'This is what God thinks of you and of the sin you bear!' He was cursed (Gal. 3:13), because he became 'the greatest thief, murderer, adulterer, robber, desecrator, blasphemer, etc., there has ever been anywhere in the world'.

The death of Jesus Christ is proclaimed until his so-called coming, until his so-called return, until his "parousia" (1 Cor. 11:26). Christ's cross and Christ's death are proclaimed in the celebration of the Supper until the complete presence of Jesus Christ in the entire creation. In this way the power of sin over the world is recognized. It becomes clear that the world is unconditionally dependent on god's saving action.

The celebrations of the meal creates a memorial for Jesus Christ. Jesus' life, death, and resurrection are not simply internalized individually and communally. They are publicly proclaimed so that the memory of Christ is carried further and spread abroad.

Particularly the Reformed traditions have repeatedly highlighted this certainty:

- Christ has promised "that his body was offered and broken on the cross for me, and his blood shed for me, AS CERTAINLY as I see with my eyes the bread of the Lord broken for me, and the cup communicated for me."
- Christ has promised me that "with his crucified body and shed blood he himself feeds and nourishes my soul to everlasting life, AS CERAINLY as I receive from the hand of the minister, and taste with my mouth, the bread and cup of the Lord."

- Finally, we read that "by this visible sign and pledge Christ acts TO ASSURE us that we are really partakers of his true body and blood, through the working of the Holy Ghost, as we receive by the mouth of the body these holy tokens in remembrance of him: and that all his sufferings and obedience are as certainly our own as if we had ourselves suffered and done all in our own persons."

The fact that a cross became the Christian symbol, and that Christians stubbornly refused, in spite of the ridicule to discard it in favour of something less offensive, can have only one explanation. It means that the centrality of the cross originated in the mind of Jesus himself.

Jesus' death was violent, premature, purposeful ... the most focused death, the most analyzed, most powerful, meaningful death in all of humanity.

Purposeful death:

- not because he was helpless
 - nor the victim of circumstances
 - nor the loser to evil forces
 - nor because of fate
- ... but of death as revealed about Him in Scripture

Gandhi wrote:

I could accept Jesus as a martyr, an embodiment of sacrifice, and a divine teacher, but not as the most perfect man ever born. His death on the cross was a great example of the world, but that there was anything like a mysterious or miraculous virtue in it, my heart could not accept.

... though Jesus was brought to his death by human sin, he did not die as a martyr. On the contrary, he went to the cross voluntarily, even deliberately.

The Cross is an exposure of human evil and at the same time a revelation of the divine purpose to overcome the human evil thus exposed.

Bible everywhere views human death not as a natural as a penal event,

In that case the cup from which he drank was something different. It symbolized neither the physical pain of being flogged crucified~ nor the mental distress of being despised and rejected by his own people but rather the spiritual agony of bearing the sins of the World

In both the Wisdom literature and the prophets the Lord's cup was a regular symbol of his wrath.

... the cross enforces three truths - about ourselves about God and about Jesus Christ.

First, our sin must be extremely horrible.

Secondly, God's love must be wonderful beyond comprehension.

He could quite justly have abandoned us to our fate, He could have left us alone to reap the fruit of our wrongdoing and to perish in our sins. It is what we deserved. This is more than love. Its proper name is 'grace', which is love to the undeserving.

Thirdly, Christ's salvation must be a free gift.

We resent the idea that cannot earn it or even contribute to our own salvation.

the divine
the cross divine mercy and justice were equally expressed and eternally reconciled.

David Wells has elaborated this succinctly: In Pauline thoughts man is alienated from God by sin and God alienated from man by wrath. It is in the substitutionary death Christ that sin is overcome and wrath averted so that God look on man without displeasure and man can look on God without fear. Sin is expiated and God is propitiated.

Fourthly, the cross of Christ is the hope of final glory.