



# CWRm

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## Golgotha—Collision of Sin and Grace

*“You killed the Author of life, whom God raised from the dead.” —The Apostle Peter, Acts 3:15*

**G**olgotha is where the great crimes of humanity—pride, rivalry, blame, violence, domination, war and empire—are dragged into the searing light of divine judgment. At Golgotha we see the system of human organization that we blithely call “civilization” for what it is: an axis of power enforced by violence so corrupt that it is capable of murdering God in the name of what we call truth, justice and liberty.

Golgotha is also the place where the love of God achieves its greatest expression. As Jesus is lynched in the name of religious truth and imperial justice, he expresses the heart of God as he pleads for the pardon of his executioners. At the cross we discover that the God revealed in Christ would rather die in the name of love than kill in the name of freedom. Our Savior is Jesus Christ, not William Wallace.

The cross is both **hideous and glorious**, simultaneously ugly and beautiful. It’s as hideous as human sin and as glorious as divine love. It is a **collision of sin and grace**. But it is not a contest of equals. **In the end love and beauty win**. We call it Easter.

The cross is not a *quid pro quo* where God agrees to forgive upon receipt of his Son’s murder. The cross is *not* an economic transaction whereby God gains the capital to forgive. These legal and fiscal models for understanding the cross simply will not do.

Jesus does not save us from God; Jesus reveals God as Savior. Good Friday does not reveal a monstrous deity requiring a virgin to be thrown into a volcano or a firstborn son to be nailed to a tree. Good Friday reveals the depths of human depravity and the greater depths of God’s love.

**Before the cross is anything else, it is a catastrophe.** It is the unjust and violent lynching of an innocent man. It is the murder of God. God did not will the murder of his Son; he simply knew it would occur. When Jesus prayed for forgiveness on the cross he was not

acting contrary to the nature of God, he was revealing the nature of God as forgiving love.

Where do we find God on Good Friday? Is God found in Caiaphas seeking a sacrificial scapegoat? Is God found in Pilate requiring a punitive execution?

Or is God found in Jesus—absorbing sin, responding with forgiveness and reconciling the world to himself (2 Corinthians 5:19)?

**The crucifixion is not what God inflicts upon Jesus in order to forgive, the crucifixion is what God in Christ endures as he forgives.** The cross is where God absorbs sin and recycles it into forgiveness. Jesus died for us...not for God.

The crucifixion is not the ultimate attempt to change God’s mind about us—the cross is the ultimate attempt to change our mind about God. *God is not like* Caiaphas seeking a sacrifice. *God is not like* Pilate requiring an execution. *God is like* Jesus, absorbing sin and forgiving sinners.

The cross is not about payment—the cross is about forgiveness.

**Good Friday is not about divine wrath, Good Friday is about divine love.**

Calvary is not where we see how just God is—Calvary is where we see how unjust civilization is. As long as we think Jesus died for God instead of dying for us, we will never see the sinfulness of human civilization and the beauty of the divine alternative: the kingdom of God.

The justice of God is not retributive justice. In the end retributive justice changes nothing. The justice of God is entirely restorative. The only thing God will call justice is setting the world right, not punishing the innocent.

The bottom line is this: God did not kill Jesus, human civilization did. We did. Jesus absorbed the blow in love and forgave us. The Father vindicated his Son on Easter. Now Jesus calls us to follow him into the kingdom of grace, the kingdom of love, the kingdom of God.

Let us follow the Lamb. □