

The Christ who carried the cross

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Preacher: John Woods

[0 : 00] Welcome this evening, this Palm Sunday evening, to this pre-recorded service here from Calvary Church in Brighton.

! You will have seen that we are an independent Baptist church on the south coast of England. Normally 70 to 80 of us meeting on a Sunday morning back in normal times.

My name is Philip Wells. I'm going to be introducing this evening. I work for the church as the minister, but it's my privilege to hand over for the talk to my dear friend and colleague John Woods, who's been so helpful to us over past months and who's going to be speaking to us again on the subject of the Christ who carried the cross.

We are coming towards Easter and it's a wonderful time for reflecting on the heart of the Christian message in the Easter story of Christ who died and was buried and rose again.

And you'll have noticed that there's a little series of five Easter questions which are available separately. And if you're a newcomer to Christian things, just looking, just interested, I do recommend those questions to you.

[1 : 23] They're available on this channel and you'll find a link somewhere to guide you in the right direction. So welcome from me. We're told in the Bible to fix our thoughts on Jesus, the apostle and high priest whom we confess to fix our thoughts on him, to think about him.

And that's exactly what we're able to do in this particular week, at this particular season. And to remember that his death and the meaning of it, that he was pierced for our transgressions and he was bruised for our iniquities.

We like sheep have gone astray, turned each one to his own way, but the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all. And that's the song we're going to sing in the book.

It's 422. He was pierced for our transgressions. He was pierced for our transgressions.

And bruised for our iniquities. And to bring us peace he was punished.

[3 : 07] And by his stripes we are healed. He was led like a lamb to the slaughter.

Although he was innocent of crime. And cut off from the land of the living.

He paid for the guilt that was mine. We like sheep have gone astray, turned each one to his own way.

And the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

He was pierced for our transgressions. And bruised for our iniquities.

[4 : 26] And to bring us peace. And to bring us peace he was punished. And by his stripes we are healed.

He was laid like a lamb to the slaughter. And to bring us peace and peace.

And to bring us peace and peace. To bring us peace and peace. To bring us peace and peace. To bring us peace and peace. To bring us peace and peace. To bring us peace and peace. To bring us peace and peace.

To bring us peace and peace. To bring us peace and peace. For the guilt that was mine We like sheep have gone astray Turn each one to his own way And the Lord has laid on him The iniquity of us all Now we've sung, let's pray together.

We come humbly before you, Almighty God, Living God, Redeeming God, Glorious God, And we come to ask that our thoughts And minds and hearts might be fixed On Jesus Christ, our Redeemer And that we might fix our eyes on him As we're told to To consider him in his work for us In his sacrificial love In his innocent righteousness In his powerful resurrection In his ascension into heaven In his enthronement on high In his power and interest in his church And grace towards his church And in his one day coming to restore all things And make all things new Help us to fix our eyes on Jesus The pioneer and perfecter of our faith

[6 : 50] And in the meanwhile, Lord, we pray that you would uphold each of your dear people With all that they might be going through Some lonely, some poorly, some stressed, some pressured, some isolated But all needing each day Help us as a church In these times may we find that you are the strong, reliable Lord who guides us through And may it please you to build your kingdom And cause your will to be done on earth as it is in heaven And that in future days More and more glory will come to your name Pray for the churches that we know of Gospel preaching churches Whether large or small Around about here Please strengthen each and every one And we pray that as we come and listen to your word It may do us good And stick in our hearts

And change us So we confess our sins That we need your forgiveness We ask you to be at work To be changing us And making us into the image of Jesus Christ And we pray that you'll be setting our hearts on him And not on anything else or anything less So come and be with us in this time together This evening we pray Please bless our world with all its needs And the various governments of our nations And our country Have mercy and cause people to turn to you And find their comfort and strength In the true and living God And we pray these things in Jesus' name Amen Amen I'm going to read from scripture In Luke chapter 23 Verses 26 to 31 And this is the scene as Jesus is led towards the cross And these are the things that were said on that fateful day Luke 23 verse 26 As they 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 A large number of people followed him Including women who mourned and wailed for him Jesus turned and said to them Daughters of Jerusalem Do not weep for me Weep for yourselves and weep for your children For behold the time will come when you will say Blessed are the barren women The wombs that never bore And the breasts that never nursed Then they will say to the mountains Fall on us And to the hills Cover us For if men do these things When the tree is green What will happen When it is dry There's the scene Leading up to the cross

And we're going to sing about the cross When I look at it Then This is my response When I survey the wondrous cross On which the prince of glory died My richest gain I count but loss And poor contempt On all my pride When I survey the wondrous cross On which the prince of glory died My richest gain I count but loss And poor contempt On all my pride Forbid it Lord That I should boast Saved in the cross Of Christ my God The very things That children me most I sacrifice them to his blood See from his head His hands His hands His feet Sorrow And love Domingo down When did such love And sorrow meet For thorns compose So rich a crown His life [12 : 04] His life Blood like a crimson rock Closed all his body God On the tree And I am dead And I am dead To overflow And overflow His death To me And overflow And overflow His death To me Where the whole realm Of nature Of nature Mine That were an offering Far too small But so amazing

So divine Demands my soul My life My own And in a moment And in a moment I'll hand over to John Woods Let's pray again Please help us to listen Without being distracted Help us to have open ears to hear And open hearts to receive your word And be changed by it We pray through Jesus Christ Our Saviour Amen In the Gospel of Luke We see the disciples on the road With Jesus It's more than a metaphor It's a reality They really are travelling From A to B With Jesus And in Luke's Gospel

Ten whole chapters From chapter 9 Through to chapter 19 And in Luke's Gospel Are occupied with Jesus Taking the significant journey Towards Jerusalem And towards the cross Since chapter 19 In Luke's Gospel Jesus has been In Jerusalem In and around Jerusalem Revealing himself And finally Being arrested And tried And here we find him On the final lap Of his journey As he approaches The cross In chapter 9 We have an anticipation Of this In these words As the time approached For him to be taken up To heaven Jesus resolutely Set out For Jerusalem Jesus Is going to the cross Not by mistake By mistake It's not a tragic accident Events have not Somehow overcome him He has taken this turn He has taken this journey Because this Is his destination This is his destiny He is obedient unto death Even death On a cross And as he approaches The cross As he travels With the cross beam On his shoulder We see a huge crowd Jostling around him We see a solitary figure Who becomes a helper In his moment of distress And we see a group of women Who express their sorrow At what they're seeing We're on the road With Jesus What's interesting About this particular journey And it's unique to Luke Is that Jesus speaks On this journey And he speaks With a prophetic voice That shows the people Who are around Exactly what's going on And exactly how they ought To respond

To these events Jesus Speaks about the significance Of the events that lead up To the crucifixion And we do well To listen To his voice On the road to the cross And on the cross itself When he gets there The individual The man who assists Jesus In his hour of need Is named as Simon of Cyrene And he's named Because for the early church There would have been Some significance in the naming In fact there's reference To his two sons In Romans chapter 16 As though this event This event This kind of seemingly Random event Where someone is randomly Taken out of the crowd Has a deeper And long lasting significance In the life of the person Involved Simon of Cyrene Is selected to carry The crossbeam of Jesus Presumably because Jesus has become [17 : 10] Exhausted through The mockery The mockery And the trial And the beatings Whatever the reason Simon of Cyrene Takes the crossbeam And carries it for Jesus It is a simple Act of service Although In the Gospels So often Nothing is Quite as it seems And maybe Luke Is trying to Say to us That Simon of Cyrene Was doing something That was even more significant Than initially Met the eye He was carrying The cross Of Jesus For Jesus And for the disciples For Christ And for Christians All roads lead To the cross Jesus' path As we've seen In Luke Led to Jerusalem And led to this Particular moment Where he is crucified Upon the cross When he spoke

In Luke chapter 9 About his death About his crucifixion He said to his disciples In Luke chapter 9 Verse 23 If anyone would follow After me He must deny himself Take up his cross Daily And follow Me Maybe in Luke's mind He makes that connection And he sees Simon of Cyrene Symbolically Becoming The first Of those public Disciples To take up The cross And follow Jesus You know Sometimes When we Are in An event We're Observing An event We Know we're there But we don't Really see the significance Of it It doesn't To be Real To us Simon Was in The crowd In the General Millet He's selected To

Assist Jesus I suppose It would have been Possible just to have done that And for it To have had no long term Impact on his life Just as someone Could be here tonight Listening to the sermon Without it really having An impact upon them at all It's possible isn't it For a child to be taken to church Or to be made to hear a sermon Not because they want to But because their parents Are doing it And somehow For what's What's said And what's done To have very little In the way of impact Lasting impact In their lives Simon Carried The cross Of Jesus The indications The hints In the New Testament Is that perhaps it meant A bit more Than that You're listening to a sermon About Jesus About him going to the cross You may hear some of the phrases But it can mean More Than that If only We'll allow it

To mean more And there were women And the women Were weeping And mourning For For Jesus At the verse 27 Of course Middle Eastern People Do wear their hearts On their sleeves And they Are able To express their feelings In a way that perhaps The stiff upper lip Brit Finds it difficult to understand Public displays Of Sorrow Particularly By women Something Which was A common Occurrence In the first century world And still a common Occurrence The women See Jesus And they Weep And they Wail I wonder what they saw It's interesting That there is no physical description Of Jesus In the Gospels

We don't know what he looks like And there's no detailed Physical description Of the crucifixion either We're told about The people who surround That event We're told About some of the words That are spoken To Jesus And spoken by Jesus But the actual physical representation Is left to our imagination They did see What looked like A very sad And sorry figure A lone figure Trodding towards the cross And Quite obviously It stirred up Sympathy Feelings of sympathy In their hearts I mean It's good to cry Isn't it?

[21 : 55] Sometimes tears Can be beneficial Sometimes we can bottle them up But sometimes we let them flow Sometimes we let them flow And We We connect with our With our feelings In this last week or so There's been a A vigil In various parts Of the country Remembering A poor young woman Who was brutally killed In the last week or so And Tears were shed Candles were lit Voices were raised Unfortunately Many of those events Many of those events Were hijacked By people with another agenda But it's a reminder That we are human beings And we do have human feelings And we express them And sometimes we express them In very physical ways With tears Maybe the beating of the chest The women were weeping But Jesus turns to them And he speaks And it's important to recognise That these are unique words

In Luke's Gospel In Luke's Gospel Unique experience Jesus speaking On the road To the cross Itself Do not weep For me Do not weep For me You see Jesus does not need Our sympathy Or our pity Because He is planning to do this This is his destiny He does not need us To look sentimentally

At what's going on It's possible isn't it To look at Christian things To think about the cross And think about it In sentimental terms And to cry perhaps But in the same way As we might cry At the end of a sad film Or at the end of a sad story That it's sentiment Rather than spiritual insight Sentiment Rather than spiritual insight There was a psychological experience The women were feeling They felt psychologically disturbed That a young life A young promising life Was coming to an end And there was sadness About that But possibly It wasn't any deeper than that

Possibly it was just A psychological experience It was Sympathy And pity For someone Who did not ask for that And does not need it Jesus knows what he's doing Jesus knows Where he is going Jesus Is in control And that's one of the wonderful things That we see in the Gospels The majestic Silent Calm Control Of Jesus He is laying down his life It's not being snatched from him Do not weep for me Weep for yourselves And weep for your children Do not weep for me Weep for yourselves And for your children The grief Would be better saved Says Jesus For themselves And their children Because there will be Many reasons in the future Why such tears Should Be shed For the time will come Says Jesus Blessed are the childless women The wombs that never bore And the breasts that never nursed Then they will say to the mountains Fall on us And on the hills Cover us These words Echoing the prophets Like Hosea In Hosea 11 Verse 8 And Echoed In Revelation 6 Concerning The judgments that are to come We see People At such a Moment of crisis That what they are facing Is so horrible That they Ask for the mountains To fall on them So that they might be spared The consequences Of What has befallen them In In Jewish society It was considered to be a great blessing To have a child And a Great blessing Indeed To have many of children And We see many stories

In fact Luke's gospel begins with one Concerning Zechariah the priest And Elizabeth An older Childless couple That There was a certain Sorrow and shame About not having children And Jesus says That Things will be turned on their head That the person who is perceived Not to be blessed Will be considered blessed For not having children Because Their children will not need to face What's coming We hear people say No don't we I don't want to bring children Into the world Because it's such a horrible world I want to spare children So therefore I'm not going to have children They make a conscious decision That will be the case And Jesus says That's the way people will feel Is so Horrendous That they'd rather Be childless And they'd rather That the mountains Fell upon them And they'd rather That the earth Opened up and swallowed them up Because What is coming upon them Is so Terrible Some see

[27 : 03] That the words of Jesus Somehow reflect The words of Zechariah the prophet And I will pour out on the house of David And the inhabitants of Jerusalem A spirit of grace And supplication They will look on Me The one they have pierced And they will mourn For him as one mourns for an only son And grieve bitterly For him as one Maybe Jesus Recognises in the tears of these women Just a very faint echo Of this prophecy of Zechariah Because he is The firstborn son The firstborn son of Mary And the firstborn The one true eternal son of the living God Who has come to earth And this one This firstborn Is dying He is giving his life And although they didn't know it Though they didn't realise What their tears represented

Maybe there is An echo In this deeper sorrow Sometimes people can cry They don't know why they're crying Why are you crying? I'm crying because they're crying Why are you crying? I'm crying because they're crying I don't know why I'm crying Some people get set off very easily But I suppose all tears Are a reminder That we live in a world Of pain and sorrow And loss And some losses Are greater than others And I guess for anyone In the past year The recognition That we lose a loved one And how tragic and sad that is And particularly for a parent A parent of any age Losing a child Of any age It's possibly one of the greatest losses That a human being Can experience Jesus Seeks to give Some context Some perspective To what's going on here Wants us to understand Wants his women to understand And he speaks Words that are Like a proverb Either quoting a proverb Or Or maybe coining A proverb Verse 31 And if men do these things When the tree is green What will happen When it is dry The point is That the fire Hot enough To burn green wood Will Very quickly Burn That which is Dry If the fire is so hot That it can consume Green wood Wet Live wood Well What will happen When the wood is As dry as tinder They say don't they It's kind of good Economically efficient Environmentally friendly To use Kiln dried logs In the wood burner Or the fire Rather than Greener alternatives Those things have not been dried out properly

And that's probably true And Jesus refers to this contrast between green undried tree And dried tree And dry bone dry tree If this has been done in the green tree What will happen in the dry tree If the innocent Jesus The green wood That does not kindle Into flame very easily Can endure this experience of crucifixion What will happen to the dry tree The guilty Those guilty of crucifying Jesus Those guilty of rejecting Jesus What will be their destiny If the destiny of the green tree Is destruction What will be the destiny of the dry tree If God has not spared Jesus

[31 : 26] If the Father has not spared Jesus His one and only Son But has offered him up upon the cross What will be the fate The seriousness of judgment Of those who have rejected The Son that he loves Jesus Seems to be referring to something That he spoke about On a number of occasions in the Gospels The destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70 Which he speaks of in the other Gospels As a time when There would be Unimaginable and unparalleled terror A time when one stone would not stand on another in Jerusalem When the whole city would be devastated When the whole city would be devastated And that according to history Is exactly what happened Don't weep for me But weep for yourselves Weep for the prospect Of being abandoned

Of being devastated By this force That will come upon the city And destroy it Here the green tree is Being crucified Is being destroyed What will happen when the dry tree Meets the full force Of the flame of the wrath of empire And the wrath of God Jesus is the green tree And this story about the green tree Is that which the story of Jesus Swivels in Luke 23 So Pilate three times comes to the people And says he's innocent I find no basis for a charge against this man He's an innocent man Pilate says he's a green tree You shouldn't burn the green tree

It's a green tree He is innocent No basis for a charge against this man The person who is the representative of Roman rule and justice And justice declares publicly three times I find no basis for a charge against this man He is innocent He is innocent And this theme continues As Jesus is addressed by one of the men Who was crucified alongside him Now we're told in Mark's Gospel That both men had insulted Jesus But one of them grew silent And then said to the other man who was crucified The other side of Jesus Don't you fear God?

He said since you're under the same sentence We're punished justly For we're getting what our deeds deserve But this man has done nothing wrong You see this is what happens When a human being is measured against Jesus Against Jesus Against Jesus The straight edge All of us Are shown up to be crooked This man was not measuring himself against the other criminal dying on the cross He was not measuring himself against the crowd But it's kind of easy isn't it sometimes To let ourselves off the hook When we compare ourselves with other people We're not as bad as that person Or that person But no he compares himself with Jesus And compared with Jesus All of us fall short All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God The glory of Jesus Measuring himself against Jesus He says I'm here because I deserve to be here He does not deserve to be here This man has done nothing wrong If he's dying He's dying for another cause If he's dying it's for another purpose He's not dying because of his own sins He must be dying for the sins of others Of course He would have had an insight into What was beating in the heart of Jesus When Jesus prays on the cross there in verse 34 Father forgive them for they do not know what they're doing He would have heard those words Who when they're being crucified Prays for the forgiveness of those who crucify him What kind of person is this?

[36 : 06] What kind of person is this? Who can love the enemy? Who can love those who are persecuting them? What kind of person is this? It's unnatural It's supernatural Of course It is supernatural because Jesus is the Son of God And beating in his heart Is a divine heart of love The man heard Jesus Speak those words of forgiveness And we can only assume that he felt That maybe there was an opportunity for him To experience forgiveness too Jesus Has many titles in the Gospels Rabbi Emmanuel Son of man Messiah Son of God Son of David So many titles

But here In this final moment One man Looking to another man Dying on the cross He uses The very bare title Jesus The naked title Jesus Is stripped and on the cross Jesus is vulnerable upon the cross And here The man takes The stripped down Title Jesus Jesus Which means We're told In Luke and Matthew That he will save his people From their sins Jesus Jesus Jesus Remember me When you come into your kingdom Jesus Remember me Remember me Now he didn't look like a king Stripped And bloodied And beaten He didn't look like a king But suddenly this man's eyes were opened That perhaps

Real kings Look different Maybe real kings rule in a different way Maybe real kings rule and reign through sacrifice Maybe real kings demonstrate their power through weakness Maybe real kings

have a power that cannot be summed up by how many armies they have Or what technology of warfare they might have But maybe their power is displayed in love In reconciling love The power to forgive The power to give people a new start Jesus Remember me When you come into your kingdom And Jesus Turns to this man and says Today You will be with me In paradise Luke loves the word

Today The angels appear to the shepherds Today In the town of David A saviour Is born Who is Christ the Lord When Jesus Steps into the Synagogue in Nazareth And he takes the scroll And reads from Isaiah He completes it Rolls up the scroll And says Today these words Are fulfilled in your hearing When Jesus goes to the home of Zacchaeus At the end of that long road From Luke chapter 9 through to Luke 19 He says to Zacchaeus Today salvation has come to this house For this man has become A son of Abraham A son of Abraham And now upon the cross Today Today You will be with me In paradise In paradise You see here You see here We are standing At the foot Of the cross

And standing at the foot of the cross We see True majesty We see True kingship We see Jesus Conquering Through sacrifice Conquering Through forgiving love Through forgiving love Breaking down resistance Not with force Not with the force of armies But with the force of love Of tenderness Kindness And this man The man crucified next to him Is melted By that reality And we stand At the foot of the cross And we see that love That has come down To heaven To show us God's desire For us to be his And we glimpse Eternity We glimpse the eternity That's on offer When we come to faith

[41 : 13] In Jesus For this man This man who looked to Jesus He really saw He saw by faith That Jesus Was the true king And the true ruler The true rescuer He realised That he was guilty He realised That he was empty He realised He was lost He was guilty And Jesus could forgive him He was empty And Jesus Could Fill him He was lost And Jesus Had come To find him This year Is 100 years Since Events In Lowerstoft In 1921 In what was called A forgotten revival When God brought a man called Douglas Brown To preach in Lowerstoft And When I was a pastor there In Lowerstoft There was a man called Hector Who was a member of the church

And Hector Had been Around In 1921 He Had a friend Who Was praying For him Later She became his wife And one evening He was at the services Douglas Brown was preaching And When Douglas Brown was preaching At the end of the sermon He would sometimes walk up and down The aisles of the church Praying And Speaking to the people Urging them to become Christians And in one moment He stood Beside Hector And He was silent for a while And Hector Felt his heart beating Quoting from that story About Zacchaeus The son of man Has come To seek And to save That Which was lost And Hector With his East Anglian Accent Said I knew I was lost I knew I was lost And

At that moment I felt The presence of Jesus And I felt the power Of his forgiving love I experienced What it was To be found That's what that man On the cross felt The son of man Had come to seek And to save That which is lost And that man That man What it was To be found What about you? Have you been found By Jesus? Have you experienced The love Of Jesus? Have you seen Yourself measured Against the straight edge That is Jesus And seen That you are crooked And guilty And that you need To be forgiven?

See the remarkable thing About this particular story Is that it reminds us That we We don't need to Spend a lifetime Serving God To be saved We don't need to Attend church Every week All of our life We don't need to be Baptised to be saved We don't need to be A church member To be saved We don't need to Collect brownie points And present them To be saved This man Had nothing He had no Bargaining chips He simply Saw Jesus And trusted him The only thing That we can contribute To our salvation Is the sins From which we need To be saved Will you Today Look to Jesus And say Remember me Forgive me Rescue Me Shall we pray Father God

[45 : 02] We thank you That your love Has been revealed to us In the Lord Jesus Christ Through the cross We pray that you Will melt our hearts That we might experience The power Of that love And the power Of that acceptance Perhaps for the first time Today Help us to see Ourselves Crooked In relation to The straight edge Of Jesus But forgiven By The death Of Jesus That we might be With him In fellowship With him Because he has Accepted us As he accepted This Dying Thief My brothers and sisters If one of you Should wander From the truth And someone Should bring that person Remember this Whoever turns a sinner Of their way Will save them From death And cover over Of sins Be merciful To those who doubt

Save others By snatching them From the fire To others Show mercy Mixed with fear Hating even
The clothing stained By corrupted flesh To him Who was able To keep you From stumbling And to
present you Before his glorious presence Without fault And with great joy To the only God Our
Saviour Be glory Majesty Power and authority Through Jesus Christ Our Lord Before all ages Now
And forevermore The grace Of our Lord Jesus Christ Be with your spirit Amen So we've heard
about The cross To which our Saviour Headed And once he was crowned With thorns But the head
that was crowned With thorns Is crowned with glory now And he didn't stay In that place Of
ignominy But is now in the highest place That heaven affords Is his by sovereign right The King of
kings

And Lord of lords And heaven's eternal light It's 498 If you're interested In the number The head
that once Was crowned with thorns Is crowned with thorns The head that once was crowned with
thorns Is crowned with glory now The royal die again The royal die again adorns The mighty victor's
brow The highest place That heaven affords Is his by sovereign right

The King of kings And Lord of lords And heaven's eternal light The joy of all who dwell above The
joy of all below To whom he demonstrates His love And crowns his name to know To them the
cross With all its shame With all its grace The praise is given Their name

An everlasting name Their joy The joy of all They suffer with their Lord below They reign with him
above Their prophet Their prophet And their joy to know The mystery of his love The mystery of his
love The cross he bore!

[49 : 55] For his life and health O shame and death To him His people's hope His people's wealth
Their everlasting theme So we're grateful for the word For the word that we've heard And grateful to
be able to sing And pray and read As we have been doing And now let us close with a prayer To
him who is able to keep you From falling And to present you Before his glorious presence Without
fault And with great joy To the only God our Saviour Be glory Majesty Power And authority Through
Jesus Christ our Lord Before all ages Now and forevermore Amen Glory be to Jesus

That's the end of our time together I will wish you Goodbye And a happy Easter And it's goodbye
from me Bye bye Bye bye To the ending of our dream To the ending of our dream To the ending of
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