

The Cross of Jesus is Good News Part 2 (Romans 3:19-26)

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[0 : 00] Well, good morning and welcome again to Digital Church. Glad you're able to tune in so that we can worship together.

Let's hear our call to worship, which comes from Psalm 123. Reminds us of the attitude we are to bring as we come to God.

I lift up my eyes to you, to you whose throne is in heaven. As the eyes of slaves look to the hand of their master, as the eyes of a maid look to the hand of her mistress, so our eyes look to the Lord our God till he shows us mercy.

We look to our great God who is good, who is loving, and we will ask him to show us mercy. And we'll recenter our hearts and our minds on him as we worship. Let's sing together.

There, first of all, Behold Our God, and then two sections of Psalm 103, and Kellan will lead us in this. Who has held the oceans in his hands?

[1 : 21] Who has numbered every grain of salt? Kings and nations tremble at his voice.

O creation rises to rejoice. Behold our God, seated on his throne.

Come, let us adore him. Behold our King, nothing can compare.

Come, let us adore him. Who has given counsel to the Lord?

Who can question any of his words? Who can teach the one who knows all things?

[2 : 41] Who can follow all his wondrous deeds? Behold our God, seated on his throne.

Come, let us adore him. Come, let us adore him. Behold our King, nothing can compare.

Come, let us adore him. God, let us adore him.

Who has felt the nails upon his hands, bearing all the guilt of sin for me.

God eternal, humble to the grave, Jesus, Savior, risen now to reign.

[3 : 57] Behold our God, seated on his throne, come let us adore him.

Behold our King, nothing can compare, come let us adore him.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Praise God, my soul, with all my heart.

Let me exalt his holy name. Forget not all his benefits.

His praise, my soul, in song proclaim. The Lord forgives you all your sins, and heals your sickness and distress.

[5 : 04] Your life he rescues from the grave, and crowns you in his tenderness. And crowns you in his tenderness.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. The Lord is merciful and kind, to anger slow and full of grace.

He will not constantly reprove, or in his anger hide his face.

He does not punish our misdeeds, or give our sins their just reward.

How brave his love, as high as heaven, towards all those who fear the Lord.

[6 : 04] Towards all those who fear the Lord. Now, let's continue to worship as we pray.

Lord, we began with a psalm that encouraged us to look to you with humble dependence, that you might show us mercy. We ask that you'd help us to look to Jesus, to see him as our Lord, to see him as our King, to see him as our only Saviour, to recognise him as that friend who sticks closer than any brother, that good shepherd who laid down his life for us, who wants to lead and guide and protect us.

And that we would look to you to show mercy to us, and to our nation and to our world in this time of trouble that we find ourselves in. Lord, we place ourselves into your care, recognising our own limitations and inabilities, and trusting that you are all sufficient, that you have power for us.

You have wisdom where we lack it. We need your love, and you are ready to show that to us. Lord, we pray for those who need special help.

We pray for any who are feeling particularly lonely or isolated. We pray for those who are suffering through the virus, and we pray that you might spare them.

[7 : 45] We think of our NHS workers who are on the front line. We pray for them in difficult conditions, with their own anxiety, with families that care for them.

We thank you for the way they are willing to love, and to serve, and to care. And we ask that you would protect them. Lord, we pray for mercy that the virus would slow, that it would be contained. And we also pray for mercy that this would be a time of us reassessing what we live for, that it might be a chance for us to slow down and to think about you, maybe for the first time in our lives.

Lord, we thank you that we're coming up to Easter, at the time when we remember that in your great love, you sent Jesus into the world to live a perfect life of obedience that we all fail to live, then to die as a sacrifice for sin, so that by trusting in him, we might be forgiven and we might have the gift of eternal life.

We thank you that we remember that he didn't stay dead, but that he rose in victory, that you, Lord God, were satisfied with the sacrifice that he offered on behalf of his people.

[9 : 00] And so we ask that you'd help us to prepare our hearts and our minds for Easter. And we pray that our world that so badly needs hope would come to find real hope in Jesus during Easter.

Amen. Now, let's read together. Let's hear the word of God again. We're back in Romans chapter 3. And we're going to concentrate on verses 22 to 24 today.

But let's hear verses 21 to 26 again. Through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus, God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement through faith in his blood.

He did this to demonstrate his justice because in his forbearance, he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished. He did it to demonstrate his justice at the present time so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus.

Now, let's think about those words that we find in verses 22 to 24 as we continue to think about how the cross is good news.

[10 : 38] Our question for today is this one. How can I find a future-proof hope? Perhaps like the commentators, you're beginning to ask the question, what will life be like post-COVID-19?

What will the economic impact be nationally, globally and in your own family finances? What jobs and industries will make it and which will fold? And what will the implications be for your own work? What about social gatherings? Those simple pleasures we used to enjoy, will they be the same or will they be different? When we think about all the impact this pandemic is having, it is fair to say it comes to us as a destructive enemy.

It is interrupting normal life. It is isolating us from one another and the everyday things we used to take for granted. It is relentless in pursuing us in every corner of life.

We wake up and we check the news and we hear it in conversation and we see it in government restrictions when we go shopping or go for a walk. And it leads us to ask the question, will I get through this okay?

[11 : 54] What will the impact be? What will the final outcome of it all be in my life? And here's why I want to say today that the cross stands as good news and good news we all need today.

The cross gives hope against this enemy that we face and against the even greater enemy of death that lurks in the background. It helps us to answer the question, our passage will help us answer the question, how can Jesus' death equip me to deal with these setbacks and suffering?

How can I find a hope that is future-proof? So we're going to look at that section of Romans 3 to see what we can discover. First of all, just as we saw last week, it begins with bad news.

It begins with the bad news of falling short of God's glory. Notice we're all included in this. Verse 22, there is no difference for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

Now, in recent years, there has been the rise of the superhero origin stories and you may or may not be interested in that, but they all have a backstory or they're filling in a backstory to explain how did our character get here and how did he get to be like this?

[13 : 14] Where do we find the origin story for humanity? It is found in Genesis 1-3. How did we get here? Well, we were created by God in his image to display his glory and to worship and to enjoy him.

Two pictures that might help us. Think of your life as a mirror. We were made to reflect God's glory in God's world. Not to take glory for ourselves, but to reflect it out the way.

Or think about a small statue. In the ancient Near East, when Moses was writing Genesis, kings would place these little statues around their kingdom to say, I reign here, to remind those in the kingdom, this is the king who's in charge of us.

The Bible says we are God's living icons. And we live in this world for his glory to say, our king, our God reigns.

So when we read Genesis 1-2, we find a picture of absolute perfection, perfect relationships, perfect love, enjoying life that is flourishing and good. So we need to ask ourselves the question, how did the world get to be like this?

[14 : 33] Like it is today with all its brokenness, with all its sadness and pain. And that's why we need Genesis chapter 3. Genesis chapter 3 explains the reality of all falling short of the glory of God.

And it begins with Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. Adam and Eve's sin, where they listened to the voice of the snake, the devil, and they were deceived to pursue their own glory, to seek to be like God themselves and to stop listening to God and his word.

And with that came curse. So all the brokenness, all the fall, all the pain that we experience is a direct result of what happened there in the garden, Adam and Eve's sin.

It led them to lose their perfect standing, their righteousness before God. They are driven out of the garden, God's perfect place where he lived with them.

And they're told that ultimately they would die. And since then, as people, we are mirrors, we are reflecting the image of God, but we are cracked and broken mirrors.

[15 : 44] We fail to truly reflect the glory of God. We, to use the language of Romans 3, we fall short of the glory of God in our lives. So we can see that in various ways.

Three ways we see it. We miss the glory of God like a target that we aim for, but we miss. Let me speak to families just for a moment.

I wonder if you are finding that you're playing lots of different games at this time to pass some of the time. When you read the rules for certain games, and hopefully you do read the rules, they can be helpful, classic games like Monopoly and Uno, you will notice now they deliberately advise against playing by house rules, those sort of made-up family rules.

Their basic point is we are the game designers, we know the best way to play, and perhaps you've had that experience that house rules can lead to chaos and carnage and all kinds of confusion.

Well, here's the point for us in our life.

God is our grand designer. And when we ignore his rule, and when we ignore his rules for our life, we will miss what is best, we will miss his glory and the enjoyment of it.

[17 : 00] And even when we try to live by the rules, we realise that we miss the mark so often, we break those rules, so again, we miss that standard of God's glory. So we miss, we fall short of the glory of God.

We also fall short because we swap, we exchange the glory of God and we give glory to other things. We talk about idolatry and in our culture and society, we talk about idolatry, things that are idols in our hearts and in our lives.

What does that mean? What does that look like? Well, it's when we treasure something, anything, more than Jesus. That might be another person, it might be an object, it might be a career, it might be financial security, it might be our beauty or intelligence.

When we place anything as the most important thing in our life, that's an idol for us. When we find our value or significance in anything else, that's an idol to us. And one of the things that this coronavirus pandemic is showing to us, I think, is that so many of the idols that we live for, so much that we place our hope in, we're now discovering those things can be lost and they can be taken from us, whether that's our health, whether that's our finance, whether that's our job security, whether that's our relationships.

And we discover that these things are too small, we need something bigger to place our hope in. So we swap a treasuring God for something else.

[18 : 28] We also deliberately sometimes rob God of glory. So remember, according to the Bible, we're made as living icons. We are to represent, to reflect, and to worship God because of his glory.

But we take that glory that belongs to God, we take it to ourselves so often. It's like we take a can of spray paint and all over God's creation we graffiti, I rule, okay.

Not God rules, I rule. God is forgotten. We live for number one so we fall short of the glory of God when we rob God of what he deserves. And the result is we do not have a right standing with God. We remain separated from God by our sin. we face a verdict of condemned at the end of our lives and without Jesus, all of us, we're in the same crisis.

So whether morally or religiously or spiritually, you feel like you're in the gutter, in the lowest kind of place, or whether you feel like you're on the mountaintop and you're doing really well as a good person, none of us can reach the stars.

[19 : 39] not one of us can reach God's perfect standard. So if we trust in ourselves, we will not have future hope. We will not have God's positive verdict which is the one verdict to live for.

So that's the bad news. But there is good news, there is great news here in our passage that we are justified and we are redeemed by Jesus. There are three words and ideas full of good news.

Let's just remind ourselves of verse 24. We are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. Justified, redemption and free grace.

Let's look at each of these. Let's think about justify. This takes us into a law court and in God's law court there are two verdicts that can be passed on a person. We can either be condemned or we can be justified.

Now according to the Bible, according to Romans 3, what do we deserve? We deserve condemnation because we've fallen short of God's glory. We have broken his law and we've been guilty of spiritual treason where we've sought to take him off the throne to place ourselves there.

[20 : 50] So then it stands as good news that by faith in Jesus we are actually given the verdict of justified. That means that our sins are pardoned, our wrongdoing is covered over and that's wonderful, isn't it?

And also, God declares of us there is no basis for any charges against that person. You and I, by faith in Jesus, we can be considered moral, good citizens, perfect law keepers.

Now how can that be? You know your heart, I know mine. How can this be? Well this is why the cross is such good news because there at the cross a great exchange takes place.

Jesus takes my sin and my guilt and he faces the punishment for that there on the cross and in exchange I am forgiven and I am pardoned.

Jesus lives and dies in perfect loving obedience to his Father and he gives that to us, to his people, so that we can be reckoned to be in right standing with God while he takes our sin and our guilt.

[21 : 57] Here is the love of God. Jesus is willing to take your guilty verdict and to give you his righteous record if you will simply believe in him.

This is why we call Good Friday good. What's happening there on the cross as Jesus dies, he is going under the curse of God for the law that is broken and he's doing that for his people so that by faith we can receive God's blessing.

Jesus faces death on the cross so that by trusting in him he can grant to us eternal life. Jesus there on the cross is being punished so that when we believe that he is our saviour, that he died for us, we are pardoned.

And then on Easter Sunday Jesus is raised to life and his people share in that new life, in that new victory, in that great future hope that Jesus won by defeating our enemies of Satan and sin and death.

So in Jesus we are justified and that is good, good news. then there is also the word redemption and I guess maybe we are familiar with the word redemption.

[23 : 23] We talk about redemption codes for online shopping and we think about sporting redemption where failure becomes success. Well for Paul's readers, so Paul wrote the book of Romans and according to the Bible we need to think what does redemption mean?

Well for first century people living in Rome who would get Paul's letter first of all, they would go to the marketplace and they would think redemption price was the price to release a slave from the slave market.

When somebody who knew their Bibles read this they would think of the story of the Exodus of the time when the nation of Israel was slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt and God acted in power to release them, to redeem them.

or they might think of the image of the figure in the Old Testament of the kinsman redeemer. So when a person an Old Testament Israelite got themselves into financial difficulties they could sell some land or they could sell themselves into slavery and a kinsman redeemer could then pay a price to buy back that land or buy back that person from their debt.

So there is a price paid, there is a redeemer and the outcome is freedom. So how is the cross of Jesus? Good news. Well the Bible makes clear and our own conscience I think testifies to us that we are slaves to sin.

[24 : 56] Unable to live for God's glory as we should. Unwilling to live for God's glory because we want glory for ourselves. So we have this debt hanging over us that's a growing debt.

We owe God perfect love and perfect obedience in all of our life all of our days and that is a debt that we can never and could never pay.

And so Jesus is good news to us because he pays for us. He is the one who pays the ransom. The ransom price is his blood.

Peter, a friend of Jesus said we weren't redeemed by silver and gold we're redeemed by the precious blood of Jesus. through him spilling his blood shedding his blood there is forgiveness for our sin and his perfect life of absolute obedience and always giving glory to his father meets that standard that we fail to keep.

So redemption is found in Jesus and again here is the love of God. Jesus has come to set you free. Free from a guilty verdict on your life so that you can say now there is no condemnation for me because I'm trusting in Jesus.

[26 : 10] All that shame and that guilt that we feel in our lives Jesus wants to set us free by paying that price and covering our sin and our shame and Jesus wants to set you free from fear of death and judgment because he wants to give you the hope of eternal life and security and knowing there is joy to come after and that only happens because God loves because God in Jesus stoops down and enters in because God through Jesus takes the initiative to rescue us and that takes us to our last word the idea of free grace we are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that comes from Jesus so you might be asking at this point well this sounds wonderful what do I need to do and that's our instinct isn't it but the answer is there is nothing we need to do Jesus has paid it all when Jesus said on the cross it is finished he meant his work of salvation was complete so what's left for us to do is to say sorry for us and to turn away from it and to accept the free gift by faith that free gift of a right standing with God of peace with God of being redeemed we are to believe on Jesus to go with empty hands to our generous Father and ask him to fill us with his love and with his peace and when we do that he will so the Bible says to us that Jesus alone can give a future proof hope a hope beyond any and all the enemies that we face

COVID-19 and others this virus is a powerful and indeed a painful reminder to us that some things can and some things will be taken from us but God God's love for us in Jesus it can never be lost it can never be taken from us Jesus has come to where we are he has entered into our broken world so that one day he will take us to be where he is a perfect world of hope and peace of enjoying his glory forever in a world without sickness and pain and death so when your life is full of fear when you are full of uncertainty Jesus gives hope by faith in Jesus the final verdict on your life is brought forward so that you can know today in an uncertain world here is one thing I am sure of I am sure that I am loved by God that I am accepted by God that beyond death there is life and joy for me how do we know that where do we look to find that security we look to Jesus death on the cross we see him paying the price to redeem us so that by grace you and I might be justified now let's sing together a hymn that will help us to remember that great truth the hymn is Christ the sure and steady anchor Christ the sure and steady anchor in the fury of the storm when the winds of doubt blow through me and my sails have all been torn in the suffering in the sorrow when my sinking hopes are few

I will hold fast to the anchor it shall never never be revealed Christ the sure and steady anchor while the tempest rages on when temptation claims the battle and it seems the night has won deeper still then goes the anchor though I justly stand accused I will hold fast to the anchor it shall never be removed Christ the sure and steady anchor through the floods of unbelief hopeless somehow oh my soul now lift your eyes to calvary this my ballast of assurance see his love forever proved I will hold fast to the anchor it shall never be removed Christ the sure friend steady anchor as we face the wave of death when these trials give way to glory and we draw our final breath we will cross that great horizon clouds behind and life secured and the cup will be the better for the storms

that we endure rise the shore of our salvation ever faithful ever true we will hold fast to the anchor it shall never be moved and now let's pray together using the words at the end of [33 : 18] Romans chapter 8 a wonderful chapter of hope of future glory of being more than conquerors through Jesus so here's how it finishes I am convinced that neither death nor life neither angels nor demons neither the present nor the future nor any powers neither height nor depth nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord may each one of us know that love of God may each one of you have that security of knowing that nothing can separate you from God's love if you are in Christ Jesus may you know that today and every day amen and now before you go a couple of things first of all to say that on Good Friday which is this coming Friday we will have I'm not sure of the details yet but check YouTube check our website check Facebook we will have some form of Good Friday service that will certainly include readings and reflections and hopefully we can have some songs to sing as well so join us then you'll keep your eye out for the details and then this week digital tea and coffee we'd love to do something a little bit different and we'd love to see a bit of a group mix-up to see new people having the chance to join in so normally it tends to be community groups sticking together but what we thought would be a good idea since I guess it's going to be a little while before we're together again and to remind ourselves that we're all part of one big families that we'd have a chance to join with different people and have a chat so at 12pm there will be different digital hosts waiting to welcome you share a time of friendship bring your own cup of tea and coffee bring a cake or a biscuit and enjoy that if you don't have the details check your emails or check Elvanto and you can find how you can join in with that so be brave embrace the technology and enjoy a time of friendship together