



Radical Love

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Scriptures: John 13:34–35; Philippians 2:3,8; Acts 3:15

Idea: The message of Jesus was fueled by a radical new ethic of love. One crucifixion changed everything.

Introduction

1. We visited Rome several years ago. I wanted to visit the Coliseum. It was built in 72 AD by Vespasian and completed by Titus in 80 AD. It took only eight years to build. It held over 50,000 people. It was 144 feet high. The floor was wooden. Underneath, animals and slaves were kept in waiting.

[Show pictures of the Coliseum.]

2. There are 72 numbered entrances, like a modern stadium. There are four not numbered: the emperor's gate, VIP gates, and the gladiators' gate.
3. For almost four centuries, the Coliseum was a place where death and brutality were celebrated. It was in use during several periods of wide-scale and localized persecution of Christians. During that time, tens of thousands of Rome's enemies were crucified.

And so, with all that as a backdrop, I was not prepared for something I saw.

4. Tourists enter the emperor's gate. Hanging in the entrance to this arena of death are two huge crosses.

[Show picture of cross.]

5. Pope Benedict XIV placed a cross there in the mid-1700s when he dedicated the Coliseum to the Christian martyrs who had died at the hands of Rome since Nero.
6. If you could go back in time and visit, you would see:
 - The slaves beneath the floor of the Coliseum awaiting their eventual death in front of a cheering mob
 - The slaves responsible for carting off the remains of those partially eaten by wild animals
 - The Roman Christians who lived in fear within the shadow of the Coliseum

- I. **You could have said to them: “One day, the cross will not represent the cruelty of Rome . . .”**