



## The Cost of the Gift

*This is a lesson I've used before. Sometimes it's good to remind ourselves of what we know and why it's important.*

Suppose you received a very expensive gift—maybe a fancy watch, or a very nice coat—from your mother or grandmother or a friend who does not have a lot of money. Would you only think of how nice it was to have the gift? Or would you give some thought to what it cost that person to give it to you?



The church I attend has a strong tradition of observing the different seasons of the church year. Today, as I prepare this lesson, is March 6, just a few days after Ash Wednesday, the beginning of the season of Lent. In my church and many others Lent is the six weeks before Easter. It's the time we focus our attention on the last few weeks of Jesus' earthly ministry, up to and including His crucifixion and burial. As someone once said, salvation is a free gift—but it's not a cheap one. The idea of Lent is that, in order to appreciate fully God's gift of eternal life, we ought to spend some time considering what the gift cost.

I'm not suggesting that all churches should formally observe the season of Lent, as mine does. But it is very clear that without the cross there could be no Resurrection. I believe that studying the events that led to the cross can help us appreciate the cost, and therefore the value, of God's gift of grace.

The windup began, I suppose, on the Mount of Transfiguration. (Luke 9:28-36; also Matt. 17:1-8 or Mark 9:2-8—from now on I'll just cite one passage; you can find and read the parallel accounts on your own.) Here Jesus had a conference with Elijah and Moses, apparently about what was going to take place—specifically, His death on the cross. God also spoke from the cloud, saying, **"This is my beloved Son. Listen to Him."** (Mark 9:7) Peter, James, and John were there for two reasons, I think—to be witnesses who could later report this event to the other disciples, and to solidify their own understanding of who Jesus was. After this they could have no more doubts that He was really the Messiah.

Jesus cautioned them not to tell anyone what they had seen **"until the Son of Man had risen from the dead."** (Mark 9:9) This is when Jesus began to speak more and more plainly about His coming death and resurrection. But **"...it was concealed from them,**

**so that they might not perceive it. And they were afraid to ask him about this saying."** (Luke 9:45)

After this, Jesus continued to teach and heal people for approximately another six months. Except for one visit to the Temple (John 7:10-8:59), He mostly stayed away from Jerusalem, because it was not yet time for the final confrontation with the Jewish authorities. But every time they encountered Him, or heard of His activities, they became more determined that He must be killed.

During this time Jesus prepared His disciples for their future ministry. He taught them about humility and serving others, rather than trying to be "the greatest" among them (Luke 9:46-48). He gave 72 others authority over sickness and demons, and sent them out in pairs to minister in the villages (Luke 10:1-20).

This is also apparently the period of time during which Jesus told His most memorable parables—the Prodigal Son, the Good Samaritan, and others.

The time came for Jesus to go up to Jerusalem for the last time. In order to fulfill the Old Testament prophecy (Zechariah 9:9), He entered the city riding on a young donkey. People lined the road and shouted **"Hosanna,"** which is a word that means "praise God," but it also means "save us." They knew the Scriptures; they knew that Jesus was possibly their promised King and Savior.



**And Jesus entered the temple and drove out all who sold and bought in the temple, and he overturned the tables of the money-changers and the seats of those who sold pigeons. He said to them, "It is written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer,' but you make it a den of robbers."**

**And the blind and the lame came to him in the temple, and he healed them. But when the chief priests and the scribes saw the wonderful things that he did, and the children crying out in the temple, "Hosanna to the Son of David!" they were indignant, and they said to him, "Do you hear what these are saying?" And Jesus said to them, "Yes; have you never read, "'Out of the mouth of infants and nursing babies you have prepared praise'?" (Matt. 21:12-16)**

Now fast-forward a few days to what we call “Maundy Thursday,” the day of the Passover feast. Jesus and His twelve disciples gathered in an upper room for the Jews’ traditional meal and ritual. But Jesus did a very strange thing. He literally humbled Himself, taking the position of a servant, and washed the feet of the others. (John 13:3-15) This was to give them an example of service to follow.

At this meal Jesus also ordained the sacrament of Holy Communion—the celebration of His death by the ritual consumption of His body (bread) and His blood (wine). We Christians are to do this often, remembering His sacrifice. It’s like a little replay of Lent, each time we do it.



Leaving there, they went out of the city to the Garden of Gethsemane, on the Mount of Olives. Jesus prayed to the Father three times, wanting to find some way to avoid the pain He knew was coming. (Matt. 26:37-44) This shows us that Jesus was really a human being. He was dreading the pain He would have to endure, just as you and I would.



Then, understanding that it had to be, He gently chided the three disciples for sleeping while He prayed, and He went to meet Judas and the men who would arrest Him.

We need to understand what Jesus went through after that, because it was really brutal and horrible. The movie, “The Passion of the Christ,” does a good job, I think, of showing how brutal and awful it was.

They took Him first to the house of the High Priest. There He watched as Peter, His disciple and friend, swore three times that he didn’t know Him. Then his captors began beating and mocking and insulting Him. They threw him into a cell at the bottom of a pit until morning. Then they brought Him before a hastily assembled, illegal meeting of the Chief Priests and Scribes, where He was questioned until they decided they had an excuse to condemn Him to death.

Since the Jews were not allowed to execute anyone, they took Him to the Roman governor, Pontius Pilate, and asked him to sentence Jesus to death. Pilate questioned Him and found Him not guilty of anything. Then he learned that Jesus was from Galilee, and since Herod, the Galilean Tetrarch (ruler), was in town, Pilate sent Jesus over to be judged by Herod.

Herod was pleased, for he had heard of Jesus and was hoping to see Him perform a miracle. But Jesus gave him no answers and no miracle, and because the crowd was condemning Him, Herod also mocked Jesus, dressed Him in an elegant robe, and sent Him back to Pilate.

Pilate still did not want to crucify Jesus, but he finally gave in to the demands of the crowd and sentenced

Jesus to death. The soldiers flogged Him, using a whip that probably had little bits of sharp stone or bone embedded in its thongs. This was an awful punishment—men who were flogged were often crippled for life, and sometimes died from shock and loss of blood.

**Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the governor's headquarters, ... they stripped him and put a scarlet robe on him, and twisting together a crown of thorns, they put it on his head and put a reed in his right hand. And kneeling before him, they mocked him, saying, “Hail, King of the Jews!” And they spit on him and took the reed and struck him on the head. And when they had mocked him, they stripped him of the robe and put his own clothes on him and led him away to crucify him.** (Matt. 27:27-31)

Crucifixion was one of the cruelest ways to kill a person that human beings ever devised. Not only because of the nails being driven through the feet and hands (or wrists), but also because of the strain of hanging on the cross. The muscles soon started to cramp. Also it was hard to breathe; the victim had to push up against the pain in his feet and legs in order to draw a breath. After a period of time the soldiers would break his legs and, not being able to raise himself up, he would quickly suffocate.



Jesus died before they needed to break His legs.

Why did Jesus have to suffer so much? We don’t really know, but I think it was probably so we could realize how ugly our sins are in God’s eyes, and how much pain we cause the Father by sinning.

Lent is a time to understand the pain Jesus suffered for us. It’s a time to consider the effect of our sins, which we commit so often without even thinking about it. It’s a time to consider what it cost Jesus to purchase the gift of our redemption. It’s a time to repent; That is, to turn away from sinful ways and pursuits, and rededicate ourselves to living for God, with the Holy Spirit’s powerful guidance and help.

Knowing the cost of the sacrifice Jesus made for you, you shouldn’t have any doubt that God loves you and wants you to be with Him in Heaven eternally. It cost Him a lot to save us, but He thinks we’re worth it.

Two followers of Jesus, Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus, took the body of Jesus, wrapped it with spices and aloes, and placed it in a tomb. Next month we will discuss what happened after that.

God bless you, my brothers and sisters in our Lord Jesus Christ, and give you His peace —

*Brother Roland*

## Atonement

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### Oh, Love, How Deep

Attributed to Thomas a Kempis  
Translated by Benjamin Webb

Oh, love, how deep, how broad, how high,  
Beyond all thought and fantasy,  
That God, the Son of God, should take  
Our mortal form for mortal's sake!

He sent no angel to our race,  
Of higher or of lower place,  
But wore the robe of human frame,  
And to this world Himself He came.

For us baptized, for us He bore  
His holy fast and hungered sore;  
For us temptation sharp He knew;  
For us the tempter overthrew.

For us He prayed; for us He taught;  
For us His daily works He wrought,  
By words and signs and actions thus  
Still seeking not Himself but us.

For us by wickedness betrayed,  
For us, in crown of thorns arrayed,  
He bore the shameful cross and death;  
For us He gave His dying breath.

For us He rose from death again;  
For us He went on high to reign;  
For us He sent His Spirit here  
To guide, to strengthen, and to cheer.

All glory to our Lord and God  
For love so deep, so high, so broad;  
The Trinity whom we adore  
Forever and forevermore.

Got a question about the Bible or the Christian life?  
Send me your question. I'll try to answer it or find  
an answer for you, and maybe share it with others  
via the "Good News Guide." Write to:

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The word can be broken into three parts which express the act by which God restores a relationship between Himself and human beings, "at-one-ment." The atonement was the bringing of people back into a relationship with God. This was accomplished by the death of Jesus on the cross. When Jesus died on the cross He paid the price to free us from the clutches of sin. The atonement is the central doctrine of the Christian faith and includes all that our Lord accomplished for us on the cross.

Jesus perfectly fulfilled the law (Matt. 5:18) and then paid the penalty of our sins by laying down His life on Calvary's hill. Peter says in 1 Peter 1:18,19, "You know that it was not with perishable things

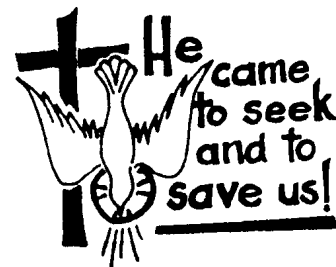


such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect."

Because of God's grace, we today can look back to the day that Christ died and realize the great Day of Atonement took place for all.

### Prayer

Our Father, we want to thank You for the great gift of Your love in sending Your Son to die in our stead. He accomplished for us what we could not do for ourselves. We look forward to the day You send Him for us and then we will be able to thank You more personally. Until that day comes, we pray that we will not do anything that will bring shame to You or Your church.



# Holy Week

Some of the events, and some words Jesus spoke, from Thursday through Sunday of that week.

## Puzzle:

C R U C I F I E D P M M Z L X I Q P V Q U Y S Y P N N E E D  
B O C J O X P F W O C M B C E Y E A M O D B K I D I N X E O  
S M P S E L P I C S I D E K A M Q O J O V B G O R O B I H U  
Y R O C K F G Q R H Y Z M Z G B O G B M G M G D T A D N O M  
A Y N T U F D V F I V U C S H R J Y E M N O E S C E D Y B W  
W A T J Y D N B S E H C N A R B M L A P T H Y T H E R O A Q  
L E I H T T G U W E C P B E K S A R K Y N V Q N G O C X D M  
A T U W S W P A E A E N P P I S Y E R A A U M A F F X Y S T  
U V S L N Z O M J T O P A S U M J O S E P H S N E W T O M B  
O F P X R E P T E K U C I R A H L C H T N T E E T B N X A Z  
Y W I G O L U D H V N H E G B G V S N H F K G V F Z N H S D  
H B L Z H V R P T I T J D T A M W E J E O D N O D D H J E M  
T O A J T G P M F X E A F O L D E D G R A V E C L O T H E S  
I P T B F G L L O S L V R K F L K M B O U L O W R Z S E D L  
W R E F O R E E G E I S E O Z S E W E D S W O E E I H I R A  
M D E W N S R N N G C M F S A N N A S R L W K N N D Q S B S  
A D I V W G O E I S H O O F A T H E R F O R G I V E A N Z T  
I N Q C O X B U K O O E Z N S N H Z C S C H F F I X Q O M S  
E W W X R S E E S T T Q R C O H G B U C I S E U R F G T F U  
V O R D C O S A W M L G O R G F R E A J I F M I D K U H Z P  
Y R T N E T N A H P M U I R T E C I L T D I O O S P H E Q P  
W P B P Z N S V P T R Z U Q A C P Y I S V R Z G C R O R C E  
U Q W B A H F D O G L U E D P H V V R L A P F L N K I E N R  
K V I R I G E X E R G O T O A L L T H E W O R L D I I S S C  
T E U N W H J D N S U O G S D K T H K W N Z K W Y F K N E T  
I D G Y E K N O D G N U O Y O X U S P E V E P B P U P Y G N

## Words:

### \* Palm Sunday

JERUSALEM  
YOUNG DONKEY  
TRIUMPHANT ENTRY  
PALM BRANCHES  
HOSANNA  
KING OF ISRAEL

### \* Holy Thursday

LAST SUPPER  
UPPER ROOM  
PASSOVER  
FOOT WASHING  
NEW COVENANT  
BREAD  
THIS IS MY BODY  
BROKEN FOR YOU  
WINE  
REMEMBRANCE

### \* Good Friday

CROWN OF THORNS  
MOCKING  
PURPLE ROBE  
KING OF THE JEWS  
TWO THIEVES  
SIMON OF CYRENE  
PONTIUS PILATE  
HEROD  
CAIPHAS  
SANHEDRIN  
SCOURGED  
CRUCIFIED  
FATHER, FORGIVE  
IT IS FINISHED  
HE DIED  
JOSEPH'S NEW TOMB  
HEAVY STONE

### \* Resurrection Sunday

EMPTY TOMB  
FOLDED GRAVECLOTHES  
ANGELS  
MARY MAGDALENE  
HE IS NOT HERE  
HE IS RISEN  
GO TO ALL THE WORLD  
MAKE DISCIPLES  
I AM WITH YOU ALWAYS  
GLORY TO GOD