

## **Title: Christ's Love Reigns from the Cross**

**Subtitle:** Love, so amazing, so divine, demands my soul, my life, my all.

**Video URL:** [https://youtu.be/5PipMywAz\\_4](https://youtu.be/5PipMywAz_4)

Today's Gospel pictures the crucifixion of Christ, along with depictions of mocking and taunts from the religious leaders and soldiers and the two thieves who hung on either side of him. The scene is so dark and depressing that most are tempted to turn away. Yet, in the midst of such darkness, the love of Christ breaks through, with a shining example of the salvation that Jesus' death would accomplish.

The conversation that is depicted between the two thieves and Jesus is unique to Luke's account. One hurled insults at Jesus with the taunt, "***Are you not the Christ? Save yourself and us!***"<sup>1</sup> Many, like this thief, suggest that if Jesus (or God) is real, then He should get me out of this mess and fix my problems. And if he doesn't come through for me and answer my prayer, then forget you. But that's not how faith works. But the other, after seeing the way our Lord responded to those who hated and taunted him, had a change of heart, saying, "***Do you not fear God since you are under the same sentence of condemnation?***"<sup>2</sup> Following his admission of guilt, this criminal addresses Jesus by name and asks to be remembered when he comes into his kingdom. The mercy he seeks is assured when Jesus responds, "***Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in paradise.***"<sup>3</sup>

The mercy and assurance given to the penitent criminal in his last dying moments is a picture of unmerited compassion. I

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<sup>1</sup> Luke 23:39

<sup>2</sup> Luke 23:40

<sup>3</sup> Luke 23:43

like how Bishop Bane describes this kind of wondrous love in his book *God, Life, You, and Me*. In it, he writes:

“Compassion means feeling with, truly sharing in, identifying with, and feeling the pain and suffering of another. In a way, it means to forget ourselves as we are consumed with care for someone else. (And this) is precisely what Jesus did for you and me on the Cross.”<sup>4</sup> Then he later comments, “When Jesus was dying on the Cross, he had forgotten himself in his total love for others as he willingly gave his life.”<sup>5</sup>

This is the essence of his connectedness with us, which is why he died in our place. The Apostle John defined this act of self-giving in his 1<sup>st</sup> epistle when he wrote, “*In this is love, not that we loved God, that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice and propitiation for our sins.*”<sup>6</sup> Our New Testament lesson today describes the “peace that was made by the blood of His cross.”<sup>7</sup> They had been “*alienated from God and hostile in their minds because of evil behavior.*”<sup>8</sup> Yet now they were “*reconciled by Christ’s death.*” Now they were “*made holy and blameless and above reproach before him.*”<sup>9</sup> All this was made possible by what Christ accomplished at the Cross.

On that dark and sad day, “*The people stood by, watching.*”<sup>10</sup> They were spectators in a cosmic drama with no clue as to what was actually going on. I can only guess that they hoped to see another miracle performed by Jesus. But Jesus didn’t do what they expected. Instead, he persevered and “*gave*

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<sup>4</sup> The Rt. Rev. David Bane, *God, Life, You and Me*, p. 31

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 32

<sup>6</sup> 1 John 4:10

<sup>7</sup> Colossians 1:20

<sup>8</sup> Colossians 1:21

<sup>9</sup> Colossians 1:22

<sup>10</sup> Luke 23:35a

***his life as a ransom for many.***<sup>11</sup> Eventually, those who had eyes to see began to perceive something they could not deny. The love of God for undeserving sinners started to break through.

The wonder of it is that it was not just for the penitent criminal or the few other people like the centurion. It didn't matter if they were outsiders from the covenant of grace. Now they saw something life-changing in the Cross. The unmerited grace of salvation is available to those who see and admit their need and spiritual poverty. The words of the Gospel song, "Come, look upon the Savior," says it best:

*Behold the spotless Lamb of God  
Upon the brutal tree.*

*Behold the cruel crown of thorns,  
His wounded hands and feet.*

*O, what a glorious work of grace!  
What wondrous love outpoured!  
Salvation through the precious blood \_\_\_\_  
Of Jesus Christ our Lord.*

*Chorus:*

*Come look upon the Savior  
Come kneel before his face,  
Come look upon the Savior  
Receive his saving grace.*

Many believe that all of this is too good to be true and that salvation has to be earned. To some, receiving God's free gift seems foolish and simple-minded. This is one reason "***the preaching of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing.***"<sup>12</sup> But, ***God (has) chosen what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the***

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<sup>11</sup> Matthew 20:28b

<sup>12</sup> 1 Corinthians 1:18

*world to shame the strong; God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, so that no human being might boast in the presence of God.”<sup>13</sup> As a king, Jesus did not wage war against nations but rather against sin, death, and the power of the Devil. Jesus couldn’t save himself and, at the same time, “make himself an offering for our guilt, ...and bear the sins of many.” Our Lord “came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”<sup>14</sup>*

No one can measure his infinite love. After all, He is:

- The King of kings and Lord of lords.
- He is the doorway to deliverance and the pathway to peace.
- He is the highway to holiness and the gateway to glory.
- To the hungry, He is the bread of life.
- To the thirsty, He is the water of life.
- His mercy is everlasting, and his love never changes.
- His goodness is limitless, and His grace all-sufficient.
- His yoke is easy, and his burden is light.
- The Pharisees couldn’t stand Him, but they found out they couldn’t stop Him.
- Death couldn’t handle Him, and the grave couldn’t hold Him.
- He is the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end.
- He is my King and Yours.
- For His is the kingdom, the power, and the glory forever and ever. Amen.

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<sup>13</sup> 1 Corinthians 1:27-29

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.