

## “The Meaning of Christ’s Death”

Romans 5:6-8, 1 Corinthians 1:18

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Every year in February, we celebrate our Boy Scout program as an extension of our Methodist Church ministry. Our church gladly supports your good ministry. I know that there are over 100,000 scouting units operated by chartered organizations. Of these, 71.5 percent of all units are chartered to faith-based organizations. I proudly remind you that our United Methodist Church is the second largest Christian denomination in the number of congregations that hosts Boy Scouts of America.

This morning, I would like to explore why we churches are happy to support your ministry. Remember the words of the Scout Law? “A Scout is trustworthy, loyal, helpful, friendly, courteous, kind, obedient, cheerful, thrifty, **brave**, clean, and reverent.” Please pay attentions to these words: trustworthy, loyal, helpful, kind, obedient, and brave. Do you think we can find a common ground between a great Scout role model and Jesus in Christian faith? It may sound silly to you but I would imagine that Jesus would have been the first Eagle Scout or Scoutmaster if there were a scouting program in His times.

In our first Scripture reading, the Apostle Paul explains to his congregation the meaning of Jesus’ death. He says, “Jesus Christ presented himself for this sacrificial death when we were **far too weak** and rebellious to do anything to get ourselves ready.” Paul describes our human nature and our human condition as weak and rebellious. When we were in great need of help, Jesus made up his mind that he would give away his life to make us strong. His sacrificial death was not for his sake, but for our sake. Paul reminds us that Jesus showed us an example of responsibility, courage and bravery on our behalf.

The movie, “The Lord of the Rings” directed by Peter Jackson was originally made based on the novel of “The Lord of the Rings” by J.R.R Tolkien, a deeply Christian man. It was one of the most successful fantasy series. This book is a story of Frodo Baggins, the hobbit (a small man), and he tells about his courageous trip from his home in Shire to the volcanic place in Mount Doom. This book reminds us that courage is not found in the size of a person but in the size of his heart. The whole story deals with Frodo’s courage and determination. Even though Tolkein doesn’t directly talk about Christian faith, he believed that courage is one of the essentials in Christian beliefs.

In our second scripture reading from Apostle Paul's personal letter to the Corinthian church, he said, "For the message about the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God." The cross and resurrection are two important pillars in Christian faith. The cross on one hand, symbolically describes the reality of our human nature and condition. We disobey God, try to have our own way, and are indifferent and irresponsible toward others. And on the other hand, Jesus' death shows us His courage and accountability through the act of his sacrificial love. But we need to understand that Jesus didn't die passively, but he actively chose death for us.

Some of you may challenge Christians arguing that God or Jesus would have chosen an easy way to save all human beings. But the point is not about God's almighty power, but of our human condition. This reflects our self-portrait of ego-centeredness, indifference, anger, making Jesus a scapegoat for our sake. God wanted people to understand His heart, compassion and accept this wonderful gift for our salvation. We name this gift God's grace! Grace is an expression of God's extravagant generosity and love for human beings. He confirmed His love and compassion through the death of his Son. No other religion talks about almighty God's sacrificial act and compassionate heart for human beings.

We thank Jesus for teaching us his act of courage, a sense of responsibility for others, disciplining ourselves to be a trustworthy, loyal and helpful citizen to our community. And this would perfectly match with the spirit of the Scout Law and Scouting discipline purpose. I understand that the Scouting program is not a faith based Christian program, but is civic. However, we can see the common ground between Jesus' life and Scout ideals. May God bless you all Boy Scouts and Cub Scouts here and your program in the name of Jesus who might have been the first Scoutmaster for our souls. Amen.