

So I'm gonna share something with y'all and I don't want to make any of y'all mad; but here goes. (pause) I like pool, better than golf. I know we have a lot of guys in the room who love to play golf. That's all fine and good, but I like pool better. I am not really any good at either game, but I like pool better. Here's why. In pool, the object is to get all of your balls into the pockets before your opponent. Sometimes we do that by being a better with the pool cue. Sometimes we do that by knocking our opponent's balls away from our pocket. If you're like me, sometimes we mess up and knock our own balls into the wrong position. That happens a lot less in golf. I think pool is a better metaphor for life and ministry. What are the things that impact us? What are the things we allow to impact us? How are we impacted both by our own actions and the actions of others? Take this morning's Scripture for example. It seems like everyone and everything were impacted by the crucifixion of Jesus Christ.

In Genesis 1:31 God had created the heavens and the earth and God looked around and saw that all of it, including you and me, were, "very good." Humanity is formed from the dust of the earth (Gen 2:7). We are a part of God's creation, and as a result we are linked to God's creation. What happens to creation happens to us, and what we do impacts creation. Here's the proof. When Adam and Eve ate of the fruit of the tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil creation was cursed right along with Adam and Eve (Gen 3:17-19). The Apostle Paul writes in Romans 8:19-23;

"¹⁹ For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God; ²⁰ for the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will but by the will of him who subjected it in hope; ²¹ because the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and obtain the glorious liberty of the children of God. ²² We know that the whole creation has been groaning in travail together until now; ²³ and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies."

On the day of Jesus' crucifixion all of creation felt the terror and despair of Jesus' death. It is almost as if creation understood, Jesus was the hope for all of Creation's salvation from the curse in Genesis 3. For when Adam was cursed creation was cursed as well. With Jesus as the second Adam, when Jesus brings salvation it will be salvation for all of creation as well. The fear of hope dying is felt physically when from the sixth hour to the ninth hour there is darkness over the earth and the sun's light failed during the crucifixion (Luke 23:44).

Exodus 26:31-35 lays out the instructions for the veil separating the Holy of Holies from the rest of the tabernacle. "and you shall hang the veil from the clasps, and bring the ark of testimony in thither within the veil; and the veil shall separate for you the holy place from the most holy" (Exodus 26:33). Both Luke's and Mark's telling of the gospel share this note about the veil being torn in two.

I take from these Jesus' crucifixion impacted the whole world. Creation herself fell into darkness as hope for restoration and reconciliation died with Christ. However, right away, things began to change. The crucifixion was not the failure the Jewish leaders and the Roman soldiers wanted. The barrier dividing the holy space of the temple from the Holy of Holies was torn from top to bottom. The veil was not torn by human hands. The force of the completion of Jesus' passion on the cross was being felt in God's temple.

The impact of the crucifixion moved in waves out from the cross of Jesus. There at the cross there was a centurion who had the job of securing the site of the crucifixion and administering the deaths of those to be crucified. The centurion, who had likely seen many deaths, watched as Jesus breathed His last breath. The site of it and hearing what Jesus said made an impact on this Roman soldier. In the Gospel according to Luke the

centurion exclaims, "Certainly, this man was innocent!" The centurion had likely already seen many deaths, and many of those by crucifixion, but Jesus' death impacted the centurion enough for the centurion to recognize Jesus' innocence.

Now, by most evidence the Romans didn't care a lick about the Jews. They were just another people conquered by Rome. The Jews had proven to be stubborn, stiff-necked and rebellious. The city of Jerusalem at that time was prone to riots because some of the Jewish leaders were stirring up the extremists in their midst. Barabbas had been one of those. This was a problem for the Romans. Very likely they crucified many to make the point the Jews should stop crossing the Romans. However, this Roman centurion was impacted enough to exclaim, "Certainly, this man was innocent. He was moved to speak

The Jewish people who had come around to mock and make fun of Jesus were impacted by the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. We imagine, or I imagine they came to see Jesus punished, or to see if there might be a miracle. We might recall the crowd saying, "Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to save him" (Matt 27:49). After Jesus breathed His last Luke records the people who had come to see the crucifixion leaving. They beat their breasts, or chests as they returned to their home. This is an Ancient Near Eastern way of beating themselves up, or a process of self-condemnation. I remember when I was in middle school we had a grease fire in our home. My Dad was pretty badly burned, and the whole way to the hospital he beat himself up about the fact there was baking soda right there in the cabinet. Have any of y'all ever done that? (**raise my hand**) That's what the crowd was doing. The crowds had come to see a show, or a miracle, and walked away realizing their guilt and their shame for they were as responsible as we are for the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. After all, what other response can a sinner have than to realize their guilt?

Then there were those who had not run away. We do not know who the acquaintances Luke mentions were. Luke does not name them specifically. Other Gospels do. We do know there were the women. This group of people watched. They were able to bear witness to everything they had seen and heard.

It is hard to consider the crucifixion without being impacted. It is hard to imagine the Creator of everything; the hills, the valleys, the rivers and the oceans; the Creator of you and me caring so much about us that the Creator would allow the Son, Jesus Christ to be killed. Jesus was not just killed, Jesus was tortured. Jesus was brutally and terribly tortured. His life and ministry appeared to be a total failure on the cross where He died about the worst death imaginable as a traitor on the cross. Jesus died so you and I could be free. Jesus died so the debt we all owe for our wanton rebelliousness could be paid in full. My children are at that age where they are all learning there are consequences for our actions. Sometimes those consequences are good. Sometimes those consequences are bad. Those consequences impact our lives. The consequence of the debt we have run up for our sin is a punishment had to be delivered. Jesus took that punishment for us. Looking at all Jesus went through I'd say we are very lucky Jesus took that because none of us could. As I ponder and consider the reaction of creation to the crucifixion, the darkness, and the tearing of the veil I begin to wonder if I am allowing the crucifixion to have its right impact on me. As I consider the impact of the crucifixion on the Roman centurion I wonder is the crucifixion have the right impact on me? As I think about those who went home beating themselves up for their behavior which lead to Jesus on the cross I wonder about the impact of the crucifixion on me. (**pause**) What impact do you think the crucifixion is supposed to have on people? (**pause**) What impact is the crucifixion supposed to have on us? (**pause**) Jesus' last words, "Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit," are the reaction we are supposed to have. Jesus Christ is supposed to be the top priority. Loving others is the next priority. If anything else comes first it is selfishness. Is that the reaction we are supposed to have?

In the name of Jesus Christ,
Amen.