

Will we follow Jesus to the cross?

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Date: 23 March 2025

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[0 : 00] Let's share our prayer together. Heavenly Father, we humbly bow in your presence. May your word be our rule, your spirit, our teacher, and your great glory, our supreme concern.

Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. I wonder if perhaps you've been involved in selling a house sometime in the last 5-10 years or so.

Maybe you are someone in the family. You'll know that nowadays, surveyors need to come round.

And they'll make contact with you between 8 and 12 or between 1 and 5.

And they'll come round sometime and you wait in and wait in and wait in. And then they come. And they kind of walk round with their hands in their pockets. And in less than 5 minutes they announce, well, that's fine.

And off they go. And you think to yourself, that wasn't much of a survey. He didn't knock anything.

[1 : 08] He didn't even have one of these wee laser things to measure anything. He's really just glanced at it. And he's going to charge somebody a lot of money for that.

Isaac Watts did not write in his hymn, when I casually glance at the cross.

He did not write, when I notice the cross and rush on to the next thing. He definitely did not write, I wish I didn't have to think about the cross at all.

A part-time survey just isn't good enough. In fact, it's not worthy of the name survey at all.

A passing glance after which we forget what we've seen just isn't going to do it. When I surveyed. When I survey. When I really pause.

[2 : 14] When I take time. When I measure the length and the breadth and the height and the depth. When I sit.

For hours and days and a whole lifetime. Before the wondrous cross. Today, by the grace of God, we are brought close to the cross.

We are called by our Father Jesus. Our Father to follow Jesus all the way to the cross. Not to follow Jesus where we want to go.

But to follow Jesus where he will lead us. All the way to the cross. A tiny candle in a dark cave.

Shines all the more brightly. Than the same candle in the noonday sun. Our reading this morning was only three verses.

[3 : 16] See, if you want to come and be part of our reading rota at the church. Sometimes you'll get three verses. Please do consider joining us in our rota for readings.

And praying in our Sunday services. But it was only three verses. We might pass over it too quickly. For a moment, it's good to notice the passages round about those three verses. And to see the three verses that Rosemary read for us just a bit more brightly.

As we consider what's round about them. So there we are. We had two weeks ago. This passage of the man coming to Jesus and asking, What reward can I get?

How can I get the reward of eternal life? Last week, we had a whole lot of workers who agreed to work for a reward.

[4 : 16] And even those who came at the 11th hour got the same reward. They were rewarded. Next week, God willing, if we remember the clocks have changed.

Next week, a mummy comes to Jesus and says, Can my boys get the best seats? She's wanting the reward of honour for her two sons.

That they'll get the good seats right next to Jesus. All of these passages all round about our verses are all about humans gaining something.

Getting something for themselves. The focus in all these passages is about getting or receiving. But then in the middle of them, we have these three verses.

In this setting of humans seeking rewards for themselves, Jesus speaks about self-sacrifice.

[5 : 25] Jesus speaks about a cruel death on a wicked tree. Jesus speaks not about getting anything for himself, but about giving everything away for us and for our salvation.

Jesus speaks of new life. Not life which is a reward for good behaviour. But life, the real life of God's kingdom, which is given for us only through the suffering of Jesus.

There was no other good enough to pay the price of sin. He only could unlock the gate of heaven. And the key for that gate is his body broken on the cross.

The cross of the Lord Jesus Christ is the jewel in the whole Bible. A precious and well-cut gem which shines and sparkles all the more when it is set against our instinctive human selfishness. Our instinctive human grasping for ourselves. Against that dark background, the cross of Jesus shines above it all.

[7 : 00] These few verses this morning then begin with Jesus doing something. Jesus goes first. God always goes first.

And in these verses we read of some things Jesus did. As Jesus was going up to Jerusalem, he took the disciples aside and he said to them, Jesus was going up to Jerusalem.

Twice before, Jesus has predicted his suffering and his death in Jerusalem. Jesus and the disciples already knew that the authorities in Jerusalem were looking for him.

And not to give him a reward, but to do him harm. Like the brave people in our rescue services, Jesus does not run away from danger, but steadily walks towards it.

Jesus was going up to Jerusalem. Jesus' foreknowledge of what waited for him in Jerusalem was not vague. It was crystal clear and utterly precise.

[8 : 25] The cross was not a surprise for Jesus. Jesus. The story is told in Sagrada Família in Barcelona.

Some of you will have been. Wonderful building. If you get a chance, go. There's part of the building which is about the cross and there's one of those squares on the wall.

It's got four by four and numbers in it and all the numbers add up to 33. And you'll have figured out why they all add up to 33. But in a tour group, a visitor asked, why do all the numbers add up to 33? And was told, well, that's the age Jesus was when he died. And then, you can hardly believe it, she said to the guide, oh, that's a terrible shame that he died so young.

It's not a shame. It's not a shame. This was the plan. And not human's plan. It was Jesus' plan.

[9 : 30] It's not a shame. It's not a mistake. It's not a, oh, if only he could have survived and told some more of these stories kind of thing. The cross was before him and that's where he went.

When he went up to Jerusalem, he knew that's what he was going for. For us and for our salvation. To rescue us from a fate we could not endure and which we could not escape.

And we are to follow Jesus all the way here. Jesus chooses to save you by his suffering and death on the cross.

And we need to follow Jesus and let him do that. Jesus, the living word of the Father, spoke to his disciples. Of course he did.

And thank Jesus that he does. The work of salvation to be accomplished on the cross is not something that is told about us after the event.

[10 : 36] We are told about it before it happened. Jesus declares before all creation that he knows the way he must walk.

And he did it. And we need to follow Jesus all the way here. Follow Jesus so closely that we can hear him speaking to us.

Follow Jesus so that we can hear him speak in great shouts of triumph and in accents clear and still. A disciple is someone who follows their master so closely that they can hear everything he says.

Truly, truly, Jesus knows more about this than we do.

If we had our choice, we would run away from this. We try our best to avoid talking about death in any circumstance.

[11 : 43] We would be like Peter. The first time Jesus spoke like this, Peter took him aside and said, let me tell you, that's not going to happen. That's not how it should be. And Jesus smiled and said, no, this is how it's going to be.

I am going up to Jerusalem. I will walk in the way of the cross. And you get to follow me all the way here. Jesus speaks to his disciples and he tells them and us what people will do when Jesus goes up to Jerusalem.

See, we're going up to Jerusalem and the Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests and the scribes and they will condemn him today. They will deliver him over to the Gentiles to be mocked and flogged and crucified.

All peoples, no exceptions, no exclusions, all peoples, Jews and Gentiles, that means every human in the whole world has come together to put the Son of God to death.

Yes, we were there when we crucified our Lord. It was our sin which held Jesus to the cross.

[13:11] It was for us and our salvation he hung and suffered there. Jesus, the innocent one, is condemned. Jesus, the one who has no sin, becomes sin for us.

Jesus is the one who bears our burdens upon the cross. Jesus, whose yoke is gentle, is abused with mockery.

Jesus, whose back is bent under our heavy load, has his back torn with cruel stripes. Jesus, whose hands are held out to bless, has them pierced with nails.

that's what people did to our Saviour. But don't dare think it was other people. It wasn't other people.

That's what we did to our Saviour. That's what we've done to Jesus who came for us. Those wounds which mar the beautiful brow of the sacred one are not only wounds which should have fallen upon me, but their wounds which I have inflicted upon him.

[14:34] All the time he knew this. He responds to our abuse with more grace. He suffers our punishment so that we might go free.

He takes the worst that we could do and open handedly pours the love of God upon us. And we need to follow Jesus all the way here.

We need to let Jesus who knows more about this than we do tell us that we're involved. It wasn't someone else. It was us.

We are involved in the mockery, the scourging, the cruel death of Jesus. We need to follow Jesus even here and dare not to turn away.

But Jesus' dad is bigger than everybody else he's dad. Jesus' dad is bigger than any suffering and stronger than any death.

[15:46] Yes, Jesus has told us what he's going to do. Jesus has told us what people are going to do. But now Jesus tells us what his dad is going to do.

See, we're going up to Jerusalem and the Son of Man will be delivered over. And after being mocked and flogged and crucified, the Son of Man will be raised on the third day.

Now stick with me a moment. this is going to sound like an English class. There are two verbs in that one sentence and only two, which are both future and in the passive voice.

They're about something that is going to happen and they're about something which is done to the subject of the verb. Not by the subject of the verb, but to him.

The Son of Man will be delivered over. This is something that is going to be done to Jesus. It is going to be done to Jesus by God the Father.

[16:56] Jesus is not doing the handing over. God is the one who hands over his Son, his beloved Son, his one-of-a-kind Son.

He hands him over. Jesus chooses to go up to Jerusalem and Jesus submits to God's handing him over because this is the Father's will.

Jesus is not the kind of saviour who is pleading and whinging with a reluctant God to somehow change his mind.

The Father and the Son are together in this. The Father and the Son are perfectly united. This is a team effort.

The Father and the Son in perfect harmony. The Father wills it and the Son goes and achieves it.

The sacrifice of the body of the Lord Jesus is pleasing and acceptable to God.

[18:09] We know this because God handed it over. God chose this way to save us.

Do not doubt not for one minute that the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus is sufficient to pay the penalty for your sin. It is absolutely sufficient.

Do not doubt not for one moment that the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus is sufficient to break the power of sin in your life. It is absolutely sufficient.

That's why God handed him over. With a heart broken yet filled with love, the Father accepts the offering of the Son for us and for our salvation.

salvation. We need to follow Jesus all the way here. There is no turning away from this. The cross of Jesus is the plan and the purpose of God.

[19 : 17] The cross of Jesus is God himself doing for us what we could not do for ourselves but which we desperately need someone to do. And we need to follow Jesus all the way here.

it's only when we follow Jesus all the way here we get to the glory in the final words. The cross is not the final objective of Jesus' prediction of his passion.

The cross is not the end of the Father's work for the Son. The cross is simply not the end. Here's the second future passive.

He will be raised on the third day. Because we follow Jesus all the way to the cross, we follow him through the cross and through the empty tomb into the glory of the resurrection of his body.

We follow Jesus all the way into the resurrection life. We follow Jesus all the way into the kingdom of God which breaks upon us as Jesus steps across the threshold of the now empty tomb.

[20 : 33] Words are not enough to tell our wonder at the power of the Father in raising up to new life his beloved Son.

The enemies of God have done their worst but God wins over them all. We together with all people have done our best to try and reject God and his love and his grace but God reaches down and raises Christ alive again for us and for our salvation.

If ever we turn away from surveying the wondrous cross let it only be to survey the glorious resurrection of Jesus our Saviour. And we need to follow Jesus all the way here.

We do not put our hope in the leaders of nations. We do not put our hope in the plans of men and women. We put our hope in the Father who reached down and raised Jesus alive again from the dead.

We do not despair of what we hear happening in the world around us. We do not despair because we let the risen Jesus reach out and lift up our heads that we might see him and him only.

[21 : 58] We follow Jesus all the way here. Do not turn away from following Jesus. You might read these words and think no that's not for me but the suffering and death of Jesus is for you.

the only way that you can be made right with God. You need to follow Jesus all the way here and let Jesus be the leader.

He gets to go first. He gets to go before us and we get to follow him all the way to the cross, all the way through the empty tomb.

Jesus knew what lay before him. We get to trust him. Jesus knew what we would do to him.

We need to depend upon Jesus. Jesus knew what God the Father was doing through his sacrifice and we get blessed by that.

[23 : 07] The cross of Christ is for us and our salvation. The resurrection of Christ is for us and our salvation. Today we are called.

Follow Jesus all the way here. Let's pray together. Father, we kneel at the cross and yet our hearts are lifted up.

that you have planned this perfect way for us and our salvation. That Jesus has humbled himself to achieve our salvation in this way is more than we could imagine.

Open our eyes wide that we might take it in. Soften our hearts that our lives might be changed by the cross of Jesus. Strengthen us by your spirit that we might follow Jesus all the way here.

Keep us here. Let the cross be all for us. Let Jesus be our only way and our only saviour that all the glory might be yours in Jesus our Lord now and forever.

[24 : 35] Amen. Amen. God bless you.