



THE WONDROUS CROSS

By Jan Brunette

When I survey the wondrous cross
On which the Prince of Glory died,
My richest gain I count but loss
And pour contempt on all my pride.

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As I held the rough-hewn cross in my hand, my spirit sensed a profound emotion deep within. There was no

real beauty to it. Its shape was no different from other crosses that hung on my walls at home. The size was not dramatic for it only measured 5 by 7 inches. Yet when I picked it up and touched the rugged markings, my inner being wanted to weep.

After asking questions of the cross's maker, I learned that it was made from an aged, fallen redwood tree. Sometime in its past, it likely endured the hardship of a difficult year, for the distress was deeply cut into it. Yet the beauty that remained for me was beyond words. As I held it, I gradually began to understand the significance not only of this cross, but also the rough-hewn, splintered cross upon which an innocent man, my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, died. And just as my cross was scarred from deep distress, so the Lover of my soul was distressed beyond belief for me.

With those thoughts in mind, I felt the need to share what I have learned through this simple 5-by-7-inch cross that now resides in my home, as visually and physically near to me as possible. May we all find rest and comfort in this wondrous cross as we recall portions of Scripture that reveal the grace and goodness exposed on the first cross used over 2,000 years ago.

Forbid it, Lord, that I should boast
Save in the death of Christ, my God
All the vain things that charm me most,
I sacrifice them to His blood.

As I imagined Christ stretched out on the cross, my thoughts focused on His arms — His loving, everlasting arms. They were arms that loved us from eternity into eternity. Because of His attraction for you and for me, His arms, though limp, bloodied and strained beyond belief, never hesitated to remain on that cross. Because those arms belonged to a man that became a curse for us, we now are embraced with His love and forgiveness. See that love revealed in the following verses.

Deuteronomy 33:27 _____

Isaiah 40:11 _____

As His precious lambs, we were carried close to His heart through His journey on the cross. The sense of pain that cut deeply into Him is exposed in each flaw of my cross and is a reminder that, as a result of His restoring, loving arms, we are redeemed and set free to love and serve Him and others. Our sins were erased from our accounts, and only His purity remains.

He Remembered Us

When He was nailed to the cross, He remembered us. He knew it was our sins that placed Him there, and He chose to remember that His love for us was greater than our sin. Revealed in each searing pain felt by Him and with each nail that held Him there also came a flood of refreshing righteousness that could only be exposed through His love beyond comprehension. Confirm these thoughts in the following verses.

Isaiah 49:16 _____

John 15:13 _____

Romans 5:6–8 _____

What was the final outcome? **2 Corinthians 5:21** _____

See, from His head, His hands, His feet
Sorrow and love flow mingled down!
Did e'er such love and sorrow meet
Or thorns compose so rich a crown?

Oh, For The Joy

Hebrews 12:2 states that we are to look to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross and despised the shame. Now because of that wondrous cross, the joy He experienced became ours. Granting us the Holy Spirit, we are anointed with a joy that can only come from Him — one that is not dependent on our circumstances but on Him alone. Review and discuss the following verses together.

John 15:11 _____

Romans 14:17 _____

Galatians 5:22 _____

1 Thessalonians 1:6 _____

1 Peter 1:8–9 _____

The cross that bore our sins, sorrows, and grief was replaced with our salvation, freedom, and everlasting peace. Now we can honor our best Friend, Jesus, by willingly taking up our crosses and following Him, no matter the cost. Read the following verses and discuss the possible impact upon our lives today.

Mark 8:34–38 _____

Romans 1:16–17 _____

1 Corinthians 2:1–4 _____

Galatians 6:14 _____

Were the whole realm of nature mine,
That were a tribute far too small;
Love so amazing, so divine,
Demands my soul, my life, my all!

Hymn #426, *Lutheran Service Book*

So Where Does This Leave Us Now?

As I personally continue to examine my rough, rugged cross, I can't help but be moved by the chunks, the jagged edges, and the deep grooves that are cut into it. As I gaze at it and run my fingers across it, I realize that they resemble my insecurities, weaknesses, rebellion, and selfishness that held Jesus on the cross. Like nails that pierced Him, my sins obscured the innocent man that He was. Yet His loving powerful purpose of love is really what held Him there.

Colossians 2:9–14 is evidence of that. Read this section of Scripture together and discuss your answers to the following questions.

Verses 9–10: What do we possess because of Christ's deity?

Verses 11–12: Our Baptism, which is the new circumcision of the heart (**Romans 2:28–29**), awards us important results. What is the significance of that Baptism according to **Colossians 2:12**? _____

Verses 13–14: What is the victory we attain in and through Christ? _____

In Christ we are alive. In Christ our sins were nailed to the cross and forgiven. In Christ the price was paid for our freedom, and we can release the need to satisfy God on our own terms. The nails were excruciating for Him but revealed righteousness, grace, and mercy for us.

Now, through His Spirit, we can look at the wondrous cross and experience a peace that passes understanding. We can be strengthened with His power as Christ dwells in our hearts through faith. And incredibly so, our rough crosses will help us to better *grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge — that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God (Ephesians 3:18–19).*

Closing prayer

Dear Father in heaven, thank You for sending Your Son Jesus into the world for our sakes. We know that His burden on the cross was unbearable, but we give You honor and praise for accepting His price for our eternity. We offer Him our grateful thanks as we remember the freedom, grace, and forgiveness He won for us as a result. May we now be willing to take up our crosses for You in loving service and with grateful hearts. In His name we pray. Amen.

Additional hymns: "In the Cross of Christ I Glory" (*LSB* #427; *LW* #101; *TLH* #354) and "Lift High the Cross" (*LSB* #837; *LW* #311).

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