

## **Matthew 20:17-19 (NIVUK) Jesus predicts his death a third time**

<sup>17</sup> Now Jesus was going up to Jerusalem. On the way, he took the Twelve aside and said to them, <sup>18</sup> 'We are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests and the teachers of the law. They will condemn him to death <sup>19</sup> and will hand him over to the Gentiles to be mocked and flogged and crucified. On the third day he will be raised to life!'

If I were to ask you, what was the universal symbol of the Christian faith, I am sure you would answer – The Cross.

But I wonder, what it is about the cross, that so deeply inspires us ? Why is it, that the cross has captured, the imagination of people, throughout all the centuries, like no other symbol ? What does, the cross, say so profoundly, to us human beings?

My Friends, for me, the cross captures, the compassionate love of God, for you and me; the height and depth, the length and breadth of God's love, like no other religious symbol.

This symbol, more than any other, a commentator wrote "is the window through which, we can look, to see, the face of God, himself." But, What does God look like ? I mean, Can you tell me, what his face resembles ?

Well, if we look through the cross, we you will be able to see, the presence of God, face to face. And that is, what I would like, to talk about today: God's face, as seen, through the window, of the cross.

OK, so, When you look through the window, of the cross, into the face of God, what kind of face, do you see ?

Well for me, You see the face, of passionate love, of a passionate lover. His feelings, are filled with intensity, and emotion, for the face of God, is the face, of passionate love, for you and me.

But, BUT, and please hear me on this, I am not thinking, of the passionate scenes, we see in the movies, or on TV etc etc, No ! I am thinking, about the passionate love of God. For if you, look up, in your dictionaries, the word "passionate", from the original Greek, you will find, it means suffering. So "passion" primarily, means suffering.

**So today, on Passion Sunday, I am thinking about “passionate love”, in its truest sense, and meaning.**

My friends, I believe, that Jesus, the very Son of God, is passionate, about you and me, for ours, is the only religion, in the world, whose God, steps forward, and dies, on behalf of his friends, so that they, wouldn't have to. Let me say that again : **ours, is the only religion, in the world, whose God, steps forward, and dies, on behalf of his friends, so that they, wouldn't have to.**

My Friends, It is the very nature, of this passionate love, to keep loving you, no matter what. For there is one thing, that you cannot do: You cannot stop, God from loving you. As human beings, we can stop God, from doing many things, but, **BUT, you cannot stop God, from passionately loving you.**

Of course, You cannot stop, the sun from shining. But, if you want to keep the sun, away from your face, you merely, pull down the blinds, and close the curtains, but you cannot stop, the sun from actually shining.

**Similarly**, you cannot stop, the passionate love of God, from shining on you; in fact it is impossible to stop God from loving you, any more, than you can stop, the sun from shining.

Or God's passionate love, is like the mighty waters of ... well, well, lets say, the Mississippi River. You may not want, to drink from the water. You may not want, to harness it's energy. You may not want, to go sailing on it, or swimming in it, but you cannot stop, the mighty Mississippi, from flowing.

**Similarly**, that, THAT, is the nature, of the passionate love, of God; **for God is Love**, and He, cannot stop loving you, any more, than you, can stop, the Mississippi River, from flowing.

**And so to Conclude** : “what if” all of this is true ? What if it’s true, that the face of God, is in the face, of the cross ? What if it’s true, that the very nature, of the universe, is not only energy, not only, intelligence, not only power, not only, infinite complexity; but what if it’s true, that the nature, of the God, of the universe, **is passionate love?** What if it’s true ? That this love, is not some, religious ideal, or pretty, philosophical speculation?

Yes My Friends, what if it’s true, that God, is pure, passionate love !! What difference, would that make, to you ? What difference, would that make, to your life, if you knew, for sure, that God, was such a lover ? Would you not, love God back ? Would you not, love God, in return ? Would you not, respond to him, wanting to love him, as He loved you ?

**Well, well, it’s up to us !!** For as John 3:16 says, for God so loved the world, that he gave His Son. And we, WE, have a choice, we can either choose, to receive that love, or, OR we can simply, forget him, ignore him, or resist him. For we can choose to live, as if the sunshine, of His love, is not shining upon us. Yes, we can choose to live, as though, the love of God, from the passion, of the cross, does not, flow out, to all the world. For I believe in a God, who does not coerce, does not command, a God, who does not bribe us in any way; but who simply, loves and lives, suffers and dies, for me, for you, in passionate love, upon the cross, for the whole world.

**So Finally** : My Friends, for me, the cross, is the symbol, that captures, the passionate love, of God, for your life and mine. And God, wants to capture, your heart and mine, so that you and I, would love Him back. And so, it is, through the window, of the cross, that we see the face of God, His Love, His Passionate Love.

And So, what is the cross for me ? Well, It is the key to life. For its love, its power, touches, me every day. For as Paul, in 1 Corinthians Chapter 1 and Verse 18 says - **The cross ? It is foolishness, to those, who don’t understand, but for those, who do, the cross is the power for life.**

Well, Thank You for listening. Hope to see again, on Tuesday,  
But for now, may the blessing and peace of God,  
Father, Son and Holy Spirit, be with you, and those you love,  
this day, and always. Amen.