

“NAILS”

Pastor Mike Corwin

ASH WEDNESDAY MEDITATION

TEXT MARK 15:22-24(a) & COLOSSIANS 2:13-14

SCRIPTURE: PSALM 51:1-17

I – NAILS:

I was recently in a room for prayer and for some quiet time. I had finished praying and was just sitting there staring at the rough wooden cross, which was hanging on the wall there. For some reason I was drawn to look at the nails which were holding the cross on the wall, one nail on either side so the horizontal part of the cross rested on them and kept it from falling.

Have you ever taken the time to think about nails? They're simple little things really, comprised of a straight body, a head, and a pointed end. Yet they're complex too. They come in all shapes and sizes. They're made from iron, or steel, or stainless steel. They can be made out of aluminum or even copper. You can get them blued, heat treated, galvanized or coated.

They have numerous uses. You can get them for roofing, decking, siding or plasterboard. You can get nails for flooring, upholstery, finishing, or masonry. If you don't like conventional nails, you can even get a thing called liquid nails that comes in a tube and you squirt it on instead of using a hammer. Doesn't matter what job you have to do; you can get a nail for it.

II – DESTRUCTIVE OR CONSTRUCTIVE:

As I continued to sit there and think about these things called nails, a second thought came to my mind. The use of nails could be either constructive or destructive. You can use nails for good or for evil purposes.

Nails are used to construct a house, from the framing to the finishing. I use nails to hang pictures of my loved ones around the house, or to make a place for visitors to hang their coats inside the back door. It's nails that hold the barn siding on the wall in your family room and hold the tack board that keeps your carpet stretched and tight across the floor.

But nails can be destructive too. I've seen them bent and welded together so they could be thrown into people's driveways and cause flat tires. I've had the pleasure of having a nail hit the

wrong spot on a piece of wood and split the board from one end to the other. How about the accidents with nail guns we read about like the man who shot one through the roof of his mouth and into his brain behind the eye.

III – SCRIPTURE:

As I thought more about it this week it dawned on me that the Lenten story deals with this very issue. The Lenten story deals with one set of nails that are both destructive and at the same time constructive.

In Mark's telling of the crucifixion we read these words concerning the nails:

Mark 15:22 – 24(a) (NLT)

²²And they brought Jesus to a place called Golgotha (which means Skull Hill). ²³They offered him wine drugged with myrrh, but he refused it. ²⁴Then they nailed him to the cross.

As I read these words the destructive nature of the nails jumps out at me. I can only imagine the destruction to bone, muscle, and flesh done to the body of Jesus as the Romans drove the nails through his hands and feet and imbedded them in the wood of the cross. I can only imagine the pain and agony, which wracked his body as they tore through him and the blood flowed. I can only imagine the continued suffering he endured as they lifted the cross and his weight pulled against those nails, ripping the wounds open and making them wider and deeper.

And yet the Apostle Paul points out that not only were these nails destroying the body of Jesus, they were building ours:

Colossians 2:13 - 14(NLT)

¹³You were dead because of your sins and because your sinful nature was not yet cut away. Then God made you alive with Christ. He forgave all our sins. ¹⁴He canceled the record that contained the charges against us. He took it and destroyed it by nailing it to Christ's cross.

The nails which held our Savior to the cross, held our sins to the cross. The nails that brought death to the Lord, brought life to all of us. The same nails which destroyed flesh and bone on the Creator, healed the souls of the created. Destruction became construction. The nails which now hold up the symbol of my Salvation, first held up my Savior!

IV – WORK IN PROGRESS:

Tonight begins the season of Lent, a period of 40 days that Christians are asked to reflect on

their lives as they relate to a Savior who endured the nails for us. It's a time to search our souls and see what stands between us and a full commitment to that Savior. It's a time to grow and mature in our Faith and to remember Jesus' call to take up our cross and follow him.

If you're like me, which I believe most of you are, you are all still a work in progress. God has not finished with your construction. We all still have things we must nail to the cross so they don't destroy what God is trying to do in our lives. It is my sincere hope and prayer that your lives will be changed this Lent. God had a blue print of your life before you were ever conceived, and God knows exactly where the nails need to be driven to hold your life together, to make you a fully repentant and forgiven child of God. I pray that you will let the Master Carpenter do his job.

V – NAIL IT TO THE CROSS:

In a few minutes we will be having communion. As you take of the bread, and drink of the cup, I urge you to get rid of whatever it is that still stands between you and Jesus. You can do it at the Altar, you can do it in your seat, you can do it coming down the aisle, it doesn't matter, just do it.

Make the nails constructive tonight. Use them to nail that sin to the cross that still haunts you, God's forgiven you, now forgive yourself. Use them to fasten to the cross the hatred you hold against another, the hatred that consumes you and your very soul. Nail to the cross your ego, your pride, your selfishness, your apathy... all of which stand between you and Jesus. Nail to the cross the idols in your life like sports, shopping, and sleeping... all those things, which keep you from worshipping the God who died for you. Keep pounding the nails in all during the 40 days of Lent...

Then on Easter morning remember the promise of the Gospel; that they may be able to nail shut the coffin lid on these human bodies, but because of the nails, just like Jesus, our lives go on forever.

AMEN