

Back in the 1970s, I used to drive a fork lift truck in the factory. It had the ability to lift and move heavy equipment and boxes in and out of trucks and on and off racks in the factory store warehouse. When there was a need to repair something up high, a man would stand on this wooden platform, and I would drive the forks of the lift truck under the platform and lifted him up high to reach the area that needed repairs.

As I was thinking about those past experiences working with a lift truck, I was thinking about the Gospel lesson today about how Jesus needed to be lifted up high on the cross to make repairs in our lives.

The title of my message today is:  
THE CROSS OF GORY AND GLORY

Our Gospel lesson begins with Jesus talking about how Moses lifted up the snake in the dessert on a pole. As you read about the story in the Book of Numbers, you will read about those disobedient, grumbling, unthankful people of Israel who were bitten by a venomous snake and dying. So, God asked Moses to make a bronze snake and put it on a pole and lift it high in the air so those bitten by the snake could see the image and live.

Disobedient, grumbling, having an unthankful spirit — does this remind you of anyone? We are under the condemnation of God and being punished for our sin. The poison of Satan, the world and the flesh are deadly. The poison is called sin. The Apostle Paul tells us that “**the wages of sin is death.**” — eternal death. The object lifted high before us is the cross. It is a gory cross. It is the emblem of, those who do not believe in the cross of Christ, as judgment. However, the glory of the cross, for those who believe in the cross of Christ, will receive eternal life.

In our gospel reading from John, there is quite a contrast between belief and unbelief. The Apostle John defines the believer as being in the light and the unbeliever as being in the dark. He points out that the difference between believers and unbelievers does not lie in their guilt or innocence of either. Where do their differences lie? It is in the different attitudes they take toward the "light." Unbelievers cringe from the light because it exposes their sin. They desire to stay in the dark. What is this darkness? It is defined as the love of evil deeds. Sin. This keeps people from

responding to the light. All of us are held accountable for our actions, and the choice is ours — evil deeds or truth.

Believers, however, willingly come to the light so that their real motives may be revealed. They repent and confess their sins. This is what the Apostle John is saying in **1 Jn. 1:8-9** **If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.**

What did Jesus mean when he said in **Jn. 3:14** **“Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up.”** ? This is not the first time He said something like this. In **Jn 8:28** Jesus said, **“When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am the one I claim to be...”** Again, in **Jn. 12:32-33**, Jesus explains why he must be lifted up. For He said, **But I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself. He said this to show the kind of death he was going to die.**

Being "lifted up" is used for the crucifixion. He was summoning people to receive Him as the heavenly Father's provision for the cure of sin and death. That is the gory part of the cross. But there is also a glory part of the cross. The glory of the cross is the complete confidence in Christ Jesus for the eternal future.

What is this eternal future? Eternal life. It is a deepening and growing experience. It can never be exhausted in any measurable span of time, but it introduces a totally new quality of life.

The glory of the cross of Christ is the good news of God's love. He offers forgiveness, salvation, and eternal life. All of these are accepted by believing. What is so cool about believing? It also is a work and gift of God. For Jesus tells us in **Jn. 6:29** **“The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent.”** Forgiveness, salvation, eternal life, believing are God's gifts for us. And God brings with this the fullest blessings He can bestow.

What is God's purpose for us? The answer is found in **Jn. 3:17** **For God**

**did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.**

We see God's purpose toward humankind as positive, glorious. It is an attitude of love. He is not seeking an excuse to condemn human beings, but is rather endeavoring to save them. His purpose in sending Jesus into the world was to show His love and to draw people to Himself.

Jesus fulfilled the path that led to the cross of gory and glory. That path paved with blood, pain, sorrow, and the weight of our sins and the sins of the world was upon Him. Jesus walked that road by Himself for you, for all of us — for our salvation and to the greater glory of God. The result is an unexpected glory of God which He shares with us through His Son, Jesus Christ. Think about this with me as: WE SHARE THE GLORY OF CHRIST'S CROSS.

How is it that Christ's cross provides His glory? Jesus despised the cross. According to His human nature, as a man, Jesus did not look forward to the dreadful sacrifice. Listen to His personal struggle with this in the garden of Gethsemane, as recorded in **verse 27 of John, chapter 12**. Jesus said, **"Now my heart is troubled, and what shall I say? 'Father, save me from this hour'? No, it was for this very reason I came to this hour.** Jesus said, **"Now my heart is troubled.** Jesus knew the part of the cross that was gory. He knew that His pain and suffering would be great. His friends would leave Him, and the Father would forsake Him, because He took upon your sins and mine. He suffered for the sins of the world. Jesus knew that His death was a frightfully depressing, torturous, grueling, deadly prospect. His death would not be peaceful.

Jesus thought so little of the pain and shame the cross involved that He did not avoid it. Instead, He endured the cross. Jesus knew that this cross had to be experienced in order to bear the fruit of His glory. His blood washed us free from sin. We have the forgiveness of our sins through Him. And the glory of God did not stop at the cross and the grave. Jesus said He will be lifted up. And when Jesus rose again to life for us, He gives us His glory. What glory of the cross is that? Jesus told us in **Jn. 14:19, Because I live, you also will live.**

That brings us to the last point of our message today. By faith, we share the cross of gory and glory. We are to share the same attitude toward this life on earth that Christ had. As you heard me proclaim to you a couple of weeks ago, Jesus in **Mt. 16:24-25** said, **"If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will find it.** To put it simply, to love one's life here and now -- to concentrate on one's own successes -- is to lose what matters. What matters then? The whole focus is seen in the cross of Jesus. To the world around us, our life is lost in the gory of the cross of Christ. But to God, the glory of the cross of Christ gives us eternal life.

Those who believe in the crucified and risen Lord, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, has eternal life. For we read from **John 3:36** **Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life..."** In the Greek language, this verse actually should read, "Whoever believes in the Son ALREADY has eternal life." In **John 11:25-26**, Jesus said, **"I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die."**

Someone once said, "The cross is gory, but it IS the stuff of which lasting glory is made." The glory God has and shares with us could not have happened without the cross.

God calls upon you and I to lift high the cross. You don't need a lift truck to do that. To lift high the cross is to have Jesus Christ in the highest position in your life as your personal Lord, Savior and King. And He will lift you up during those gory times you experience in your life. Remember the words of the writer to the **Hebrews**, in chapter **12:2-3** **Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.**