

Good Friday Reflections

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[0 : 00] Friends, welcome to our Good Friday service from Becluse. It's a very unusual situation for the Worldwide Church.

Normally Easter is such an important time for us. We get together and we invite friends and family. Usually our service, especially Good Friday, we'd have lots of people involved.

Whereas today, that's not the case. It'd usually be a great time for us to invite friends and family to come and share with us Easter breakfast, our Good Friday and Easter Sunday services.

And again, sadly, that can't happen this year. But certainly, we absolutely still need the message of Easter. We need to know about the death and resurrection of Jesus.

And its significance for us and for the world. So it's good to spend a few minutes reflecting. So Good Friday, so today, we'll think about the death of Jesus.

[1 : 10] Easter Sunday, we'll think about the resurrection of Jesus. And then Easter Sunday evening, we'll think about Jesus exalted, reigning in heaven.

And what each of those mean for us. So let me, as well as welcoming you to Good Friday, let me invite you to Easter Sunday.

And to spread the word, whether it's through Facebook or WhatsApp or emails. To spread the word, invite friends and family to come together digitally.

To hear about Jesus and the resurrection of hope. We're going to begin our short time of reflection, singing the hymn, Man of Sorrows.

And Kellen will lead us in our singing. Man of Sorrows.

[2 : 10] What a name for the Son of God who came. Ruined sinners to reclaim.

Hallelujah! What a Savior! Bearing shame and scoffing rude, In my place condemned He stood, Sealed my pardon with His blood.

Hallelujah! What a Savior! Guilty, violent, helpless, weak, Spotless Lamb of God was He.

Full atonement can it be. Hallelujah! What a Savior!

Lifted up was He to die, It is finished was His cry, Now in heaven exalted high, Hallelujah!

[3 : 46] What a Savior! When He comes, our glorious King, All His ransomed home to bring, Then anew this song we'll sing, Hallelujah!

What a Savior! Now I want to read from Mark chapter 15.

So we finished a Christianity Explored course, I guess fairly shortly before lockdown. So I want to look at what Mark says about the crucifixion and death of Jesus.

So we're going to read Mark chapter 15 at verse 25 to verse 32 in the first place. It was the third hour when they crucified Jesus.

The written notice of the charge against Him read, The King of the Jews. They crucified two robbers with Him, one on His right and one on His left.

[5 : 00] Those who passed by hurled insults at Him, shaking their heads and saying, So you who are going to destroy the temple and build it in three days, come down from the cross and save yourself.

In the same way, the chief priests and the teachers of the law mocked Him among themselves. He saved others, they said, but He can't save Himself. Let this Christ, this King of Israel, come down now from the cross, that we may see and believe.

Those crucified with Him also heaped insults on Him. Let's pray together. Lord, we sang of Jesus, the man of sorrows.

We recognise in His life that though the Son of God in human form, He didn't stay removed from our experience of pain and suffering, but rather He has experienced life in a broken and fallen world.

He has experienced the pain of loneliness and rejection and suffering that we see most profoundly at the cross.

[6 : 14] Lord, we thank you for Jesus coming to be our suffering Saviour, that He was willing to come as part of your eternal plan to save sinners, that Jesus would be that sacrifice offered once for all to forgive our sins, to wash us clean, so that we could know you and enjoy life with you.

Lord, we thank you that you are not a God who is unconcerned about the world that you have made, that we see in Jesus how much you cared for those who were hurting, for those who were hopeless, for those who knew sadness and trouble.

Lord, so much of our world is experiencing sorrow and suffering, and we ask that in mercy you would be present with those who need your help.

We again thank you for those doctors and nurses who are working around the clock in order to save lives and to bring healing.

And we ask that you would protect them. Lord, perhaps in our minds we think of those doctors and nurses and health professionals that we know personally, and we pray that they would be aware of your presence and help.

[7 : 52] We thank you for other key workers who are helping to keep our country moving. Lord, we again commit our government to you, asking that you would give them all the wisdom that they need.

We pray that there would be unity and clarity, and we pray that again in your mercy we would see this virus being turned back.

We pray for a sparing of life. And Lord, this would be a time when many would go to church in order to worship, in order to hear words of hope, but they can't.

We're so thankful for the internet. And we pray that as people listen online over this weekend, that you by your spirit would speak to us and would teach us again the good news of Jesus.

And we pray in his name. Amen. Now, let's read again. We're going to read another short passage from Mark chapter 15, and then we'll think about it together for a few minutes.

[9 : 06] There at verse 33, we read, At the sixth hour, darkness came over the whole land until the ninth hour. And at the ninth hour, Jesus cried out in a loud voice, Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani, which means, My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

When some of those standing near heard this, they said, Listen, he's calling Elijah. One man ran, filled a sponge with wine vinegar, put it on a stick, and offered it to Jesus to drink.

Now leave him alone. Let's see if Elijah comes to take him down, he said. With a loud cry, Jesus breathed his last. The curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom, And when the centurion, who stood there in front of Jesus, heard his cry and saw how he died, he said, Surely this man was the Son of God.

Today I want us to think about Good Friday, to recognise that Jesus endures isolation so that you and I might enjoy intimacy with God.

We have come to discover, haven't we, that isolation causes hardship and heartache. Our news is filled with heartbreaking stories and maybe your own story has known some of that heartache.

[10 : 45] Funerals where families can't attend. People having to be buried by themselves with no one to mourn for them.

We have heard stories of victims of COVID-19 spending their last hours alone with loved ones unable to visit.

We have heard and read of doctors and nurses brought to their knees by the extent of the suffering that they are witnessing, the exhaustion as they spend themselves to care for those who are seriously, seriously ill and dying.

Isolation causes heartache. Whether your experience today is one of heartache and feeling the weight of that or whether you are enduring, as is common to us all, the hardships and the inconveniences of isolation.

This virus is teaching us some painful lessons. One of the things it's reminding us of is that as people we are made for community.

[12 : 08] We are made for relationships. So that separation and loss hurt. And into that I want to say that in this darkness that we're experiencing not just nationally but globally, Good Friday provides deep resources to provide hope and comfort for you and for me.

I want us to see that on the cross Jesus endures infinite isolation. Let me remind you of the mocking words of verse 31 that we read.

Some of the religious leaders mocking Jesus. He saved others but he can't save himself. Now they are profoundly wrong in that.

Jesus could call down legions of angels to save himself but he won't because he knows this is the father's plan and he is willing and obedient to that plan.

He has come on God's rescue mission. He is God's Christ. He is anointed for the special task of saving people. And so he has come as Mark reminds us to give his life as a ransom to pay the price to release people from slavery, slavery to sin as we discover.

[13 : 39] So Jesus won't save himself because this is the only way for you and I to be forgiven. It is the only hope for us to have our guilt before God removed.

It is the only way that peace with God can be restored. It is God's means for granting eternal life to us. So Jesus has come on a rescue mission as our substitute taking sin and its punishment.

And that's what we see on Good Friday as Jesus is dying on the cross. And we can connect this with the experience of isolation if we go all the way back to the Garden of Eden beginning of the Bible as God is surveying as it were his perfect creation he says there's one thing that's not good. He says it's not good for the man to be alone. So in God's eyes a perfect life is a life in which we have loving relationships.

That begins with a loving relationship with God our creator and our sustainer but it also includes loving relationships with people.

[14 : 58] We are made for families and friendships and for community. And one of the amazing things about what's been happening during the virus is to see the solidarity and the community that's emerged.

You know, think about a few months ago all the division and the tension because of Brexit. That's all forgotten now. People are pulling together. So whether that's clapping for the NHS, whether it's virtual choirs, whether it's people doing PE with Joe, whether it's digital church, we are being reminded that we need others.

And technology is making those gatherings possible and we're so thankful. But it's also a reminder of the problem of sin.

So the Bible says to us that one of the things sin does is it isolates. It separates us. So when Adam and Eve, when they sinned against God, they first of all rejected God, so they separated themselves from God and when God came looking for them, they hid from God.

So there is that isolation between God and people because of sin. But then sin also causes separation between us in our human relationships too, doesn't it?

[16 : 18] You think about the impact of anger or gossip or jealousy or lies and how that can cause relationships to break down and for separation to happen.

And further, isolation also speaks to us of the punishment due to sin. So God announced to Adam and Eve, and it says it in other parts of the Bible, that the wages of sin is death.

Spiritual death, which is eternal isolation and separation from God and all his goodness and love. Remember, every good thing we have comes from our good God.

Eternal punishment, it is when all that is left of us to experience from God is his just judgment against sin.

That's a very somber, sobering reality. To recognise that without Jesus, your sin and mine separates you from the loving relationship with God that you are made for.

[17 : 36] But here's the good news of Good Friday. Why do we call it Good Friday? Because here we see that despite human evil as they put Jesus to death that is God's good and loving plan of salvation, Jesus has come to rescue us.

We read of Jesus when he's on the cross, we read of a supernatural darkness coming. Jesus plunges himself into the darkness of God's judgment in order to save us.

Jesus in love for a sinful world takes the exclusion that you and I deserve opening the way for us to enjoy God's embrace by faith in him.

And that takes us to verse 34. Verse 34, what's happening here? Jesus cries out in a loud voice words which mean my God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

Now people who have studied the Bible recognise that every time Jesus prays in the Bible he calls God his father except here he says my God, my God.

[18 : 53] What's happening here? Jesus as he is bearing our sins he feels forsaken by his father or to put it another way he feels isolated from separated from his father having known the perfect infinite love of God for all eternity here on the cross going under God's judgment for sin for the very first time he loses his sense of his father's love as he is overtaken by that sense of being under God's wrath and judgment on sin as it doesn't fall on the people who deserve it that's us but as it falls on Jesus because of

God's grace and kindness sin why did he endure that experience why the isolation and the only answer is that he does it for you and for me that on the cross Jesus faces the exclusion that we deserve our sin should separate us from God and his love forever because we've turned our back on him and we've made God our enemy Jesus takes our place and takes our punishment so the price for our salvation is Jesus exclusion and he's willing to pay that price so Jesus does that so that you and I might enjoy intimacy and embrace when we read the death of Jesus this is no ordinary death this is not an ordinary feeling of loneliness during a time of suffering and we have heard and read of much in terms of people suffering and dying alone this is more this is deeper and more profound even than that here is as

Turretan puts it the son of God condemned for us by God and immediately we begin to see the effects of Christ death so Mark as he writes his gospel he takes his camera lens and he moves from the cross panning over towards the temple in Jerusalem and what's happening there verse 38 the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom what was this curtain it was the barrier within the temple separating holy God from sinful people that barrier is now removed the no entry sign has been taken down now there is access how because Jesus body has been torn in two on the cross that's how we can have access to a holy and a perfect God now through

Jesus we can enter God's presence and experience his joy and all because Jesus feels excluded by his father so that you and I by trusting in Jesus can be embraced by our father in heaven Jesus felt isolated from his father as he carries our sin so if we trust Jesus as our saviour he forgives our sins so that we can enjoy intimacy of knowing and enjoying God Father Son and Holy Spirit so this good Friday let's remember with thankfulness Jesus isolation what does it mean for you and me today as we sit on our own and in small groups as our churches lie empty when there's so much chaos and fear around this loving sacrifice Jesus losing a sense of his father's love means that you and I need never go through that we can always know the love of

God and Jesus who is God with us it means for us too that the suffering saviour when we look at Jesus dying on the cross it's proof of God's love here is God in love satisfying his justice as Jesus pays for sin on our behalf demonstrating his love in the cost to bring us back to himself for a world broken by sin the cross is God's loving response it's a gift for you and me to receive by faith and it also means for us that we have a God who identifies with us Jesus identifies with us in pain in suffering in isolation and he promises just as he was with us then taking our place at the cross he is with his people now and more than that he also gives us future hope of an end to suffering there is this glorious promise that

[24 : 32] Jesus will come back and he'll make all things new and he'll take his people to be with him forever and we will live those who are trusting in Jesus will live free of sin free of suffering free of virus free of death free to enjoy the loving community that we were made for free to enjoy the eternal embrace of our God and Saviour there is good news in Good Friday in our isolation now let's sing together once again the modern hymn the power of the cross oh to see the dawn of the darkest day

Christ on the road to Calvary tried by sinful men torn and beaten then nailed to a cross of wood this the power of the cross Christ became sin for us took the blame for the wrath we stand forgiven at the cross oh to see the pain written on your face bearing the awesome weight of sin every bitter thought every evil deed crowning your blood stained brow this the power of the cross

Christ became sin sin for us took the blame bore the wrath we stand forgiven at the cross then theoph his God me you and bet mad bows his head curtain torn in two dead are raised to life finish the victory this is the the power of the cross christ became sin for us took the blame for the wrath we stand forgiven at the cross oh to see my name written in the word for through your suffering i am free death is crushed to death life is mine to live one through your selfless love this is the power of the cross son of god slave for us what a love what a cost we stand forgiven at the cross what a love what a cost we stand forgiven at the cross now i wanted to close by reading psalm 22 this psalm which prophesied the suffering and the victory of jesus a psalm written by david hundreds of years

and before jesus came but speaking powerfully of his suffering and his victory and so i'll read as we finish my god my god why have you forsaken me why are you so far from saving me so far from the words of my groaning oh my god i cry out by day but you do not answer by night and am not silent yet you are enthroned as the holy one you are the praise of israel in you our fathers put their trust they trusted and you delivered them they cried to you and were saved in you they trusted and were not disappointed but i am a worm and not a man scorned by men and despised by the people all who see me mock me they hurl insults shaking their heads he trusts in the lord let the lord rest in the lord let the lord rest in the lord let him deliver him let him deliver him since he delights in him yet you brought me out of the womb you made me trust in you even at my mother's breast from birth i was cast upon you from my mother's womb you have been my god do not be far from me for trouble is near and there is no one to help many bulls surround me strong bulls of bashan encircle me roaring lions tearing their prey open their mouths wide against me i am poured out like water and all my bones are out of joint my heart has turned to wax it has melted away within me my strength is dried up like a pot sherd and my tongue sticks to the roof of my mouth you lay me in the dust of death dogs have surrounded me a band of evil men has encircled me they have pierced my hands and my feet i can count all my bones people stare and gloat over me they divide my garments among them and cast lots for my clothing but you oh lord be not far off oh my strength come quickly to help me deliver my life from the sword my precious life from the power of the dogs rescue me from the mouth of the lions save me from the horns of the wild oxen i will declare your name to my brothers in the congregation i will praise you you who fear the lord praise him all you descendants of jacob honour him revere him all you descendants of israel for he has not despised or disdained the suffering of the afflicted one he has not hidden his face from him but has listened to his cry for help from you comes the theme of my praise in the great assembly before those who fear you will i fulfill my vows the poor will eat and be satisfied they who seek the lord will praise him may your hearts live forever all the ends of the earth will remember and turn to the lord and all the families of the nations will bow down before him for dominion belongs to the lord and he rules over the nations all the riches of the earth will feast and worship all who go down to the dust will kneel before him those who cannot keep themselves alive posterity will serve him future generations will be told about the lord they will proclaim his righteousness to a people yet unborn for he has done it we will come towards the earth even around the pasapas by which he trains the bells he lurid holler but he reflecting his presence with the yester with the might Erin in this one one i