

A cross. The electric chair – the lethal injection – the capital punishment of Jesus' day. A cross. On the cross we see Jesus in the last place we would ever expect to find God – weak, humbled, dying. Yet St. Paul spoke about the cross in this way: “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.” What a strange power this is – this suffering and dying in weakness. But you know that it was for you, in love for you that Jesus died. “Greater love has no one than this, that a man should lay down his life for a friend.” Jesus said. And then he did it – laid down his life for you on the cross.

What could be in the center of a human heart? – dreams of wealth, of glory, of fame? Pleasure, property, power - each would like to claim that place of highest honor in you. But in granting you the gift of faith in Jesus Christ God places the cross of Jesus in your heart – in the very center of your being. God will not know you by your goodness nor by your accomplishments, nor even by what you do for God but God chooses to know you by what Jesus has done in dying for you. God looks into your heart and sees the suffering and death of his only Son – the cross of Jesus- and for Jesus' sake God treasures you. For Jesus' sake God names you child of God – for Jesus' sake God forgives you all your sins – for Jesus' sake God holds onto you for in the center of your heart God has placed the cross of Christ.

A rose – symbol of beauty – sign of peace. How much more beautiful still is faith in Christ – faith that looks to Christ for everything. From faith blossoms joy, peace and comfort. Though the waters of life are not always calm Jesus invites us to walk on the stormy waters with him. In faith we walk and do not sink. In faith we have a peace from God that is beyond all human

understanding. In faith we trust that the love of God in us and through us will be greater than all else. Your life is a fragrant offering from God to all whom your life touches – when you live in faith, a rose – a beautiful gift of God to all who encounter you.

Heaven. Above the sky, beyond the stars, further than we can imagine yet as close as a prayer.

Heaven – not so much a place as the simple presence of God. Where God is – that is heaven.

Jesus said, “In my Father’s house there are many dwelling places – if it were not so would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you I will come again and take you to myself so that where I am you may be also.” A place is prepared for you – a place with God and with Jesus. Today it is yours already in hope and in faith. Cling to this promise of Jesus with all your might. Let your hope be in him.

A ring – no place it starts – no place it ends - A symbol for the life of God without beginning and without end. Eternity. In Jesus you are part of that life of God and shall be forever. You are loved and you shall love for all eternity.