

**Message for April 1, 2018**  
**God proved His Love**

**Luke 23:26 New Living Translation (NLT)**

**<sup>26</sup> As they led Jesus away, a man named Simon, who was from Cyrene,<sup>[a]</sup> happened to be coming in from the countryside. The soldiers seized him and put the cross on him and made him carry it behind Jesus.**

**Matthew 27:32 New Living Translation (NLT)**

**<sup>32</sup> Along the way, they came across a man named Simon, who was from Cyrene,<sup>[a]</sup> and the soldiers forced him to carry Jesus' cross.**

**Mark 15:21 New Living Translation (NLT)**

**<sup>21</sup> A passerby named Simon, who was from Cyrene,<sup>[a]</sup> was coming in from the countryside just then, and the soldiers forced him to carry Jesus' cross. (Simon was the father of Alexander and Rufus.**

**A man by the name of Simon, who was from North Africa, Libya to be exact, who could have been living in Jerusalem at the time or maybe traveled to Jerusalem for Passover.**

**The details are sketchy at best. But for three of the four Gospel writers to include this man in their narrative --- there is a focus on the Cross.**

**Simon was picked out of a crowd by Roman soldiers to help carry the cross.**

**Even though Simon followed behind Jesus, did he sense being with the divine? Did Jesus say anything to him? Did Simon remain for the crucifixion? Becoming an onlooker. Or was there something more. Why did all synoptic writers (Matthew, Mark, Luke) include Simon in their Gospel and then never mention him again?**

**As Jesus struggled to Calvary, would Simon have thought that maybe Jesus was carrying his sins? Did Simon become a Christ Follower and know the forgiveness of God?**

**We are not told. But like all of us we are given opportunity to respond to the forgiveness of Christ.**

**Forgiveness is free. But it's not cheap. It cost Jesus Christ His life. And I have never found living the Christian life easy.**

**Forgiveness happens only when we give up our right to hit back, and not to try and get even.**

**That's what Jesus did for us. That's what He calls us to do for others.**

**Leave it to God. Give up your rights. It's the Cross that enables us to surrender. Let God settle the score.**

**The only way to allow healing is through grace. The only way to let go of the hurts of life is to get ahold of God's grace.**

**The writer of Hebrews tells us why it is so important to respond out of Grace:**

**Hebrews 12:15 New Living Translation (NLT)**

**<sup>15</sup> Look after each other so that none of you fails to receive the grace of God. Watch out that no poisonous root of bitterness grows up to trouble you, corrupting many.**

**The Cross is the way of grace. It shows us what the Grace of God looks like in action.**

**Christ died for all the suffering we will every experience,**

**the disappointments we will encounter,**

**the brokenness we have felt,**

**the isolation and loneliness that overwhelms us,**

**and the sin that easily entraps us,**

**the guilt that enslaves us,**

**the peace that alludes us,**

**and the bitterness that keeps us in bondage.**

**Nail it to the Cross.**

**Jesus offers salvation, redemption, forgiveness and resurrection, a better way to live.**

**The Cross is critical to the Christian faith.**

**Taking up my “cross” means a life voluntarily surrendered to God.**

**Without the Cross, there is no resurrection, and without the resurrection, there is no hope.**

**Every Easter as well as every day before and after Easter is an invitation to pick up our own cross and walk alongside Jesus.**

**It’s an invitation to journey through life with Jesus at our side.**

**From the moment you take up the cross, your life will change and you will never be the same again.**

**Easter 2018 has the potential of being life changing for all of us.**

**REMEMBER WHO YOU ARE AND TO WHOM YOU BELONG**

**AMEN**