

**INTRO**

- Did you grow up observing the season of Lent? What does Lent mean to you now?

**READ**

1 Cor 1:18-25

**REFLECT & RESPOND**

In over 2000 years, no death has quite captured our attention like the crucifixion of Jesus. But what does it all mean? Our Lenten series this year is titled **Cruciform**, which means **cross-shaped**. And we'll be reflecting on the Crucified Christ.

**THE CROSS AS CENTRAL**

We preach Christ *crucified*.... — Paul

We've had over 2000yrs of thinking about the cross in a different light so we don't get the strangeness of the early church putting the crucified Christ at the heart of Christianity. Jesus himself made it central when he said that anyone who would be his disciple must "take up his cross and follow me."

*Qu: if the cross is so central, what does that say about Jesus life, ministry and teaching?*

Crucifixion, vindicated by the resurrection, is the culmination of Jesus entire life and mission such that we interpret his life, ministry & teaching retrospectively from the Cross.

**THE CROSS AS SCANDAL**

We preach Christ crucified, *a scandal*.... — Paul

It's really difficult for us today to comprehend the brutality & scandal of crucifixion in its original context. Crucifixion was a form of torturous execution for the worst of humanity that intentionally degraded, dehumanized & humiliated the victim.

Moreover, the Jewish people saw it as rejection and a curse from God. Yet, Christianity is the only major religion to have as its central focus the suffering and degradation of its God.

*Qu: It might be hard for you to consider the physical, emotional and spiritual humiliation and degradation Jesus faced. But why is it critical we do so?*

Despite the scandal and shame around having a crucified Messiah, the early followers of Jesus weren't ashamed; instead, they literally glory and boast in the Cross! Because they eventually came to see it for what it truly is beyond its scandal, foolishness or weakness.

**THE CROSS AS GOD'S WISDOM & POWER**

We preach Christ crucified...*the power and wisdom of God*. — Paul

Despite all we know of crucifixion, the gospels don't treat Jesus' shameful execution as a tragic end to his otherwise fruitful ministry, but the culmination of his Messianic calling, something Jesus himself willingly embraced to usher in God's kingdom.

And only when we understand the horror of the Crucified Christ do we begin to discover its wisdom and power—the depth of the awfulness of the Cross begins to reveal the awfulness of our problem with Sin, and the depth God went to make things right, for us.

We will spend the rest of this series trying to unpack some of the wisdom & power found in this Cross.

*Qu: what does the cross mean to you?*

**RESPOND & PRAY**

- Pray for a fresh understanding and embrace of the Cross as the way of Jesus
- Pray for any needs in the group