

The Social & Personal Danger of Mocking

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Preacher: Rev. George Sinclair

[0 : 0 0] Loving Heavenly Father, once again we come to a text of scripture where at first we don't think we see ourselves, at best we see others.

But we ask, Lord, that your Holy Spirit would bring your word and your gospel very deep into our hearts, that you would help us to see ourselves as we really are, and that you would help us to see our country as it really is.

And Father, that you help us to see ourselves and our country as I am and as the country is, not Father with despair, but in light of the gospel, and that your Holy Spirit would give us the power to repent, and that we might grow in godliness.

Father, we ask that you would do this gentle but wonderful work in our lives this morning. And we ask this in the precious name of Jesus, your Son and our Saviour. Amen. Please be seated.

So this past Friday, once again I had the great privilege and honour of being invited to speak on Parliament Hill to the Parliament Hill Christian Fellowship.

[1 : 1 4] That's some of the staffers who work on Parliament Hill. I don't know how many there were, 15, 16, 17. It's not a big crowd, but I always think it's an honour to be able to speak on Parliament Hill.

And I began my talk with them by saying that I wasn't sure how much of what I was going to say. I mean, on one level it was very practical to them, but I wasn't sure if I could help them know how to apply it.

And that's because of the very specific environment that they work in. And that's because I'm going to talk, as I did on Friday and I will now, I'm going to talk about mocking.

Mocking people. And as you know, that's a very hard thing for people who work on Parliament Hill and write speeches for their MPs at question time. It's easy to bring in mocking.

And then again, it's not completely something that it's mainly on Parliament that it might be hard to figure out the line in terms of mocking.

[2 : 1 9] But, you know, in the Church, in our own lives, it's funny, I was thinking, I can effortlessly, without any effort at all, effortlessly, that's what effortlessly means, right?

Without any effort at all, I can think of sometimes my father mocked me when I was a teenager. And it still has a bit of a pain to it.

I mean, I've forgiven him of it. It doesn't, you know, make me, bend me out of shape. But on one hand, many of us mock, and probably on the other hand, all of us have been on the receiving end of mocking, and we know how painful it can be.

In fact, the old saying, sticks and stones can break my bones, but words will never hurt me, is actually quite wrong. We can often recover from physical blows. But words can end up lingering in us for a long, long time.

So let's look at the story and see what it has to say about mocking and what it says about us. And once again, I'm going to be using as if we're doing a Netflix special. I hope this is a helpful thing for you.

[3 : 25] And so we've been looking through the Gospel of Mark from Mark chapter 1, verse 1. We're going to finish on Easter Sunday with the account of the resurrection and Mark's Gospel. And if we were watching this on Netflix or Amazon Prime, maybe I should find out a list of all the people so I don't show it.

Like I'm favoring one streaming service over another BBC World, BBC or something like that. There'd be a little recap thing. And so just a couple of episodes ago, there was Jesus in the high priest's house.

And it's a very, very telling thing that one of the most, maybe the most profound statement of Jesus's identity is made by his enemy. It's made by the man who wants to have Jesus killed.

And that man nails it. He says, are you the Messiah, the God, the Son of God? And Jesus says, yes. And that's going to be the basis for them to want to have Jesus put to death.

And then we have Peter's denial of Christ three times and his breaking down in complete and utter weeping. And then the episode just before this one is Jesus has been brought to the Roman authorities to Pilate and they've recast the charge against Jesus so that it's something that would interest Rome.

[4 : 39] And they've interpreted Messiah to mean the King of Israel, the King of the Jews. And Pilate finds him guilty. He offers the crowd the choice between Jesus, who is in fact the Son of the Father, and a man called Son of the Father, which is Barabbas.

And the crowd chooses Barabbas. And now we come to this text today. And so scene one, we're looking at Mark chapter 15, verses 16 to 32.

I'm sorry, I should have reminded you of that because it's really helpful to follow along in your own Bibles. I know we'll have the text on the screen, but it's just very helpful to have your own Bibles to maybe be able to make notes.

And there still are a couple of these note Bibles present. And by the way, Daniel and I have decided we're going to take parts of, we're not going to preach through every text, but our sermon series after this is we're going to go through the key texts in Ezra and Nehemiah.

And we're going to probably buy a notebook to go with that as well, so that people can follow along and make notes on one side, or maybe questions that they'd like me to, they hope that I'll answer. So anyway, we now come up to this particular scene, the first scene.

[5 : 47] And it's scene number one, morale building. That's what scene number one is, morale building. It's verse 16, and it goes like this. And the soldiers led Jesus away inside the palace, that is the governor's headquarters, and they called together the whole battalion.

So they've called the whole battalion together for a bit of morale building. They're doing something which is customary from what historians tell us when somebody's being crucified. So the earlier part of this, Jesus was scourged, which means that they have these leather whips, and with the leather whips, embedded in the end of the leather whips are either pieces of bone, pieces of glass, or pieces of lead, or some combination of all of that.

And Jesus would have had his hands held up above his head, and they whipped them until, usually, you can see the bone. He's whipped until you can see the bone.

And that's just, they don't have the whole battalion there for that, but now they want to have the morale building part of their day. So they bring the soldiers in, and Jesus comes in.

And, you know, all of us probably have different times when we go to morale building exercises. There's maybe a speech from somebody high up. Maybe some awards are given.

[7 : 06] From what I can gather of small southern towns in the United States, when they want the high school team to win their big game, they'll smash a car, or maybe they'll play clips of the trash talk the other team has played, has said about them.

So what happens here? How do they build morale for the Roman Legion? Well, that's scene number two, verses 17 to 20. And I call the scene, Perfecting the Art of Mocking.

Perfecting the Art of Mocking. And it goes like this, verse 17. And they clothed Jesus in a purple cloak, and twisting together a crown of thorns, they put it on him, and they began to salute him, Hail, King of the Jews.

Now, just sort of pause here for a second. So what they're doing is they're mimicking what the Roman troops and the Roman population would say to Caesar when he's triumphed.

And so Caesar would be dressed in royal purple. He'd be wearing a victor's wreath around his head, and they would say, Hail, Caesar. So what they're doing here, here they have this man who can probably barely stand, dripping blood all over the place, his skin in tatters.

[8 : 24] They've covered him with a robe, or partially covered him with a robe, and the rest of them would have been naked, but partially covered with a robe. And they hail him, Hail, King of the Jews.

And verse 19, and they were striking his head with a reed, and spitting on him, and kneeling down in homage to him. Now, in the original language, it isn't just that they tapped him on the head once.

It says that they did it again, and again, and again, and again, and again. They all got in on it. And we all understand, you know, we all understand the power, the emotional, how emotionally wrecked we would be to have our head, even if it's just a reed, to have it again and again and again.

And in every culture, spitting on somebody's face is a sign of great contempt. I've never had anybody spit in my face in anger.

I've had people spit at me in anger. But I've never had somebody come and spit in my face. Maybe some of you have had that happen.

[9 : 41] It's very, very wounding. It is a great insult. And homage. So they hit him in the head, then they spit in his face, and then they kneel in front of him.

And homage is an old-fashioned word. It's the word that implies that you're acknowledging a superior and the great worth that that superior has, and how you're going to be loyal to that superior, and how you're going to follow him and do everything to uphold him.

And they do that after they've hit him on the head and after they spit in his face. Verse 20, and when they had mocked him, they stripped him of the purple cloak and put his own clothes on him, and they led him out to crucify him.

Now, we're going to talk about mocking. We're going to go all the way through the text before we say a few things about mocking. But I did call this scene the perfecting of the art of mocking. You know, just not to give anything away later on, when we mock another person.

By the way, it's going to be, you know, in terms of, you know, one of the things we need to pray into is how we as a church can support people who work in the business world and government and the different, the real, how they follow Jesus in the context of our culture, which is increasingly making it that Christians seem the bad guys.

[11 : 13] And so how do we have people work in the civil service and private industry when that sometimes can be a real challenge? And we need to figure out how to pray into that and help each other, how to give wisdom, how to know when to be innocent as dove and as subtle as a serpent.

And we need to pray into it. You know, but one of the things when I say it's the perfection of mocking is that the heart of mocking is that you don't love the other person.

The heart of mocking is that you treat the other person with contempt. You despise them. And when you have a culture that encourages mocking, when you have a culture that encourages verbal abuse that allows these types of minor physical abuse that's all centered around contempt of the other person, it is not very far before you want them dead.

At that point in time, it's a very short journey. So we might say, well, why weren't they fired? Like if there was news reports that prison guards were doing this, and in fact, there's been cases, I don't know if any of you here are veterans, but there's been cases in the Canadian Armed Forces over the last couple of decades where they found out that soldiers have done certain types of degrading, demeaning, mocking types of things to people that sort of should have been under their protection or at least been guarded.

And they've been fired. There's been inquiries. So would there something like that happen to these soldiers? Well, here's an important point before we go any further.

[13 : 00] And it's a very important point. If you could put up my first point there, Claire. For pagan Rome, for pagan Rome, crucifixion was a symbol of their glory, majesty, and might.

It was not a flaw to repent of. If we don't understand that, the huge cultural gap between Rome and today, we won't understand what's going on in the text.

So what I'm saying is if Pilate was heard about it, he'd be giving the guys all high fives as they lead out Jesus to crucify him. They'd be saying, way to go. Great morale building exercise, guys.

I'm going to have you show other troops how to do morale building exercises like that. That was excellent. That was superb. It's very, very hard for us to understand that the cross could be one of the symbols of a country's glory, majesty, and might.

It wasn't a flaw to repent of. You see, in our culture, because our culture has been formed by this story and by the gospel, even if people don't remember it, even if it's just, you know, that there's a memory of a memory of a memory of a memory, and in all of that, they've lost the original source of the story.

[14 : 18] In our culture, it is something to repent of and amend if you find soldiers treating people in such a fashion. But that wasn't the case back then.

It was a symbol of their glory, majesty, and might. It was not something. And this is one of the things about this, you know, that in many, many ways, we don't appreciate this enough.

I don't appreciate this enough. Maybe you do, and I just don't. Or I'm a very, very, that my wife would correctly say that I'm a very slow learner and in lots of areas. But even if you just, if you think about it, it's very telling that we can't think of Roman actions, even most secular people, Roman crucifixions, without thinking of it through a Christian lens.

You don't learn to see mocking and crucifixion as evil from paganism.

You learn it from the Bible. Ultimately. It becomes something that our secular friends just think is obvious, but it's not obvious.

[15 : 30] And it's very powerful at a symbolic level in the story that goes along with it, that for Rome, crucifying a person like this is a sign that you might think it's horrible, but at the same time, a Roman man could point his son or daughter to that and say, that's a sign of the glory and the majesty and the might of Rome.

Be proud of Rome. You know, it's no accident that one of the main symbols for Islam is the scimitar.

It's a warrior religion. For Buddha, Buddhism, it's the Buddha. For Hinduism, it's the different Hindu goddesses and gods. But for Christians, it's the cross.

And the symbol changes how you view everything. Makes a very big difference if you're modeled, if you have in your home the goddess of death in Hinduism.

I can't remember. It's Kali, right? Is that right? Okay. I'm looking. No, I can't remember the name of the goddess of death in Hinduism. It makes a very big difference between that and the Buddha, the scimitar, and the cross of Christ.

[16:48] Very, very different worlds. Now, in the next part of the story, God messes with our categories. How does he do that? Look at scene three.

In fact, I've called it the triune God messes with your categories. It's verse 21. And they compelled a passerby, Simon of Cyrene, who was coming in from the country, the father of Alexander and Rufus, to carry his cross.

The word compelled there could also be conscripted. And this is recorded as something that the Roman authorities would do. If you watch World War II movies or other movies of oppressive states like the USSR and China and Nazi Germany, when you have the camps of the prisoners and one of them is weak, you'll see the person being shot.

But in Rome, they wouldn't do something like that. They wouldn't say, oh, look at that. Jesus is too weak to carry his cross. Let's just stick a sword in him and be over with it. Why? Because that would rob them from the crucifixion.

The crucifixion is the point. They don't want him to die on the road. They want to have the body hung on a cross outside of the city by a major road where in our culture, we'd be looking about where you want to put a Tim Hortons or a McDonald's.

[18:10] That's where they would be thinking is the perfect location to do the crucifixion. So as many as possible could see it. They don't want to kill him in advance. So they conscript somebody to have him continue the journey.

But here's where he messes, God messes with our categories. Africa is in this story. Simon is an African. It's very, very interesting.

How do, if you were to probably talk to the Globe and Mail or the CBC, they would tend to think of Christianity as being the white man's religion. Women are only sort of somehow sucked into Christianity because of the supposed persuasive powers of white men like me, which would only make my wife laugh.

And they think of it as a white man's religion. But Europe is in this story. Europe is Pilate who causes Jesus to be put to death. Africa is in the story.

It's an African who carries the cross of Jesus. And it's this African's African sons who are mentioned because they had important roles in the early church.

[19:20] And God messes with our categories. Now, if you've seen The Passion of the Christ, you know that the crucifixion is very, very, very gory.

But it might surprise you that the way they talk about this within the text is actually quite chaste, actually. It's not sensationalistic at all.

It's not how, in a sense, Hollywood would do it. Look how they actually go to the next part. Scene 4, verses 22 to 25. And I've entitled it, Mocked, Stripped, and Crucified.

Verse 22. And they brought Jesus to the place called Golgotha, which means place of a skull. And they offered him wine mixed with myrrh, but he did not take it.

Now, there's some debate in the literature as to whether myrrh has a bit of a numbing product, aspect. We know that wine does. But others think that it's an ongoing part of the mockery.

[20 : 27] Just as their servant brings a glass of wine to the king, here they are bringing a glass of wine to the king of Israel, crucified on the cross.

It's probably another aspect of mockery. And then if you continue on, verse 24. And they crucified him and divided his garments among them, casting lots for them to decide what he should take.

Once again, Jesus would have died on the cross naked. Why? Because you want to humiliate this person to the nth degree.

And it was the third hour, verse 25, when they crucified him. That's all they say. It was the third hour when they crucified him. The Romans crucified hundreds of thousands of people.

Maybe not hundreds of thousands, but way north of 100,000. As I said before, they would always do it, if they could. They would always do it in a place where there would be maximum visibility.

[21 : 37] Because it was an act to terrorize the population. And so every one of Mark's early readers would have seen a crucifixion.

And they didn't need to see all of the details put down. We need to hear them, but they didn't. And some of you might wonder a little bit about the time.

And I just want to make a comment about it. Because sometimes people make a big deal about the difference in time between Mark and John. This past Tuesday night, I'm teaching a course on how to preach and teach the Bible.

And one person's online watching it. And when we come up to a time for a break, I look at my phone and I say it's 7.28. And I'll say it's 7.28. We'll meet back at 7.43.

It's a very Canadian thing to say, right? It's 7.28, 7.43. And so when we see two times, we get really puzzled by that. But you need to remember, in those days, they had no clocks.

[22 : 40] And in fact, they wouldn't even understand what 7.28 meant. Because you only had when the sun rises. I don't know if I'm pointing in the right way. Actually, this is east.

But we'll pretend this is east that way? Okay. There you go. So all they have is the sunrises and the sunsets. And then they have three other things.

They have the third hour. And the third hour is sort of from there to somewhere over there. Or is it there? And the sixth hour is sort of somewhere from there to about there.

And then the ninth hour is any time from about there down to about there. So if you had two people, one of them could say, that's about the third hour still.

The other one would say, no, no, it's time for a break. It's the sixth hour. I'm sure that's the sixth hour. And there's that whole area where it's not really clear what the time is. That's just how they told time. And it were big blocks of time.

[23 : 42] And so that's what's going on here in particular in the text. Jesus is crucified. They don't go into all of the details.

And they don't go into all of the gore. And you have to remember that for pagan Rome, crucifixion was a symbol of their glory, majesty, and might.

And it was not a flaw to repent of. Well, we have a few more examples of mocking before we sort of learn a few things from it and what's going on.

Let's read the final scene, which is scene five, the spiritual and social danger of mocking. The spiritual and social danger of mocking. And it goes like this, verse 26.

And the inscription of the charge against him read, the king of the Jews, which is mocking him. And with him, they crucified two robbers or two rebels, one on his right and one on his left.

[24 : 43] And those who passed by derided, mocked, scoffed, reviled Jesus, wagging their heads and saying, Aha, you who would destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, save yourself and come down from the cross.

That's just the people who are passing by, the merchants, the tourists, the pilgrims coming to pray and celebrate the Passover.

They shoot those little barbs up as they walk by, maybe as they stand and watch for a while with their kids. Verse 31. In other words, there's a group of them.

They're all yelling out to each other and jostling each other and elbowing each other. And they're all saying in loud voices so each other can hear and so Jesus can hear.

He saved others. He cannot save himself. Let the Christ, the king of Israel, come down now from the cross that we may see and believe him. And then finally we hear that those who were crucified with him also reviled him.

[25 : 51] We know from Luke's account that one of those two thieves later repented of this ongoing mocking. It wasn't just something they said once. This summarizes the different ways that they made fun of Jesus and mocked him while he was on the cross.

So what can we say about this text? Well, there's a couple of things. The first thing to notice is that it's a text from beginning to end about mocking. And the second thing we can notice is that they were wrong.

They were wrong in everything. They were wrong when they quote about him doing the temple. They don't even bother to get his statement right. You see, why don't they bother to get the statement right?

Because when people mock other people, you don't actually care if you get it right. That's what people who mock do. We don't care if we get it right because we want to mock. Like that's part of the spiritual condition.

We don't care about the truth. We just want to mock. And then, of course, they're also wrong because, you know, I mean, this is Friday. This is, you know, they still have a couple of more hours before Jesus is finally going to die.

[26 : 58] Everybody dies of crucifixion. That's the whole point. And it's, and, but they're going to be wrong because, in fact, he is going to save people. He's going to rise from the dead.

He's going to do all these things to show that they were completely and utterly wrong. Mocking. Well, here's a couple of things. If you could put them up, they'll be very brief in each case.

Here's a couple of things about the problem with mockery. First one, 2A, you feel godlike when you mock. You feel godlike when you mock.

You might not recognize that that's what you're feeling, but that's what you feel. You feel godlike. You're looking down from your exalted place at this person that you don't like.

Maybe you despise. And the words roll off your tongue. And the jokes roll off your tongue.

[28 : 02] And you share the jokes and the things with the other people who are around you. And when you're doing that, in the moment of doing that, in the moment of mocking, you feel godlike. And the fact of the matter is that we human beings like feeling godlike.

Every single one of us likes the feeling of feeling godlike. And I got some help with a... I can't remember her name right now.

I should have written it down. But the next point, if you could put it up. Mocking quietly moves from being a slippery slope to a fun toboggan ride.

Last week, we talked about the spiritual danger of pride and the spiritual danger of envy.

And mocking is closely tied to these two types of sins. You see, if you have the experience of being godlike, and if you're in a position of power that you can get away with mocking, if you're very, very quick with your tongue and sort of assertive and looking for being able to mock people, it's something that becomes like a drug that you want to do again.

[29 : 30] And it becomes like something you do occasionally, and then you do it often. And then before you know it, it's becoming a bit of a habit of being for you. That you can't even really talk to many people unless it's your own inner circle, your own people who think like you and believe like you.

That it just comes rolling off your lips to mock them. And so at first, maybe you might have that pointed out to you, that there's a problem with this. That you shouldn't be mocking, and you might try to rein it in.

And because that's when you realize that it's a slippery slope. That if you're not careful, this habit of contempt to people, you know, and it can be contempt at your kids.

You know, when you do something that you just, you feel contempt for them. When your wife does it, you feel contempt for it. When your husband does it, you feel contempt for them. In a moment, it reveals the contempt that you feel when you say those cunning words.

And then when it's political or cultural or your neighbors or whatever, and there's this godlike sense to it. And you do it a couple of times, and then you realize you need to stop that. Because it's something which is a slippery slope that you could go down.

[30 : 35] But at some point in time, and this is the problem with all deadly sins like this. Before you know it, it's not a slippery slope that you're trying to not fall down. It becomes fun to you.

And you like going deeper into it. If you could put up the next one. You cannot mock and love.

You cannot mock and love. It's a very nature of mocking that you feel contempt for the other person. You don't love them.

Love is what Canadians desire maybe more than anything else. And yet increasingly, if you look at the Twitter world, if you look at comedy, if you look at much that goes on in the entertainment media, and even from what I gather in universities, even though what we desire most is love, what we often practice now is mocking.

And we do not realize that the more we mock, the farther love recedes. If you could put up the next one. And when you mock, you abandon seeking to know truth.

[32 : 07] When you mock, you abandon seeking to know truth. None of the people mocking Jesus were interested in the truth of what he actually said.

None of them were interested in trying to figure out how this could fit on with all the miracles that he'd done and the healing he'd done. And why was he still up there? If he could calm a storm, why was he allowing? Like, this is nothing compared to stopping a storm.

Like, he raised dead people from death to life. Like, how could he be allowing this to happen to him? Like, he can effortlessly heal this.

But they'd abandoned seeking to know truth. And that's what happens when we mock. It's all part of what we really value the most is expressing our own opinions, not knowing the truth.

And our opinions are often prejudices and lies and half-truths. And part of the thing which is essential to knowing truth is the humility needed to want to know more.

[33 : 16] To know that you're not always right. To know that you can get great value from listening to a conversation with another person. That even somebody who is your enemy, that there is possibility that you can learn something from this experience in terms of listening to them and trying to pick out what they're talking about.

That there's more truth to know. But if you just value your own opinions and you look down at people, you're not going to seek that truth which is there to know. You close yourself off from truth.

And finally, if you could put up the last one, making mocking stirs up strife. You know, you see this time and time again. In fact, I'm going to say this.

I have to be careful. So one of the problems with Trump is that he mocks people. And all it does is cause strife. But so does Biden and so does Harris.

Trudeau mocked the truckers coming to Ottawa. And good grief, they didn't like it. Imagine that.

[34 : 23] Imagine not liking being called, you know, a racist, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. Like, imagine not liking that. Imagine not liking it when the CTV and the CBC and the Ottawa Citizen and the National Post repeats these slurs.

Imagine not liking that. Imagine not liking it. Well, they can't imagine not liking it. They're lost in mockery. And then are puzzled at the strife that ensues.

When you mock, you see, those of us who've been married for any length of time know that you always hurt your spouse. Like you always do.

I mean, not every day, hopefully. But you can't be married for very long without hurting them. You can't be married very long without hurting your kids. And that's why repentance is so important. An amendment of life.

And saying you're sorry. And wanting to know the truth. And wanting to listen. And all of these things are shut off when mocking consumes you. And all it does is stirs up strife because anybody can mock back.

[35 : 27] And if they don't have the ability to mock, there's always the punch. Or there's always the leaving. Now, in terms of the things they said to wrap this up, the three things are all very, very important.

They said that Jesus should come down from the cross to save himself so that they would see and believe. But if you could put up the next point, it is precisely that we now know that it is because Jesus did not save himself that he can save you.

If they had listened to anything he had said for his entire three years of ministry, they would have understood that he predicted all of the things. In fact, the irony is that if you go back and you look at Mark chapter 10, he predicts that he's going to be beaten and spit upon.

And so the irony is that these guys mocking him, all they do is they mock him and spit on him, is actually showing that they don't know what they're talking about or doing. Like if they really wanted to show him wrong, they would have said, okay, guys, he predicted that we were going to spit on him and beat him.

So let's not do it. And he's wrong. But no, they don't care about what he said. They just do what they want to do because they want to mock. And so we now know that it is precisely because Jesus did not save himself that he can save you.

[36 : 46] Next point. Jesus tasted all there is, rather than anybody in a sense, not anybody, nobody came down from the cross. Everybody who got crucified got killed. But in a sense, anybody can avoid death.

But Jesus is completely and utterly different. Jesus tasted all there is to taste of the cause and the judgment and the punishment and the reality of death.

He partook of it. He experienced it. He ate of all there is to eat and partake of, of the cause, the judgment, the punishment, and the reality of death.

And he defeated death in his resurrection. He defeated death in his resurrection. That's why we worship Jesus and not Lazarus. Lazarus died four days and Jesus brought him out of death back into life on this side of death, meaning he still would have to die.

Jesus tasted all there is to taste of death and emerged on the other side, having triumphed over it. And that leads us to the final point. If you could put it up, Claire. Your only hope in life and death is that by repentance from sin and faith in Jesus, you will be included in his victory over sin and death.

[38 : 02] My only hope in life and death is that by repenting from sin and faith in Jesus, I will be included in his victory over sin and death.

That's my only hope in life and death. And if it wasn't a, if I could have sung it today by myself acapella, we would have sung that great praise song that Deborah introduced to us from the Heidelberg Catechism.

But it's very true. It's my only hope in life and death. Now, just in closing, see, remember earlier on, maybe some of you remember, I said that, you know, the symbol and the story that's connected to the symbol shapes your life.

If you are committed to the symbol of Buddhism and Buddha and the image of Buddha that you see, it's going to shape very much how you see your life. If you're shaped by the scimitar, it's going to shape how you live your life.

If you're shaped by, in a sense, just either the circus that is secularism or the empty void that is secularism, it's going to shape your life in very, very powerful ways.

[39 : 12] But at the very, very heart of the Christian story, at the very heart of what I've shared for you is that Jesus, rather than mocking, he chose love. Rather than mocking, he chose truth.

Rather than mocking, he chose to bring peace. Rather than clinging to being godlike and having everybody praise him.

And we all look up, he chose the lowest place that you and I might have, the highest place that we might have, be included in his victory over sin and death. And at the very heart of our story is that it's expressed beautifully in the book of Common Prayer, Morning and Evening Prayer.

It's a summary of three different verses in the book of Ezekiel. God takes no delight in the death of a sinner, but rather that he would turn from his wickedness and live.

And that's the story being presented here. God takes no delight in the death of a mocker, but that a mocker would turn from their mockery and their sin and live.

[40 : 14] And that means when that story, when we realize that that is a word from God to us, that he takes no delight in me shaking my hand, my fist at him, at mocking him and at mocking others, and being a person who becomes more and more a mocker, that he takes no delight in me falling into that hell before hell of mocking.

But that he desires that I would turn from that to live. That's the exact opposite of mocking. And as we understand that that is to be my new story, that I am included in what Christ did for me.

To share in his victory over sin and death and his victory over hell and all hostile spiritual powers. And that he would take no delight if I had rejected that.

The longing of his heart is that I would turn. Then the more that story forms us, the more we should want to choose love over contempt and the mockery that goes with it.

And that we would want to show to know the truth rather than the lies and the half-truths and the insults which characterize mocking. And that we would desire time and time and time again in a culture.

[41 : 36] Whether it's the poor, whether it's the mentally ill. And our country wants to include and make it easier for people who already suffer isolation and depression to choose death over life.

And we are to be people of life. That is the story that's to form us. To choose the truth. To choose love.

To choose the patience that goes with knowing the truth and knowing love. And to choose and hope that people choose life. That is to be the story of our lives.

As this story becomes more and more real to the very center of who we are. And we can pray that it becomes the center of who we are as a congregation. I invite you to stand in closing.

Thank you. Father, we give you thanks and praise that Jesus is our hope in life and death.

[42 : 44] Not just our hope in death, but he's our hope in life and death. And we ask, Father, that first of all, that each of us would repent and turn to give our lives to Jesus.

That he might be our Savior and Lord. That he might be the one that shares his victory over sin and death with us. And we thank you that he always says yes when we come to him humbly and penitently.

We thank you for that, Father. And we ask, Lord, that who he is and his wonderful presence and power and the story of his life and the story of his teaching.

And the very symbol of your glory, which is the cross. That that would become more and more real to us at a very deep level. And that you would form us, Father, into being people of the truth.

People of life. People of love. People of beauty. That you would form us as individuals more and more. That that would characterize us. That that could be the salt that we bring to Ottawa.

[43 : 42] It could be the salt and the music and the beauty that we bring to government and to enterprise. And to this country of Canada and to the world. Father, that we would be gripped by this truth.

We ask this in the name of Jesus, your Son and our Savior. And all God's people said, Amen.