

The Drive Methodist Church Sevenoaks

Morning Worship PASSION SUNDAY – 5TH SUNDAY IN LENT

Rev Dermot Thornberry

Opening Prayer: Let us now worship the living God, let us this morning bring our lives to God and let us honour God's name. We come together acknowledging that we are all different, acknowledging that there will be challenges to face today, and acknowledging that there will be both joys and sorrows today. Bring us together O God that we may meet with you here this morning.

Hymn: StF 28 Jesus calls us here to meet him (verses 1,2 & 3)

- 1 Jesus calls us here to meet him as through word and song and prayer
we affirm God's promised presence where his people live and care.
Praise the God who keeps his promise; praise the Son who calls us friends;
praise the Spirit who, among us, to our hopes and fears attends.
- 2 Jesus calls us to confess him Word of Life and Lord of All,
sharer of our flesh and frailness saving all who fail or fall.
Tell his holy human story; tell his tales that all may hear;
tell the world that Christ in glory came to earth to meet us here.
- 3 Jesus calls us to each other: vastly different though we are;
creed and colour, class and gender neither limit nor debar.
Join the hand of friend and stranger; join the hands of age and youth;
join the faithful and the doubter in their common search for truth.

John L Bell (born 1949) and Graham Maule (1958-2019) © 1989, 1998 WGRG CCL 7093

Reading: John 12: 20 – 33

Jesus Predicts His Death

20 Now there were some Greeks among those who went up to worship at the festival.

21 They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, with a request. "Sir," they said, "we would like to see Jesus."

22 Philip went to tell Andrew; Andrew and Philip in turn told Jesus.

23 Jesus replied, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.

24 Very truly I tell you, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds.

- 25** Anyone who loves their life will lose it, while anyone who hates their life in this world will keep it for eternal life.
- 26** Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honor the one who serves me.
- 27** “Now my soul is troubled, and what shall I say? ‘Father, save me from this hour’? No, it was for this very reason I came to this hour.
- 28** Father, glorify your name!” Then a voice came from heaven, “I have glorified it, and will glorify it again.”
- 29** The crowd that was there and heard it said it had thundered; others said an angel had spoken to him.
- 30** Jesus said, “This voice was for your benefit, not mine.
- 31** Now is the time for judgment on this world; now the prince of this world will be driven out.
- 32** And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.”
- 33** He said this to show the kind of death he was going to die.

Prayers: Lord we praise you because all that we have comes from you. Your love has been present since the birth of creation. You are the resurrection and the life. You are the God who brings hope from despair, beauty from ashes and flesh to dry bones. Thank you that we are included in your great promise and that we are always offered a fresh start and a new beginning. Thank you for the special gift of your Spirit in our lives. Thank you for strengthening us when our faith is tested and behave in a way that does not honour you.

We say together The Lord’s Prayer

Address JOHN 12:20-33

On Saturday we had an interesting conversation about why Jesus went to the cross. The theme is continued in the above passage. Let’s begin with the simplicity of the imagery in **V22-24** The death and resurrection of Jesus which is like a grain falling from the sky and buried in the soil, then grows into a plant producing fruit. However, this is the tip of the iceberg. The death and resurrection are veiled in a complete mystery. The subject has been the object of discussion for hundreds of years. (As a new Christian I struggled with why Jesus had to die for us.)

The question often asked is **HOW DOES CHRIST FIT INTO THE STORY?** Well for starters God could come in and punish all. However, that would be the end of humankind. If God wants to forgive us why does he not just do it? Therefore, he gifted us the freedom to make mistakes. But we need Jesus to guide us from the mistakes. From this we have concluded that evil is both personal and corporate.

In this struggle many atonement theories emerge (death and resurrection.) The author Brian McLaren suggests that it is looking out of a window and seeing the sky and gazing into its infinite nature. However, you need to look at a number of windows to get a more complete picture. Here are the windows

RANSOM THEORY

- **ENEMY:** Satan
- Jesus offered himself to be ravaged by evil.
- His self-giving turned evil back on itself and this freed us!

SUBSTITUTIONARY THEORY

- **ENEMY:** God's wrath towards human sin.
- Jesus stands in the gap.
- God's act of merciful goodness through Jesus cancels out God's anger over human evil and selfishness.

CHRISTUS VICTOR THEORY

- **ENEMY:** death.
- The act of Jesus overcomes death and gives us eternal life.
- Held captive.
- However, the self-giving of Jesus springs us from prison.

PERFECT PENITENT THEORY

- **ENEMY:** Our inability to forgive.
- God offers forgiveness.
- However, for forgiveness to be legitimate and real, a genuine act of repentance is demanded from the wrong doer.
- Jesus acts out full repentance on the Cross as an example.
- Jesus willingly submits Himself on the cross on our behalf.

MORAL INFLUENCE THEORY

- **ENEMY:** Selfishness and lack of love.
- The cross demonstrates Jesus' complete self-giving.
- Abandonment to God's will.
- His complete self-devotion for the sake of the world.
- Jesus' death completes the message of His life.
- He makes visible the self-giving of God.
- In turn He asks us to be self-giving.

POWERFUL WEAKNESS, FOOLISH WISDOM THEORY (McLaren's atonement theory)

- **ENEMY:** Human arrogance and religious pride.
- Becomes vulnerable on the Cross.
- By accepting suffering and not vengeance.
- Jesus shows God's loving heart which wants our forgiveness, not retaliation.
- God therefore rejects humankind's dominance, violence and oppression which leads to destruction of the environment.
- Calls on humanity to stop God's kingdom happening through coercion and force.
- The act on the cross calls us to bring the kingdom through our own vulnerability and self-sacrifice.
- **V25-26** . The disciples (and others) must follow and possibly lose their lives. We just need to lose what is not compatible with the Kingdom. We die to these negative aspects so our lives give us time and place to serve Christ. We transfer control of our lives to Christ as part of the emergence of the New Kingdom.

CONCLUSION

- **THE CROSS in a nutshell** - Jesus absorbs the punishment that we all deserve. He became the substitution for all of us. As He suffered and died all our wrongs were paid for.
- However, for forgiveness to be legitimate and real, a genuine act of repentance is demanded from the wrong doer.
- Dealing with our inability to forgive. We need to practice forgiveness not retaliation.
- The problem of selfishness, lack of love, human arrogance and religious pride.
- We need to deal with the problem of humankind's dominance, violence and oppression.
- A genuine act of repentance is demanded from the wrong doer.
- The act on the cross calls us to bring the kingdom through our own vulnerability and self-sacrifice.

Hymn: StF 594 Lord Jesus Christ, you have come to us. **(all 4 verses)**

- 1 Lord Jesus Christ, you have come to us, you are one with us, Mary's Son;
Cleansing our souls from all their sin, pouring your love and goodness in;
Jesus, our love for you we sing, living Lord.
- 2 Lord Jesus Christ, now and every day teach us how to pray, Son of God.
You have commanded us to do this in remembrance, Lord, of you;
Into our lives your power breaks through, living Lord.

- 3 Lord Jesus Christ, you have come to us, born as one of us, Mary's Son;
Led out to die on Calvary, risen from death to set us free,
Living Lord Jesus, help us see you are Lord.
- 4 Lord Jesus Christ, we would come to you, live our lives for you, Son of God.
All your commands we know are true, your many gifts will make us new,
Into our lives your power breaks through, Living Lord.

Patrick Robert Norman Appleford (1925-2018) © Josef Weinberger Ltd CCL 7093

Coffee Cup Reflection. Or you can snap off the lid and say ‘fill me. I want you to exist in my life’.

Jesus pours into our cup (life) like coffee (Holy Spirit) Three things happen...He tries to live in you in the context of who you are, making you more Christ like.

Then the Holy Spirit percolates a strong brew in you and guides you to be part of the mission. He energises you according to your personality and gifts.

Then the Holy Spirit tries to connect you with other people. Hopefully people will smell the “coffee aroma” in you or the combined stronger aroma of a group of ‘cups.’ This is the community of faith.

The community is not perfect but it’s a process.

Amen

Prayers of intercession: We turn to you father as you hear our cries and you see our sorrow. Lord for the injured, the sick, the poor and the hungry, the lost, and the grieving, for the bitter, the angry, the broken and the despairing, bring your healing and your light and hope. May they know that your mercies are new every morning. We think closer to home as we pray for the family of Sarah Everard, and her partner. We pray for families who have lost members. We pray for those who have lost jobs. We pray for our church leaders who are leading worship as we are this morning. We pray for our government with the tough road ahead. Lastly Lord we pray for ourselves, for our members and their families, we pray for the groups who hopefully will soon be using our premises.

Hymn: StF 351 In Christ alone, my hope is found (**all 4 verses**)

- 1 In Christ alone my hope is found, he is my light, my strength, my song;
this Cornerstone, this solid Ground, firm through the fiercest drought and storm
What heights of love, what depths of peace, when fears are stilled, when strivings cease!
My Comforter, my All in All, here in the love of Christ I stand.
- 2 In Christ alone! - who took on flesh, fullness of God in helpless babe!
This gift of love and righteousness, scorned by the ones He came to save:
Till on that cross as Jesus died, the wrath of God was satisfied -
for every sin on Him was laid; here in the death of Christ I live.
- 3 There in the ground His body lay, light of the world by darkness slain:
Then bursting forth in glorious Day up from the grave He rose again!
And as He stands in victory, sin's curse has lost its grip on me,
for I am His and He is mine - bought with the precious blood of Christ.
- 4 No guilt in life, no fear in death, this is the power of Christ in me;
from life's first cry to final breath, Jesus commands my destiny.
No power of hell, no scheme of man, can ever pluck me from His hand;
till He returns or calls me home, here in the power of Christ I'll stand!

*Stuart Townend (born 1963) and Keith Getty (born 1974) © 2001 Thankyou Music
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Sending Out Prayer: Life-giving God, go with us, in the bustling lives we lead. May we know your strength and peace, surrounding us always. In Jesus' name. **Amen**