

The Cross - Foolishness or Power?

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Date: 31 March 2024

[0 : 00] We're going to begin our worship by singing to God's praise. We're going to sing in Psalm 95 in the Scottish Psalter. Psalm 95, page 357.

We're going to sing from verse 1 to 6, and the tune is Gainsborough. O come, let us sing to the Lord. Come, let us, everyone, a joyful noise make to the rock of our salvation.

We'll sing from verse 1 to 6 to God's praise. O come, let us sing to the Lord.

Come, let us, everyone, a joyful noise make to the rock of our salvation.

Let us sing for His presence.

[1 : 11] Come, let us sing to Him with grace and make a joyful noise.

For God, the great God and great King, above all gods He is.

He is. He is. He is. He is. He is. He is. He is. He is. He is.

He is. He is. He is. He is. He is. He is.

He is. He is. the sin did me. Let my hand also from his hands its form at first dictate.

[2 : 42] O come and let us worship him let us bow down with hope and on our knees before the Lord our maker let us fall.

Let's bow our heads together in a word of prayer let us pray. Lord our gracious God as we bow before you as we come before you as a people who know the sin of our hearts we know Lord the wickedness that there is within us we know unworthy how unworthy we are of any of your mercies and yet we still come before you thankful that the way is open for us that the way we come is not through our own merits or our own worthiness but through the worthiness of the lamb that was slain.

And we thank you that the words that we have sung remind us of how worthy you are of all our praise. as you invite us to come and sing to the Lord with the voices that you have given to us.

Lord we know that our voices are so often can be used against you and against others and against your cause in so many ways but we thank you for the way that you put a new song in our mouth a song that gives praise to you a song to magnify and glorify your name.

And so we pray Lord that together as we worship this evening as we give praise to you as we give thanks to you as we come seeking forgiveness for all our sin as we come seeking your help in so many different situations and circumstances going on within us or around us we thank you that you are a God who hears a God who is able to answer our prayers and to answer them so much with so much more than we can ask or imagine and Lord we are dependent upon you even as we have sung of the wonder of your power of creation that you are the one who made the depths of the earth and the strength of the hills the spacious seas that belong to you for you did make them and even the lands that are around us Lord you say that they took their form from your hand at first and although we see the mark of mankind in so many ways how we have altered the creation and built our own kingdoms built up things for ourselves we thank you that there is no kingdom mightier than yours that there is no power greater than yours that there is no authority over yours and we thank you that in all things as we come dependent upon you that you are one who is mighty in all ways you are the rock of our salvation you are the one who is able to give us salvation for you are provided for us in every way as we have reflected already today on the wonder of the death of Jesus and the resurrection and the wonder of the power that there is in that and the reminder too that there is that he will come again for that final resurrection and call each of us to himself to give account for all that we have done in this life whether for good or for evil we thank you for those who are in Christ it is a day when we will rejoice a day when we will see him as he is and it is hard for us to imagine what that will be like for even as your word says we but see through a glass dimly at this time our vision is so blurred in so many ways but we thank you that we look forward to a day when we will see clearly we will see the lamb the Lord Jesus we will see him in glory and so Lord we pray to know more of you to understand you better to come and to acknowledge our dependence and need upon you and to to even cry out to you anew to have mercy upon us and to have mercy upon all around us and this world in which we live and all its different needs we see the weakness and frailty of our being in so many different ways we see it in illness we see it in wars and conflicts of different kinds we see it in famine and natural disasters we see it when we are overwhelmed by the powers of this world and yet we thank you that as Jesus came into this world he reminded us that he has power over all things even to the wind and to the waves to say peace be still and help us Lord to at this time call upon you in that way that you will help us to be still even at this time to be still before you as a holy God to be still before you as a people waiting upon you as we approach your word Lord may we come prayerfully and looking to you to speak that we might have ears to hear what you would say as again we are reminded of your word and its power and yet how many ignore it

[8 : 36] and belittle it in so many ways but we thank you for your spirit that is able to convict and to convert we thank you for the power of the spirit to apply your word to each and every one of us in all our different needs to build us up to encourage us to rebuke us whatever it is Lord whatever experience we are going through you know our needs for we call upon you as our father in heaven and as your children Lord you know everything nothing hidden from you nothing that we can hide in our hearts for it is all revealed to you already even the words that we speak Lord they are known to you before we open our mouths and so Lord we thank you that you are near and that you are with us we pray your blessing over us as a people as we go on in the week ahead Lord watch over us be with us be our shepherd be our guide lead us in the right paths lead us according to your word and to your truth and above all Lord may we know that wonder of your presence as we go on in this life and in its journey for us we do commit ourselves and all our different needs

Lord and giving thanks to you for your goodness to us even in this past week we thank you for the carry night on Friday evening and for the joy of being gathered together there in fellowship and under the banner of your name being gathered together to give thanks to you for the works of the camps over many years and to hear Hannah speaking about it Lord so encouraging as a camper and now as a leader we see the amazing work that has been done over nearly 65 years now through the free church camps and we give you thanks for all who have been so touched by them for the way your gospel has gone out to so many people over these years and changed and transformed so many lives and we pray your blessing and encouragement in the camps for this coming year as well as all the preparations are made and as all is done prayerfully and practically to make things ready

Lord we pray for help and encouragement to leaders to cooks and to campers as well we thank you for those who are going from our own number here both as campers and leaders and we ask that you would bless them in that time and bless them even as they think about going and look forward to it Lord may they be encouraged and built up through it we thank you too Lord for the ministry of the gospel throughout our islands here we thank you for the encouragements of communion seasons and for the joy of your word being blessed and your power being seen in the saving of people we thank you for the encouragement of new members in so many different congregations and we pray Lord that even going forward we will hear and know more of that joy of salvation thankful for the rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents and may we rejoice with those who rejoice even in these ways we pray your blessing on the communion in Garibus this coming weekend be with Reverend Hugh Ferrier as he ministers there and be with the congregation as a whole

Lord bind them together in the bonds of your love under the banner of your truth we pray Lord too for our nation as a whole we pray for all the different needs we see surrounding us we know Lord there are many but none are hidden from you and so Lord hear the praying people that you have throughout all corners of our land and to the far ends of the earth we thank you that you have your people and even today as a day when your word is heard and read and maybe at other times when it's for many people not heard the rest of the year apart from maybe occasionally Christmas and Easter we thank you Lord for the power of your word and we pray that to all ends of the earth today you will bless it in the preaching of it and the proclamation of it and even in the hearing of it that it will touch hearts and bring new life to many people so Lord continue to bless us now as we look to you go before us

Lord as we commit ourselves again into your hands watch over us Lord and come near to us as we seek to come near to you and pardon us in all our sin as we ask all with the forgiveness of our sin in Jesus precious name and for his sake and glory we ask it all Amen Let's sing again together to God's praise we're singing in Psalm 42 in the Scottish Psalter page 262 Psalm 42 on page 262 we're going to sing from verse 1 down to verse 5 and the tune is Weatherby like as the heart for water brooks and thirst of pant and bray so pants my longing soul O God that come to thee I may Psalm 42 from verse 1 to 5 we stand to sing to the same

[14 : 19] God wants to have and pray soatt the heart to the next he or LO so grant my longing soul
O God O God, that come to thee I live.

My soul for God, the living God, doth thirst when shall I near.

Unto thy countenance approach, and then God's sight appear.

My tears are hard to me be meet, both in the night and day.

While unto me continually, where is thy godless sin?

[15 : 50] My soul is poured out in me, when this I think upon.

Because that with the multitude I neartofore had gone.

With every true God's house I went, with voice of joy and praise.

Yea, with the multitude that kept the solemn holy days.

O why art thou cast down, my soul?

[17 : 07] Why in me so dismayed? Trust God, for I shall praise him yet.

This countenance is my name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. We can turn together to read God's word now in the first letter of Paul to the Corinthians. 1 Corinthians. Reading in chapter 1.

1 Corinthians chapter 1. We'll take up our reading at verse 10. Reading down to verse 25.

1 Corinthians chapter 1. Reading at verse 10. I appeal to you, brothers, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same judgment.

[18 : 19] For it has been reported to me by Chloe's people that there is quarreling among you, my brothers. What I mean is that each of you says, I follow Paul, or I follow Apollos, or I follow Cephas, or I follow Christ.

Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul? I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gais, so that no one may say that you were baptized in my name.

I did baptize also the household of Stephanas. Beyond that, I do not know whether I baptized anyone else. For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel, and not with words of eloquent wisdom, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power.

For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved, it is the power of God. For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the discernment of the discerning I will thwart.

Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world?

[19 : 49] For since in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach, to save those who believe.

For Jews demand signs, and Greeks seek wisdom. But we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to the Jews, and folly to Gentiles.

But to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ is the power of God, and the wisdom of God. For the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.

And so on. And may God bless that reading from his word. Before we turn back to consider some of this passage, we're going to sing once again to God's praise in Psalm 147.

Psalm 147. Sing Psalm's version on page 192. I'm going to sing from verse 1 to verse 7. The tune is Creditan.

[20 : 57] Psalm 147 at verse 1. O praise the Lord, how good it is to sing him songs of praise. How pleasant to give thanks to him for all his gracious ways.

We'll sing from verse 1 to 7. Standing to sing. O praise the Lord, how good it is to sing him songs of praise.

And bless him songs of praise.

He heals his people's broken hearts, restores the fruits and blame.

He sets the number of the stars, and calls them each by day.

[22 : 34] Tis our Lord, and great in power, his wisdom is profound.

The Lord sustains the weak but cast, the wicked to the ground.

Sing to the Lord with thankfulness, with joy his praise proclaim.

And with the music of the heart, give glory to his name.

We can turn back to our reading in 1 Corinthians chapter 1.

[23 : 38] We can read again at verse 17. 1 Corinthians chapter 1 at verse 17. For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel, and not with words of eloquent wisdom, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power.

For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing. But to us who are being saved, it is the power of God.

Especially those words in verse 18. For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing. But to us who are being saved, it is the power of God.

As Paul is writing here to the church at Corinth, he's writing to a place and a people that he loved very much. A place where he had seen the gospel blessed in the past, and people coming to faith.

But Corinth was a large, bustling city, an important place of commerce, an important place of business, strategically placed where people would be passing through it on their journeys from north, south, east, and west.

[24 : 52] So in that sense, it was cosmopolitan in so many different ways, and yet a place where the gospel at one time flourished. But being such a place as this, with different people coming through, it was a place full of different ideas and different teachings.

And there was always people coming and going who had this new kind of teaching, something new to be listened to and heard. And in many ways, Paul was seen as just one of those people who had come.

And he'd come with something new. He'd come with the gospel, and people had listened. But as is always the danger, as is always the case, there's a danger of being drawn away to something else, to something different, and to something new.

There was all kinds of wisdom as the people saw it. And yet, as Paul is writing to them, he's reminding them of the foolishness of going away from what was central and most important to faith, to life, to their salvation.

And that is the gospel of Jesus Christ. And especially the heart of the gospel, which is the cross of Christ. And that is what we've been reflecting on already today, this morning, as we think of this Easter Sunday, the day that reminds us so much of the power of the cross, that Christ died for our sins, but that on the third day, he rose again.

[26 : 24] And this is the word that he has preached to them, and the word that he is encouraging them in as well. And he gives them this challenge in verse 18, as to what way they are living, what way they are going.

For the word of the cross is folly, foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved, it is the power of God.

If there is one thing you could change in your life, or you could add to your life, what would it be? If you were given an opportunity to ask for one thing, what would that be?

In the Old Testament, in the book of 2 Chronicles 1, chapter 1, there you read of someone who was given such an opportunity as this.

And that man was Solomon. In that passage, in verse 7, it says that in the night, God appeared to Solomon and said to him, ask what I shall give you.

[27 : 34] Ask what I shall give you. God came to him and said, what do you want me to give to you? How would you reply? What would you ask for? Well, this is what Solomon asked for.

Solomon said to God, you have shown great and steadfast love to David, my father, and have made me king in his place. Oh Lord God, let your word to David, my father, now be fulfilled, for you have made me king over a people as numerous as the dust of the earth.

Give me now wisdom and knowledge to go out and come in before this people. For who can govern this people of yours, which is so great?

That opportunity that Solomon had, he asked for wisdom and knowledge. And the Lord gave it to him in abundance along with other things because he had asked wisely.

There was a king, King Solomon being asked, what do you want me to do for you? But it's not just to kings and people that might be seen as important that God gives that opportunity and asks that question of us well.

[28 : 47] In the New Testament, in the Gospel of Mark, you read of a blind beggar, Bartimaeus. And he's in many ways asked that same question. Jesus is passing by and he's crying out to him and Jesus turns and says to him, what do you want me to do for you?

Here is the blind beggar and this opportunity for asking of the Lord anything that this world has to offer. And what does he ask for? He says, Lord, that I might see.

Wisdom again is there. Not just physical seeing, but seeing Jesus and following Jesus along the way.

In all the things that we could be offered in this world, is wisdom our priority? Is that what we're looking for? Or are we getting caught up in the foolishness of this world?

Of the foolishness that despises the cross? That shuns the cross? That pushes the cross out of the way as something insignificant or unimportant? Well, Paul here is writing to the church of Corinth and to ourselves, reminding us of the importance of the wisdom, the power, and the knowledge that the cross has to give.

[30 : 07] The church in Corinth then was a place that seemed to be full of wisdom, but so easily getting led astray. And that's what Paul highlights for us further down in verse 20.

He says, Where is the one who is wise? Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world?

Anything the world has to offer us is foolishness before God. God is wisdom. And that is what we need.

And so how do we consider the word of God? How do we consider the word of the cross as we hear today and as we hear it every time we come under the gospel, the word of God?

How do we take it? What do we do with it? Do we see the cross as the power of God to salvation or do we see it as just foolishness?

[31 : 11] But foolishness, it says, for those who are perishing. Well, as we look at this passage together this evening, we see that Paul came into Corinth, this busy city, this busy place where much ideas were being put forth, where many teachings were being put forth, and he comes again just to remind them to keep their eyes on the cross of Christ, to keep their eyes on the gospel, to listen to the gospel, to see the gospel, not just a means among others, to see the gospel not just as something that will get you out of a tight spot for a time and then you can go back to your previous ways, but to see what the gospel speaks to and who it speaks to.

It speaks to us all as lost sinners in need of salvation and that the gospel speaks of salvation being found in Jesus Christ alone.

What distinguishes the Christian faith from any other? Surely it is the cross where God gave his son to die for our sins.

No other religion has that. Christ on the cross crucified is the heart of our salvation and our hope.

And that's what he wants the church at Corinth to see. The cross and its power. Its power to save.

[32 : 54] So how do we view the cross? There's three things from verse 18 I want us to think about together this evening. And it's really just taking from the words of this verse.

The first thing is the word of the cross. What does that mean? The second thing is the foolishness of the cross as it's seen by many.

But then thirdly, we want to see the power of the cross. So the first thing we want to look at is the word of the cross. For the word of the cross, it says at the beginning of verse 18.

As Paul is writing to the church in Corinth, it's into the midst of this struggle. The struggle between all the different teachers and scribes as we're seeing in verse 20.

The debaters of the age. Many people are coming to Corinth and giving their own message. They'll have their own gods. They'll have their own teaching.

[34 : 04] They'll have their own ideas. And Paul is coming into the midst of this and saying, Well, who are you going to listen to? Which word are you going to listen to?

And there are those who are coming who are perhaps more able speakers, more able debaters. They're more eloquent in their speech. They have fancy words.

They have fancy ideas. They're very persuasive in many different ways. But what does Paul say about himself?

Well, in verse 17, where we read there, we see Paul came in weakness, really, and in much trembling. He did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel.

And not with words of eloquent wisdom, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power. He didn't come to change anything that God had given to him.

[35 : 02] He didn't come to try and make it more persuasive himself or more powerful or eloquent himself that it might appeal to people. He came with the word of the cross.

Lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power. Nothing was to detract from the cross of Christ and the power that was already there.

Christ sent him to preach the gospel. And that is what we have today, to this very day. It doesn't maybe come always eloquently.

It doesn't come with words of wisdom. But it's still the power of the cross of Christ that is able to save.

And that is what we need. And we are not to listen to those who would seek to change it or to downplay the cross as central. Or to see it as something gory and just to be put to one side.

[36 : 04] The idea of Jesus Christ being crucified, having to die for our sins. To do something that surely we could do ourselves and manage ourselves.

People want to make the message more palatable. To make it more pleasing to the ear. But there is no way away from it. If we try and do that, we are emptying the cross of Christ of its power.

And it's the word of the cross that we need to hear. Take the cross out of the gospel. And no more is it good news.

No more is it the way to salvation. Because there is only one way to salvation. And that is through Christ and the cross and its power.

One preacher once said this about it. The old bloody message of the cross is quickly being replaced by a bloodless message that lacks power and lacks hope.

- [37 : 04] Instead of hearing the devastating but life changing news that we are sinners in need of salvation through the shed blood. People hear a message that tells them, I'm okay.
- You're okay. And that's always the danger with the gospel. That we empty it of its power by taking the cross out of it.
- By focusing on ourselves or bringing change for good from ourselves. That is not the answer. The resurrection on Sunday doesn't start with us.
- It starts and finishes with Christ and the cross. And how does Paul himself view the word of the cross?
- He views it in his own testimony as the only way to salvation. Because there was nothing that he could do himself. And he knows that. He acknowledges that now.
- [38 : 05] But he didn't always. In the book of Philippians chapter 3. You see that Paul once had confidence in flesh. Confidence in himself.
- And he says this in Philippians 3 verse 4. Though I myself have reason for confidence in the flesh also. If anyone else thinks he has reason for confidence in the flesh.
- I have more. Circumcised on the eighth day of the people of Israel. The tribe of Benjamin. A Hebrew of Hebrews. As to the law a Pharisee. As to zeal a persecutor of the church.
- As to righteousness under the law. Blameless. There is his list as it previously stood. There is what he could present before God in his own eyes.
- He had all of these things. All of these things he could call on. Confidence in the flesh. His circumcision. His people.
- [39 : 07] His works. His zeal. All of these things he had. And what changed? His realisation of Christ and the cross.
- Because he goes on to say in verse 7 there. As to righteousness under the law. Blameless. But he says. But whatever gain I had.
- I counted as loss. For the sake of Christ. Christ. His testimony was to the cross of Christ.
- The word of the cross. And then his preaching is all about Christ and the cross. As he says. But we preach Christ crucified.
- That is the gospel. He never loses that. And he never loses the wonder of it either. As he's preaching and teaching to so many people.
- [40 : 09] In so many different places. It's always with the cross. And the word of the cross at the heart of his message. As he writes to the Romans in chapter 11.
- He says. Oh the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God. He's still in awe of it all. How unsearchable are his judgments.
- And how inscrutable his ways. For who has known the mind of the Lord. Or who has been his counsellor. Or who has given a gift to him. That he might be repaid.
- For for him and from him. And through him and to him. Are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen. So he has the word of the cross.
- Always to the fore. Not some new wisdom with eloquent words. In case the cross be emptied of its power. The cross is always to the fore.
- [41 : 10] And so it should be for ourselves too. To always have the cross of Christ. As all that we are doing. All that we are seeing. Is for the glory of God.
- And what is the word of the cross to you today? What does it say to you today? Does it not speak of the word of victory.
- Over sin and death. If we take that cross away from the gospel. We empty it. Of that power.

There is no longer victory over sin. And death. If you take the cross away. The word of love. And grace. Is gone. Take the cross away.

And the word of power. And salvation. Is no more. Because all of these things. Are found at the cross of Christ. That is what the word of the cross is.

[42 : 12] Someone else put it. He came to pay a debt. He didn't owe. Because we owed a debt. We couldn't pay. The word of the cross.

People will dismiss it. And belittle it. But we look to the one. To the one. Who hung. On the tree. Somebody else put it like this.

When you think of the cross. And how. The world tries to dismiss it. Even conquer it. As we might see it. He said. The cross. Cannot be defeated.

For it is. Defeat. The cross. Of Christ. Is powerful. Powerful. And the word of the cross.

Is salvation. And that salvation. Cannot be defeated. Because that is where. The victory. Was won. The word.

[43 : 14] Of the cross. Is powerful. But then. Secondly. We see. The folly. The foolishness. Of the cross.

The word of the cross. Is folly. To those. Who are perishing. What does this mean? The word.

Is being ignored. The word. Is being. Put away. As foolish. And when you think of. Who Paul was writing to. You see it.

Later on. In verse 22. The Jews demand signs. And the Greeks. Seek wisdom. These were the majority. Of people. That the.

The gospel. Was coming to. In Corinth. Jews. And Greeks. And how did they. View. The cross. Well they. Viewed it as.

[44 : 09] Folly. As foolishness. The cross. For the Jews. Was. Something that is. Cursed. And. To worship.

The cross. In any way. Would be. Revolting. Wrong. Because. God. Wasn't. Going to send. A savior. Into this world.

Who would die. In such a way. This was madness. This was just. Foolishness. To them. They just. Couldn't. Get their heads. Around it. And the same.

For the Greeks. For the Greeks. The cross. Was something. That was used. To put murderers. To death. It was the. Ultimate. Disgrace. The cross.

And the idea. Of a savior. To the Greeks. Coming in this way. Again. Was foolishness. And to them. To worship. The cross. In any way. Would be just.

[45 : 04] Superstitious. And so. Here. They are. The debaters. Of the age. The scribes. And all of. These people. Coming. The words.

Of wisdom. But as. The Lord. Is saying. As Paul. Is saying. The world. Of the world. It is foolish. To think.

Anything else. Apart from the cross. As the way. To salvation. It stands. As a. A sign. For us. The consequences.

Of sin. Is death. And here. Is where death. Is being dealt. With. That Jesus died. For our sin. And to ignore this.

To ignore this. Is to be foolish. And it is. As it says here. To perish. To perish. Eternally. Is what.

[46 : 00] Behind. These words. We live in a world. Where you see. Many. Signs. That. Indicate. Danger. You think of.

A transformer. Behind. A large. Metal. Fence. Is a sign. On the sides. Probably on all sides. Of it. Danger. High voltage.

Do not enter. Danger of death. All the signs. Are there. And you ignore them. At your own risk. You ignore them. At your own peril.

So why would you go and climb over that fence. When it's got these signs up. Of the danger that exists there. And so many people.

Have ignored these signs. And they've perished. And so it is with the gospel. And the word of the cross. It's foolishness to those.

[46 : 58] Who are perishing. If we listen to the wisdom of this world. We are foolish. And we are perishing. It can sound eloquent.

It can sound persuasive. It can sound as. The wisdom of our day. And our age. Is just to shun the bible. As outdated. And old fashioned. And all of these things.

But to deny it. Is to deny. The power of God. And the power of God. To salvation. C.S. Lewis once wrote.

Atheists express. Their rage against God. Although in their view. He does not exist. And you see.

The way the wisdom of this world today. Rages against God. Anything to do with a Christian faith. Stirs up a rage. And a hatred.

[47 : 57] Against God. And as Lewis said. In their view. God doesn't exist. God doesn't exist. But as we often say.

There is that God shaped void. In us all. And just like the high voltage sign. Where there are warning signs.

The cross stands as a warning. To every generation. That apart from this. You are perishing. You are foolish. And you are foolish.

To ignore it. To ignore it. Take note. Of the word. Of the cross. Don't let it be foolishness. That leads to you.

Perishing. And the cross is. A reminder to us. Of the love. Of God. We are foolish. To ignore the love.

[48 : 54] Of God. The finished work. Of God. Of God. On that cross. Through Christ. When he said. It is done. It is finished. And how.

Even with the thief. Beside him. On the cross. Who turned to him. And cried out to him. Remember me Lord. He gave him that wonderful response.

Today you will be with me. In paradise. Dwight Moody wrote about that. As Christ was. Crucified there.

With a thief. Beside him. He said this. Of the thief. Who turned to him. In that way. He said. The thief. Had nails. Through both his hands. So he could not work.

And a nail. Through each foot. So that he could not run errands. For the Lord. He could not lift a hand. Or a foot. Toward his salvation.

[49 : 52] And yet Christ. Offered him. The gift of God. And he took it. Christ. Threw him a passport. And took him into.

Paradise. The thief. Could do nothing. For his own salvation. Neither. Can we. We are fools. To think that we can.

Instead. We are to come. Saying nothing. In my hands. In my hands. I bring. Simply to thy cross. I cling. The cross.

Is foolishness. To those. Who are perishing. So why. Would we be fools. When God. Is calling us. To himself. Through the cross.

To come. And see the way. To salvation. The way. Prepared. Right through. The Old Testament. Looking. Ahead. To the cross. And the way.

[50 : 51] We see the cross. And Christ. Crucified. Proclaimed. Through. The New Testament. It's there. Before us. All the time. Even when you go back. To the Old Testament.

Go to Ezekiel. And you see there. God. Calling his people. He says. In Ezekiel 33. Verse 11. Say to them. As I live. Declares the Lord God. I have no pleasure.

In the death. Of the wicked. But that the wicked. Would turn. From his way. And live. Turn back. Turn back. Turn back. From your evil ways. For why.

Will you die. O house. Of Israel. The cross. Cries out. Today. It's crying out. With a warning. That we are perishing.

If we ignore it. We are to hear. The word. And see the cross. As the power. Of God. To salvation. And that's the last thing. We want to see.

[51 : 46] From this verse. It says. But. To us. Who are being saved. It is the power. Of God. And isn't it great. Isn't it wonderful.

That we have the cross. Why would we want. To get rid of the cross. In any way. Shape. Or form. Because. We are reminded here. It is.

The power. Of God. To salvation. It is the only. Way. To salvation. And when we see. The cross.

And we see the salvation. That is offered here. It is. A divine. Salvation. It's a salvation. That can only come. From God. Because. It is the power.

Of God. To salvation. Because. We are. Powerless. We are dead. In our sin. We are lost. But Jesus came.

[52 : 44] To save us. From our sin. And therefore. We can rejoice. In the cross. Not as. Something. Disgusting. As the Jews.

Would see it. Or. Something. That just. Is so superstitious. Would see it. In Paul's day. But that we would see. The wonder of it. That God.

Sent his son. Into this world. To live. And to die. To die. In our place. And when we put our faith.

In the Lord Jesus. We know. This power. Of God. For ourselves. It is the power. Of God. To salvation. The one.

Who is able. To break. All the chains. Of sin. That hold us. The one. Who is able. To make us. A new person. A new people. The one.

[53 : 42] Who is able. To bring us. Away from condemnation. Because now. There is no condemnation. For those. Who are in Christ. Jesus. And that is. Under.

The cross. Of Christ. And its power. John. Newton. Wrote. These words. When he was looking. To the cross. He said.

Alas. I knew not. What I did. But now. My tears. Are vain. Where shall. My trembling. Soul. Be hid. For I.

The Lord. Have slain. A second. Luke. He gave. I freely. All forgive. This blood. Is for thy ransom. Paid.

I die. That thou. Mayst. Live. That is the wonder. Of the word. Of the cross. He died. That we. Might live.

[54 : 37] And John. In his gospel. Expresses that. So wonderfully. For us as well. In chapter 5. Verse 24. He says. Truly. Truly. I say to you.

Whoever. Hears my word. And believes. Him who sent me. Has. Eternal. He does not come. Into judgment. But has passed. From death.

To life. Passed from. Perishing. In our foolishness. To being saved. By the power of God.

In the cross. What is our. Thought. Of the cross. Today. Do. Do we see it.

As just foolishness. And perish. Or do we see it. Its power. To salvation. All around. The world. Today.

[55 : 33] The gospel. Is heard. And the gospel. At its core. Is the cross. Of Christ. And its power.

To transform. form. And we don't lose heart in all that we do for the Lord. We don't lose heart as we seek the Lord. As he calls us to himself, we see Christ as our hope for eternity. I'll leave you with a story about John Wesley. When he was returning home one evening after being out preaching, he was robbed and the thief came to him and stopped him in his tracks and asked him for the money that he had.

John Wesley was only able to say, well, I just have a few coins, but I also have this Christian literature. The thief was disappointed and yet he took the little money that Wesley had. Now you or I, we might be just terrified at that moment and just want the thief to disappear away from us.

But as the thief ran away, John Wesley called out to him and said, stop, I have something else to give you. And the thief just stopped and turned in surprise. And John Wesley said to him, my friend, you may live to regret this sort of life. If you ever do, here's something to remember. The blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from all sin. As the thief hurried away, John Wesley prayed that his words might bear fruit in that thief. Many years passed. And one Sunday when John Wesley had finished preaching a Sunday service, he was greeting people at the door. And this man approached him, a stranger in his eyes, as he thought, and introduced himself. And he was surprised to learn that this was the thief he had met that night. And the thief. And the thief was now a Christian and a successful businessman. His life had been transformed. And he said to John Wesley, I owe it all to you. And John Wesley's response was immediately to say, not to me, not to me, but to the precious blood of Christ that cleanses us from all sin.

The cross is powerful to save. It can save you. It can save me as we fix our eyes on Jesus.

[58 : 36] It's not about eloquent words of wisdom. It's about Christ crucified. There is the power of God to salvation. May we know more of that saving power in our own life and in our own experience and in our lives of our community and our land and this world that Christ would be glorified and his name be praised.

Let us pray. Lord our God, we can bring nothing to you, but we thank you that we have a cross to cling to, that we have the power of God before our eyes as we think of Christ crucified for our sins. As we think of all that was done for us, Lord, why would we ever want to turn away? And yet in our foolishness, we so often neglect these things. And we just pray, Lord, for your spirit to provoke us, Lord, to stir us up in our hearts and in our minds, to always have that cross before us, to always see its power and Christ as our saviour and as our Lord. We thank you for the wonder of it, for your love towards sinners such as we are. We pray, Lord, that you will make us thankful that the way to salvation has been made plain for us. So help us, Lord, to go on in your strength and to rejoice in the hope that is Christ our Lord as we ask it all in his name. Amen.

We're going to conclude by singing again in Psalm 147. Psalm 147 at verse 15, the three stanzas down to verse 18, the tune is Arlington.

To all the corners of the earth, the Lord's commands proceed, for when he speaks, his word goes forth through all the world with speed. He spreads the snow as wool, the frost like ashes on the land.

He hurls forth icy hail like stones who can such cold withstand. But when he sends his mighty word and makes the warm winds blow, the frozen waters start to melt and once again to flow. We'll sing these three stanzas to God's praise.

[61 : 25] To all the corners of the earth, the Lord's commands proceed.

For when he speaks, his word goes forth. For when he speaks, his word goes forth. For when he speaks, his word goes forth. Through all the world will speak.

He spreads the snow as wool, the frost like ashes on the land. He hurls forth icy hail like stones.

Thank you.

The warm winds flow, the frozen water start to melt, and once again to flow.

[63 : 25] Amen.