

The Pulpit Of The Cross

“And when they were come to the place which is called Calvary, there they crucified Him . . . Then said Jesus . . . ” (Luke 23:33, 34).

Henry Vegter has served as pastor of the Friendship Baptist Church, in Saluda, North Carolina, for over fifty years. Situated in a small community, the church, which is the church in which I grew up, has never claimed a large congregation. Brother Hank (as he is affectionately known), however, has faithfully served in this part of the vineyard for these many years. Week after week he has filled the pulpit and preached the Word.

While his ministry in the pulpit of the church has been somewhat limited, he has tapped into a form of ministry that has expanded his outreach. At his own expense, with the assistance of only a few friends, he has built many very large white crosses and erected them near various highways. On the cross is a Gospel statement that is read by all those traveling the highways. In a way, this faithful man of God has found the cross to be his pulpit.

As Jesus was dying on the cross, the cross became the Savior’s pulpit. Seven distinct sayings, or messages, were delivered here in his final hours. Three of His sayings were prayers He prayed from the cross. One message of hope was given to a dying thief. He also had special words for His disciple, John, and His mother. The other two sayings were acknowledgements regarding the redemptive nature of His death.

The message from the pulpit of the cross is a message of salvation! The first words, “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do” (Luke 23:34), reveal forgiveness and salvation is entirely of the Lord. The statement, “To day shalt thou be with Me in paradise” (Luke 23:43), spoken to a man who could not help himself, remind us that our salvation is “Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy” (Titus 3:5).

The message from the pulpit of the cross is a message of sorrow! Knowing the sorrow and grief that comes through the separation of death, Jesus committed John to Mary, saying to her, “Woman, behold thy son” (John 19:26). He also committed Mary to John, saying to him, “Behold thy mother” (John 19:27). Because Jesus bore our sin, even a greater sorrow was set forth in His cry, “My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?” (Matt. 27:46).

The message from the pulpit of the cross is a satisfaction! When Jesus exclaimed, “I thirst” (John 19:28), He was in the process of fulfilling, or satisfying, an Old Testament prophecy (see Psa. 69:21). The statement, “It is finished” (John 19:30), indicates that He satisfied the demands of the law and the will of the Father. His final words, “Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit” (Luke 23:46), remind us there is satisfaction in trusting our God in the hour of death.