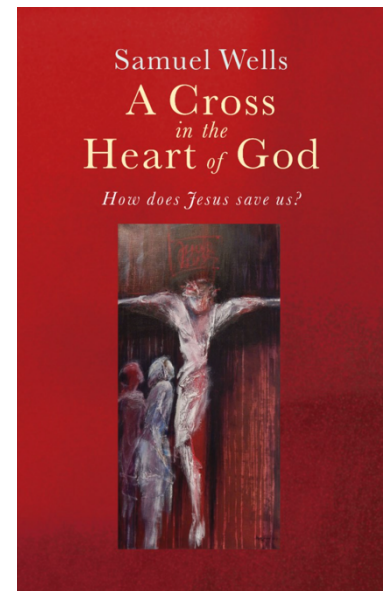


A Cross in the Heart of God Session I:

Introduction - The God of With

Based on: Samuel Wells: *A Cross in the Heart of God* (Norwich, Canterbury Press 2020) – Introduction



Key Bible passages:

“³³ When it was noon, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon. ³⁴ At three o’clock Jesus cried out with a loud voice, ‘Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?’ which means, ‘My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?’ ³⁵ When some of the bystanders heard it, they said, ‘Listen, he is calling for Elijah.’ ³⁶ And someone ran, filled a sponge with sour wine, put it on a stick, and gave it to him to drink, saying, ‘Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to take him down.’ ³⁷ Then Jesus gave a loud cry and breathed his last.

Mark 15.33-37

‘Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel’, which means, ‘God is with us.’

Matthew 1.23

¹⁹ Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.’

Matthew 28.19-20

‘In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He was in the beginning with God. (...) ¹⁴ And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory.’

John 1.1-2.14

Key Book Quotations:

If there is one word that sums up all four gospels, that word is ‘with’. Jesus’ ministry, above all else, is about being *with* us, in pain and glory, in sorrow and in joy, in quiet and in conflict, in death and in life.

A Cross in the Heart of God, xvi

(...)The Trinity of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. God is three, which means God is a perfect symmetry of *with*, three beings wholly present to one another (...) So present to one another, so rapt in love, and cherishing, and mutuality, and devotion, that they seem to transcend *with* and become *in*.

A Cross in the Heart of God, xvi

That sense of so relishing and rejoicing in *with* that you long for and aspire to *in* is a yearning human beings know well. It’s integral to sexual desire. For many people sexual desire is a longing to translate *with* into *in*, to intensify the joy of being in another’s presence into a physical and spiritual experience of mutual indwelling. (...) So much sexual expression is a grasping at *in* that’s not preceded, surrounded, accompanied and followed by a profound and lasting *with*.

A Cross in the Heart of God, xvii

‘The Trinity is the perfect equilibrium of three persons so *with* that they are *in*, but *in* in such a way that they are still *with*.’

A Cross in the Heart of God, xvii

‘This is what it means to say there was a cross in the heart of God from the foundation of the world. Being with us was in the heart of Trinity from the beginning. Jesus was not a response to the unfortunate event of the Fall. Jesus was the reason for creation. Jesus was always going to experience the full horror of humanity’s rejection of God. God’s life opening to us was always going to cost God everything. The cross in the heart of God will always be there.’

A Cross in the Heart of God, xvii-xviii

Questions:

1. Do you see God doing something *for* us or instead doing something with us? Is God more *for* than *with*?
2. How do you read Jesus’ words: ‘My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?’ What is going on here?
3. Is it possible to say God for a brief moment – while Jesus was on the cross - separated from himself?

