

The Week That Changed the World

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[0 : 00] I know what it's like when you go into the shop, you'll all be wanting the biggest one you can possibly get. And you'll be asking your mum and dad for a big Easter egg so that you can enjoy it.

But I want just to think a wee bit about what Easter means for us. I don't want to make it difficult for you to understand it, but I really want you to understand, boys and girls, what it meant that Jesus saves us.

Because that's what Easter is all about, that Jesus died and he died for me and for you. And I want to tell you a story about a wee boy called, we'll call him Kenneth this week, because last week we had Johnny.

So I don't want to have Johnny every week, but we're going to call this wee boy Kenneth. And Kenneth and his grandpa built a boat together. And I'll show you the sort of boat he built. And anyone who knows me knows that I certainly didn't build it. And it is due a refit. If anyone can help with the refit, just speak to me afterwards. But they built this boat together.

[1 : 07] And Kenneth used to go down to a loch near his house every single day to sail the boat. Because it had sails on it. They used to put the sails up.

And they used to go down to the loch and sail the boat round the loch. And he just loved doing that. And he loved his wee boat. And every night he went home. And he took his boat home and put it aside so that it would be ready for the next day.

And every day he did that. But then do you know what? One day he was sailing. And the wind was very strong. And the boat sailed and sailed and sailed away.

And didn't come back. And the loch was so big that there's no way Kenneth could get it. And the boat disappeared across the loch. And Kenneth had lost his boat.

He was heartbroken. Absolutely devastated. Because that was his life. He loved doing it every day. And now he didn't have a boat. So what was he going to do?

[2 : 06] He just went about. And he was a wee bit grumpy over the next few days. And always wondering what happened to his boat. And then one day, shortly after that, he went up to the town.

And he was passing this shop. And guess what he saw in the shop? In the shop window was his boat. This was his boat. And it had a for sale sign on it.

Can you imagine that his boat had a for sale sign on it? And Kenneth ran into the shop and he said, That's my boat, he said. The shopkeeper said, Wow.

He said, Yeah, but someone came in here and I bought it off them. But it's my boat, he said. And the shopkeeper said, I'm really sorry, he said. But I have to sell it on.

But I'll tell you what I'll do, he said. I'll put it aside. And if you save enough money, and once you save enough money, you can come back in here and you can buy the boat off me.

[3 : 06] Kenneth was a bit disappointed. But he said, That's fine. Because he knew he got pocket money. And he knew he could raise the money to buy the boat for himself. So off he went. And he did all the chores for his mummy and daddy.

Did all the chores for his granny and grandpa. Everyone around. He went round to see if he could do jobs for them to raise the money to buy the boat. And guess what? After about two weeks, he had enough money to buy the boat.

And when he had it in his pocket, he went up with his dad. And he ran into the shop. And he said to the shopkeeper, There's the money. Can I please have my boat?

And wow, he got his boat. The shopkeeper handed it over to him. And he got his boat. And he went outside. And he just got a hold of the boat like this. And he cuddled it up.

And he said, Oh, my lovely boat, he said. I made you. I lost you. But I bought you again. You know, that's what Kenneth said.

[4 : 08] And you know, boys and girls, that's how Jesus is. You know that today Jesus is looking at you here. And he's saying to you, I made you.

But you turn your back on me. And you sin sometimes. But I've bought you again. And if you trust in Jesus today, you'll go to heaven with him one day.

And I hope you remember that as we come up to Easter. Thank you for listening so well. We're now going to sing Psalm 25. And then sing Psalms version.

It's on page 29. And it's verses 1 to 9. Psalm 25. Page 29. Verses 1 to 9.

To you, O Lord, I lift my soul. I trust in you continually. Do not let me be put to shame. Nor let my foes gloat over me. We'll stand to sing.

[5 : 13] To you, O Lord, I lift my soul. I trust in you continually.

Do not let me be put to shame. Nor let my foes gloat over me.

No one who sets his hope in you will ever suffer such disgrace.

O Lord, I lift my soul. O Lord, I lift my soul. To you, O Lord, I lift my soul. I lift my soul. To you, O

Lord. To me, O Lord. To me, O Lord.

You may be yet in shame well faced. O Lord, reveal to me your ways, And all your paths help me to know I make and guide me in your truth, Instruct me in the way to go.

[7 : 04] You are my Savior and my God, All day I hope in you alone.

Remember, Lord, your love and grace, Which from past ages you have shown.

Do not recall my sins of you, Are my rebellious evil ways.

Remember me in pure great love, For you, O Lord, are good always.

Because the Lord is just and good, He shows His paths to all who stray.

[8 : 43] He guides the weak in what is right, And teaches them His holy way.

Amen. We're now going to read God's word, And John chapter 18, At verse 28.

It's at page 1090, If you've got a pew Bible. John chapter 18, At verse 28, And we'll read to the end of the, Read to verse 16 of chapter 9.

Then they led Jesus from the house of Caiaphas To the governor's headquarters. It was early morning. They themselves did not enter the governor's headquarters, So that they would not be defiled, But could eat the Passover.

That was the chief priests and the elders. They were so hypocritical, As we shall see later. So Pilate went outside to them and said, What accusation do you bring against this man?

[9 : 59] This was Jesus. They answered him, If this man were not doing evil, We would not have delivered him over to you. Pilate said to them, Take him yourselves, And judge him by your own law.

The Jews said to him, It is not lawful for us to put anyone to death. This was to fulfill the word that Jesus had spoken, To show by what kind of death he was going to die. So Pilate entered his headquarters again, And called Jesus and said to him, Are you the king of the Jews?

Jesus answered, Do you say this of your own accord, Or did others say it to you about me? Pilate answered, Am I a Jew? Your own nation and the chief priests Have delivered you over to me.

What have you done? Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world. My servants would have been fighting That I might not be delivered over to the Jews, But my kingdom is not from the world.

And Pilate said to him, So you are a king? Jesus answered, You say that I am a king? For this purpose I was born, And for this purpose I have come into the world, To bear witness to the truth.

[11 : 06] Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice. Pilate said to him, What is truth? After he said this, He went back outside to the Jews And told them, I find no guilt in him.

But you have a custom That I should release one man for you at the Passover. So do you want me to release to you The king of the Jews? They cried out again, Not this man, But Barabbas.

Now Barabbas was a robber. Then Pilate took Jesus and flogged him, And the soldiers twisted together a crown of thorns, Put it on his head, And arrayed him in a purple robe.

They came up to him saying, Hail, king of the Jews, And struck him with their hands. Pilate went out again and said to them, See, I am bringing him out to you, That you may know that I find no guilt in him.

So Jesus came out, Wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. Pilate said to them, Behold the man. When the chief priests and the officers saw him, They cried out, Crucify him, crucify him.

[12:10] Pilate said to them, Take him yourselves and crucify him, For I find no guilt in him. The Jews answered him, We have a law, And according to that law he ought to die, Because he has made himself the son of God.

When Pilate heard this statement, He was even more afraid. He entered his headquarter again, And said to Jesus, Where are you from? Jesus gave him no answer.

So Pilate said to him, You will not speak to me. Do you know that I have authority to release you, And authority to crucify you? Jesus answered him, You would have no authority over me at all, Unless it had been given you from above.

Therefore he who delivered me over to you, Has the greater sin. From then on, Pilate sought to release him. But the Jews cried out, If you release this man, You are not Caesar's friend.

Everyone who makes himself a king, Opposes Caesar. So when Pilate heard these words, He brought Jesus out, And sat down on the judgment seat, At a place called the stone pavement, And in Aramek, Gabbatha, Now it was the day of preparation of the Passover, It was about the sixth hour, He said to the Jews, Behold your king.

[13:23] They cried out, Away with him, Away with him, Crucify him. Pilate said to them, Shall I crucify your king? The chief priests answered, We have no king, But Caesar.

So he delivered him over to them, To be crucified. Amen. And God will bless this word to us. We'll continue singing in Psalm 67, And sing Psalms on page 84.

We'll sing the whole Psalm. God be merciful and bless us, Shine upon us with your face, That the earth may know your actions, And know all lands your saving grace.

Psalm 67, Stand to sing. God be merciful and bless us, Shine upon us with your face, That the earth may know your actions, And know all lands your saving grace.

O God, May the peoples praise you, May all peoples sing your praise, Are you judge the nations justly, Ruling over every race.

[14:55] May they sing with joy and gladness, May they all rejoice as one, O God, May the peoples praise you, As they all unite in song.

Then the land will yield its harvest, God will pour his gifts of God, God our God, God our God, Will surely bless us, All the earth will fear our God.

Can we just bow in prayer?

Lord, we thank you for your word and help us to understand that it is the word of the Lord. May we also understand, Lord, that you are the Lord of the word and everything in it comes from you. So, Lord, I pray that you would bless it to us this morning as we think upon it and as we look at your son, Jesus, that we might lift him up and glorify his name. In his name we ask everything. Amen. Well, as most of you know, we're entering Easter week and Easter is a very important time in the Christian calendar. I'm not going into detail about where the word Easter comes from or anything like that, but Christ was crucified in the month of Nisan, which was probably April. Easter can be between the 21st. The earliest Easter we've had in the UK is the 21st of March and the latest one is the 25th of April, so it can change. It's fairly straightforward as to when Easter is. It's the first Sunday after the first full moon after the spring solstice, so that's why it changes. But the Passover was held at that time and it was during that Easter week that Jesus' trial took place. It was during that week he was crucified and it was during that week that he rose again. It is probably the week that changed the world more than any other week in history because the week of Jesus' trial is a really important week. And there is no more important week in the Christian calendar than the week in which he was crucified and the week he rose again. And today I'm just going to look very simply, I hope, on question that Pilate asked, and that is, what are you going to do with Jesus who is called the Christ?

[18:12] About at least 25% of the story of Jesus is taken up with his last days, with his death. Some gospels, up to a third is taken up about his death. And we very rarely see that when we're writing a story about anyone. I mean, I have a tome, a tome about Churchill and very little about his death. It's mostly about his life. But about Jesus, it's mostly about his death. And we all have a fascination with trials. I mean, at the moment, the most famous murder suspect by far is probably Oscar Pistorius. I'm not sure if you, like me, look up BBC News at 7.30 and sometimes again Sky News at 9.30 to see how the trial went. As we see Jerry Nell, the prosecutor, who is called the pit bull, cross-examining Oscar Pistorius. It's a very solemn thing to watch it, but there is a certain fascination with it. And important as though, as that the trial is of Oscar Pistorius, it will pass.

I will forget about it. I would be interested to do a poll here this morning to find out how many of you remember the O.J. Simpson trial. Some of you weren't born when the O.J. Simpson trial was there because it was 1995. And 150 million people tuned in to see the verdict on television. It was one of the most watched events in television history. But very few people talk about it today. It's history. Very few people remember it. We won't remember the characters in it. But there's a trial that took place 2,000 years ago, and half the world today will be remembering it. Billions of people will be remembering it because it was the trial of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. And it's a fascinating trial. And, you know, we don't have the time this morning to go through it all because there are parallel accounts in all the Gospels of it. And if you really want to understand it, you should read each Gospel and find out what they all say about this trial.

[20 : 35] It's fascinating in many ways because how do you put God on trial? But I want to look just a wee bit at the background just now because a few things must...

It's really fascinating on why they arrested Jesus, for example, on Thursday. Let's just look at it on a daily basis. Today in the Christian calendar is Palm Sunday. It's when Jesus came into Jerusalem. And you know the story how they all welcomed him. And it says in Matthews that the chief priests and the elders were wanting to arrest Jesus to kill him, but not during the feast.

The feast was this week, starting today. But they didn't want to do it this week because there were so many people in Jerusalem at the time, and they were scared there would be a riot. However, for some reason or other, on Thursday night, I say next Thursday night, Judas went out to the chief priests to betray Jesus.

Now Judas had gone out the Tuesday before that. Tuesday night, Jesus had dinner with Simon the leper. And after that, Judas went out to offer to the Jews that he would betray Jesus to them.

[21 : 49] Now I had no account of the Jews at this stage expecting him to do it that week. But on Thursday night, he came again and told them that this was the opportune time to arrest Jesus.

Now, from the Jews' point of view, it was very, very tight. Because this was Thursday evening, and Jesus had to be crucified and dead by Friday evening.

Because if he was going to be crucified, he would have to be dead and taken down from the cross before the Passover was celebrated. So they literally had less than 24 hours for his trial, for his conviction, and for his crucifixion.

And it's really fascinating why they did it. There is no doubt in my mind, there is no question whatsoever, it all was heaven-led. But despite it being in the annals of God, all the people involved in it had their own responsibility.

Judas was responsible, Pilate was responsible, Caiaphas was responsible. They weren't robots, they made their own decisions. And Judas went out, and he betrayed Christ to his enemies.

[23 : 13] Now I want you to think of the situation on Thursday evening. Jesus was having the Passover meal with his disciples. And it says in the Bible that they were having that at the evening time.

So on Thursday evening, they were all together having their meal. Tradition has it that that meal would probably have been finished between 8 and 9 o'clock that evening.

And if we accept that Judas left the meal, say, after they had eaten at 8.30, and went to the Jews and told them that this was the opportune time to arrest Jesus, the disciples were then prepared to get ready, and they were going out to the Mount of Olives.

Now, Judas went to the Jews. Now the Jews had a problem. They told them, Judas told them that Jesus was ready to be arrested and to be crucified.

But the Jews had to make sure that he would also be convicted of treason, and that he would be sent to death. So I would put to you, although the Bible doesn't say it, that the Jews had to go and see Pilate to make sure that Pilate would commute their sentence on Friday morning, and that Jesus would be crucified.

[24 : 36] And one of the reasons I have for saying that, there are a few, but one of the main reasons for that is Pilate's wife. You may remember that when Pilate was trying Jesus, when he was cross-examining him, he received a message very early on from his wife, telling him not to have anything to do with this innocent man.

And I would suggest to you that Pilate's wife was with him in Jerusalem during those ten days. And when the Jews came late at night to Pilate, she heard what was said.

And like any wife, she asked, what was that all about? And she would have known that there was a prisoner being presented to Pilate first thing in the morning, and that he had agreed to commute the sentence that the Jews would have concluded the evening before or during the early hours of the morning.

And then, of course, she dreamt about Jesus, and she sent Pilate an urgent message first thing in the morning to tell him not to have anything to do with this man.

It was impractical for the Jews not to have approached Pilate. For a start, they wouldn't know that he was even available in the morning had they not gone to see him. Secondly, you can see their hypocrisy because they couldn't enter.

[25 : 55] When Pilate tried a prisoner, it was always in the court of the stranger. And the Jews were so holy, they wouldn't go in there because they would be ceremonially unclean if they went in there, and they couldn't participate in the Passover feast.

So they wouldn't go into this hall where Pilate cross-examined the prisoner. So they had to make sure that Pilate would come out and talk to them. So they had to come to some arrangement with Pilate because they couldn't enter the hall because they would be unclean.

Basically, that meant they couldn't participate in the Passover meal. For example, if they touched a dead body, seven days had to preside before the Passover, otherwise they would be considered unclean and they couldn't participate in the Passover.

So the Jews came to an agreement with Pilate the night before, probably, I would say, probably 10, 11 o'clock. Because if you think of the disciples, they went with Jesus to the garden, probably arrived at the garden, let's say about 10 o'clock in the evening, half nine at the very earliest.

It would have taken them half an hour to get there. Remember, there were three times Jesus came back and found the disciples asleep. Now, these disciples were fishermen.

[27 : 15] You know, they were used to late nights. But three times he came back and found them sleeping. Now, if we assume half an hour for each time, that takes us to half 11 at least before he was arrested.

It was also very dark because they needed torches to come up to arrest him. So Jesus, I would reckon that it was probably half 11, 12 o'clock before they arrested him. So during these two hours or three hours that Judas had gone to the chief priests, they would have to find the charges against Jesus.

They would have to convict him in their own court, the Sanhedrin. They would have to have the agreement of Pilate to convict him of treason and convict him in such a way that he was crucified before sundown on the Friday evening.

So it was a very, very tight timescale that they had to do that. They arrested Jesus here at 12 o'clock at night.

They took him to their own court. Was there anything illegal about it? There was a lot of illegality about it. I mean, they weren't supposed, for example, to have a trial at night if it was a murder trial.

[28 : 27] It was totally illegal. They weren't allowed to use the temple guards to arrest Jesus. It was the witnesses who arrested the prisoner if they were going to accuse him of murder.

It was the witnesses that did that. And the fascinating thing was in Jewish law that if the witnesses themselves were found to be lying, they were also liable to be put to death themselves.

So it was illegal for the temple guard to have gone for Jesus. It was illegal to have the trial at night. It was also illegal for the examiner, who was the high priest, to cross-examine the prisoner if the witnesses' testimony did not convict him.

So we have here Jesus in front of the Sanhedrin, and he was being cross-examined by Caiaphas, the high priest. And witnesses came up, and you know the story, many of you, and the witnesses did not concur in any way.

And the fascinating thing is that the Jews throughout the witness program, the witness in cross-examination, they stuck strictly to the law.

[29 : 38] But he wasn't convicted by the witnesses because they couldn't get to agree exactly on what they said. And yet, he should have been set free then.

When they didn't get the witnesses to agree or to concur on the charges, Jesus should have been set free. There was no evidence whatsoever found against him. But then, Caiaphas applied to Christ the most solemn of oaths, known in the Hebrew Constitution as the famous oath of testimony.

And we see that in Matthew 26. In Matthew 26, verse 63, we see Caiaphas saying, if you can look it up yourselves if you have it, I a Jew by the living God.

Tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God. Now, because Jesus was a Jew, he had no right to refuse to answer that question. Jesus had to ask that, answer that.

There was no way he could get out of it. And as a law-abiding Jew, he answered it. And he told them that he was. Jesus said to him, you have said so.

[31 : 02] And as far as Caiaphas was concerned, this was blasphemy, and it was worthy of death. And Caiaphas had a masterstroke. He had found Jesus guilty of blasphemy because he didn't believe he was the Son of God, and he was ready to bring him before Pilate.

And the Sanhedrin agreed to this, and Jesus was brought in front of Pilate. Now, there is no question in my mind that Pilate had agreed the night before or during the early hours of the morning to commute the sentence that the Sanhedrin would come to.

Otherwise, the Jews would never have risked it. But when they went to Pilate, when they went to Pilate, as we read earlier on, Pilate took him into his own court, and Pilate came out.

And he said to them, what charges have you brought against this man? For some reason or other, Pilate had changed his mind. Instead of accepting what the Jews had said and finding him guilty, he started asking them, what charges have you brought against this man?

And they didn't know what to say. They were really taken aback. And they said to him, if you weren't a criminal, we wouldn't have handed him over to you.

[32 : 25] And Pilate said to them, yeah, that's fine, he said, but if that's the case, why don't you deal with them yourselves? You know, Pilate had definitely changed his mind.

And I would put to you this morning that Pilate was the most reluctant prosecutor that ever tried a prisoner. And we can see in Pilate's story, time and time again, him trying to release Jesus instead of convicting him of what the Jews accused him of.

And then the Jews came back and they said three accusations against Jesus. We have found this man subverting your nation. He opposes payments of taxes to Caesar and he claims to be Christ the King.

Now these were very clever charges because they affected Rome and the Roman governor would have been affected by them. But Pilate saw through them. Pilate was quite a sly character himself. He saw through their charges. And he realized that it was out of envy that they brought Jesus to him. And then Pilate started talking to Jesus himself.

[33 : 34] Pilate had a most fascinating discourse with Jesus. It was really fascinating. It was really worthwhile going through it. Can you imagine, for example, yourself today having the opportunity of asking Jesus, what is truth?

And the only person this world has ever known who could answer that to satisfy our minds was in front of Pilate. And what did he do? He turned his back on him and he walked outside.

And Pilate kept on asking him questions. And then he realized that Jesus was a Galilean. And Herod was in Jerusalem at the same time as Pilate.

And he thought, this is a get out for me now. I'll send him to Herod. Because Herod can try him as a Galilean. So he sent him to Herod.

And you know the story with Herod, how they asked Jesus questions. Herod was desperate to see Jesus for many reasons. And he asked Jesus questions.

[34 : 40] Jesus never answered him. It's a very sober thought that Jesus never answered Herod. Because there may come a time, I don't know whether it will or not, but there is the possibility that there will come a time in people's lives when Jesus will not answer.

Because he never answered Herod's questions. And in a way, that was unveiling Jesus as who he was, the Son of God. Because he was led like a lamb to the slaughter.

And as a sheep before a shearer is dumb, he opened not his mouth. And Herod mocked him and his soldiers mocked him. They laughed at him. And they put a robe on him and sent him back to Pilate.

Pilate was unable to pass the buck this time. Because he was facing the Son of God. And he didn't know what to do with him.

He knew deep down in his own heart that this man was innocent. There was no way he was guilty in any way. He was a really special man. But he had sent him to Herod and he had found that Herod had found him innocent also.

[35 : 47] And then he brought him back again. And then Pilate said to the crowd that he would punish him. Can you imagine a prosecutor punishing him knowing that he was innocent?

And yet he was prepared to punish him. He had no guts, did Pilate. No guts at all. And you feel like just shouting to Pilate, why do you punish him?

Why don't you have the courage of your convictions and let him go? And maybe you're here this morning and you know about Jesus. You know deep down in your heart that he is the Son of God. You know deep down in your heart that he cares for you. You know deep down in your heart that he has changed lives. You know lives that he has changed. And there's something very, very attractive about following Jesus.

But you don't have the courage of your convictions. You don't have the strength, the guts to say I really want to follow you Jesus. I really want to be your disciple.

[36 : 51] That's the way Pilate was. But he had another cop out. He knew that he was able to release a prisoner to them at the feast. He knew that as Roman governor he had that right to release a prisoner.

So he thought, wow, what I'll do is I'll release the worst prisoner that I know of who's in prison just now. I'll release to them Barabbas.

I'll suggest that I'll release to them Barabbas or Jesus. And again the crowd will make the choice. I won't have them make the choice. The crowd will make the choice. See Barabbas was an awful guy.

He was a murderer. He was guilty of insurrection in the city of Jerusalem. When Barabbas was around people locked their doors. Mothers brought their kids in.

Men didn't send their woman out. They were scared of Barabbas. People knew who he was.

Interestingly, John says he was a robber. Do you know why John said that?

[37 : 55] We read it earlier. Because there were two robbers crucified with Jesus. And clearly Barabbas was going to be crucified also that day.

So Pilate put to them Jesus or Barabbas. What about Jesus? What was he like? What did he think of the crowd that was being for his crucifixion?

He had compassion on crowds. How did he treat children? He put them on his knees. Played with them. And he said that the kingdom of heaven was made up of people who were like little children. How did he treat women? If you're a woman here today never ever forget that it was Jesus who turned women's rights upside down first.

He had a place for women that no one in his culture or society ever had. How did he treat the sick and the leper? How did he treat Jairus' daughter?

[39 : 00] How did he treat the widow who had lost her son? Pilate was totally convinced that they would ask for Jesus to be released and not Barabbas.

What did they do? They asked for Barabbas. And can you imagine Pilate? Why? What has Jesus done?

He said. And they kept on saying crucify him crucify him. And he kept asking them why? What has he done? I find no reason at all.

I find no fault in this man. And Jesus and Pilate then had Jesus flogged. I don't know why he had him flogged. Flogging was an awful thing.

I could read about it but I don't have time. It was horrendous. This was the king of the universe. This was Jesus Christ. One who could call twelve legions of angels.

[39 : 59] And he was flogged. Why? It was for you. For me. For us.

As he was flogged he saw your name. He saw your face. He saw my face. And he accepted it. For the love that drew salvation's plan.

The love of Christ willing to be flogged. And Pilate took him out again. In front of the crowd. I think Pilate probably thought when they see what he's like.

When they see how much he has suffered already they will definitely allow me to set him free. He was a broken man. He was so weak after the flogging that he couldn't even lift his own cross.

So Pilate took him out again in front of the people and he said behold the man. Was there ever a man like this man? surely you let him free now.

[41 : 04] What do they do? Crucify him. Crucify him. You feel like shouting to Pilate stand up to the crowd Pilate.

Have the courage of your convictions. And again can I ask you are you scared of the crowd today? Deep down is there a flicker of interest in Jesus Christ? Is there something about him that attracts you? But the crowd might be your boss. What if I had to tell them I had to run my business in Christian lines? Might be someone in your office who would laugh at you. Might be someone in your classroom. Maybe the people you go to the gym with. Maybe the people you play football with. Maybe they're your crowd. Maybe they're stopping you from following Jesus. Maybe those who phone you up on Saturday night to go out you don't want to tell them or turn them down.

[42 : 07] What are you going to do with him today? Are you with the crowd and are shouting crucify him crucify him? Do you know there's no middle ground with Jesus? There's no neutral zone with Christ. because if you're facing Christ today like Pilate was Pilate realised he was between a rock and a hard place. You're either for him or you're against him. There's no middle ground with Christ. And maybe the crowd is stopping you from following him today. Maybe you want to get better make yourself better which makes a mockery of what Jesus did. You'll never make yourself better because Jesus did everything. So what are you going to do with him today? Maybe you're enlightened. Maybe you think I'm in the 21st century. I don't believe that nonsense. It's intellectual suicide. I'm morally and theologically in a neutral zone. I'm safe enough.

[43 : 14] I'm a good person. I'm going to heaven anyway. see there is no neutral zone. You're either for him or you're against him. And for many of you here today the crowd is keeping you back. Last night I read an interview by Bono and I don't have time to read it all about you to you but he's an intellect. He's a singer but he's got a powerful mind over and above that.

And he says about Jesus, I'm holding out that Jesus took my sins onto the cross because I know who I am and I hope I don't have to depend on my own religiosity. He goes on to say the point of the death of Christ is that Christ took on the sins of the world so that what we put out did not come back to us and that our sinful nature does not reap the obvious death. He replies Bono to the interviewee, it's not our own works that get us through the gates of heaven. And the person who was interviewing him said, no I don't believe it, it's intellectual suicide.

[44 : 32] And Bono said, that Christ says I'm not saying I'm a teacher, don't call me a teacher, I'm not saying I'm a prophet, I'm saying I'm the Messiah, I'm saying I'm God incarnate, so that what you're left with is either Christ who said, who he said he was, the Messiah, or you've got a complete nutcase, and I see that very carefully.

The idea that the entire course of civilization over, for over half the globe could have its fate changed and turned upside down by a nutcase, for me that's far-fetched. Maybe you today think Jesus is a good man, but that's not enough, he's the Lord of glory, and he's asking you to come to him today. You know there's going to be another trial, and every single one of us will be at that trial, and Pilate will be at that trial, and he'll be facing Jesus eyeball to eyeball, and Jesus will be in the judge's seat, and you'll be standing there in front of him, and he's going to ask you, what did you do with Jesus, who is called the Christ?

What are you going to do with him today? I'm going to close by just looking at Barabbas. Can you imagine what he went through that day? As he was listening to the crowd in his prison cell, he would hear his voice ringing through, Barabbas, Barabbas, Barabbas, and then crucify him, crucify him.

I'm sure he was trembling as he thought of what the crowd was saying, because that's all he could say, he couldn't hear the detail. Can you imagine what it must have felt like?

[46 : 24] as he heard the soldiers coming from him with their keys, he was expecting the worst, thinking that he was going to be crucified.

The keys came to set him free. I wonder if he went to Calvary. I wonder if he went there and saw Jesus hanging in his place.

I wonder if he heard one of the robbers saying to the other robber, we are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man, he's done nothing wrong.

I wonder if it clicked for Barabbas, because that's the gospel. That's the gospel in a nutshell. Barabbas was free because Jesus took his place.

If you want to be really free today, believe in Jesus. believe that he is the son of God. Believe that he died for you and saves you.

[47 : 27] For Barabbas, it was very real. He knew it physically. He was free. If you met Barabbas that night, you would be surprised to see him and you would ask him, why are you here?

And he would say to you, because Jesus took my place. And on that day when we meet Jesus, he was walking the streets of heaven, someone might ask you, why are you here?

Didn't expect to see you here. And all you can say is, Jesus took my place. What are you going to do with him today?

I wish I had more time to go through that trial. It's fascinating. fascinating. But I want you to remember that Pilate asked the question that reverberates through the ages.

What are you going to do with Jesus who is called the Christ? Are you going to crucify him again today? Are you going to walk out here crucifying the son of glory?

[48 : 36] Are you going to say, what nonsense? Can you take the risk that you might be wrong? I pray that God will bless you today and that you'll come to know him.

Let's pray together. Lord, help us to understand it. Help us to take it in.

What it meant for you, the Holy One, to bear away our sin. Lord, may your name be glorified today for what you did for us.

May we see you as the flogged man, as Pilate presented you and sent you to be crucified.

May we see you doing that for me, for us today, and may we embrace you and love you because of what you have done for us. We ask it, seeking your glory.

[49 : 42] In Jesus name, Amen. We'll sing together in Psalm 23 in the Scottish Psalter.

The Lord's my shepherd, I'll not want. He makes me down to lie in pasture green, he leadeth me, the quiet water side, and the voiceless Aaron will stand to sing, and as we sing, make him your shepherd today.

The Lord is my shepherd. The Lord is my shepherd, the Lord is my shepherd, I'll not want.

He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside still waters.

I am sure that in your fire. My soul be in danger so high, loving, no A major walk that may Within the pulse of righteousness In part is only safe Yet though I hope in death's dark veil Yet will I clear the hill For the war will be on my watch

[51 : 59] And stop me calm for still My table how has furnished In presence of my foes My head thou does with all the noise And my cup overflows Goodness and mercy of my life Shall surely follow me

And in those hands forevermore My dwelling place shall be Good Lord we thank you for your sacrifice And I pray this day that we might see you High and lifted up And that we are inhabiting the heavens And Lord I pray that you would bless our time together After the service That you would bless the food prepared for us And may this week your grace Your mercy and your peace go with us Wherever we go In Jesus name Your mercy and His family And will I eternal Order Just there For you