

The Cross

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[0:00] Let's pray. Dear Lord, we thank you we can come and think about the cross today. Now, as a church we like to be reminded of the cross each time we meet and we can't celebrate communion just at this time as things stand but the scriptures are here for us to meditate on and to take heart in today.

And in Matthew 26 it tells us that it was just before they headed to Gethsemane it says when they had sung a hymn they went out into the Mount of Olives. Just as the Lord Jesus left the Last Supper and he and his disciples headed to the Mount of Olives, the Garden of Gethsemane, it says they sang a hymn. Now, that Passover night traditionally they would have sung Psalms 113 through to 118. This was the tradition.

They are called the Hallel Psalms. And Hallel means praise. These Psalms were full of praise, full of joy and thanksgiving. And we see in Psalm 118 these words at the close of the Psalm.

[1:46] And you might want to follow along here as we read from verse 22. It says, The stone which the builders refused is become the headstone of the corner.

This is the Lord's doing. It is marvellous in our eyes. This is the day which the Lord hath made. We will rejoice and be glad in it.

Save now, I beseech thee, O Lord. O Lord, I beseech thee. Send now prosperity. Blessed be he that cometh in the name of the Lord.

We have blessed you out of the house of the Lord. God is the Lord, which hath showed us light. Find the sacrifice with cords unto the horns of the altar.

Thou art my God, and I will praise thee. Thou art my God. I will exalt thee. O give thanks unto the Lord, for his mercy endureth forever.

[2:58] These were the words that would have echoed in their thoughts as they treaded to the garden of Gethsemane on that fateful night.

This joyful song was still in their thinking. It's interesting how the first Adam's sin happened in the garden of Eden.

Now the second Adam's entering into the work of the deliverance for our sin in the garden, the garden of Gethsemane.

Just now I'd like us to tread with him together the pathway to the cross. And consider the enormity of his work there for you, for me.

His great saving work of love, the second Adam, in the garden, garden of Gethsemane. O give thanks unto the Lord, for he is good.

[4:02] Give thanks unto the Lord. Walk with me through this time, if you would, in your mind's eye, if we could just travel back in time to that place, that moment.

Here, that night, as our Lord knelt to pray in Gethsemane. His stress would have escalated to that point, as it says, his sweat was, as it were, great drops of blood falling to the ground.

And it's been reckoned that this reflected the stress of that moment, as the pores of his body were releasing blood mixed with sweat.

And here in the garden, he began to drink that bitter cup. At the cross, our Lord drank fully, deeply of the cup of God's holy wrath against our sin.

Consider the gravity of that today. God's judgment poured out on our sin. It was poured out, friends. It was the Lord who puttook of the brutality, the pain.

[5:14] And bear with me as we're going to look at some of that. Torment of the cross. The torment. The brutality of the cross. The pain of it.

He was unjustly treated through mock trials. They were unjust. They were illegal in some elements. And Pilate ordered him to be flogged.

This man of whom he has said, I can find no fault with him. Yet, he was flogged. And this scourging that he endured, it meant maximum pain. The Romans designed this torture, these whips that were...

Full of sharp objects entwined in the leather. And these whips, they cut the flesh from the victim's bones and bodies.

Such that it exposed some of their internal organs. This was the brutality of it. We can't even contemplate and reckon of the extremity of this. How painful the beatings were.

[6:19] It was horrific. Savage. Friends, this was no light thing. We know how men would picture such things at times as painted pictures of our Lord, which we know really the Bible says not to portray him.

But yet, I suppose as a reflection, as a reminder, as an illustration, we could consider how brutalised his body was and the gravity of that. But it was God's judgement on our sin.

That's the point. It was poured out, friends. And our Lord partook of it. He partook of it. He held not back the brutality, the pain of it as he was flogged.

It was savage. And these were terrible wounds. We can't imagine it was torture. 1 Peter 2, 24 says, More so than the pain was our sin.

That's the enormity of the cross was our sin was there. His own self there in his own body.

[7:22] Our sins. Our sins in his own body on the tree. Think, well, when you think, well, I think of my sins and I think, wow, my sins were back there 2,000 years ago.

Nailed. Nailed to that flesh. That flesh stretched out and quivering in pain and agony. My sins were there as they nailed his body there to the cross.

That we being dead to sin should live unto righteousness by whose stripes he were healed. Now stripes here, the word is a medical term of a bruise or a wound from severe beating.

His stripes. You know, he was already full of stripes before they laid him on the cross because of the scourging. And friends, he suffered a heavy loss of blood.

It was intense, unrelenting pain from the lacerations. And the brutal torture would certainly send him into what doctors call shock. And folk that might have had some exposure to the health sector might be aware.

[8:37] Shock. Even shock can kill. Shock can kill. And he would have experienced what, as a medical term here, hypovolemic shock, which is a life-threatening condition that you suffer when you lose more than 20% of your body's blood or fluid supply.

So when you lose like one-fifth of your body's fluid or blood, you go into this hypovolemic shock. And this meant that his body would be struggling just to pump the blood.

It was a total overload of his whole system. And you could consider in Christ's severely stressed condition, you know, just in the garden when he took the cup, he was bleeding then before man touched his body.

And now, after the scourging, his body was horribly bruised and cut and bleeding. And having had no nourishment for many hours, he would have lost fluids through profuse sweating, much bleeding.

Our Lord Jesus was severely dehydrated. Now contemplate that today. He faced much mockery. We know as these mock trials pursued that the soldiers, and there was hundreds of them, that they were mocking him and degrading him, humiliating him, placing on his head this crown of thorns, which is these sharp three to four-inch thorns that would have pierced his scalp.

[10:09] A crown. Thorns were symbolic of the curse. As we read back in Genesis 3, right after man's fall, one of the features that followed the fall, thorns and thistles.

You know, I got out of bed this morning and I trod on one. It was a three-corner jack. They're all around us, aren't they? Thorns, thistles. It's the curse.

It's Adam's fault. The earth shall bring forth thorns and thistles. Symbolic of the curse, friends.

And our Lord wore these thorns, the very thorns, as his crown, as this mock crown. And the scalp and face are filled with many nerves and lots of blood supply.

So there is significant bleeding. And they repeatedly struck these thorns deeper and deeper on his head as they struck him with a rod.

[11:16] The blood would have poured down his face. They gave him, for a time, a mock royal robe. And they then tore it from his bleeding back. This robe, its colour was scarlet.

Again, a picture of man's sin. Sin is written all over the cross. Sin. Our sin. Your sin. My sin. Isaiah 1, it tells us, So the very robe that he wore, this scarlet robe, was again a picture. Our sin was there. They spat upon him. They tore his beard. Imagine the humiliation. John 19, 17, it says, And he, bearing his cross, went forth into a place called the place of a skull. He went to that place of a skull. A place called, in the Hebrew, Golgotha. And people reckon today there's a site that has these features of a skull.

[12:37] He went to the place that was the place of a skull. The place of death. He carried his cross there. When he could carry it no more, they compelled a bystander to carry it for him.

Now this cross was almost 30 kilos in weight. And he tried this path nearly two kilometres to Golgotha, the place of a skull. He was despised, rejected.

Isaiah 53, verse 5 says, But he was wounded for our transgressions. He was bruised for our iniquities. The chastisement of our peace was upon him.

And with his stripes we are healed. Now the Bible says he was wounded. He was wounded, friends. Listen, it's been said that wounds can be classified in five different ways.

Five different kinds of wounds. And again, some medical terms. Not that I'm any medic or anything. But just to picture this further.

[13:43] Of the wounding. It was comprehensive. There were five wounds. There's five wounds. And number one wound was a contused wound. Which is a wound from a blunt instrument.

A contused wound. So when a blunt instrument strikes you, there's a bruising there. And this is called a contused wound. Such as would result from the blow by the rod.

As foretold in Michael 5, verse 1, it says, This was fulfilled as he was punched and pummeled repeatedly with a stick, with a rod.

That was number one wound. Number two is the lacerated wound. Another wound of our Lord. He was wounded for our transgressions was the lacerated wound. This was produced from a tearing instrument.

This was the laceration of the tissues as a result of skirting, for example. As it reads in prophecy of Psalm 129, it says, The plowers ploughed upon my back.

[14:47] They made long their furrows. In Isaiah 50, verse 6, it says, I gave my back to the smiters. What a picture. As the plowers ploughed upon my back.

We've got fields near us and they're ploughing the fields now. Well, in recent times, they were ploughing the fields. You think, that was what our Lord's back looked like, a ploughed field. He gave his back to the smiters. Friends, it was a lacerated wound. A third wound is a penetrating wound. This is a penetrating wound. Such is caused by a sharp, pointed instrument. Such were the wounds upon his head, as we talked about. As they call it, the Jerusalem thorn or the victor's crown. These four-inch spikes. These thorny, spiky, plattered, bush-type plating of a crown.

This manufactured crown made out of this thorny bush that was pressed down upon his head. In Matthew 27, we read here, they plaited a crown of thorns.

[15:58] And then it says, they smote him upon the head. So they not only pressed it, but they hit it. And these wounds would have been deepened as the blow of the rod was upon his head.

Friends, this was a penetrating wound. A fourth wound is the perforating wound. He was wounded. And this is the number fourth wound is the perforating wound.

And this word perforating is from the Latin, which means to pierce through. So we know the Bible says of our law, it says in Psalm 22, as they prophesied, it says, he says, they pierced my hands and my feet.

He was wounded. He was pierced. Amen. He was pierced for us. It says one day they're going to look at him whom they have pierced. They shall look upon me whom they have pierced. Zechariah 12 verse 10. So this was a perforation wound.

And just lastly of these five wounds, these five classifications of wounds, the incised wound is another wound that our Lord endured for us. It says this is a wound that's produced by a sharp-edged instrument.

[17:08] As we know, as he was already deceased, that a soldier with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came there out blood and water.

Now this was after the death of the Lord Jesus, the Roman soldier making certain that he would, that whatever little life there may have been would be, they'd ensure that he was killed.

And so this is an assurance to us. He was fully killed. There's no doubt about it. And it says, as I said earlier, they shall look upon me whom they have pierced.

So the spear thrust in his side was another wound. So just to recap that, there was the wound from a blunt instrument as he was hit by rods, the laceration, the scourging, the penetration of the crown of thorns, and the perforation he was pierced through, and then the incised wound, he was stabbed with the spear in his side.

Consider this, friends, why he was wounded for our transgressions. That's the point that matters today for you, for me, that our sin was there at the cross.

[18:17] Consider the injustice, the shame of it, the horror of it. Our Lord Jesus had not slept for 28 hours. Imagine that. So sleep deprivation was another factor that intensified his fatigue and pain.

Friends, the cross is barbaric. It's cruel. It's gruelling. Crucifixion is one of the most gruelling forms of capital punishment ever devised by man.

When they pierced him, he was barely alive. He had already gone through torture, and he was in a serious state of shock and dehydration.

Scholars say that Jesus faced the east, and if so, upon the cross, he could see, they reckon, the glistening gold top of the temple of the day, of Herod's temple.

He could see the temple from the vantage point of the cross. And as he was pierced there, he knew great agony, nerve pain in his hands and feet.

[19:20] The cause of death in crucifixion was typically suffocation, as the victim died from slowly suffocating. Now, with the entire body of your, the weight of your body hanging by your wrists, you cannot properly exhale.

You can breathe in, but the problem is breathing out. And his breathing would have become shallow and laboured as a result of progressive shock. And for the next six hours, every single breath the Lord Jesus took was literally excruciating.

Now, the word excruciating is allied to crucifixion. It's the same context, the same root word. So, more so than the crucifying, the excruciation of every breath, he took our judgment and hell.

This is what we need to be reminded of, I put to you today. That it's more than just the physical pain and agony of the cross, was that our sin, our judgment, our hell, he paid for it, friends.

He knew the pains of hell, conscious suffering, judgment, the darkness of hell, as the sun stopped shining for three hours in the middle of the day.

[20:38] So, all the elements of hell were there. And finally, the curtain torn from top to bottom. Not from bottom to top. Man didn't do it.

Wasn't some guy there pulling it apart from the bottom up. Man's works. No, this was a divine work. This was God tearing it from the very top to the bottom. God did it.

God did the work, friends. Think of the cross as we close just this time here. God did it.

And then, as we know, the legionnaire, the Roman soldier, drove his lance through the ribs, through the pericardium, into the heart.

And immediately there came out blood and water. And again, this was conclusive post-mortem evidence, really. As far as the medical profession would reckon it, this was evidence of the Lord's death.

[22:08] Not through the usual death of suffocation, but of heart failure due to shock and the constriction of the heart by the fluid in the pericardium, the area around the heart.

Why did he do this, friends? This is the point today. Love. Love. If you ever start to down God's love, look at the cross.

When they would come to the place which is called Calvary, there they crucified him. The malefactors, one on the right hand and the other on the left. Now, some people reckon, I know we get this often in witnessing encounters and conversations, you know, people question God's love. How could a loving God allow this or allow that? And a word of wisdom from my bouncer part on the witnessing team yesterday is God spared not his own son.

If there could have been another way, he would have found him. But his love was so extreme that he spared not his own son to go through that suffering.

[23:39] So we can be saved. So we can know his saving. So we can know his great outpoured love. It's beyond our comprehension, isn't it?

The wonder of his love. Do not doubt his love. His love is so enormous that he proved it at the cross. And the Lord Jesus suffered more as the God-man than any man ever will.

And to think of it that the marks of his cross, the marks of the cross are still on his body in heaven. As it says, they're going to look upon him whom they have pierced. They're going to see the marks. We're going to see the marks. You will see the marks. Blessed are you. You believe. You've not seen yet.

But one day you will see the marks. Amen. You'll see the marks in his hands, the marks in his feet, the marks in his side. You'll see them when you get there. As a reminder what he has done for you of his great love.

[24:41] Let's praise him. Let's pray. Lord, we thank you for the cross as we're reminded afresh of the wonder of it. Lord, our mind cannot conceive what it meant.

The very precious love of the love that you showed for us. Lord, we thank you for the wounds of the cross. The wounds that you bore, Lord, in that even from Gethsemane's garden, as you shouldered our weight of our sin.

As it reads that you took our sins in your own body on that tree, Lord God. Lord, we thank you. Dear Lord Jesus, that you are wounded for our transgressions.

And it's by your stripes we can know that absolute healing of our most dread disease of sin, the foulness of it.

You wash it away by your precious blood. Lord, we thank you. We can meditate on these things and just recollect again. Oh, give thanks unto the Lord for he is good.

[25:45] For his mercy endureth forever. Amen.