

Sunday Service ~March 29, 2024

Service for Swansea & Charlestown Presbyterian Church

Welcome & Prayer

Romans 5:6-10 tells us: *"6 You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. 7 Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person someone might possibly dare to die. 8 But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. 9 Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him! 10 For if, while we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life!"*

Lets' Pray. Our Lord and Heavenly Father, we come to you today with hearts full of praise, with hearts full of joy. For we know that this time of year is where we very specifically remember the boundless love you hold, even for sinners who rejected your rule over their life. Lord, we thank you for the beauty of this gift. And Lord, we count the cost. We recognise that we crucified Jesus as much as Pontius Pilate or the Roman guards. We recognise that we denied Jesus as Simon Peter did. We recognise that we mocked you as the robber or the soldiers who forced the crown of thorns onto his head. We recognise that we often worship in secret, as Nicodemus did. And yet Lord, you have loved us enough to send your Son to die and then to call us and reveal this truth to us.

As we ponder your sacrifice, make us a people who sacrifice for others. Help us to give up time, money, reputation, pride – these earthly trappings – for that which is so much better. Make us a people who submit, who love, who give sacrificially, not for our own glory, but to shine the love Jesus showed on that first, strangest of all Good Fridays. Keep this uppermost in our mind, Lord. Many are in need in our community right now, Lord. Open opportunities for us to help meet those needs all around us.

Father, we pray you will comfort and protect those who are vulnerable. As they struggle with various needs, often in silence, we pray that the message of Easter will be prominent. Help those who are lost to realise their need for you and your limitless love. Encourage them to come to you in humble repentance, accepting the gift that Jesus offered as he gave up his life for them. Father, we pray that even through the unusual societal impact of COVID-19 that you will bring people back to you. In the name of Jesus, we bring these petitions to you. Amen.

Song – Glories of Calvary [The Glories of Calvary With Lyrics By Sovereign Grace Music \(feat. Norton Hall Band\) - YouTube](#)

1. Lord, you're calling me to come
And behold the wondrous cross
To explore the depths of grace
That came to me at such a cost
Where Your boundless love
Conquered my boundless sin
And mercy's arms were opened wide

2. Sinners find eternal joy
In the triumph of Your wounds
By our Saviour's crimson flow
Holy wrath has been removed
And Your saints below
Join with your saints above
Rejoicing in the Risen Lamb

Chorus: My heart is filled with a thousand songs
Proclaiming the glories of Calvary
With every breath, Lord how I long
To sing of Jesus who died for me
Lord, take me deeper
Into the glories of Calvary

Chorus x2
Bridge: For all eternity we will sing worthy
Our God has set us free
We'll sing the glories of Calvary
Repeat Bridge
Chorus

Bible Reading – Luke 22:39-71 (NIV)

³⁹ Jesus went out as usual to the Mount of Olives, and his disciples followed him. ⁴⁰ On reaching the place, he said to them, “Pray that you will not fall into temptation.” ⁴¹ He withdrew about a stone’s throw beyond them, knelt down and prayed, ⁴² “Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done.” ⁴³ An angel from heaven appeared to him and strengthened him. ⁴⁴ And being in anguish, he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground. ⁴⁵ When he rose from prayer and went back to the disciples, he found them asleep, exhausted from sorrow. ⁴⁶ “Why are you sleeping?” he asked them. “Get up and pray so that you will not fall into temptation.” ⁴⁷ While he was still speaking a crowd came up, and the man who was called Judas, one of the Twelve, was leading them. He approached Jesus to kiss him, ⁴⁸ but Jesus asked him, “Judas, are you betraying the Son of Man with a kiss?” ⁴⁹ When Jesus’ followers saw what was going to happen, they said, “Lord, should we strike with our swords?” ⁵⁰ And one of them struck the servant of the high priest, cutting off his right ear. ⁵¹ But Jesus answered, “No more of this!” And he touched the man’s ear and healed him. ⁵² Then Jesus said to the chief priests, the officers of the temple guard, and the elders, who had come for him, “Am I leading a rebellion, that you have come with swords and clubs? ⁵³ Every day I was with you in the temple courts, and you did not lay a hand on me. But this is your hour—when darkness reigns.” ⁵⁴ Then seizing him, they led him away and took him into the house of the high priest. Peter followed at a distance. ⁵⁵ And when some there had kindled a fire in the middle of the courtyard and had sat down together, Peter sat down with them. ⁵⁶ A servant girl saw him seated there in the firelight. She looked closely at him and said, “This man was with him.” ⁵⁷ But he denied it. “Woman, I don’t know him,” he said. ⁵⁸ A little later someone else saw him and said, “You also are one of them.” “Man, I am not!” Peter replied. ⁵⁹ About an hour later another asserted, “Certainly this fellow was with him, for he is a Galilean.” ⁶⁰ Peter replied, “Man, I don’t know what you’re talking about!” Just as he was speaking, the rooster crowed. ⁶¹ The Lord turned and looked straight at Peter. Then Peter remembered the word the Lord had spoken to him: “Before the rooster crows today, you will disown me three times.” ⁶² And he went outside and wept bitterly. ⁶³ The men who were guarding Jesus began mocking and beating him. ⁶⁴ They blindfolded him and demanded, “Prophecy! Who hit you?” ⁶⁵ And they said many other insulting things to him. ⁶⁶ At daybreak the council of the elders of the people, both the chief priests and the teachers of the law, met together, and Jesus was led before them. ⁶⁷ “If you are the Messiah,” they said, “tell us.” Jesus answered, “If I tell you, you will not believe me, ⁶⁸ and if I asked you, you would not answer. ⁶⁹ But from now on, the Son of Man will be seated at the right hand of the mighty God.” ⁷⁰ They all asked, “Are you then the Son of God?” He replied, “You say that I am.” ⁷¹ Then they said, “Why do we need any more testimony? We have heard it from his own lips.”

Announcements

Easter. For Christians, Easter is the most important time of the year. And we are fortunate because Australia has traditionally given us two days off work to celebrate the death and resurrection of Jesus. Please don’t see these days as extra holidays but as what they really are—HOLY days. Please use these days wisely to grow in your holiness as you fill your vision with who Jesus is, what He is doing and how he wants us to respond to all he has done. what he requires of us in return.

Hamilton 5pm service – Alive @ 5!

It’s great that our partnership with Hamilton Presbyterian Church has led to a brand new service beginning each Sunday afternoon, Alive @ 5. If you know of someone who used to go to Church or someone who needs to hear the gospel of Jesus, why not invite them to go along (and go along with them that first time!)

Positions Vacant.

We are hoping to be able to employ a new Administrative Assistant (10 hours a week) and a Young Adults Worker (8 hours a week) from term 2. With Jon leaving we also have a position for an associate minister. This would normally be filled by an ordained Presbyterian minister. The process to find the right person will begin with the congregation choosing a selection committee on its behalf (at our annual

meeting 7/4/24) who will then agree on the sort of person we are looking for, interview potential candidates, ask the best candidate to preach before the congregation makes the final decision.

Easter Services

ST

31/3 Resurrection Sunday Swansea 8am Charlestown 9:45am & 6pm

Annual Congregational Meeting.

Will be held on Sunday 7th April 2024 from 11:20am. This year's meeting will be an important (and long one!) Included in the items to be decided

- Receive all the annual reports
- Approval of financial statements
- Elect a committee of management
- Find out the latest about the Charlestown redevelopment
- Re-elect the Construction Working Group
- Re-elect our Deacons for another 12 months
- Vote for a Selection Committee to help choose our new associate minister (nominations can be given to Ross Logan before Friday 5th April). This committee will comprise the elders plus 7 members of the congregation and should represent a good cross section of the congregation but especially include those who will work most closely with any future associate such as member of Sunday @ 6 and families with school aged children.
- Appointment of a new Administrative Assistant
- Agree to a job description and hopefully appointment a Young Adults Worker.

JOY

Our next JOY (Just Older Youth) will meet this Friday at the 16 footers 10-11am. All welcome

Renew Women's Conference (Women of Truth)

Registration is now open for Hunter Gospel Ministries next women's conference. Date: 25th May 2024.

Place: Metford Baptist. Topic: God-Centred Relationships. Speaker: Dani Treweek. More details at hgm.org.au/renew

Pastoral Prayer

Pray for Yemen (Pop 32 million, Christians very few!). Following Jesus in Yemen continues to be extremely dangerous. Yemeni society is strongly Islamic, conservative, and tribal, and the tribal punishment for denouncing Islam can be banishment or death. The humanitarian crisis caused by Yemen's 10-year civil war has also exacerbated the pressure on believers. While some relief aid is available, this is mostly distributed through local Muslim groups and mosques, which are alleged to be discriminating against anyone not considered a devout Muslim. Pray for strength and protection for believers living in areas occupied by extremists. That converts from Islam would have wisdom and courage to share their faith. That peace **Pray for the Walaha community in Vanuatu.** For people to volunteer and take up leadership roles within the Church. For unity within the Church and its members. For continued energy and enthusiasm and they make repairs to the Church.

Pray that Australians can find hope in Jesus over this Easter weekend.

Pray for safety on the roads and for all those who are in the emergency services or service industries that have to work this weekend.

Pray for Hamilton & Woy Woy Presbyterian Churches. That new people will come along this Easter and find the real meaning for life.

Bible Reading – Luke 23:26-49(NIV)

²⁶ "As the soldiers led him away, they seized Simon from Cyrene, who was on his way in from the country, and put the cross on him and made him carry it behind Jesus. ²⁷ A large number of people followed him, including women who mourned and wailed for him. ²⁸ Jesus turned and said to them, "Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me; weep for yourselves and for your children. ²⁹ For the time will come when

you will say, 'Blessed are the childless women, the wombs that never bore and the breasts that never nursed!' ³⁰ Then "they will say to the mountains, "Fall on us!" and to the hills, "Cover us!"³¹ For if people do these things when the tree is green, what will happen when it is dry?"³² Two other men, both criminals, were also led out with him to be executed. ³³ When they came to the place called the Skull, they crucified him there, along with the criminals—one on his right, the other on his left. ³⁴ Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing." And they divided up his clothes by casting lots.³⁵ The people stood watching, and the rulers even sneered at him. They said, "He saved others; let him save himself if he is God's Messiah, the Chosen One."³⁶ The soldiers also came up and mocked him. They offered him wine vinegar ³⁷ and said, "If you are the king of the Jews, save yourself."³⁸ There was a written notice above him, which read: THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS.³⁹ One of the criminals who hung there hurled insults at him: "Aren't you the Messiah? Save yourself and us!"⁴⁰ But the other criminal rebuked him. "Don't you fear God," he said, "since you are under the same sentence?"⁴¹ We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong."⁴² Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom."⁴³ Jesus answered him, "Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise."⁴⁴ It was now about noon, and darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon, ⁴⁵ for the sun stopped shining. And the curtain of the temple was torn in two. ⁴⁶ Jesus called out with a loud voice, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit."^[a] When he had said this, he breathed his last.⁴⁷ The centurion, seeing what had happened, praised God and said, "Surely this was a righteous man."⁴⁸ When all the people who had gathered to witness this sight saw what took place, they beat their breasts and went away. ⁴⁹ But all those who knew him, including the women who had followed him from Galilee, stood at a distance, watching these things."

Song – Jerusalem <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g252SXZvdn4>

- | | |
|---|---|
| <p>1. See Him in Jerusalem
Walking where the crowds are
Once these streets had sung to Him
Now they cry for murder
Such a frail and lonely man
Holding up the heavy cross
See Him walking in Jerusalem
On the road to save us</p> | <p>4. See the empty tomb today
Death could not contain him
Once the servant of the world
Now in victory reigning
Lift your voices to the one
Who is seated on the throne
See him in the new Jerusalem
Praise the one who saved us</p> |
| <p>2. See him there upon the hill
Hear the scorn and laughter
Silent as a lamb he waits
Praying to the father
See the king who made the sun
And the moon and shining stars
Let the soldiers hold and nail him down
So that he could save them</p> | <p>Lift your voices to the one
Who is seated on the throne
See him in the new Jerusalem
Praise the one who saved us
Praise the one who saved us</p> |
| <p>3. See him there upon the cross
Now no longer breathing
Dust that formed the watching crowds
Takes the blood of Jesus
Feel the earth is shaking now
See the veil is split in two
And he stood before the wrath of God
Shielding sinners with his blood</p> | |

Sermon: Fullness! –(Stephen T)

Sermon link: <https://youtu.be/Lib1s916cwU>

Life is all about choices. You wake up in the morning and you have the choice to roll over and go back to sleep or try and get up and start your day. Then you have to choose what to have for breakfast. What to wear today. What work you will do. What sort of attitude you will have. And so on and so on.

Some choices are not really that important. Should I wear the grey socks or the black socks? Will I have cereal or fruit for breakfast? But others have more riding on them. Who will I vote for at the next elections? Whom shall I marry? What things will I do with my life?

But one of the biggest choices of all comes down to who we will follow. What will influence our life? Where are we going? It is a critical decision because that is the sort of choice which will in turn affect almost every other choice we make. And in the last 24 hours of Jesus life we see Jesus and those around him face this critical choice. Will I choose to listen to the crowd or the cross? Will I follow my own desires or God's desires? Will I try & maintain a sense of honour and of dignity or will I humble myself in order to honour my God?

Slide 2

For Jesus had come to this earth in order to die. Not really to teach, even though he did teach people about God and about themselves and about salvation. Not really to do miracles but he did heal the sick and he did walk on water. Not really to gather a group of people around him, even though he did have his 12 disciples and a few extra womenfolk. Jesus had come to die. And that is why each of the gospels slow down and concentrate in the end on the last week and the last day and the last hour of his life. Luke for example has 18 chapters on the first 33 years of his life and 5 chapters on the last week of his life.

Jesus came to die. But on the last day of his life, Jesus faced a critical choice. And that is what I want to concentrate on this morning. Jesus is in Jerusalem, a melting pot of hopes and dreams and ideologies and here he finds himself with the ultimate choice. Will I please the crowd or go to the cross. And nowhere is that choice more apparent than when he meets three groups of people who all have their own agendas at the garden, at the palace and at the place of the skull. Let's turn to the garden of Gethsemane first.

Slide 3

1. The Garden: Might vs Right.

Jesus has just eaten the Passover with his disciples. He has taught them about being a servant and has washed their feet. He has told them that he will soon go away but he will leave them his Holy Spirit. And he has prayed for his disciples, for the Church and also for himself. When a crowd of people armed with torches and swords make their way toward the small group of Jesus and his disciples.

John calls it a detachment of soldiers and they are there with a captain who would normally be in charge of 1,000 troops so this is a small fighting force. Along with them are some of the Temple guards sent by the chief priests and the Pharisees. And in the front and centre of them all is Judas, one of Jesus closest companions.

Slide 4

Now they are armed for a fight with their torches and lanterns and weapons. They are here to arrest the preacher. Yes, he has been in the temple courts every day in the last week and they could have arrested him whenever they wanted to. But they are doing it at night. They are using their military might. They want to give Jesus and his disciples a real fright.

Now this is how people in power think that we should play the game of life. Might is right. Stockpile our weapons. Build up our armies. Work harder on the military hardware. Because power is the most important thing. You have to outmuscle your opponent. You have to land the harder punch. And although

Jesus has no army at his disposal and he has shown himself as a man of peace throughout his ministry, this is the way of the crowd. This is the power of the mob.

And you see that Simon Peter gets swept away with this as well. He draws his sword, he's willing to defend Jesus' honour and so he most likely picks on someone that he thinks he can beat, in this case the high priest's servant Malchus and with one swing of the blade, he slices his ear right off.

Slide 5

Now Jesus has a choice, doesn't he? The crowd or the cross? Might, or right? For as he says in one of the other gospels. He could summon a thousand angels from his Father's troops to defend himself and his band of disciples. He could draw upon the most powerful army of all. He could fight fire with fire. No he could more than match the swords of his opponents with a nuclear arsenal from heaven. But that is not his way. That is not God's way.

They came in the night, but he is the light. They come with their supposed might, he will fight with right. Jesus will not be going with the crowd for he is on the way to the cross.

Slide 6

Now let's think about that for a moment. How foolish does that sound? But Paul will pick this idea up in 1 Corinthians 1 and say that the cross is the power of God. Not the sword but the cross. Not in bullying but in humility. Not in relying upon ourselves but relying upon God. For the weakness of God is stronger than man's strength. The weakness of God is stronger than man's strength.

You see the crowd will use their power, their strength, their weapons to push Jesus into a corner. A terrible corner. They will use power, they will use the government of the day, they will use all their influence to kill Jesus, to nail him to that cross. And Jesus will say, that is where I was going anyway. That is where I will show you my power over sin, my power over Satan, my power over death. Your worldly weapons are no match for God's heavenly weapons. And so I will walk away from the crowds. I will not let them distract me from my cause. I will defeat your might with my right.

Slide 7

Friends that is a really good lesson for us to learn today as Christians. The governments of the day can amass their weapons of mass destruction. They can gather their crowd of people and form their armies that perfectly goose step their way through city streets. But in the end that mighty army will fall. That government will topple and sometimes, just sometimes God will use unarmed men, prayerful saints, faithful females to bring down their power. For the kingdom of God has a power much greater than the kingdom of man. And the power of our kingdom comes from the cross. It is the seed that Jesus himself has planted into the good soil of the earth that will defeat all the kingdoms of the world.

Slide 8

I love the story of Helmut Thielicke. Thielicke was a German theologian when Hitler came to power before WW2. Because he was outspoken in his criticism of Hitler, he was removed from his university post and sent to a small town, where he began pastoring a very small church.

He says that when he became a pastor, he decided to have his first midweek Bible study. For he held high hopes for making an impact in the church, and on his community, but he was extremely disappointed when only three people came to his Bible study: Two elderly ladies and an elderly man. He says as he sat looking at these three elderly people, outside the church he could hear the marching of the battalions of Hitler youth who'd sworn their allegiance to the Third Reich.

In that moment he wondered about the future of the Christian faith, as it seemed that the faith was dying while the Hitler war machine was growing stronger & stronger every day. Was it really true that the kingdoms of this world will one day become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Messiah? Then Pastor Thielicke thought of that parable of the mustard seed that grew into a plant. That gave him

encouragement and hope, and of course when the dust settled, it was Hitler's kingdom that fell, not God's kingdom. The kingdom of might and force it didn't last, but the Kingdom of grace continued to grow. In effect those three elderly people meeting as a Bible Study were stronger than the armies of Hitler just out the door.

Slide 9

Do we believe that? That the power of the cross is stronger than the power of the crowd? That the power in the Church is stronger than the power of the government? I'm not talking about the power of destruction though but the power to bring healing and love and forgiveness. We have this strength, when we like Jesus turn away from the crowd & toward the cross. Away from might and onto right. Away from the night and into the light. In the cross we might find God's weakness but that weakness is stronger than man's strength.

So, friends don't chase power or influence or authority. Don't use your position to get what you want. Go the way of the cross, the way of humility. Jesus died so that we might live. We can live so that the death of Jesus might change the way that others live. As well as the way that we live.

Slide 10

2. The Palace: The audience of many vs the audience of one.

But then we see the action move on from the garden and into the palace. Jesus is arrested and then taken to Annas the father-in-law of the high priest. And then onto Caiaphas who continues his accusations. Onto the Sanhedrin, the highest religious court of the land and they all condemn him on next to little evidence. And so, he ends up in front of the most powerful man in Jerusalem, Pontus Pilate.

In the meantime, the disciples have abandoned him or disowned him. And so, he is alone in front of his accusers. And it seems that Pilate can see through the chief priest's tricks because he is not quick to condemn Jesus until he brings the crowd into play. This time it is a larger group of people, priests and commoners, young and old, scholar and simple all looking for Pilate to release one man. One man as their Easter present.

Slide 11

So, Pilate asks who will it be Jesus or Barabbas? And they shout back Barabbas. Now this is mob mentality at its worse. Barabbas is a murderer, one who has taken life, whereas Jesus is one who gives life. Barabbas is a thief, robbing the people of their hope to a peaceful future, whereas Jesus wants to give them life to the full, hope, love and peace. And this takes Pilate by surprise. "Wait a second crowd, Jesus hasn't done anything wrong. So, what should I do with him?" Kill him. Crucify him, they bay for blood. He says that he is a king. And the only king we have is Caesar.

There's the crowd at it again. This time it is not about might but about numbers. Follow what the latest survey says the government should do. Don't forget there is such a thing as people power. Let's do things democratically. The crowd says we have numbers on our side. It is the audience of many that will determine the right course of actions.

And Jesus says it's not the numbers, it's not the crowd, it's not the opinion polls that count, it is not the audience of many, it's the audience of one. God is the only one you have to please. God is the only one you have to satisfy. Yes, Pilate you might have power over me and these guys might want to crucify me but you can only do these things because God has given you that position. You are not there to please the crowd but to please the one who has given you your position, the one with the real crown, your heavenly father.

And that's what Jesus does isn't it? The crowd at one stage wanted to make him king, but he left them and turned to his father God in prayer. The people want him to take on the Romans but God's command was to take on the unholy trinity of sin, death and the devil. Now that is dumb, isn't it? That's crazy!

Slide 12

But once again let's turn to Paul in 1 Corinthians 1. He says the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. Jews demand signs, Greeks look for wisdom but we preach Christ crucified. For the foolishness of God is wiser than man's wisdom.

Jesus doesn't follow the crowd because if he did that, he can't save the whole world. If Jesus walks away from the cross, then man's sins can never be forgiven. God's wrath will never be satisfied. And the hope of the whole world is snuffed out, completely. So, Jesus turns his back on the audience of many and instead performs for the audience of one. His father God.

Slide 13

The crowd says to us today you are only 5% of the population. Join us in gambling, in materialism, with our sexual freedoms. Modernise. Get with the times. Drop the cross. And we have to say, the only person who really counts is God. What does he want me to do? What is his message to the world? Where does he want me to go? It might not be popular or trendy. But ultimately, we are not here to impress the crowd but to follow the cross.

Slide 14

What did Jesus say in Luke 9? *"Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me. For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will save it. What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, and yet lose or forfeit their very self? Whoever is ashamed of me and my words, the Son of Man will be ashamed of them when he comes in his glory and in the glory of the Father and of the holy angels."*

Don't indulge yourself. Deny yourself. Don't follow the crowd, follow the Saviour. Don't rely on yourself and others. Look to Jesus. Don't honour yourself, humble yourself. Don't aim to be happy, aim to be holy. Everyone might be going one way in our suburb but we have to have the courage of our convictions to go the other way, God's way. You only need to please one, the One in heaven!

Is that your aim to please the audience of one? Or are you too busy keeping up with the Jones? Doing what your family thinks you should be doing. Not wanting to stand out amongst your friends. Not wanting to miss out on what the crowd says is important. Today turn again to the audience of one. Look to Jesus for inspiration. For he gave himself fully to God and God backed him from the cross to the grave and then onto life and glory. And that is the journey he wants to take us on as well. So live for the audience of one.

Slide 15

3. The Crucifixion: Do or Done

Which leads to the last crowd, the crowd at the foot of the cross. Pontus Pilate condemns Jesus, and so he carries his cross to the place of the skull. Where they crucify him, with two common criminals, one on his left and one on his right. And while he hangs there, the crowd wants to have one last say.

- *"So you were going to destroy the temple and build it in three days, come down from the cross and save yourself, some yelled". Mk 15:29-30*
- *"He saved others, let him save himself if he is the Christ of God, the Chosen one" others taunted. Lk 23:35*
- And then the chief priests and teachers of the law twisted the knife a little further. *"Let this Christ, this King of Israel come down now from the cross that we may see and believe". Mark 15:31-32.*

The crowd have a go at him. Prove yourself. Do something. Do anything. And Jesus response. "It is finished." I will not DO anything for now it has all been DONE. Salvation has now been secured because of Jesus' death on the cross. If he had got down from the cross to satisfy someone's curiosity, then the way of salvation would have been stopped. The way to save others was to not save himself. He died, he paid the punishment for sin, he went to hell, so that we might have the chance at life. And the way that we take hold of this gift is not through what we DO but trust in what he has DONE.

The crowds today will talk about some new age spirituality. How you need to wash your sins away in the Gange's river. You need to make a pilgrimage to Mecca or Rome. You need to learn the latest meditation techniques. You need to attend their Church and it's all do, do, do. That's the way of the crowd, that's keeping up with the crowd. But the way of the cross is all about what Jesus has DONE.

Slide 16

There's a famous painting by Rembrandt called The Three Crosses. Those who look at it have their attention drawn first to the centre cross on which Jesus died. Then they look at the crowd gathered around the foot of that cross, impressed by the various facial expressions and actions of the people involved in the awful crime of crucifying the Son of God. At the edge of the painting there's another figure, almost hidden in the shadows. Art critics say this is a representation of Rembrandt himself, for he recognised that by his sins he helped nail Jesus to the cross.

Slide 17

The crowds today will talk about what we do and we must talk about what Jesus has DONE. That is why the heart of the Christian gospel is the cross. That is why we need to keep at the centre of our preaching and teaching the cross of Jesus. That is why you and I need to live cross shaped lives. That is why the central theme of Church is not worship or entertainment, it's not buildings or sacred spaces, it's not the Holy Spirit and his gifts given to us. It is Jesus and him crucified on the cross.

So, the sources of unity amongst Churches must be the cross. The message that we preach to young and old must have at its heart the cross. The way forward will not be all about technology or music but the cross.

Slide 18

And friend if we are going to go down that path that will mean that we will need to leave the path of the crowd. The crowd in our community, even the crowd in much of the Christian community. They want to talk about might and we will want to point to what it is right. They will craft a message that will get traction from the audience of many and we will want to set out to please an audience of one. They will want to talk about what we need to DO and we will keep bringing the conversation back to what Jesus has DONE.

Slide 19

We have to make our choices because in the end our choices will make us. And the biggest choice is do we want to go via the crowd or the cross? As preacher Vince Havner once said "We need men of the cross, with the message of the cross, bearing the marks of the cross."

But that will be hard – at sometimes it may even be a lonely existence. For Jesus it led to unjust suffering. And for us it will mean leaving the crowd. Not always doing what everyone else is doing. Even here in the Church it might mean going against the court of popular opinion. It might mean taking the barbs of well-meaning Christians who want you to go down another path. But we must be going down the path of the cross. And we must be willing to bear the marks of the cross.

Slide 20

"The whole world is against you!" a colleague once exclaimed to Athanasius when it looked like the entire Roman empire was lapsing into Arianism. Unperturbed, Athanasius replied, "Then it is Athanasius against the world." These words have rung out down the halls of history as an inspiration to all those who have held fast to the truth against powerful opposition.

Slide 21

Friends we don't want to be always people who move with the times or who follow the crowd. We need to men and women of the Cross. So today and every day, be willing to deny yourself, take up the cross and follow Him. That's what Good Friday teaches us and that is the journey that Good Friday leads us on. From where we are today toward the cross.

Song – When I survey <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tRfkehP0SLU>

- | | |
|--|---|
| <p>1. When I survey the wondrous cross
On which the Prince of glory died,
My richest gain I count but loss,
And pour contempt on all my pride.</p> | <p>3. See from His head, His hands, His feet,
Sorrow and love flow mingled down!
Did e'er such love and sorrow meet,
Or thorns compose so rich a crown?</p> |
| <p>2. Forbid it, Lord, that I should boast,
Save in the death of Christ my God!
All the vain things that charm me most,
I sacrifice them to His blood.</p> | <p>4. Were the whole realm of nature mine,
That were a present far too small;
Love so amazing, so divine,
Demands my soul, my life, my all.</p> |

Closing.⁴¹ *"We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong."*⁴² *Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom."*⁴³ *Jesus answered him, "Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise."* (Luke 23:41-43)