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Sermon Notes

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## **The Cross of Christ a Prism for the Glory of God**

**John 13:30-32**

### I. A Light Shining in a Dark Place Shows Its Hidden Colors

#### A. Isaac Newton's Prism and a Rainbow of Colors

1. We begin in a darkened room in a country farmhouse in Lincolnshire, England...
  - a. The year is 1671... the plague had threatened London and caused many people to flee for safety to the country
  - b. One of those fleeing from the deadly pestilence was a man as yet relatively unknown to the world... a somewhat obscure mathematician at Trinity college named Isaac Newton... he fled to his parents farmhouse in the country to rest and study
  - c. He had been interested in science, and decided to set up an experiment to study the nature of white light
  - d. So he went into a room, set up two prisms... a prism is a triangle of glass which does strange things to light
  - e. He shuttered the room completely, making it totally dark except for one tiny hole through which a beam of pure white light passed
  - f. It hit the first prism, and was broken into a magnificent spectrum... a rainbow of glorious colors... seven of them, to be precise; RED, ORANGE, YELLOW, GREEN, BLUE, INDIGO, and VIOLET
  - g. Each of these colors were then made to pass through the second prism... and though they bent some, they were not changed further... red stayed red; orange stayed orange; etc.
  - h. Hence Newton came to this conclusion: white light is a mixture of ALL seven colors... but colored light is pure
2. It took a prism to see this... to understand it... without the prism, the perfectly mixed white light simply appears white

3. After a storm, you can occasionally see Creation's natural prism—a rainbow!  
The droplets of water in the sky break the white light of the sun into a magnificent spectrum, dazzling the eye

#### B. God's Prism and a Rainbow of Attributes

1. God is light... pure white light...

***1 John 1:5 This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all.***

2. God's light reveals His nature... for this reason it is the first thing He created

***Genesis 1:3 And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light.***

3. Light's purpose is to make things visible...
4. God's light is His glory... the radiant display of who He is...
5. But it cannot be seen clearly without a perfect prism... and the best prism for the glory of God is the cross of Jesus Christ
6. Main Idea of the Sermon: in the cross of Christ the white light of God's total person breaks apart the attributes of God more clearly than anywhere else and makes them visible
  - a. BUT this is only visible to the healthy eye of faith
  - b. A blind man standing in that darkened farmhouse in Lincolnshire on that day in 1671 could never have seen Isaac Newton's glorious seven-fold rainbow
  - c. So also the blindness of natural man to the things of God makes the cross of Christ seem foolishness

***Isaiah 53:2 He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him.***

To the natural eye, Christ was merely a man bleeding to death on a wooden cross... a grotesque, despicable sight...

***Isaiah 53:3 Like one from whom men hide their faces...***

Thus the cross of Christ is not Naturally glorious... but grotesque, offensive foolishness

***1 Corinthians 1:18 For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.***

***2 Corinthians 4:4 The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.***

C. What Are God's Attributes?

1. There can be no portrait of God... no physical likeness made
2. The "portrait" of God in Scripture is a series of descriptions... words, really... that tell us what God is like... these are attributes

***Leviticus 21:8 I the LORD am holy***

***Psalms 11:7 For the LORD is righteous, he loves justice***

***Psalms 34:8 Taste and see that the LORD is good***

***Psalms 103:8 The LORD is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love.***

3. Theologians have gone through the Bible and made lists of these descriptions
  - a. Self-existent... unchanging... perfect... eternal... immense... one... omnipresent... omniscient... omnipotent... spirit... invisible... holy... wise... truthful... love... compassionate... gracious... patient... merciful... etc.
4. Taken together, these tell us who God is
5. I believe the cross of Christ acts as a prism to put these glorious perfections on display

## II. Judas's Betrayal a Darkened Room, Jesus' Cross a Prism

### A. "And It Was Night..."

1. John 13: the night before Jesus was crucified
  - a. Sharing the Last Supper with his disciples
  - b. Judas the betrayer was there... Jesus predicted the betrayal

***"I tell you the truth, one of you will betray me."***

- c. They were all shocked... they wanted to know who He meant
- d. John was laying on Jesus' chest and asked "Lord, who is it?"
- e. Jesus said

**John 13:26-27** *"It is the one to whom I will give this piece of bread when I have dipped it in the dish." Then, dipping the piece of bread, he gave it to Judas Iscariot, son of Simon. <sup>27</sup> As soon as Judas took the bread, Satan entered into him.*

- f. Then Judas left to begin the process of having Jesus arrested... and John makes this dramatic statement;

**John 13:30** *As soon as Judas had taken the bread, he went out. And it was night.*

- g. The night is not merely the time of day... but a symbol of the wickedness of Satan and of man
- h. It is the darkened room in which the beam of light can shine the more brightly... Jesus is the light of the world and the darkness is the backdrop

**John 13:31-32** *When he was gone, Jesus said, "Now is the Son of Man glorified and God is glorified in him. <sup>32</sup> If God is glorified in him, God will glorify the Son in himself, and will glorify him at once.*

#### B. The Light Shines in the Darkness

**John 1:4-5** *In him was life, and that life was the light of men. <sup>5</sup> The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it.*

Satan's rebellion makes him the prince of darkness

Humanity's joining his rebellion makes us dark as well

The light is God's glory... the prism makes it clear

### III. God's Attributes Displayed at the Cross

#### A. Grace

**Romans 3:23-24** *all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, <sup>24</sup> and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.*

Simply put, all of us are rebels against God, having violated His glory by our rebellion; we stand deserving of wrath and instead we are justified... forgiven, made right with God through Christ's work of redemption on the cross

Amazing grace!!! Displayed most clearly at the cross of Christ

1. Grace is the central attribute of God by which all good things come to us
2. Grace is more than merely "unmerited favor"

Illus. Unmerited favor is going up to a total stranger and giving them a \$20 bill from your wallet... it unmerited in that they have done nothing to deserve it, being total strangers; it is favor in that it is a good thing given... a \$20 blessing

- a. Both words are too weak
  - b. “unmerited” implies we were neutral... but we were actually God’s enemies deserving His deepest wrath
  - c. “favor” is also too weak a word... for we deserved to suffer eternal torment in hell, and instead we get eternal life in heaven!!
  - d. We who deserved infinite curse get infinite blessing... that is GRACE... and nowhere in God’s universe or in history is grace more clearly displayed than on that bloody cross
3. The Cross of Christ is the clearest display of grace in the universe... and I say it is the fountain of ALL grace that God gives us...
- a. It is by grace God causes the sun to shine and the rain to fall on the righteous and the unrighteous... Christ’s death on the cross is the fountainhead of that grace
  - b. It is by grace that sinners are not instantly killed the moment they willingly transgress a command of God the very first time... Christ’s death on the cross is the fountainhead of that grace
  - c. It is by grace that Christians and non-Christians alike enjoy the spectacular sights of this earth: the majestic beauty of the National Parks—the rugged wilderness of Denali in Alaska, the breathtaking depths of the Grand Canyon, the sulfurous geyser Old Faithful in Yellowstone, the rocky coastline of Acadia in Maine... Christ’s death on the cross is the fountainhead of that grace
  - d. It is by grace that Christians and non-Christians alike enjoy family and friends, good food, any pleasure at all... Christ’s death on the cross is the fountainhead of that grace
  - e. You see, our race joined Satan in open rebellion against Almighty God, and we deserved Satan’s punishment... “Every good and perfect gift ever given” has come to us from God through the death of Christ on the cross...
  - f. If Christ had not died on the cross, God would have had no reason to allow us to live one moment longer after the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil

## B. Love

***Romans 5:8 But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.***

1. In like manner, the clearest display of the love of God is seen at the cross of Christ
2. Romans 5:8 speaks of a “demonstration” of love in Christ’s death on the cross... the Greek word means to set forth, to present for our consideration, to prove, to display...
3. God IS love, 1 John 4:16... but what IS love itself?
  - a. So many popular songs sing of love...
  - b. But what is really being celebrated is selfish lust... a good feeling that another person gives ME
  - c. Three elements of biblical love
    - i) Delight
    - ii) Sacrifice
    - iii) Blessing

It is a delight in the other person that produces a cheerful willingness to sacrifice to bring a blessing on that person

Nowhere do we see that more clearly than at the cross of Christ...

- d. Biblical love is a matter of the heart of God attaching His affections and His commitment to people... determined to bless them and do them good no matter what the cost may be to Him

***1 John 4:10 This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.***

- i) It is unconditional... “not that we loved God” says 1 John 4; “While we were still sinners” says Romans 5:8
  - ii) God set His love on us contrary to what we deserved; determined to bless us because He loves us; determined to bless us because of His nature and contrary to our own
4. This love is so rich and powerful it cannot be measured...
  5. Paul prayed that we would have POWER from God through the Holy Spirit to understand it’s infinite scope

***Ephesians 3:17-19 And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, <sup>18</sup> may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, <sup>19</sup> and to know this love that surpasses knowledge-- that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.***

Michael Card: He cannot love more and will not love less

Why can't he love more? He gave His only begotten Son... what was most valuable in the universe... the infinite sacrifice for us

### C. Kindness

***Titus 3:4-5 But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, <sup>5</sup> he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy.***

1. Slightly different than love... it has to do with a gentle, welcoming character trait
2. A willingness to be generous in a welcoming demeanor and to give blessing with open friendliness
  - a. Genesis 50; Joseph's brothers were afraid that after Jacob died he would take his revenge on them for what they'd done to him, selling him as a slave into Egypt... Joseph wept when he learned this and did everything he could to alleviate their fears... most powerful was the kindness with which he spoke to them

***Genesis 50:19-21 But Joseph said to them, "Don't be afraid. Am I in the place of God? <sup>20</sup> You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives. <sup>21</sup> So then, don't be afraid. I will provide for you and your children." And he reassured them and spoke kindly to them.***

- b. Boaz spoke kindly to Ruth, a Moabitess stranger, and urged her to glean with his girls and to eat with them and rest under the shade
- c. Jesus spoke kindly to the little children, welcoming them and blessing them...
3. It is possible to do good for someone in a gruff, harsh manner... "I hope you realize how much I have done for you"
4. God's love for us in Christ is gentle and kind... meeting our needs and welcoming us
5. The greatest display of God's kindness is the cross of Christ; and it is so infinite a display that it will take eternity for God fully to display all the kindnesses that will flow to us from that one fountainhead, the cross:

***Ephesians 2:7 in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus.***

Forever God will be kind to us; and the kindness flows to us from the cross

#### D. Holiness

***Hebrews 13:12 Jesus also suffered outside the city gate to make the people holy through his own blood.***

1. Holiness is the only attribute of God stated three times in succession

***Isaiah 6:3 they were calling to one another: "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory."***

2. Holiness is absolutely required of us if we are to be in His presence

***Habakkuk 1:13 Your eyes are too pure to look on evil; you cannot tolerate wrong.***

3. We see the holiness of God when He forsakes Christ as our sin-bearing substitute, not willing even to look upon His own Son as He willingly carried all our defiling sin

***Matthew 27:46 About the ninth hour Jesus cried out in a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?"-- which means, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"***

4. God's holiness is most perfectly displayed at the cross, where Christ died to make us holy
  - a. The verse from Hebrews I just quoted shows that it is only by the blood of Christ shed on the cross that we can be holy

***Hebrews 13:12 Jesus also suffered outside the city gate to make the people holy through his own blood.***

- b. So also Ephesians 5 links our personal holiness to Christ's sacrifice

***Ephesians 5:25-26 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her <sup>26</sup> to make her holy***

5. At the cross of Christ, we get the perfect picture of God's purity, His utter hatred of sin, His separation from all creation
6. The cross of Christ is the most visible display of God's holiness in history

#### E. Justice



***Romans 3:25-26*** *God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood. He did this to demonstrate his justice, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished--<sup>26</sup> he did it to demonstrate his justice at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus.*

1. God's justice is His righteousness to uphold His law, His character, His standard of what is right and wrong
2. God's commitment to justice is infinite... it cannot be measured, and the cross is the greatest display of His justice ever

***Psalm 36:6*** *Your righteousness is like the mighty mountains, your justice like the great deep.*

The scale of distance on the surface of the earth runs from the highest height--Mount Everest 29,000 feet above sea level—to the deepest depths of the Marianas Trench in the Pacific, the deepest abyss in the ocean floor over 36,200 below sea level

The Psalmist says God's commitment to perfect justice is like these extremes... only the Bible says it goes infinitely beyond this

He HATES any form of injustice:

- Unjust scales of a merchant who uses false weights to cheat his customers
- The crooked judge who takes a bribe to acquit the guilty and condemn the innocent
- The corporation that cheats its investors out of billions of dollars by using advanced and complex bookkeeping tricks
- The schoolyard bully who intimidates his playmates into bending the rules for him so that he always wins
- To extend it... any violation of His law, any transgression of the perfect law of God, He has already decreed the just penalty

***Romans 6:23*** *the wages of sin is death,*

***Ezekiel 18:20*** *The soul who sins shall die.*

3. He passionately loves what is right and passionately hates what is wrong

***Hebrews 1:8-9*** *But about the Son he says, "Your throne, O God, will last for ever and ever, and righteousness will be the scepter of your kingdom."<sup>9</sup> You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness*

4. Since every one of us have sinned and violated His perfect standards, His law, we all deserve to die a death penalty
5. God's commitment to justice is perfectly demonstrated at the cross... in that the penalty is paid in full
  - a. God had patiently overlooked the sins of the Old Testament saints
  - b. Like King David, who committed adultery with Bathsheba and had her husband murdered
  - c. When Nathan the prophet confronted him, David confessed his sins openly
  - d. Nathan then something shocking:

***2 Samuel 12:13 Then David said to Nathan, "I have sinned against the LORD." Nathan replied, "The LORD has taken away your sin. You are not going to die.***

- e. WHAT INJUSTICE, you might think!! Because David is God's special chosen one, he apparently can sin with impunity
- f. No... the penalty would be paid by His only begotten Son
- g. Romans 3:25-26 The death of Christ was a clear demonstration to the world of the JUSTICE OF GOD... to prove that God does not overlook the slightest sin or the greatest
6. Many say "God loved US so much that He gave His only begotten Son..." and say "God would rather that His Son die on the cross than that He would lose us to hell." OKAY that is true
7. BUT it is also true that God would rather that Jesus die than that any of us go to heaven unjustly... that His holy law could be so trampled with no punishment
8. The most perfect display of justice in history is the cross of Jesus Christ
9. NOTE: It is only just if Jesus, the sinless Son of God who perfectly obeyed the law of God was actually our SUBSTITUTE, who took our sins on himself

***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.***

***Isaiah 53:6 We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.***

Frankly without substitution, without the transfer of guilt from us to Christ, the death of Christ on the cross was the **GREATEST INJUSTICE** in history... not the clearest display of justice in history

## F. Wrath

1. Wrath is God's personal, passionate response to evil... God is not indifferent to sin, nor to the immeasurable damage it has caused to His beautiful universe
2. There have been many displays of God's wrath throughout history
  - a. Certainly the expulsion of Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden and their subsequent deaths were displays of God's wrath
  - b. Even more clearly was the worldwide flood of Noah, when every single human being on the face of the earth and all the air-breathing creatures, all that were not on the Ark, drowned because of sin
  - c. So also the pouring out of fire and brimstone on Sodom and Gomorrah, raining down from heaven against that godless and wicked place... a display of God's wrath
  - d. The instant deaths of Nadab and Abihu, Aaron's sons, when they offered unauthorized fire on God's altar, and fire came out from the altar and struck them down... a clear display of wrath
  - e. An the bible speaks of place of unspeakable horror for all who refuse to repent... of hell, a place of unending torment, where the smoke of their torment rises forever and ever, and there is no rest day or night for the wicked
3. BUT the greatest display of the wrath of God in history is the cross of Christ
  - a. It is found in the Greek word translated "propitiation" in many verses

***Romans 3:24-25 Christ Jesus, <sup>25</sup> whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith.***

***1 John 4:10 In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.***

- b. The word means the turning away of the active wrath of God by the offering of a sacrifice
- c. Jesus is our lightning rod... who absorbed the lightning strike of God's passionate wrath against our sin that we might be free forever from the present and future wrath of God
- d. Here we stand in amazement at the unsearchable character of God: What kind of Father would torture His own Son? What kind of Father would pour out active wrath on Him? We cannot understand this concept of

**propitiation**, but it is indispensable to our future hope of surviving Judgment Day

- e. Because Jesus has already suffered wrath for us, we shall be free forever from God's wrath

***Romans 5:9 Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him!***

#### G. Wisdom

1. God's wisdom consists in His ability to discern the best destination for the journey of human history and the best road to get there

Illus. GPS navigational system; it is uncanny in its ability to navigate a car from any place in the US to any other place; it can calculate the shortest route, using the best roads

BUT one thing it cannot do... it cannot tell you what your destination SHOULD BE!! If you get in the car and ask your GPS "where should I go?" It cannot answer!!

God's wisdom has already discerned the best and highest end for human history and the best way to get there

The destination: the GLORY of God fully displayed in a perfect universe, observed, known, and delighted in by a countless multitude of ransomed people from every tribe and language and people and nation

The way... the road... the avenue... is CHRIST, especially by the cross of Christ

2. God's wisdom is infinitely beyond ours... His ways cannot be predicted or perfectly traced out

***Isaiah 55:8-9 For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," declares the LORD. <sup>9</sup> "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.***

***Romans 11:33-34 Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out! <sup>34</sup> "Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counselor?"***

3. We would not have ordained that a dead Jewish carpenter could save our souls from sin!!
4. God has WISELY chosen the cross of Christ to HUMBLE us, to be the object of a faith that He alone can give... only the elect, only the ones God sovereignly draws, will ever be able to see in the hideous figure of Jesus dead on the cross the greatest beauty there has ever been in the universe
5. This is the perfect wisdom of God... the cross of Christ

***1 Corinthians 1:23-25 we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, <sup>24</sup> but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. <sup>25</sup> For the foolishness of God is wiser than man's wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than man's strength.***

#### H. Power

1. In the cross of Christ we see also the infinite power of God
2. God's power is made perfect in weakness...
  - a. When Christ casts Himself upon His Father at death, He is entrusting the outcome of His entire ministry to Him for all history

***Luke 23:46 Jesus called out with a loud voice, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit." When he had said this, he breathed his last.***

- b. Only the Father's power could take a dead Messiah and make Him the Savior of the world
3. We also see the power of God in AUTHORITY: the Father has the authority to transfer the sins of the believers of the world to Jesus and to punish Christ as our substitute...and with that authority comes the power of complete forgiveness, and no one else's opinion matters
4. We see the power of God in destroying Satan's dark empire, and crushing death in the death of Christ

5. And we see the

#### I. Infinity

***Zechariah 3:9 I will remove the sin of this land in a single day.***

***Daniel 9:24 to finish transgression, to put an end to sin, to atone for wickedness, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the most holy.***

1. One man, one afternoon, three hours on a cross... and an infinity of blessing flows to a multitude greater than anyone can count from every nation on earth
2. HOW? How can the death of ONE man accomplish so much?
3. How can the suffering of Jesus for three hours on the cross be greater than the suffering of millions of people for billions of years in hell?

4. How can a finite amount of blood cover an almost immeasurable amount of sin?
  - a. Every murder ever committed by God's elect... completely covered in one act of suffering
  - b. Every lust thought ever entertained by God's children... in thousands of years of human history
  - c. Every instance of pride, selfish anger, gluttony, laziness, impatience... every unkind word, every moment of selfish pleasure... all of this atoned for in THREE HOURS in one location at one moment in history... there outside the gates of Jerusalem
  - d. HOW COULD IT BE DONE?
5. Simply put: Jesus was the Only Begotten Son of Almighty God... He was an infinite person, and therefore the value and worth of His suffering was infinite.

#### J. Patience

***John 17:1 When Jesus had spoken these words, he lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, "Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you***

***2 Peter 3:9 The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.***

1. From before time began, God the Father knew that His Son would die on the cross
2. For all those centuries, He overlooked sins committed in ignorance, looking ahead to the day when Christ would die...
3. For a thousand years, the perfectly holy God accepted David in his presence with his sin unatoned for in space and time... waiting for the perfect time
4. Through the prophets, this patient God made ever more specific promises, one after another, concerning the death of Christ
5. At just the right moment in history, Jesus was born... and He began His own patient walk through years of waiting for the right time to die
6. Throughout his ministry, enemies tried to kill him but they were unable to do so because 'his time had not yet come'
7. Throughout his life he felt the weight of the death he would give

8. On a specific Passover, at just the right time, Christ died for our sins

***Romans 5:6 You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly.***

9. The patience of God and of Christ had at last been rewarded... the patience of God fulfilled

10. Now began a different wait... the wait for the Holy Spirit to move through twenty centuries of human history to take the gospel to the ends of the earth

a. The patience of God waiting for the cross to be APPLIED to the hearts of one hardened sinner after another

b. God showing kindness, tolerance and patience to sinners like Saul of Tarsus until the time when they would repent at last

c. Patience toward Augustine, who had to experiment with all kinds of pagan philosophies and wild sensual pleasures before at last he came to his senses and looked to the cross

d. Patience toward Martin Luther, who tried to save himself by religious duties until at last he looked to the cross of Christ

e. Patience for the Protestant church to at last understand our responsibility to take the gospel to the ends of the earth... until the 18<sup>th</sup> century when at last the Moravians sailed to the Caribbean sugar plantations, and William Carey sailed to India

The cross of Christ is the greatest display of patience in history.... Here the glory of God's patience shines the brightest

#### IV. Applications

A. Come to Christ

B. Make the Cross the Center of Your Life of Worship

1. Go Over Each Attribute Listed and PRAISE CHRIST

2. delight in each one as over great riches

3. realize how wise God is to save us in a way that so clearly glorifies his nature

C. Ask God to work the truth of the cross into your heart to transform your character

1. more next week

2. make the cross a fountain of ongoing power for holiness, worship, service