

# Communion Service - The Cost of Salvation

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Date: 28 August 2022

Preacher: Rev Colin Macleod

[ 0 : 00 ] our hearts to sing praise to God. Let us hear first of all these few words from the Bible. Give thanks to the God of heaven for his steadfast love endures forever. Let us together worship him in song from Psalm 122 from the Scottish Psalter, page 416 in our Blue Psalm books, Psalm 122, singing from the beginning of this psalm. We'll sing the whole psalm to the tune free church.

I joy to enter the house of God, go up they said to me, Jerusalem within thy gates our feet shall standing be. Jerusalem as a city is compactly built together and to that place the tribes go up, the tribes of God go thither. Psalm 122, the whole psalm to the praise of God.

I joy went to the house of God, go up they said to me, Jerusalem within thy gates our feet shall sound in me. Jerusalem as a city is compactly built together and to that place the tribes go up, the tribes of God go up they said to me. Jerusalem as a city is compactly built together and to that place the of the world of God. Jerusalem as a city is compactly built together and to that place the the built-in thing and the protection of wherever the jerseys came from peace or the travelling of Christ. Specifically, what worship seems to be so spoiled and to that place the of Christ still remains true. Jerusalem as a city is compactly built together and to that place the of Christ still remains peaceful within thy bones remain. Before worship may return high Him for the And ever may thy goddesses prosperity retain.

Now for thy chains and reverence it is thee in thee I'll say.

[ 3 : 46 ] And for the house of God our Lord I'll seek thy good always.

Let's pray together. Gracious God our loving Heavenly Father how these words stir our hearts. How it is we enjoy and rejoice in having this time together in worship this morning. On the beginning of a new week on this your day in your house to sing praise to your name.

And may it be Lord today that this psalm would be our portion, our experience, our motto. That we would truly in our hearts be full of joy in coming in here together today to worship before you.

Lord our God go before us in what we do here. And we pray that in this morning's service of worship by word and by sacrament your name would be glorified.

[ 4 : 55 ] The gospel of Jesus Christ would be upheld. The wonder of Jesus would be extolled before us and within us. And that the kingdom of righteousness would expand in our hearts and through our witness.

Be with us Lord as we spend this time together before you. We bow in worship. We acknowledge you. We adore you. We sing praise of your holiness, your justice, your goodness, your truth and above all.

We give thanks this morning for Jesus Christ, your son, the one who came into this world. Having covenanted from all eternity to redeem a people to himself, he came.

And in that hour of suffering and as the hour of the cross loomed heavy upon him, as the darkness closed in, as impending judgment came closer and closer, we hear our Savior saying, Father, if it be your will, let this cup pass from me.

Nevertheless, not my will but yours be done. And so we say today, Hallelujah. What a Savior. Be with us as we remember the cost of our salvation.

[ 6 : 08 ] Be with us as we remember what it cost our Redeemer to secure the forgiveness of sin that sets us aright with you, the living God, that brings us from darkness and enmity to light and life, that brings us from being far off and strangers of the commonwealth of Israel and aliens to the promises of God, right in to the very family of God.

What a Savior. And we pray today that our songs of praise would unite our hearts, that our sense of purpose and joy would be evident and felt amongst us and between us.

And when we go from here, we pray, Lord, then that you would draw near to us, that you would bless your word to our hearts, that you would undertake for us as we study together the scriptures and as we remember the death of our Lord and Savior.

Be pleased, Lord, to bless us with your presence and your grace. By word and sacrament, Lord, we come to you, hungering and thirsting after righteousness.

So here as we pray this morning, young and old alike, you know, Lord, our thoughts. You know our concerns. You know the things that worry us and leave us anxious, that rob us of sleep and keep us from feeling a sense of peace in life.

[ 7 : 29 ] Sometimes, Lord, life itself is so heavy. And we pray today for any who are burdened and weighed down. We pray, Lord, for those who are struggling in life, who are experiencing difficulty, hardship, ill health, unemployment, financial pressure and strain.

For those, Lord, who in these days and months have felt loneliness. For those, Lord, struggling today with brokenness and addiction, we pray, Lord, for them all. That you would remember our communities, our island, our nation at this time.

We pray especially, Lord, for any joining with us today online, those who are watching from home. And we pray, Lord, for them. We pray for those who cannot be with us.

And we pray, Lord, that above all, that your word would be blessed, that the word would run free in hearts and lives, and that Christ would be glorified, the one who was lifted up, that he might draw all men to him.

Hear us this morning, we pray, as we seek forgiveness for our sin. Cleanse us and renew us, we pray, for Jesus' sake. Amen. Now, boys and girls, I just want to say something to you today about choices.

[ 8 : 48 ] Choices. Got here a little menu card. That's a little thing that comes very often to the post for weddings. And this wedding menu is sent along to people invited.

And what you have to do nowadays is you make your choices and you send it back. So that they know before you turn up the meal that you're looking to have. So I don't know, boys and girls, what you would choose if you were given this menu.

This is what the choice you would have. For the starter, you could have either homemade lentil soup or salmon. You would tick one of them if you wanted a starter.

Then you'd be on to the main course and you could have top side of beef or chicken Balmoral. I'm sure there'd be another vegetarian option somewhere if that was your choice.

You would tick the box and that would be served to you on the day of the wedding. And then the best bit, desserts. That's what it's all about, isn't it? You could have meringue with cream and berries or you could have strawberry cheesecake.

[ 9 : 48 ] You would tick your choice, you would put your name on the card, in it goes, and on the day of the wedding, the choices you make are served to you. Isn't that nice? It's good planning, isn't it?

You're making your choice nice and early. And the thing about choices is that sometimes you don't get much warning. You have to make a decision on the spot and you make a choice.

And this is when it gets quite difficult. If you're having a bad day, if you've been told to do your homework, if you've been told it's your turn for the dishes, if it's your turn to cut the grass or wash the car or walk the dog and you don't want to do any of these things, well, you're faced with a choice.

Do what you've been asked to do by mum or dad or granny or granddad or don't. What are you going to do? And I want to tell you today, boys and girls, that sometimes it's good to prepare for choices and we can do that by asking God to help us.

The Bible says, seek first the kingdom of God. We put them first in our choices, in little things like menus and particularly in days that are difficult or trying, if big brother's getting on your nerves, if little sister's going off with your favorite object and you're going to make a choice to cause chaos or just be a good brother or sister, that's another choice you're going to have to make.

[ 11 : 13 ] Ask yourself at that time, what choice would God want me to make? And if we ask that question as we make choices, we are in a far better position than if we don't and we are really close to God and if we're close to God, we're going to want to, please him.

So the next time choices come your way, next time there's a decision to be made, say to yourself, what choice would God want me to make? Well, let's read together from God's word this morning

two passages from the New Testament.

First of all, from the Gospel of John. The Gospel of John. We'll read from chapter 10 and verse 7 and then we'll turn forward in our Bibles to 1 Corinthians and chapter 15.

Reading first of all into the Gospel of John chapter 10 and verse 7. So Jesus again said to them, Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep.

All who came before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them. I am the door. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture.

[12:39] The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly. I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.

He who has a hired hand and not a shepherd, who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. He flees because he's a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep.

I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me. Just as the Father knows me and I know the Father and I lay down my life for the sheep and I have other sheep that are not of this fold, I must bring them also and they will listen to my voice so there will be one flock, one shepherd.

For this reason, the Father loves me because I lay down my life that I may take it up again. No one takes it from me but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and I have authority to take it up again.

This charge I have received from my Father. There was again a division among the Jews because of these words. Many of them said, He is a demon and is insane.

[13:54] Why listen to him? Others said, These are not the words of one who was oppressed by a demon. Can a demon open the eyes? of the blind?

I'm turning forward to 1 Corinthians in chapter 15, reading this chapter from the beginning. Paul's letter to the Corinthians, his first letter, chapter 15, reading this chapter from the beginning.

Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and which you stand and by which you are being saved if you hold fast to the word I preached to you unless you believed in vain.

For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised in the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve.

Then he appeared to more than 500 brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James and to all the apostles.

[15:19] Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me, for I am the least of the apostles, unworthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.

But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God that was with me.

Whether then it was I or they, so we preach, and so you believed. Amen. May God bless his word to our hearts, and to his name be the praise.

I'll sing again to the praise of God from Sing Psalms and the 23rd Psalm. On page 28 in our blue psalm books, Sing Psalms and Psalm 23.

We'll sing this whole psalm together to the tune Tarwathi. The Lord is my shepherd, no want shall I know. He makes me lie down where the green pastures grow.

[16:18] He leads me to rest where the calm waters flow. Psalm 23, we will sing together to God's praise. Amen. The Lord is my shepherd, no want shall I know.

He makes me lie down where the green pastures grow. He leads me to rest where the calm waters flow.

My wandering steps, he brings back to his way. Hence they pass off my justness, making me safe. and this he has done this great day to display. Though I walk in death, how he hurt our messes near.

He wants you are with me, no evil I fear. your God and yourself bring me comfort and cheer.

[17:39] In the sight of my enemies, and the evil you spread. The oil of rejoicing you pour on my head, my cup, O earth, those hand and graciously fed.

So surely your covenant, and mercy and grace, will follow me closely in all of my ways.

I will go to heaven in the highest of the Lord all my days. We'll bow in prayer together.

Let us pray. Lord, we bow this morning together. We sing praise to your name. We acknowledge your holiness in prayer.

We bring to you our petitions and our supplications with thanksgiving. We pour out our hearts to you, Lord, conscious of that great declaration of the Christian church.

[ 19 : 01 ] The Lord is my shepherd. We pray this evening as we, today as we reflect on the truth of the gospel. As we reflect on the cost of our salvation.

As we remember our Lord till he come again. That you would be here with us. We thank you that as we open the scriptures, we hear you speak.

We have before us the very word of the living God. And we pray today that that word would take root in our hearts and lives. That we would grow in grace, deepen our faith, and further grow up into him, the head of the church, our King and Saviour.

Be with us, Lord, today we pray through word and sacrament. Our need is great. And so we come, Lord, seeking your blessing and filling. We would seek you with our whole heart today.

And we would ask that you would address us at the deepest point of our needs. and that the Spirit would move amongst us, teaching us and leading us to see the one who gave himself for us.

[ 20 : 14 ] Jesus, our King and friend. The one who is the door. The one through whom we are bid come and enter onto the highway of holiness.

May we do so, Lord, humbly and expectantly. And so, Lord, we gather in anticipation. We look upward. We look to Christ.

We come to the throne of grace via the cross, where we go for the forgiveness of sin that so often besets us and entangles us.

Lord, we are conscious this morning of the gospel's declaration that the wages of sin is death. But the gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus, our Lord.

So, Lord, come among us. Bless us and do us good. Open our hearts and minds and bless us by your word this morning and the sacrament as we share this meal together at the table.

[ 21 : 18 ] In Jesus' name we ask it. Amen. Amen. The death of Christ in our place to satisfy the demands of divine justice and appease the wrath of God is of the very substance of the gospel.

And that's what we find when we turn together in our Bibles to 1 Corinthians in chapter 15 where the apostle, in writing to this church that he was so intimately aware of and wanting to encourage them and build them up and keep them on the right path, that's what he's been doing these previous 14 chapters, teaching and pleading and exhorting that they would again appreciate and come to a deeper understanding of the gospel of God.

And so, we find him here in chapter 15 beginning to wrap things up and draw his conclusions. And so, he says, now I would remind you, brothers, and that word there, brothers, adelphoi, was a plural term used in the ancient Greek tongue to refer to brothers and sisters.

And so, to read it perhaps more accurately would be, now I remind you, brothers and sisters of the gospel I preached to you which you received in which you stand and by which you are being saved if you hold fast to the word I preached to you unless you believed in vain.

Why speak like that, Paul? Because there were tensions here and there were divisions and people were saying, well, Paul's not much of a preacher, is he? And in that, they were going after the messenger.

[ 22 : 58 ] And then you had other schools of thought that were saying, well, if you're saved, retire. Just live off whoever's got money. You don't need to do it. You're a child of God. Sit down. You don't need to do anything else.

And so, what was happening there was it wasn't the messenger being attacked, it was the message. And this pincer movement was coming against the church as it is today. Nothing has changed.

The devil will attack messengers and the message in his attempt, in his ferocious enmity toward the gospel to try and drive the gospel out of hearts and lives and keep sinners from coming to a knowledge of their need to be born again.

And so, Paul is pleading here that they would stand fast or hold fast to the word I preach to you, the gospel of grace. And there's a wonderful and very famous description of what he did when he came among them back there in chapters one and two of this wonderful letter.

Chapter one and two of first Corinthians. It would help if I didn't turn to chapter one of Romans. And in first Corinthians two, he says, I came to you, brothers and sisters, I did not come proclaiming to

you the testimony of God with lofty speech of wisdom, for I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified.

[ 24 : 17 ] And I was with you in weakness, in fear, in much trembling. And my speech and my message were not implausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the spirit and of power, that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.

And so he zeroes in on the focus Christian men and women need to retain and work at and develop and our focus must be the cross of Christ.

Who died there? Why he died there? And what it means for us all today. And so he says in verse three, as he continues to drive home the need to get this right and be specific and zeroed in on what the gospel is.

Verse three, chapter 15, for I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures.

And he was buried and he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures. The message was under attack in Corinth.

[ 25 : 25 ] The message is under attack in Stornoway today. this message of Jesus Christ the righteous, the Son of God who came into the world to do what?

To seek and to save the lost. How did he do it? He gave himself for us. So that statement really does come into its own when we say the death of Christ in our place to satisfy the demands of divine justice and appease the wrath of God is the very substance of the gospel.

It's good news. It's good news for Stornoway today. It's good news for Scotland today that there is a saviour. And of course the good news follows the declaration that there's bad news.

And you see, that's the thing about the gospel. The gospel is neither a discussion nor a debate. It is a declaration. I would remind you brothers and sisters of the gospel I preach to you.

This is the apostolic message, the apostolic preaching of the cross, the apostolic emphasis of our need to be born again by repentance and faith in Christ by coming to him and trusting in him as Lord and Saviour.

[ 26 : 46 ] It's a wonderful simplicity and yet an incredible depth to what Paul goes on here to see in verses 3 and 4. I deliver to you as a first importance. See where he started with what they needed to know most of all.

But then notice that he delivered to them what he received. And that tells us there's a wonderful balance to be struck here. And that balance is that the gospel is supreme.

The gospel is not subject to the church or authenticated by the church. It's not the invention of the church. The church of Christ is subject to the gospel of Christ.

We are here to declare him, to point to him, to say he is the one through whom men and women and boys and girls are saved. This is the wonderful gospel of Jesus Christ.

So I want us to think today about what Paul says here in this summary, this revision, this calling the Christian men and women, back to the fundamentals of the gospel, keeping them zeroed in on the cross, lest they fade away and drift away into uncertainty and ambiguity and agnosticism and all these awful things that are doing the rounds today as they were back then.

[ 28 : 06 ] And why do we find this emphasis here on the death of Christ? Christ. Because he was writing to a Christian congregation in a Greek city some 2,000 years ago that was full of philosophy and culture and thinking and teaching and schools of thought that utterly rejected any concept of resurrection from the dead.

It was in the DNA of the city. And that's where the Christian church had been planted, that's where the congregation had grown, and began to experience difficulty and troubles and hard times.

And so Paul writes them and he zeroes in on this essential truth that I think it was John Stott that spoke about, the irreducible minimum of the Christian gospel, the death and resurrection of Christ in the place of sinners.

Verse 12 in this chapter indicates the thinking there that's perhaps hindering the Christians from progressing. If Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead, how can some of you say there is no resurrection of the dead?

So the thinking that surrounded the church, the thinking in culture and philosophy and schools of thought that surrounded the church was beginning to make its way into the church.

[ 29 : 27 ] The world was beginning to penetrate into the thinking and therefore the theology and therefore the practice of the Christian church. It was ever thus.

It is a constant source of attack that we must be vigilant of, that we don't allow culture to set the tone for what we do and what we believe and how we operate as the church of Christ. Only Jesus does that by and through his word. So let's think about this as we prepare to share together in our Lord's Supper and remember the death of Christ till they come again. What does Paul want us to take to heart today? Verse 3 tells us, first of all, that the death of Jesus was promised.

The death of Jesus was promised. I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scripture.

[ 30 : 35 ] And so Paul, having said that this message is authenticated by its source, the Almighty God who gave his Son that we might live, so he has now stipulated that not being a master over the message but a servant of the message of Christ, he is now underlining this declaration that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.

Places the Bible right at the center of what he's about to say, doesn't he? He says twice, he uses that phrase in accordance with the Scriptures. And that is a bedrock.

Again, it's a bedrock that we face being under attack and being undermined today. He can't believe that. Surely you don't need all this Old Testament narrative. You don't really need these passages in Romans that questions and challenges our morality and that addresses issues of sexuality, that speaks about marriage, it speaks about how we conduct ourselves.

No, sure, that's up to us. We try our best. We do what we are to be upstanding people in society. And so what we find constantly is the world chipping away at this very phrase, that our declaration, which is made in accordance with the Scriptures, that's out of sync today.

That's unpopular today. That's old school. That's Reformation. Knox, don't talk to us about John Knox. He was surely, he was a bigot, he was a secretarian, he was a misogynist. And so they destroy the character of the messenger and then go after the message.

[ 32 : 16 ] You can't say that to me. You can't tell me I'm a sinner. And yet, what does God ask of his church today? Why has God raised up and placed his church on earth, the church militant, to assert, maintain, and defend?

And unless and until we are born again, we remain under the wrath and curse of God. And so we share this message in patience and humility.

We share this message in love again and again and again. And we refuse to allow the world to undermine our grasp of Scripture and our reverence of Scripture because it is from the Scripture that the Gospel has been declared to the world.

And that message is Christ died for our sins in accordance of the Scripture. You see, everything we know of Christ today, it comes from God's Word. It's a proclamation that we find long ago at many times and in many ways God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son.

All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, reproof, correction, and training. This death of Jesus was promised. In the Old Testament, we have anticipation and straining forward and looking forward.

[ 33 : 40 ] God is saying in the Old Testament Scriptures, I will send a Redeemer. And then we come into the New Testament and we're looking back and through the New Testament we hear God saying, I have sent you, my Son.

This is my beloved. Hear Him. And so we assert, maintain, and defend on the basis of being a Bible-based, Spirit-filled, Christ-centered church that the death of Jesus was promised.

We write at the beginning of the Scripture, we find the promise that God will send His Son into this world. And the New Testament furnishes us with the understanding we need as to the importance and absolute centrality of the death of Christ in our place.

Secondly, this, the death was promised. This death was real. His death was real. Verse 4 puts it as plainly as is possible.

He was buried. He was buried. The Christian gospel is a message of deliverance that comes through the death of the deliverer.

[ 35 : 01 ] No other world religion comes close to this. No other world religion even begins to approach the magnitude of these words, the solemnity and depth and wonder and beauty of what we're told here.

The Son of God, the Lamb of God, the Lord of glory, through whom all things were made. The one who is altogether sufficient. The one who is the rose of Sharon and the lily of the valley. The one that is the apple of God's eye. What do we read here? He was buried. This is the gospel. This is the good news.

That just as the babe, Jesus, was laid in the manger, so the torn and bloody body of Jesus in his early 30s was laid in a grave without life outside Jerusalem.

What happened on the cross is abundantly clear and you would need to have a heart of stone and a mind that resembles stone to say, well, the Bible doesn't say that Jesus died.

[ 36 : 17 ] That is the response of the Islamic world to the claims of the gospel. They revere Jesus. They honor Jesus.

They say Jesus was a great man. But he didn't really die. And even if he did die, he certainly was not the Son of God. What happened on the cross?

The Bible says otherwise. His vital functions shut down. His heart straining for six hours to pump deoxygenated blood around his body finally arrested.

And ultimately, after six hours of suffering, Jesus' breath gave out and he died. With all his vital functions having stopped, even then, the world was not finished with him because a Roman soldier under instruction thrust a spear into his chest to confirm death had done its work.

The death of Jesus was real. Why do we reflect on this? What did Jesus tell us to do? Do this in remembrance of me.

[ 37 : 35 ] The bread and the wine that we're about to share together speak powerfully and vividly of this moment. And they say to each one of us as we take our bread and as we drink our wine that the cost of our salvation was nothing less and nothing other than the life of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

He was buried. his death was real. What else can we say of this?

We must say this as we move on. That for Christianity to be genuine, for the hope of the gospel to be held out as a life-transforming message of grace and splendor and wonder and forgiveness, it utterly depends upon the death of Jesus being genuine.

And it begins to push us back from that. You say, well, why? Why the cross? Why this awful death? Why was it that he breathed his last on that cross and laid his head and gave up his life?

As you read there in John's gospel and chapter 10, for this reason the father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord.

[ 38 : 54 ] I have authority to lay it down and I have authority to take it up again. charge I have received from my father. Jesus himself affirms in these words, his death was real.

The Christ of the Bible was buried without life. His death then was promised and his death was real, but we don't fixate on it.

We don't stay there. We don't stay in the graveyard. We don't stay at the foot of the cross. We don't reflect constantly and permanently with the fixation on the graphic scene of the cross.

Yes, we survey it. We study. We do so humbly. We do so with a sense of awe and wonder. When we survey that scene and see there nothing other than the Son of God dead on the cross outside Jerusalem, this is the message of good news.

I think it was that sentiment that perhaps moved McShane to write these words in one of his hymns. When I stand before the throne dressed in beauty not my own, when I see thee as thou art, love thee with unsinning heart, then, Lord, shall I fully know not till then how much I owe.

[ 40 : 17 ] we owe him everything because he gave everything. He gave himself for us, not just by taking on the flesh of the incarnation and being a good man.

Jesus was truly man and truly God and he died on that cross that the sins of the world might be taken away.

He gave what the Bible calls propitiation to the Father and of our sin he effected expiation. He removed our sin by bearing its guilt on himself and he paid the price by giving his life.

His death was real. But then there's this, Paul's summation, his calling the Corinthian Christians, his calling us today by the providence of God to just reflect on the heart of the gospel and this glorious message of grace.

Yes, there's death here, but death did not have the last word with Jesus of Nazareth. Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus did not in their act of devotion and tenderness and service have the last

say on the life of Jesus of Nazareth.

[ 41 : 44 ] For verse four goes on, he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures. And so this tells us thirdly that the death of Jesus was victorious.

Victorious. You see, death could not hold him. And this is where the good news takes on such incredible significance and wonder.

The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord. And that empty tomb that followed the cross on the third day, that first Easter morning, is evidence in God's declaration to the world that the sacrifice of his son in a room instead was pleasing and acceptable. And so he came, as he says to us in John in chapter 10, that I laid down my life of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and I have authority to take it up again.

This charge I have received from my father. And so we survey this wondrous cross on which the prince of glory died. We are humbled. We're awestruck.

[ 43 : 01 ] We think, how can it be that he was pierced there for our transgressive possessions? And then we read on and the gospel moves on.

The gospel moves from the cross and the cemetery into the world. It moves from a message of the reality and vitality of Jesus' death to what impact it has and what meaning it has for you and I today. That he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures. There was this thought that maybe maybe it's not true.

Maybe there isn't such a resurrection and maybe death is death and that's it. We're all finished.

Chapter 15 and verse 20 says, in fact, Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep.

If in this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied. If the message stayed in the cemetery, if the message was just about a good man dying, there would be no saviour today because a dead saviour can save nobody.

[ 44 : 13 ] And so we say today that Jesus was dead and now is alive. And that's how this chapter goes on as Paul brings this wonderful reflection to this glorious conclusion.

Toward the end of the chapter in verse 56, he speaks of death being swallowed up in victory.

Death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting? The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law.

But thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. He died that we might be forgiven. He died to make us good, that we might go at last to heaven, saved by his precious blood.

The death of Jesus is victorious. the women who came in their devotion and love and brokenheartedness that first Easter morning with aointments and oils seeking to pay homage and show respect out of pure devotion and sadness.

They had nothing to do, they were redundant. The oils and the spices, the pastes that they were going to anoint the body with that morning in the tomb, they were left behind.

[ 45 : 26 ] There was nothing to anoint because the body was not there. The grave was empty and the angel said to him, why do you seek the living among the dead? Jesus' death was victorious.

It's the pivotal point in the history of God's redemption. He raised his son from the dead. In this act of resurrection, satisfaction has been rendered and the father's declaration is clear.

In Acts chapter 2, as Peter preached to those around him, he said God raised him up, loosing the pangs of death because it was not possible for him to be held by it.

This Jesus God raised up and of that we are witnesses. It's good to remember today that we too, like the apostles on the day of Pentecost, in our way, right here, right now, at this moment, are witnesses to the truth of this message having taken root in our hearts and lives.

And so we acknowledge that Christ is our Lord and Savior. We take our place at his table, not because we're perfect and wonderful, great and without problems. We take our place at his table in faith, looking unto him, the author and finisher of our faith.

[ 46 : 49 ] We take our place at his table because we're sinners in need of forgiveness. forgiveness. And we have found that forgiveness not in our own strength and in our own works, not because of the righteousness that we have acted and therefore earned God's grace, no, because God's grace is poured out in our hearts.

And we have come to know Jesus Christ as our Lord and as our Savior. Paul would later write to the church in Rome, and in chapter 5 and verse 1 he puts it this way, therefore, since we have been

justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

And so this morning we pause, we reflect, we remember, do this in remembrance of me.

We remember that the best news the world has ever heard God comes from a graveyard. Our faith today is fixed in a living Jesus, one who did die on that cross and one who was physically buried, but he has been raised from the dead and he is Lord.

And we profess our faith in him, we acknowledge that we love him, we trust him, and we will follow him, for he gave his all for us and now says to each one of us, follow me, follow me.

[ 48 : 19 ] And the wondrous thing is that Christ doesn't then disappear over the horizon into the distance. He says, lo, I am with you always to the very end of the age.

And so we remember a dead saviour can save no one but a living, personal, reigning saviour. That changes everything. And that's why the language in this section, it goes, Christ died, he was buried, he rose again.

He was seen. And the Christian church for these 2,000 years has been proclaiming this wondrous message, this good news that has been passed on to us and we focus in on what has been given of first importance, that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures.

The only explanation for the cross, the only explanation that holds water, that makes sense, that joins up, is the seriousness of sin, the awfulness of sin.

And that sin had created a barrier between us and God that was impassable. We couldn't get round it, through it, over it, or under it. And that left us lost, lost, and far off from God.

[ 49 : 34 ] I wonder if you've noticed how Paul opens his letter to the Romans, that incredible letter that goes on to deal with many of the deep things of God.

But notice the first sentence in this incredible letter. Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy scriptures concerning his son who was descended from David according to the flesh, and was declared to be the son of God in power according to the spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead.

Jesus Christ, our Lord, through whom we have received grace. That wonderful phrasing there, set apart in verse 1, set apart for the gospel of God.

It's a word that speaks of being marked out by a boundary. Isn't that wonderful? That today, Christian friend, God has set a boundary.

And that boundary marker has one word, redeemed. Redeemed. And you have been set apart for the gospel of God.

[ 50 : 57 ] Redeemed. And it's as redeemed we gather at this table. It's as redeemed that we reflect on how we came to be on God's side of the boundary marker. How it is we came to be marked out as redeemed by putting our trust in Christ.

And that alone, nothing else. There's no other way but to trust and obey. And so Paul zeroes in here.

And he reminds us that the death of Jesus is victorious and that victory has resulted in God setting a marker, a boundary around you, Christian friend, that is marked out as redeemed.

And so we look in anticipation to this supper to receive more grace in a special, effective way, remembering that the cost of that boundary marker being placed upon us and around us was nothing other than the death of Jesus, the Son of God.

And this is the last thing. The death of Jesus is saving. Our Savior who was dead and now is alive through each one of us today says that we are to proclaim his death till he come.

[ 52 : 06 ] How do we do that? We take our place at the table. We share together the bread and the wine and we look up. And as we look up, we look out. We look away from our sins.

We look away from the struggles. We look away from the faults and the failings and we look away from the sin that so often entangles us and trips us up. We cry out for mercy and grace to help us in time of need.

And we cry out for God's strengthening. And we remember that the victory is ours through Jesus Christ who gave himself for us. And we press on. We press on.

We cannot say today that God forgives us because he is some kind of light force of love, some kind of blur in the sky.

So many people today, if they even get close to thinking about God, that's about as far as they get. They never open his word. But what do they read? They read you and I. They read our lives.

[ 53 : 03 ] They see us. And so may it be that as we conduct ourselves, this message would shine through. That the light of Christ would be seen in how we conduct ourselves.

As he said this morning to the children, in the choices we make, in the decisions that form us, in what we do on Monday and Tuesday and Thursday and each day in work, private, the family and the community, over the fence with the neighbours, when we're at home with our children.

May it be that it would be evident that we love the Lord and that his mark of redeemed is upon us. Not to make us special, not to lord it over anyone.

Of course not. It's the opposite, isn't it? We're so aware of sin. We're so keenly aware of sin. That's what the tender conscience does. It makes us so awake to sin and aware of sin that we wouldn't dare lord it over anybody.

We are saved by grace and through faith and not of ourselves. It is the gift of God. Let's any of us should boast. There's no room for pride in the kingdom of heaven. No room for pride in the church of Christ.

[ 54 : 12 ] There's only room for humility and dependence. sins because were it not for Jesus, every single one of us would still be under the wrath of God. And so we give thanks today that this message of hope and this message of faith, this message of life revolves around the central event of the death of Christ.

He tasted its awfulness and disarmed it. He felt its sting and defeated it for us.

So our song in our hearts is hallelujah what a savior. He is risen from the dead, he is Lord. He died that we might be forgiven.

He died to make us good that we might go at last to heaven, saved by his precious blood. This is our king and lord and savior that we now remember together.

This is our king and lord and savior who bids us come. This is our king and lord and savior who says of his table and his supper, all things are now ready.

[ 55 : 29 ] Do this in remembrance of me. Let's pray together for a moment. our gracious lord, how can we take in the scene of the cross?

How can we take in the scene of an empty tomb? How can we take in the meaning and significance of Golgotha? And yet, lord, we bless you for the garden. We bless you that there in the graveyard there was no body to anoint.

There was only an angelic guard set on the tomb to tell those early followers, why do you seek the living among the dead?

For he has risen, as he said, come see the place where he lay. Lord, our God, we bless you that at the center of the Christian message today is the message of a savior who loved us and gave himself for us even to death on a cross.

How can we begin to comprehend in our lifetime the significance and wondrous depth of that message? And so, lord, in faith, we gather today, we follow the instruction of our lord in simple obedience, reverently and humbly.

[ 56 : 45 ] And we come to this table to be fed. We come to be nourished. We come to be enlivened. We come for grace. So be with us, we pray.

In his precious name. Amen. Now, before we share together in the Lord's Supper, we'll sing again to God's praise. We'll turn to Psalm 118 in the Psalter.

Psalm 118 in the Psalter, page 398. And we'll sing from verse 15. And we'll sing to verse 21, to God's praise, to the tuned coal sill.

Psalm 118, singing from verse 15. If anyone is still in the church present who loves the Lord Jesus Christ and who is in full communion with their own church and is perhaps visiting or otherwise detained, so come into the table and invite you to take your place at the Lord's table as we sing these verses.

This is the table of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is not the table of the free church. And so you're welcome in our Saviour's name to join us. We'll sing then from verse 15 to verse 21.

[ 57 : 57 ] And dwellings of the righteous has heard the melody of joy and health. The Lord's right hand doth ever valiantly. These verses to God's praise. of joy and health.

The Lord's right hand doth ever valiantly. Of joy and hell the Lord's right hand doth ever valiantly.

The right hand of the mighty Lord exalted is on high.

The right hand of the mighty Lord doth ever valiantly.

I shall not die but live and shall the works of God discover.

[ 59 : 29 ] The Lord doth me just, I said so, but not to death give no heart.

O set ye open unto me the gates of righteousness.  
Then will I enter into them, and I the Lord will bless.  
This is the gate of God by it, that thou shalt enter in.  
Thee will I please for thy leaders, and as my safety be.

[ 60 : 52 ] Amen. We gather at the Lord's table to share in his supper.

This opportunity that he provides to his church to receive his grace in this special way. To remember his death till he come again. We read from 1 Corinthians 11, words that we refer to as our warrant for why we do what we do here.

In verse 23, I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you. The Lord Jesus in the night when he was betrayed took bread. And when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, This is my body which is for you.

Do this in remembrance of me. In the same way also he took the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this as often as you drink it in remembrance of me.

For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he come. And so we proclaim his death.

[ 62 : 02 ] We proclaim that he was dead and now is alive. We proclaim he is our hope, our joy, our peace, as we share together in this supper.

Let us first of all pray together. O Lord, we come in anticipation to your table. We come to be fed, to be nourished, to be blessed, to receive grace.

And so we pray, Lord God, that through this bread and this wine, set apart in your ordinance, and by your providence and by your providence and in your mercy, that they would be to us a feast. They would be to us this day a banquet. They would be to us nourishment to our souls, that we be replenished and refreshed and revived in our spirit by sharing together in this supper.

As we take the bread and as we take the wine, as we share together at this table, at this meal, we ask, Lord, for a sense of worship and wonder, a sense of oneness and purpose, a sense of drive and a sense of determination, as we in your grace and mercy are enabled here to proclaim our Lord's death till they come again.

[ 63 : 23 ] Here as we pray in his name. Amen. Before I serve these elements, let me just share with you these words written by Gregory of Nazianzus, a fourth century church leader who wrote magnificently on who Jesus is and what Jesus has done.

He began his ministry by being hungry, yet is the bread of life. He ended his ministry by being thirsty, yet is the living water. He was weary, yet is our rest.

He paid tribute, yet is the king. He was accused of being a demon, yet cast out demons. Jesus wept, yet he wipes away our tears. Jesus was sold for 30 pieces of silver, yet he redeemed the world.

Jesus was brought as a lamb to the slaughter, yet he is the good shepherd. Jesus died, yet by his death, he destroyed the power of death.

This is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me. The initiative in our redemption comes from God the Father.

[ 64 : 43 ] For that we give thanks and we praise him. He's given me long enough to speak to you today, so I just want to read the last verse in the chapter we were thinking about this morning, 1 Corinthians 15 and verse 58.

Where in light of what we've thought about, in light of the grace we've received, at this table we hear these words, therefore, my beloved brothers and sisters, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.

May he bless us, as together we serve him and share something of the unsearchable riches of Christ with the people around us, professing to them that he is our Savior, our Lord, our King, and our Friend, and that through faith he can be that to everyone who comes to him.

We're going to close our service this morning by turning to the Psalter and singing from Psalm 72, words of adoration and proclamation, words of praise and wonder.

His name forever shall endure, last like the sun it shall, men shall be blessed in him, and blessed all nations shall him call. Psalm 72, we'll sing to the end, and if you give me a moment to get to the front door, please, at the end of the service, that would be appreciated.

[ 66 : 07 ] Psalm 72 from verse 17 to the end. His name forever shall endure, last like the sun it shall, men shall be blessed in him, and blessed all nations shall them call.

Now blessed be the Lord our God, the God of Israel, for he alone doth wondrous works in glory that excel.

And blessed be his glorious name, to all eternity.  
the whole earth let his glory fill.

Amen, so let it be. Amen.

[ 68 : 18 ] Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.