

# The Middle Cross

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Date: 31 March 2024

Preacher: Rev Donald M Macleod

- [ 0 : 00 ]     public worship of God. We can sing first of all in the Scottish Psalter and Psalm 57. Scottish Psalter, Psalm 57. Psalm 57, that's verses 1 down to verse 4 of the psalm.
- Psalm 57, verses 1 down to verse 4. Be merciful to me, O God, by mercy unto me, do thou extend, because my soul doth put her trust in thee.
- He in the shadow of thy wings my refuge I will place, until these sad calamities do wholly overpass. Psalm 57, verses 1 down to verse 4. To God's praise.
- Be merciful to me, O God, by mercy unto me.
- To thou extend, because my soul doth put her trust in thee.
- [ 1 : 22 ]     Be merciful to me, O God, by mercy unto me.
- Be merciful to me, O God, by mercy unto me. My cry, I will come to the same, and to the Lord most high.
- Radio ■■■ hyphen, ho arts, ha mercy unto me, O God, by mercy unto me. By mercy unto me, O God, by mercy unto me. For Christ, we can sing to the Lord most high.
- August 4. G Fourth, the Lord most high. The Lord most high. The Lord most high. God, by mercy unto me. God, by mercy unto me.
- Ma mercy silently unto me. From this recourse he came That would be my only God is due That mercy for us and My soul, my spirit, I am I have been upon May sons, whose kings As fears and doubts As chaps
- [ 3 : 39 ]     For this Ere time Let's join together in a word of prayer. Let's pray.
- Lord, we come and gather ourselves once more before you on this set aside day, this set aside time. And we worship together as a set aside people, as those who have been called out of darkness into your marvelous light.
- We thank you just now for the gathering here of your people, for those of us here this evening who know and who love our Savior. We thank you that together this evening we are brothers and sisters and sons and daughters.
- Help that to be at the forefront of our minds. We thank you, Lord, for the gift of calling one another members of the Holy Family. Each one of us so different in our ways.
- Each one of us so different in how you have made us. Different in our life situations, personally and publicly. But together as your people, we are brother and sister.
- [ 4 : 50 ]     Lord, help us to understand that this evening. We come this evening as one family, looking up towards the one head of our family. The Lord Jesus, our elder brother.
- The one who has gone before us to prepare a place for us. The one who right now is not passive, but who is active in the care he shows towards us.
- Who right now at your right hand is there whilst his enemies are being put under his feet. Who is active in the spirit. As the Holy Spirit, as he works in the hearts and the lives of your people.

As he works in the hearts and the lives of those you are bringing into your kingdom. We see our Savior as active. His glory is being shared from one end of this world to the other.

And we give you praise that this evening we are part of that glory. That we here as your people, as sons and daughters, we are here as partakers of the glory.

[ 5 : 52 ] Partakers of the glory of the Son. Who in his glory we find ourselves covered. Who in his glory we find ourselves hidden. Who in his finished work on that cross.

As he cried out it is finished. We find all that we have. And all that we are. Consumed and hidden away in him. As he now becomes our righteousness.

As he becomes our perfection. As he becomes for us our holiness. We bring nothing. We bring the tattered rags of our own self-righteousness.

And we come to him who clothes us in the finest embroidered gold of his righteousness. The finest cloak of his love. And he drapes us and he covers us and he hides us in that shawl of his love for us.

Help us then to approach you this evening for right understanding. We come this evening not to mourn a saviour who is dead. We come this evening to mourn at one who died.

[ 6 : 58 ] But then to rejoice at one who rose again. One who died in the way that horrific way that he did. But who rose again for the sake of his people.

Who rose again to show that he is and he was all that he said he was. To show that he is truly the second person of the Godhead. To show that he truly was the Messiah.

Come to save his people. To show that all who now are alive in him will be alive forever. And all who die in him will not die forever.

Will be raised up on that last day to live time without end. Until we see that final day, Lord, help us to serve you. Lord, help us to serve you well in our homes, our places of work.

Help us to serve you well here in the village. Help all that we are and all that we do. Reflect the glorious hope we have in our risen saviour.

[ 8 : 00 ] Lord, we come today as we do every Lord's Day. Remembering a living Lord. Not just as a bare memorial. We are not just here to remember and to tick off the box of the week.

We are here to worship and praise a holy God who hears and who sees. A holy God who is present with us here this evening. As we remember ourselves, we give thanks tonight especially for our brothers and sisters and friends in the APC congregation in Stornow.

We thank you for them. We thank you for their love and their willingness of engaging in gospel work. Now, though at times they find themselves with perhaps smaller numbers than even we have here, we give you praise that we are a congregation that are willing and that are seeking to be engaged in the gospel work.

As we pray for the congregation, we also remember the servant you placed over them. We thank you, Lord, for Jonathan. We pray for him personally. We pray for him and for Miriam personally.

We pray for them as a couple as they seek to serve you in the privacy of their own home and the privacy of their own lives. We also pray for Johnny as he seeks to serve you as your servant. We pray, Lord, that you set him aside to lead that congregation.

[ 9 : 18 ] We ask you to give him wisdom along with the elders in the days and weeks and years ahead. We thank you that we are reminded even this day that you are beyond denominational lines.

That we have brothers and sisters across not just the three church. Brothers and sisters across our island, across all the denominations, across our nation and then across the world.

We are part of that worldwide family. Help us this evening for a short time together to lay aside the burdens and strains and worries that we bring to this place.

And for this short time to focus on who you are and what you have done for us. We page now for ourselves. We pray for the upcoming weeks if it's your will.

We thank you, Lord, for those who are willing to offer supply preaching. These brothers who are willing to give off their time. And brothers who are willing to stand up here, quite literally, but also to stand up here in their spirit and to proclaim the risen Saviour.

[ 10 : 27 ] We ask you to give them strength as they help out. We ask you to bless them in the word as they share it. We ask you to bless the word as it goes out. Thank you, Lord, for those who are willing to engage in that work.

We pray, Lord, for ourselves as a congregation. We page now, Lord, for the elders. We thank you, Lord, for a Kirk session that seeks to serve you. A Kirk session that seeks, first and foremost, to glorify our Saviour.

We thank you, Lord, for a Kirk session where we see harmony, where we see peace. A Kirk session where we see, at times, a variety of discussion and opinion, but where we see brothers working together.

We don't take it for granted, Lord. We don't take it lightly. We thank you for that. We thank you for a congregation where it is clear we are a congregation of praying people. We again thank you for that.

We ask it would continue on and on. It would ongoing be a continuation of a praying congregation. And we do so, we pray for the fervence of the gospel in our own hearts and our own minds.

[ 11 : 32 ] And with that, the fervence of the gospel in the whole of North Tulsa. Help us and remind us of our duties to be salt and light in this place. We pray just now, Lord, for the boys and the girls who attend our Sunday school.

We thank you for them. We pray just now, especially at this time of break for them, that they would be encouraged. We ask that they would come back ready once more to hear the good news.

We give you praise, Lord, that you are able to work in the souls of even the youngest of these young friends who come to this place week after week. Help us not to be a stumbling block to them.

Help us, Lord, to pray for them and to remember them. We pray once more, as always, for the teachers and for those who look after our boys and girls. We pray just now for the teachers in Sunday school, but also the teachers who look after the boys and girls in school day by day.

We pray just now, especially for Christian teachers who seek to serve you well in the calling and the vocation where you've placed them. As they seek to bring up the young people with knowledge, I'll serve them well.

[ 12 : 41 ] We ask, Lord, for wisdom and for peace for Christian teachers. As they at times face challenges that the rest of us don't and cannot comprehend, I ask, Lord, to give them strength and give them wisdom in how they go forward.

Lord, they bring all things back to you and they would know that we remember them. We pray for our wider nation this evening. For all the struggles and pain and all the evidence of decline in our society, all the evidence of decline in our nation as a whole, we feel perhaps helpless.

We bring this reality to you. And we say, Lord, give us the strength we ask to be faithful when all around us are faithless. Give us the strength to keep on going and keep on serving you when we are mocked and derided for it.

Give wisdom to your people to be salt and light in a world that is increasingly tasteless and increasingly dark. We ask all these things relying on the finished work of our Saviour, on his strength and his power alone.

Lord, you bless us this evening. Help us to listen carefully to your word. As we are reminded that simple reminder of that horrifying scene where we see our Saviour on the cross.

[ 14 : 04 ] And we are reminded as to both his love for us, but also the stark reality that salvation is offered but not always accepted.

Lord, help us to be mindful this evening of all we hear and apply it to ourselves. Forgive us our sins. We bring that sin before you. And we confess that this past week, perhaps this past day, we have engaged in sin.

And we bring these things, understanding that we cannot pay it ourselves. We understand that for all who know him, and all who care, and all who love him, and all who place ourselves as his servants, we have seen our sin as nailed on that cross.

As the great declaration was made, it is finished. Help us, Lord, then, to look upwards to him. Not on that cross, but look upwards to him, risen at your right hand.

It is in his name, and it is for his sake we ask these many things. Amen. Let's turn to reading God's word. Luke chapter 23. Luke chapter 23.

[ 15 : 16 ] I can read verses 26 down to verse 49. Luke chapter 23. Luke chapter 23. It's on page 830.

Luke 23 on page 830. Luke 23 and verse 26. Let's hear the word of God.

12. And as they led him away, they seized one, Simon of Serenae, who was coming in from the country, and laid on him the cross to carry it behind Jesus. And there followed him a great multitude of the people and of women who were mourning and lamenting for him.

But turning to them, Jesus said, Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. For behold, the days are coming when they will say, Blessed are the barren and the wombs that have never bore and the breasts that never nursed.

Then they will begin to say to the mountains, Fall on us and do the hills cover us. For if you do these things when the wood is green, what will happen when it's dry? Two others who were criminals were led away to be put to death with him.

[ 16 : 33 ] When they came to the place that is called the skull, there they crucified him and the criminals, one on his right and one on his left. And Jesus said, Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.

And they cast lots to divide his garments. And the people stood by watching, But the rulers scoffed at him, saying, He saved others. Let him save himself, if he is the Christ of God, his chosen one.

The soldiers also mocked him, coming up and offering him sour wine and saying, If you are the king of the Jews, save yourself. There was also an inscription over him, This is the king of the Jews.

One of the criminals who were hanged railed at him, saying, Are you not the Christ? Save yourself and us. But they ever rebuked him, saying, Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation?

Are we indeed justly? For we are receiving the due reward for our deeds, but this man has done nothing wrong. And he said, Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.

[ 17 : 47 ] He said to him, Truly I say to you, Today you will be with me in paradise. It was now about the sixth hour, and there was darkness over the whole land, until the ninth hour, when the sun's light failed.

And the curtain of the temple was torn in two. Then Jesus, calling out with a loud voice, said, Father, into your hands I commit my spirit. Having said this, he breathed his last.

When the centurion saw what had taken place, he praised God, saying, Certainly this man was innocent. No, the crowds that resembled for the spectacle, when they saw what had taken place, returned home beating their breasts.

And all his acquaintances, and the woman who had followed him from Galilee, stood at a distance, watching these things. Amen. And so on, we give praise to God for his holy and his perfect word.

Let's again sing, again from the Scottish Psalter, and this time, Psalm 118. Psalm 118. It speaks of our Lord's suffering.

[ 19 : 01 ] Psalm 118, verses 11 down to verse 18. Scottish Psalter, Psalm 118, and verse 11 down to verse 18.

They compassed me about, I say, they compassed me about, but in the Lord's most holy name, I shall them all root out, like bees they compassed me about, like unto thorns at flame.

They quenched are, for them shall I destroy in God's own name. Psalm 118, verses 11 to 18. To God's praise. They compassed me about, I say, they compassed me about, like bees they compassed me about, like bees they compassed me about, like bees they compassed me about, like bees they compassed me about, like bees they compass on.

Like bees they compassed me about, like bees they compassed me about, like bees they compassed me about, like bees these Cincotta for them, like bees their■■■■ belong to thee, like bees their genetics with their Stu's meaning.

Oh Oh Hey The Lord's fire now, the devil's fire now be.

[ 22 : 04 ] The right and all the mighty Lord, exalted is on high.

The right and all the mighty Lord, the devil's fire now be.

I shall not die, but live and shout the words of God.

The Lord has made, chastised it more, but not to get there more.

Let's turn back to the chapter we had, Luke chapter 23. Luke chapter 23, looking from verse 32 of the chapter.

[ 23 : 35 ] Luke 23 and verse 32. Taking verse 32 just for our text, just to help us. Two others who are criminals were led away to be put to death with him.

I know we're aware that every Lord's day we remember our risen Lord. And in many senses, we are reluctant at times to set Sundays aside.

The scripture doesn't give us to set aside. And I agree, I think, personally with that reluctance. At the same time, this weekend is a weekend when the whole world is in a sense, and I'm very much clear on that, in a sense, they are celebrating Easter.

Now, what the world understands of that, we know is limited. What the world understands of that, we know is almost always wrong. But for ourselves, as we celebrate every Lord's day, we remember, for a short time this evening, this glimpse into an account we all know so well.

We've heard it all, I'm sure, countless of times. We've read it countless number of times. For a month where the challenge is to read a part of scripture you haven't read for a while, I think is one of the most common parts of scripture we've all read and heard preached.

[ 25 : 01 ] But just for a short time this evening, taking our focus to the cross, as we always should, this evening quite literally taking our focus there, and for a short time together focusing what we see, or who we see on the cross, on the crosses, more accurately.

We're familiar, of course, with the three crosses. We've heard it, talked about it, we've read it, all the imagery of Easter, you do see three crosses always used. And these three crosses, the criminals either side of Jesus, in one sense is not unusual.

The Romans often did multiple crucifixions at one time, and then multiple time slots during a day. There's nothing extraordinary about having more than one criminal killed by execution.

The Romans were efficient. The Romans were good at using the best time possible. So the Romans tried to fit in as many as they could in one day. There's nothing strange about Jesus being executed along with two others.

Perhaps we have the image that his cross is slightly higher or different. There are three normal crosses put together. Perhaps imagining the crosses themselves as being carefully carved and clean.

[ 26 : 20 ] They were methods of execution. We know from examples we've dug up after the fact, but we know around the same time, yes, we were crosses, but they weren't clean, perfect pieces of carpentry.

Why would you waste that time on a prisoner? It's there to kill someone. It's full of splinters. It's uneven. It's not three even crosses on the hill.

It's three crosses, shabby lumps of horrible looking, off cuts, and splinter filled wood.

And that's what we see tonight. That's what we have in front of us presented. These three men on these three crosses.

As the world looks on to these three men, what do they see? Well, for many, for the Romans at least, it's three criminals. Again, this is one of who knows how many executions they're doing this week.

[ 27 : 24 ] There are just three more criminals finally out of the Romans here. Three more criminals to finally stop bothering the Romans. Three more Jews who are causing problems who are now being gotten rid of, who are now gone from the scene.

We read there to the chief priests and the rabbis, there are three criminals in many ways, for to them, of course, one of these men is much worse than the others.

To them, one of these men, only one of these men, is calling himself and has been called by his followers the Son of God, the Messiah, the Saviour.

One of these men, it's been claimed he is doing incredible miracles. It's been claimed that he is fulfilling all the points, all the promises of the coming Messiah.

and they also, you can imagine, are more than glad to be rid of this troublemaker. They've been planning to get rid of him since the start and now finally, their plans have come together.

[ 28 : 31 ] To the women who were beside him, to the disciples who are, we find it later on, who are further away, many of them, this is a son for Mary.

This is her son who's dying, choking to death slowly, his lungs filling with blood and fluid as he exsicates to death, as he drowns on the cross, quite literally.

That's her son, the boy she looked after, the boy she brought up, the boy she taught all the things that mums look after and teach their kids. We know he was everything else, but at the same time, let's not forget, yes, Mary believed and Mary understood as much as she did, but at the same time, he is her boy.

She raised him, she loved him, she looked after him clearly. And to his friends, it's their friend, their teacher, the one who promised he was king, the one who they adored, who they believed would lead in the new kingdom, who would lead in the conquering of the Roman Empire and here he is, captured, tortured and killed.

All the hopes, all the dreams, gone. To us, with the hindsight of time, what do we see?

[ 30 : 03 ] We see two criminals and one innocent man. But on that cross, on these three crosses, there's about to be three sinners, isn't there?

Two sinners, two criminals, and an innocent man in the middle who's what? Who's about to be made sin. Who was made sin on that cross for the sake of his people?

A place of a skull on a hillside. And again, we might imagine like the cross, we might imagine the Golgotha being some scenic view. Imagine it almost like Benadrove.

We know it's a dumping ground, a burning ground close to it. It stinks of burning rubbish. If you didn't have someone to bury you, the corpses will be burnt just beside that.

So for those who had died on the cross previous in the day or previous in the week, they've been taken down and for a poor, which the criminals often were, they were burned in a pile right beside the crosses.

[ 31 : 12 ] You've got smoking, smouldering corpses. You've got a rock, a wee mound outside of the city, a rubbish pile behind it, dogs and rats. That's the scene.

That's the scene we have in front of us this evening. A horrifying image. And here he is in the middle, beaten and bruised, skin and muscle just congealed together, bleeding and bleeding, gasping.

The final bits of breath he can get into his perforated and closing lungs. and there he is, the second person of the Godhead.

There he is, the one who from all creation was made. All things made through him, made for him and there he is, gasping.

There he is, slowly losing consciousness. There he is, dying on that cross. What a scene of horror. What a scene of horror. To the outside world, he is here.

[ 32 : 24 ] An absolute, helpless, hopeless weakness. What a disaster. He claimed so much about himself. He promised so much.

Look what he is. All that for nothing. For us, we see, not weakness, we see power, don't we? There we see the ultimate display of the full power of our Saviour, fully God.

And he is so powerful that he chooses to be a servant Saviour right to the end. He chooses, we'll see in a second, he chooses to stay there on the cross.

He doesn't call down the legions of angels. He doesn't stop the full process of creation which he is upholding. Just think, all creation is made through him, made for him.

He sustains the whole of creation, we're told in Hebrews. He sustains it all. And if he chose in that second, he could stop all creation. But he doesn't.

[ 33 : 30 ] Things keep going on and he chooses to stay there and to suffer. And here we have our servant Saviour on the cross.

So what else do we see about these three men? Let's stay with Jesus in the middle. Verse 34 down. We see the account we know well of our Saviour.

He's there. Verse 34. And Jesus said, Jesus prays, Jesus cries out, Father, Abba, forgive them for they know not what they do.

They know not what they do. First of all, we see we have a praying Saviour on that middle cross. All we've said about him as he's got his last final breaths, his ability to breathe and to speak and to cry out is leaving him.

Some of the last things he cries out, the last interactions he has, is prayer. Note the love here.

- [ 34 : 40 ] Even in the pain, the unimaginable pain, we're talking about the physical pain, never mind the spiritual agony that's going on. That we can't even begin to enter into as he is suffering on the cross for the sins of his people.

We don't understand that. We can't even begin to enter into that. And yet, through all the agony spiritual and physical, his last words are prayers of love and forgiveness.

If I ever forgive them, again, you think, well, this is more sign of weakness. What kind of God is he? What kind of God is he who is there and who doesn't choose to defend himself?

What a weak God. What a useless God. God. Our friends, the Muslim faith, they see this description of Jesus and they call him weak and they believe so much so that part of our theology is that it actually wasn't Jesus God swapped him with Judas on the cross.

Because God can't suffer. God can't be this weak. We can't follow a weak saviour who's praying for his enemies as he's dying slowly.

- [ 36 : 04 ] That's not God we follow. And we say it is. That is the servant saviour we love. That is the servant saviour we follow who as he's there facing those who have crucified him, he is praying for their forgiveness.

He is praying for them in love. We also note as we said before, he is there on the cross. Again, we perhaps forget that. He is there on the cross.

There's a hymn and the rest of the hymn I'm very partial to, but there's that line of the hymn that it was our sin that held him there until it was accomplished.

Not really. In one sense, poetically, it's right. But theologically, it's wrong. Why is he on the cross?

What held him to the cross? Is it the nails pinning him in? Is it the armed soldier around? No. It is his active obedience to the Father and his eternal love for us.

- [ 37 : 13 ] That's what holds him to the cross. He willingly endures every single millisecond of his misery, actively being present and remaining there.

He doesn't have to stay there. He is God. He can leave, as we said, he can fold up the whole of creation in a second, in one sense. But he doesn't. He stays there, actively enduring the full wrath of those around him, but worshiping that, eternally worshiping that.

He stays there and he endures the full wrath of God as it's poured out, as he has made sin on that cross for us. He stays there and he endures it all. All whilst in complete, ongoing humiliation.

He is there naked, don't forget, on that cross. He's been clothed to take away from them. Prisoners didn't get the luxury, the privilege, of being clothed and are killed.

Crucified, naked, battered and bruised, mocked, derided. And a further humiliation of here he is in a real human experience, a real human body, God incarnate.

- [ 38 : 33 ] He's faced humiliation from the second he was born in the sense that he took on human flesh. That's a lowering that we can't begin to understand. From eternal to material.

That's humiliation. He then allows himself to be further humiliated quite literally by the soldiers, by the crowd, by the chief priests. And you see the mockery.

He saved others. Let him save himself if he is the Christ, the Son of God, the Chosen One. And the soldiers pipe up and they say if you are the King of the Jews, save yourself.

And here you see something similar, don't we, to the words of Satan as he's tempting our Saviour. The same theme is there. Go on.



Do it. Prove yourself. Prove to us who you are. Save yourself. You say you can do it. Then do it. But if our Saviour followed their demands, if he saved himself off the cross, there would be no salvation for us.

[ 39 : 48 ] He endures the mockery. He endures the arrogance. He endures quite literally the satanic attack. For really, all this is demonic.

It is satanic. The world, the flesh, and the devil are gathered here. Because Satan is there and he's being crushed, he's about to be crushed, by the work of the Son.

If you're familiar with C.S. Lewis and his allegory and his imagery, he has this. When you see the great lion who is there to remind us of Jesus, he is killed on behalf of the people.

It's all the evil who's around the great lion. There's humans there, yes, but also there's all the demonic evil around that place of sacrifice. And here we have Satan's greatest moment of triumph as he's conspired behind his scenes to get Judas, we know, to hand in Jesus, to plot, and Satan thinks he's got it.

Finally, after millennia trying to defrone God, now he has managed to get the Son of God crucified and embarrassed. And we know behind the scenes and we know the truth is what Satan thinks was his greatest moment of achievement was his moment of total defeat.

[ 41 : 18 ] Brothers and sisters, here is the Saviour, nailed to the cross, bathed, covered in humiliation. And here he is from glory to Golgotha to quote Werder Campbell.

Here he is with nails in his very human hands from paradise and praise down to earth and mockery.

And here is our king. So who's beside him? Verse 29, or verse 39, sorry, we find one of the criminals, one of the criminals who were hanged, railed at him, saying, are you not the Christ?

Save yourself and us. Save yourself and us. If you go to the pulpit Bible, you can see there are three there if you follow it on the bottom of the page where it says railed at him or blasphemed at him.

I'd argue personally looking at the language blasphemed is a better reading. Railed makes you think he's just shouting at him. He is blaspheming at Jesus.

[ 42 : 34 ] He is saying the worst of the worst at Jesus. I'm saying just now we're calling him the, so Jesus of course is the man in the centre.

We'll call this man the man on the left. Now we don't know which position and which side he is but it helps my next point. The man on the left. Imagine him the man on the left. Your left I guess is that side.

The man on the left. Here he is and they're all dying together. They're all lying up there naked and bleeding and struggling to breathe pushing themselves up with her feet with the nail and their feet and their ankles rubbing against their muscle and their tendons and their nerves and their bones and they're trying to breathe all the time and yet here he is here he is and what's he doing?

What's he doing? He is shouting and blaspheming and screaming at Jesus. He's not asking for help. See you might read that and you think well he's asking Jesus to save him.

He's not. This is the content of his railings. This is the content of his blasphemy. It's summarised very carefully by Luke the doctor who summarised things well and summarised things quite cleanly but what Luke summarises cleanly we can understand it was not this way.

[ 44 : 04 ] It was worse. But Luke says the summary of what he was saying was are you not Christ? Save yourself and us and add in the blasphemy add in the swearing add in the horror add in the evil of it all and there we have this wee man this criminal who is using his final moments on earth to blaspheme Jesus to shout and to swear at Jesus.

That's his choice. that's his choice. Here he is himself at the end of his life knowing there's no escape knowing he will die today at this moment he is heading towards his death and yet and yet even in his last breaths his last few hours perhaps on earth he is using that time to blaspheme and to rail and to have a go to mock Jesus.

And those of us who know the Lord and have awareness of our own sin I wonder if you've ever wondered which of the criminals you might have been in that day I wonder if sometimes like myself you think I've been the other man definitely I've been there asking for help asking for salvation I wonder if we're being very honest how many of us before we're saved would have been actually this man this man we hate him we hate him so much we hate him so much we're willing to spend our time railing at him now in one sense this man his hours are numbered not even his days his hours are numbered his minutes at this point even might be numbered but friends in one sense apart from the agonising reality we're not that far away from him our days our numbers maybe our minutes are numbered from this point going forward we just don't know do we one of the differences he knew when his death was going to come he knew it he was there to die he was guaranteed of one thing but he'd be dead soon apart from that we are like him in every other way this is his last chance to come to the saviour his last chance to be saved not from the physical pain but his last chance to actually have real salvation and he spends that time not speaking or crying out to Jesus he spends that time shouting and blaspheming and turning even further away from salvation there's many things that man teaches us many things but just for ourselves this evening the one thing he teaches us which I think speaks into our culture our island culture our history is we have a culture and I'm sure you know this and friends maybe this is you brothers and sisters you've heard it plenty of times we have a culture that thinks that relies heavily on last minute conversions on deathbed conversions we think

I'll be okay at the end do you know what I've been to church plenty of times and when the end comes then you know what I'll do it then now we don't for a second as a church as believers we don't for a second deny last minute we don't deny deathbed conversions they happen praise God they happen we give glory to God he allows them to happen we don't deny it but this man on the cross reminds us we cannot rely on last minute conversions you think he might be at the end well friends at the end you might be more like this man than the other man don't expect there'll be some incredible change when the end rears its head you think well maybe then I'll feel ready I'm sure this man wasn't wanting to die

I'm sure this man wasn't wanting to die slowly and painfully and yet this man who is seeing and who knows his death is imminent is using his last time his last breath to further distance himself away from his means of salvation don't think that won't or couldn't would never be you yes we praise God for deathbed conversions we praise God for the good news of last minute salvation we see that in a second don't we of the other man we can't deny last minute salvation but don't presume God's mercy at that point there's plenty of stories which go the opposite way plenty of great men humanly speaking and women but I think of one in particular a great man a Scottish man a philosopher scientist

[ 49 : 56 ] David Hume whose statue is there on the royal mile just says I have a court the high court he's there and he's incredible in bronze strong powerful handsome man and his last breath his last moments recorded by those around him he was asked do you believe now he was asked are you close now it was disputed the exact wording of it I'm not sure he said but I know it's too late that's it gone don't presume the grace of God don't presume the mercy of God that last second now is the day now is the time this man hated him this man railed at him and this man died like that we praise God and his goodness to us there's another man isn't there on the other side the man on the right hand side we can call him the man on the right hand side verse 40 the other criminal the man right hand side rebuked him the other criminal saying do you not fear

God since you are under the same sentence of condemnation and so on and so on just to summarize see in this man we see the full flow the full salvation experience condensed down into one conversation to remind us how gracious God is and to remind us how simple salvation is so this man is still blaspheming and swearing at Jesus on this side there's a man who is using his last breaths his last few hours wisely note how salvation is summarized let's see the journey of this man very briefly his journey into the kingdom he has a sense of his own sin quite clearly he knows he's a sinner he knows he is bad do you not fear

God since you are under the same sentence of condemnation he understands he has to fear God he knows God is holy and he is not therefore he is in trouble not just just now but he is in eternal trouble he knows he's a sinner he knows God is holy he also has a sense of the just punishment that's hovering over him we are indeed punished justly verse 41 to translate it we're receiving the reward for our deeds he knows he is where he deserves to be God is holy God is just he is a sinner these three things already he knows but he goes on to save him more doesn't he what else does he show that he knows as he talks to Jesus he turns to Jesus and he keeps talking to the other man and he says about

Jesus we indeed justly are condemned but this man has done nothing wrong he hopes he trusts he believes in the perfection and the innocence of Jesus he hopes he trusts he believes as much as he can at this moment in the promises of Jesus he hopes he believes that Jesus is able to save he also believes and we see it here quite literally he sees that Jesus is willing to listen as Jesus is dying here Jesus is still willing to listen to the man beside him crying out for help now this man he brings nothing quite literally to Jesus he has known Jesus he has been with Jesus for the time they have been crucified together they have not been making introductions they have not had many interactions they are there to die and yet what he has heard about

Jesus perhaps beforehand but even from the disciples and the women and even the mockery of the Romans and the mockery of the rabbis and the scribes and Pharisees this man has heard enough to think and to understand maybe it's true maybe it's true again he has nothing he brings to Jesus no great lineage he brings to Jesus no church attendance he brings to Jesus no great understanding of theological concepts what did he bring to Jesus a genuine plea will you help me actually what does he say he doesn't even say that does he what does he say Jesus remember me when you come into your kingdom just remember me now that could be remember me in order to save me but does he understand that probably not he's just a desperate plea a desperate begging of

[ 55 : 33 ] Jesus whatever it is you can do please do it for me whoever you are whatever else you are just just help me it's not a great prayer it's not a profound prayer it's not a deep prayer it's a prayer but it's a clueless prayer in many ways but it's a beautiful prayer it's one of the most beautiful prayers I think in scripture in many ways Jesus remember me or to say another way the same thing Jesus don't forget me Jesus don't forget me when you enter into your kingdom and see there he believes Jesus has a kingdom he believes Jesus is a king now how much understands of that nothing zero and yet he humbles himself and he cries out his salvation is instant and like ours it is based fully and totally on

Jesus you've heard it preached I'll keep preaching it until today I'm gone from this pulpit we bring nothing to Jesus nothing we come to him empty handed trusting that he saves those who come with nothing and here is the evidence this man is naked on a cross he brings to Jesus no understanding no idea really he just brings desperation he brings a cry for help and Jesus hears Jesus listens Jesus responds and Jesus promises friends you have an almost unbelievable amount more theological biblical gospel knowledge than this man had you have all knowledge compared to him the one thing he has done that as of yet friends you haven't done is cry out to

Jesus look at the response of our saviour we all know it Jesus said to him truly I say to you today you will be with me in paradise here we have the instant hope our saviour gives this man instant hope instant reassurance truly amen in other words Jesus is saying what I say is true what I say is true I say to you today that's all emphatic it's all imagine exclamation marks throughout the sentence today exclamation mark you will exclamation mark be with me in paradise the tone of his voice Jesus saying to the man I hear you

I have heard your cry you are mine and soon we'll be together in glory paradise yes it is still pain to go this man still have to choke to death in his own fluids in his lungs this man has endured the agony of tendons being stretched and torn and muscled by the nails that's not removed from him not at all but he knows his eternity is now sure if you have time this week remember we can put it on the facebook page later on this week Alistair Begg minister of america Scottish Scottish minister born here if you have time please listen to Alistair Begg he's well worth your time Alistair Begg often play him on the Lord's Day and he's got plenty of good incredible sermons he's a reformed man he's a baptist he's reformed he's well worth listening to he's a great part of a sermon called based around these men on the cross and the very climax of his sermon he pictures this thief entering into glory and the thief is questioned why are you here what qualifies you to be here and all this and the man says

I don't know I don't know the bible I don't understand this I don't understand that it's one thing I do know the man on the middle cross said I was welcome brothers and sisters that is our gospel hope friends that is the gospel the man on the cross says you are welcome to come in for the sake for our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin so that in him we might become the righteousness of God one of the final recorded words of our saviour on the cross is that simple with that horrifying sorrowful cry of what it is finished friends it is finished you don't buy away into glory you don't buy away into God's good graces you come like this thief with nothing the Greek there it is finished it's one word it's one simple word teach us in Greek before we conclude tetelestai tetelestai it's a banking term a financial term and quite literally when Jesus says it is finished that word tetelestai it is used to mean it is paid in full it is paid in full it is done the debt has been cleared and that is the words of hope our saviour gives to all who come to him as he cries out on the cross it is paid the debt is paid tetelestai it is finished it is cleared as he cries that out on the cross believe it for yourself receive that truth for yourself and please please be like the man on the right and don't be like the man on the left of our saviour on the cross spread our heads now a word of prayer we thank you lord for the great words of encouragement and challenge we have in your word as we remind us of the final moments of our saviour's life our saviour's earthly mission we give you praise for it as we remind us of the horror of the suffering we're also reminded us to the reality that suffering was there not by accident he suffered not outside of his own willingness but he suffered there out of obedience to you and of his love for his people he remained on that cross till the end as he cried out it's finished as that man beside him as that man on his right hand side as he entered into glory with his saviour that day we ask that to be the case for all not just here this evening but all who are part of our congregation who attend so faithfully and who listen so clearly and who perhaps are crying out for salvation lord that this evening even perhaps you would bring them to a saving faith and the one who was on that cross for them and the one who asks for nothing but contrite heart who asks for nothing but a plea for help and the promises in return everlasting life help us then we look upwards to an empty cross wood long since gone and we see our risen eternal saviour at your right hand in his name and it's for his sake we ask and we give thanks for these things amen let's

[ 64 : 32 ] conclude in sing psalms and psalm 98 sing psalms psalm 98 we can sing verses 1 down to verse 4 sing psalms psalm 98 verses 1 down to verse 4 oh sing a new song to the lord for wonders he has done his right hand and his holy arm the victory have won the lord declared his saving work and made it to be known to all the nations of the world his righteousness is shown psalm 98 verses 1 to verse 4 to god's praise oh sing a new song to the lord what wonder she has come his right hand and his holy heart and they touch he have one let lord heal him his saving life and make it to be known to all of his love the world his righteousness is shown his steadfast love and faithfulness he has remembered well let us let other men be in the land that has thought his side and all their nations hope he has asked who has recently done and is told well that truth succinct

Act with blood for all the earth, Shelf, love, and rejoice.

In the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, with you now and forevermore. Amen.

Amen.