

Making Sacrifices

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[0 : 0 0] so who is Jesus our passage this morning was Jesus asking who who do people say I am who do people say I am I wonder what the answer would be in our world today who do people think Jesus is the alpha course and which some of you may have heard of has gone around the whole world asking people who is Jesus and there are clips of some of their answers some of them saying he's a religious man some of them saying he's a god of many one person said he's a cool guy that gave great advice and a long time ago and it kind of snowballed from there maybe just a cool guy then I wonder who you would say Jesus is to you today and my next question for you to think on your own is whoever whatever your answer was or if you're maybe still thinking about it I wonder how that answer carries out into your everyday life what does that actually mean for Jesus to be who you say he is for Peter in this passage he says Jesus you're the Messiah the son of God and what does he mean by that well Messiah means someone chosen from God as someone anointed to come and redeem the world to come and take on all of the wrongdoings and the iniquities and bear them in order that others can have a relationship with God to bear all of those pains those sins that's what Messiah is but do you think Peter really understood what that meant perhaps when he was saying when he was rebuking Jesus for saying what he was going to do he didn't seem to truly understand the meaning of what he was claiming Jesus to be now today and we're talking about sacrifice as Clive has mentioned and which is in our series of covenant meaning making commitment a commitment to God and throughout the Bible sacrifice is shown through that from the very beginning all the way through to Revelation there are stories of what sacrifice really means and I'd describe it as being to fully surrender something as an offering in order for for a cause so in other words to fully give something in order that that cause can be made aligned for example when Jesus died on the cross his sacrifice was to pay the ultimate price for the world's sins for the world's wrongdoings in order that we might come into a right relationship with God again that was his sacrifice for us now in the book of Mark and as a side note if you haven't read the whole book of Mark all the way through or even listened to it on an audiobook I'd really encourage you to do so because the whole of it is like a dramatic kind of reading of revealing who Jesus is and on this kind of journey to the cross and but that's the side note go and do that because it's great and but at this point in Mark's gospel in chapter 8 there's there's been all of this lead up to kind of

wondering who is Jesus who is this man that's doing all of these miracles and healing people and feeding so many people and and his identity has been concealed but here Peter kind of reveals who he is and so Jesus sort of explains what that truly means what the cost might be for his followers Jesus says if you want to become my follower you must deny yourselves take up your cross and follow me now this is a really hard message to give today and I don't give it at all as a sense of knowing the answers it's a struggle for me to hear but here we are there's there's truth here there's Jesus's words saying come and follow me at this cost at this sacrifice now I've tried to written a bit of a poem to help us kind of engage in the tension of what's going on in this passage so I wonder as I read it perhaps put yourself in the position of one of Jesus's disciples one of his followers or maybe even Peter

Jesus explains the suffering and pain he must face that he is called to make a sacrifice in our place before he is raised to life again Peter doesn't like what he hears so tries to stop Jesus in his flow saying no why should the Messiah die and suffer Peter, Peter, Peter Jesus has eyes fixed on the future where more than just Peter and his friends need a saviour Peter, this battle is for life eternal for the faithful Peter, your eyes are narrow to desires merely human but Jesus sees through the divine lens of the kingdom now perhaps you can empathise with Peter or to his to the listeners around there of this kind of wrestling of what it means for Jesus to suffer why should the Messiah suffer or even why will we suffer and Jesus's response is you're setting your mind not on the divine

things but on human things on frail things that will soon fade away how often is it I wonder that the world tells us to earn big to spend huge or to be motivated on pleasures that are just small and instant or to settle for comfort well this is not the words of the kingdom Christ calls us to have our minds set on divine things he is inviting us to put on like kingdom lenses goggles where we see things of the a bit like the upside down it's a bit backwards a bit back to front he says to have life deny yourselves take up your cross and follow me so what's the hope here that we're hearing today well the hope is a promise of life promise of life eternal life to the full life so greater than we could imagine the world groans and longs for a restored order in creation I'm sure it's not difficult to look at the news and to hear the groans of earth the groans of people that there's just something not quite right we're broken and we're fragile but we were made for more than this we were made for more than this we were made for an eternal relationship with God for a restored order with him and Jesus is offering that hope of restored life with God he's offering it he's saying come and follow me come into the way of life eternal but it comes with a cost and we can trust in God's promise for the future that we can't quite fathom and understand today even sometimes in his creation we see those glimmers of beauty

[9 : 20] I don't know if you managed to get outside in the snow and you saw the kind of glimmers of the snow before anyone had set foot on it just a little glimpse of God's glory God's beauty in creation and his beauty in us so we hope for life eternal for his glorious restored kingdom and the action and response to this is us is sacrifice and sacrifice is to fully surrender not just to dip our toes in and have a little taster or to peer in from the room on the other side of the house it's to fully submerge to fully give ourselves so he says to deny yourself and to take up your cross what does it mean to deny ourselves what is that it's something about being less of us and more of God more of

Jesus and less of us and our worldly lens limits our view of God limits our understanding of what that means and I think it's something about our heart attitude today to deny ourselves is something about our heart attitude to following Jesus and how it flows into our actions so what if our heart's desire is to be the best business person to climb the ladder and reach for promotion to get public affirmation or to reach for those big profits but then our heart forgets the neighbour who is a single parent who's struggling to pay for their next meal or what if our heart's desire is to live in comfort to be the best host to max out on your

Netflix subscription but then your heart forgets the person at work who lives alone or the person down the street who has no home sometimes we need to put on our kingdom lenses and to lay down those desires that we as humans have in order to live for the sake of God's love for his world so here's our first challenge what are our heart's desires what is it that we really go after what are we striving for is it in line with God's kingdom and then he says take up your cross what does that mean well as we know from Jesus the cross is a symbol of suffering like

Jesus he must undergo suffering and so we may also find ourselves following Jesus at a cost there is hope for life eternal but we still live in a broken world therefore Jesus says to have life to the full you must lose your life kind of sounds so hard and hard to hear but the question is are you willing to perhaps be ridiculed at work for for knowing that you follow Jesus and others don't quite understand or are you willing to give up something of your own because you know that someone else could benefit from it more greatly or are you willing to stop watching a TV series because you know it's really not healthy for your relationship with God the question is what is that number one thing that perhaps is a stumbling block from

Jesus being the number one person in our lives this is a really hard message but it has hope and it's especially challenging when we truly open our hands to God and say to him okay God what is it allow him fully in it's a little I've got a little story just to kind of help us along the way of being reminded of what it looks like to follow along this journey John and I went hiking up Crib Goch in Snowdon I don't know if any of you have heard of it before this was about a year or two ago and I would generally call myself a keen hiker someone who likes fair weather hiking likes the views likes to take in the fresh air and I was told that there would be lots of this up Crib Goch so I was keen [14 : 58] I was keen to go along with the journey perhaps wasn't quite aware of the challenges that I might face and the perilous danger that there may be along the journey and when we arrived John said that's the mountain we're going to climb so I was like great okay I'm imagining there's going to be a kind of smooth ascent at some point somewhere along the journey but no no we went straight for the direct hill or rock face is probably more of the one and I must admit I was not too happy on the journey and was grumbling a little bit saying this surely cannot be the way surely there's a

different way an easier path but John affirmed me that he said no this is definitely the way as there were some five and six year old children going the same path so I was like right okay I probably should follow the way and trust and once we were beginning to climb to the top we came to this knife edge ridge is what they call it which you can probably imagine means literally you're walking on a tiny little pathway with a sheer drop face at either side you don't even dare think how far it is and the rain actually started falling as we were just about to go along this rock slippery face with sheer drops either side

I don't know if that was what you were supposed to do or not but John assured me that this is the right way to go so on I went feeling like a mountain goat but using all fours to try not to fall and we made it I don't want to tell you what kind of language I found myself in as we were going along but we did make it and we made it to the top now the reason for me saying this is that the journey was hard I knew where we were going and I knew that it was going to be amazing but the journey was really hard and was it worth it yeah it actually absolutely was it was absolutely worth it getting to the top and seeing how we had been held and how we were actually safe all the way it was worth it the fresh air was there the view came out eventually after the cloud lifted following

Jesus can sometimes feel like you're climbing this mountain you know that there's a glorious hope at the top but the journey there is really hard the journey there can be faithful we can be striving on to Jesus but we still find it hard we still find rocky patches and yet the promise of Jesus is he says I've been there I've climbed that mountain as well I've paid the price and I've suffered greatly I know the pain you're going through and so in those moments when we're on our journey he sits with us he holds our hand and he takes us along so that's the hope that we hold on to for today when we struggle when it's hard when we forget God Jesus is always there for us to turn to for us to question he is always there so as

I come to close now it is a hard message it can't really be vamped up with a cherry on top but the fact is that there is a hope there's a hilltop with a gorgeous view and that's what we're striving for in and amongst where we find ourselves but we're going to take a moment in a minute and perhaps the band might come up as well and I'd love just to invite us to let God speak to us today I can't tell us how to live a sacrificial life that's for you and for God to decide what that looks like and today it might be about starting small it might be about giving a little or perhaps you know that there is something for you that is actually a stumbling block that's really stopping you from fully immersing yourself in Jesus or maybe it's that you feel actually that you are in the midst of that suffering that you are in the midst of the pain and perhaps you need to be reminded again by Jesus that he is there sat with you walking along the journey with you taking you to the glorious life that's ahead of that you to the you to go to the what the do as or as or the you you