

SHADOW OF THE CROSS

LUKE 2:22-35

INTRODUCTION

Please, take a look in these images and tell me which one, in your opinion, best represents the true meaning of Christmas.

Composers Ken Parker and Bob Krogstad captured, in a beautiful way, the paradoxical relationship between the cradle and the cross, between Bethlehem and Calvary.

There in the stable, the dim light reveals a frightening shadow. The feet of the manger where Jesus was laid to rest reflect a shadow. It is the shadow of a cross. ([video](#))

In his bestselling book, "Knowing God", J.I. Packer, comments on this:

The crucial significance of the cradle at Bethlehem lies in its place in the sequence of steps down that led the Son of God to the cross of Calvary.

This truth was prophetically anticipated by Simeon and painfully apprehended by Mary in the passage we read today.

The fact is that if we keep Jesus in cradle we have totally missed the point. That sweet little baby was born with a mission - a mission that was going to alter the course of human history. That would alter the course of my life.

This little baby was born to die. Dag Hammarskjold, late Secretary-General of the United Nations, put it this way: "...*To him who looks toward the future, the Manger is situated on Golgotha, and the Cross has already been raised in Bethlehem.*" (Hymns for the Family of God, p. 189)

But, the question remains: why is the cross so essential to the Christian faith? What significance would the death of a poor Jewish man 2000 years ago have for me and you today. We could dissertate for hours on this matter, but I believe, the essential significance of the cross may be seen in the fact that the cross is a meeting place, indeed,

a meeting place for paradoxical and contradictory powers, persons and provisions.

I. THE CROSS IS THE PLACE WHERE GOD'S LOVE AND JUSTICE MET THROUGH PROPITIATION

²¹ But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, ²² even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe. For there is no difference; ²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴ being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, ²⁵ whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed, ²⁶ to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus. Romans 3:21-26

Propitiation is the biblical doctrine embodying the concept that the death of Christ fully satisfied the demands of a righteous God in respect to judgment upon the sinner.

In the cross of Christ, God harmonizes the fact he is a God of infinite love and a God of infinite righteousness.

II. THE CROSS IS THE PLACE WHERE CHRIST AND HUMAN SIN MET THROUGH SUBSTITUTION

God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. 2 Corinthians 5:21

III. THE CROSS IS THE PLACE WHERE GOD AND MAN MET THROUGH RECONCILIATION

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! ¹⁸ All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: ¹⁹ that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. 2 Corinthians 5:17-19

CONCLUSION

How to receive a gift?