

The Romans Sent a Message; God Sent One, Too

The rulers of the Roman Empire wanted everyone under their power to understand clearly that it would be very costly to try to overthrow their government. They conceived the idea of crucifixion as a way of sending an unforgettable message to all people under their control. Death on a cross would be a slow excruciatingly painful death. The cross would be put in a very public place so as many as possible would get the message: Don't even think of defying Roman rule!

That is why Christ was crucified on Golgatha hill close to a busy road where no passerby could miss the shocking scene. Christ was guilty of nothing. Yet His enemies hated Him so much that they told Pilate, Rome's representative in Jerusalem, that Jesus was a danger to Roman rule. Christ's enemies said to Pilate, "If you release this man, you are not Caesar's friend; everyone who makes himself a king sets himself against Caesar" (John 19:12). Pilate caved into the clamor of the crowd and allowed Jesus to be crucified.

But those who saw to it that Jesus suffered death on the cross did not know that God had a message to send as well. God victoriously raised Christ from the dead!

God touched the precious body of His Son and infused it with life, glorious, dynamic life, life in all of its fullness.

God turned the cross, the executioner's tool of death, into a dramatic symbol of victory. The empty cross and the empty tomb, along with the resurrected body of Christ, reveal God's victory over the worst deed humans might do – the assassination of the Holy.

That is why we put crosses everywhere: boldly, proudly, joyously, and triumphantly. It is why we glory in the cross always. It stands eternally "towering o'er the wrecks of time" (John Bowring).

After resurrection, Jesus' friend, Peter, explained God's message to all of Christ's enemies with these bold and certain words; "This Jesus, you crucified and killed... But God raised him up, having loosed the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it ... This Jesus God raised up, and of that we are all witnesses...Therefore know assuredly that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified" (Acts 2:23-24,32,36). That is what Easter is all about. All praise to the living Lord!