

Preparatory Service - Carrying Christ's Cross

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Preacher: Rev James Maciver

[0:00] Any who wish to come to take communion for the first time are warmly encouraged and invited to do so. The session has already been opened earlier this week and will be ready to meet with any in the congregation who wish to do this for the first time.

After the service tonight, anybody who wishes to do that are asked please to come forward and just either come back in or stay in. But if they take their place at the front here, we'll then meet with them in the session room afterwards.

And I do hope that there are some and that they'll be encouraged to come and do this. So let's worship God. We're going to sing in Psalm 118.

Psalm 118. That's on page 155. Sing Psalm's version to the tune of Old 100. O thank the Lord for he is good. His steadfast love endures always.

Now let the house of Israel say his love will last through endless days. And let the house of Aaron say his love forever will endure. Let those who fear the Lord declare his love will stand forever sure.

[1:10] Down to verse 9. It's better far to trust the Lord than look for help to man's defense. It's better far to trust the Lord than in a prince have confidence.

So Psalm 118. These verses to God's praise. O thank the Lord for he is good.

His steadfast love endures always. His steadfast love endures always. Now let the house of Israel see.

His love will last through endless days. And let the house of Israel see.

And let the house of Israel see. His love forever will endure.

[2:22] Let those who fear the Lord declare. His love will stand forever sure.

I cried in a wish to the Lord. He answered me and set me free.

The Lord is with me. The Lord is with me. I'll know near. All time can be but due to me.

The Lord is with me. The Lord is with me constantly. He is the one who is me.

I'll look Israel upon my foes.

[3:43] I will love me to be a place. God. It's better.

It's better part to trust the Lord. who called him to man's deep pains, they paid their part to trust the Lord, and in a print of confidence.

Let's now engage in prayer. We'll call upon the Lord in prayer. Amen. Gracious and eternal God, we draw near to you this evening, knowing that these words we have sung are words that we speak from the heart, that we come before you as we seek to do at all times, believing that you are, and that you are the rewarder of those who diligently seek you.

We thank you, Lord, tonight for your word that has spoken to us already, and as it brings before us the greatness of God, so also we are encouraged to live by trust and in the fear of the Lord.

Lord, we pray tonight for your blessing. We pray that your Holy Spirit will take your word and make it effective in our experience. We pray that each of us may look back upon these moments and realize that we have indeed met with God, that you have been pleased to draw near to us.

[5 : 30] We thank you for every privilege that attends our worship, and we know that our worship itself is our highest privilege in this life, and to come to be engaged wholeheartedly in the worship of the living God, to have been given that desire from yourself, from your Holy Spirit, to draw near to God in such a way that will exalt and praise his holy name.

Lord, we thank you for every blessing we receive from you, and we know that we receive blessings each day of our lives. We confess, O Lord, we receive blessings that we fail to realize at the time are blessings, but looking back upon them, we see that they are indeed blessings from your hand.

We give thanks for the blessings even that cause us at times to question and to be dismayed, the blessings that attend the sufferings and the anxieties of your people.

And we ask that we may draw our encouragement from your word at such times also. We have many instances, Lord, in the words we sing in the Psalms of people who were downcast, people who searched for answers in different ways to the issues of life, and who came nevertheless to express their questions and their thoughts to God, and came especially into a spirit of worship and of adoration, realizing that God alone is great and that he doesn't actually owe us any answers, and yet he is pleased so often to give them.

We thank you, O Lord, for all that we anticipate tomorrow on the Lord's Day. And we thank you for the continuing remembrance of the death of the Lord in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, not only here but throughout the world, wherever it is administered, wherever your people gather together to remember the Lord's death in partaking of the bread and of the cup.

[7 : 31] Lord, we pray that this may be a blessing to us this time as a congregation, and we pray that all who partake of it will know that blessing attending the action of doing so.

We pray that you would strengthen the faith of your people. We pray that they may look forward in greater hope, having their vision expanded even beyond what it is at present, so as to look into those wonderful things of eternity, and looking towards the marriage supper of the Lamb, which will replace forevermore this Lord's Supper here on earth.

We thank you for all who come to profess their faith, who come to partake of the supper from time to time. We pray for any tonight, Lord, who may be contemplating coming to do this for the first time.

We pray that you would encourage them. Help them, Lord. We pray to have confidence in you and not in themselves. Help them even in the midst of many questions and maybe even doubts.

Help them, Lord, never to doubt in yourself and to bring all their doubts to be pacified under the assurance that you give us in your word that when we do this in remembrance of you, so you bless that to your people.

[8 : 49] We pray that you would grant to us, Lord, as a congregation, that we may continue to know your blessing in the gospel. And we ask that you would come to bless us in such a way that we will be a blessing to others, that others will be drawn to the Lord himself through the testimony and witness of the church.

We ask tonight for those who are unwell, for those who can't be with us here, who have not been able to come to take communion for some time. We thank you, Lord, for the way in which you promised to be with them.

We thank you that they're able to partake through the vehicle of online services, that they are able to hear your word and have broadcast live the worship of your people.

We pray that you bless them. Bless especially, Lord, those who may be downcast in mind, those who may have mental health issues to contend with, those who are seriously ill, those recovering from surgery.

All those, Lord, we commend to you that we know belong to us as a people. We pray that you bless them tonight. And we ask that we may constantly bear in mind those of lesser privileges than we have ourselves.

[10 : 09] Remember those who have disablement of various kinds in body or mind. We ask, Lord, that they too will be blessed, for you are able to reach with your blessing into the furthest, inmost recesses of our souls.

Remember, to those who mourn the passing of loved ones, Lord, we have had another funeral today and some recently, and most weeks we know of those who have lost loved ones.

We pray, Lord, that you'd bless them. We pray that you would comfort them. We pray that your own presence may be given to them. We pray that any of them who have not yet come to embrace you and live by faith in you will be persuaded even through these as means towards enlightening their soul and giving them that inner desire after you.

Gracious one, we pray that you would bless even such difficulties and trials in our lives as human beings. And now we ask your blessing to be with us here as we further wait upon you.

And as we turn to your word, we pray especially that your Holy Spirit will take it and enlighten our minds through it. and give us, Lord, we pray, that reception to your word so that we may indeed grow by it.

[11 : 22] And help us as we interact with your word tonight and at all times that we may give it that due attention that it requires. Help us now then, we pray, and pardon our many sins and receive us graciously for Jesus' sake.

Amen. We're going to sing once again to God's praise and this time our psalm of praise is Psalm 130, the prayer of Psalm 130 on page 421.

We're singing to the tune Martyrdom, words in which the wonder of the psalmist is expressed as he takes issue with the way that God, if he were to mark iniquity, neither he nor anyone else could stand, but there is yet forgiveness with God so that he may be feared.

So we'll sing these verses to the tune Martyrdom. Lord, from the depths to thee I cried, my voice, Lord, do thou hear. The whole psalm. Lord, from the depths to thee I cry, my voice, Lord, have lest in you.

I'm here unto my salvation, holy, I'm not yet to hear.

[13 : 03] Lord, who shalt thou in thine, O Lord, Sure smart iniquity, But yet with thee, For in places, The fear thou mayest be.

I wait for long, my soul doth lay, My hope is in this word.

More than they have, For morning watch, My soul waits for the Lord.

I say, Lord, may thou to watch, The morning light to see, Let Israel open the door, For within mercy be.

On plentious redemption, Is ever found with him, And from all his equities, The Israel shall redeem.

[15 : 21] Let's turn now to read God's word, And there's two passages tonight From the gospel according to Mark. First of all, Mark chapter 8, And at verse 27, And then we'll turn to Mark chapter 15, From verse 16.

First of all, Mark chapter 8, Beginning at verse 27, And Jesus went on with his disciples To the villages of Caesarea Philippi, And on the way he asked his disciples, Who do people say that I am?

And they told him, John the Baptist, And others say Elijah, And one of the prophets. And he asked them, But who do you say that I am? Peter answered him, You are the Christ.

And he charged them strictly To tell no one about him. And he began to teach them That the Son of Man Must suffer many things, And be rejected by the elders, And the chief priests, And the scribes, And be killed, And after three days rise again.

And he said this plainly. And Peter took him aside, And began to rebuke him. But turning and seeing his disciples, He rebuked Peter and said, Get behind me, Satan, For you are not setting your mind On the things of God, But on the things of man.

[16:54] And he called to him, The crowd with his disciples, And said to them, If anyone would come after me, Let him deny himself, And take up his cross, And follow me. For whoever would save his life, Will lose it.

But whoever loses his life, For my sake and the gospels, Will save it. For what does it profit a man, To gain the whole world, And forfeit his life? For what can a man give, In return for his life?

For whoever is ashamed of me, And of my words, In this adulterous, And sinful generation, Of him will the Son of Man, Also be ashamed, When he comes in the glory of his Father, With the holy angels.

And if we turn to chapter 15, We'll read from verse 16. Verses 16 to 32. And the soldiers led Jesus away, Inside the palace, That is, The governor's headquarters, And they called together, The whole battalion, And they clothed him, In a purple cloak, And twisting together, A crown of thorns, They put it on him, And they began to salute him, Hail, King of the Jews.

And they were striking his head, With a reed, And spitting on him, And kneeling down, In homage to him. And when they had mocked him, They stripped him, Of the purple cloak, And put his own clothes on him, And they led him out, To crucify him.

[18:23] And they compelled, A passerby, Simon of Cyrene, Who was coming in, From the country, The father of Alexander, And Rufus, To carry his cross. And they brought him, To the place called Golgotha, Which means, Place of a skull.

And they offered him, Wine mixed with myrrh, But he did not take it. And they crucified him, And divided his garments among them, Casting lots for them, To decide what each should take.

And it was the third hour, When they crucified him, And the inscription of the charge against him, Read, The King of the Jews. And with him they crucified two robbers, One on his right, And one on his left.

And those who passed by, Derided him, Wagging their heads, And saying, Aha, You who would destroy the temple, And rebuild it in three days, Save yourself, And come down from the cross.

So also the chief priests, With the scribes, Mocked him to one another, Saying, He saved others, He cannot save himself. Let the Christ, The King of Israel, Come down now from the cross, That we may see, And believe.

[19:31] Those who were crucified with him, Also reviled him. Amen. May God add his blessing, Now to the reading of his word. When we turn to these passages, We'll sing once more, This time in Psalm 48a, On page 63 of the psalm books, Psalm 48a, Singing to the Tune Free Church, And we're singing verses 9 to 14, From verse 9, To the end of the psalm, Page 63.

We contemplate your steadfast love, Within your house, O God, For like your name, Your praise extends, Through all the earth abroad, All that you do is righteous, Lord, Mount Zion's joy is great, And Judah's towns rejoice, As they your judgments celebrate, Round Zion walk, And count her towers, View every citadel, So that to children yet unborn, Her story you may tell, For God the Lord, Who is our God, Forever will abide, He is our God forevermore, And to the end, Our guide.

So these verses from verse 9, We contemplate your steadfast love. We contemplate your steadfast love, Within your house, O God, For like your name, Your praise extends, Through all the earth abroad, All that you do is righteous, Lord, And Zion's joy is great, And Judah's town rejoice,

As they your judgments celebrate, Round Zion walk, And count her towers, View every citadel, So that to children yet unborn, Yet unborn, Hearts only you may tell, For God the Lord who is, Our God forever will abide, He is our God forevermore,

And to thee our guide. Please turn with me now to Mark chapter 15, Mark chapter 15, And reading at verse 21, And they compelled a passerby, Simon of Cyrene, Who was coming in from the country, The father of Alexander and Rufus, To carry his cross, The cross of Jesus, That is.

[23 : 25] We're going to focus tonight, And in the two services tomorrow, On certain references to, And aspects of the cross. We'll look at it tonight, In terms of Simon, Carrying Christ's cross.

Tomorrow, We'll look at Matthew's account of the crucifixion, Where we read that soldier sat down, And watched, Or kept watch, At the cross, So observing the cross.

And then God willing, Tomorrow evening, We'll look at John's gospel, Where he tells us about, Nicodemus, And Joseph of Arimathea, Who dealt so lovingly, With the body of Jesus, Taking it down from the cross, And placing it in the sepulcher.

So the cross, Will feature largely, In our services, As you might indeed expect, Given that it's a communion time. And of course by the cross, The Bible does give us, As here, The word cross, Just referring to the wooden cross, That Jesus was crucified, On.

So there's that cross, Literally, That wooden cross. But of course, Most of the time, Especially in the epistles, You'll find the cross mentioned, In terms of referring, As a reference to the death of Jesus.

[24 : 44] For example, Paul in Ephesians 2, And verse 16, Speaks of the blood of his cross. That by which we are reconciled, By which we are come to know peace with God, The blood of his cross.

In other words, The cross in that context, Obviously means, Far more than just, The wooden cross, On which Jesus, Was actually crucified. As you know very well yourselves, It means, The death that Jesus actually died, On that literal wooden cross.

So it refers, Especially to, His death, And the kind of death, That he died. So our relationship, With the cross, Really effectively means, Our connection, With the death of Jesus.

Whenever you find, The cross mentioned, As something that features, In relation to the faith, Of God's people, Their hopes, Whatever else, You find in reference, To their relationship, With the cross, It always is, The relationship, With Jesus himself, That's actually set down there.

Not being ashamed, Of the cross, Means, Not being ashamed of Christ, Or of the death, That he died, On the cross. And of course, It's also used, As we've read, And we'll go back to, This passage in chapter 8, Near the end of our study this evening, It also means, Used figuratively, In the way in which it does, Feature in chapter 8 there, Where Jesus says, If anyone would come after me, Let him deny himself, Take up his cross, And follow me.

[26:17] So there's a reference, To something, That's at the heart, Of discipleship, It involves, Taking up our cross, We'll take a look at that, Because obviously, It's related to, What you find here in Simon, Taking the cross of Jesus, And carrying the cross of Jesus, From this moment, That he was compelled, To do so.

And now, As you look at this passage, Let's take, All of that with us, That we've mentioned, And see what this is actually, Saying to us. What did this mean, For Jesus, First of all, That this man, Simon of Cyrene, Was compelled, To carry the cross, Of Jesus.

What would that have meant, For Jesus himself? And secondly, We'll have a, We'll look at the reference here, To the sons, Of this man, Simon, He's known as the father, Of Alexander, And Rufus.

Wonder why that, Is actually mentioned. Thirdly, We'll go back to chapter 8, And see, The image of discipleship, As it's set out, By way of, Referring to carrying, Or taking up, Our cross as well.

So there's an interaction, An interrelation, Between these passages. What did this mean then, For Jesus? They compelled, A passerby, Simon of Cyrene, To carry his cross.

[27:44] It was, Almost always the case, That a person, Going out to be crucified, Having been tried, And condemned, Would actually carry, The cross, On which he, Was going to be crucified.

Sometimes it was just the, The bar, To which his hands, Would be tied, But most often, It would be the whole, Of the cross. That was then fixed, In the ground, And the person, Crucified to it.

So they were, They were always, Expected, Or made, To carry, Their own cross, Most of the time. And this is what happened, With Jesus at first. You go to John's gospel, Chapter 19 and verse 17, You'll see that Jesus there, Began the journey, Carrying his cross.

But here, They compelled this man, Simon, To carry the cross, Instead of leaving it, With Jesus himself. Now why was that? Well they compelled him, The word compelled, Means he was forced into it, He didn't necessarily, Want to do it, But they forced him into it, They compelled him, They took him, They took hold of him, They grabbed him, And just said, This is what you're doing, You're going to carry, This cross, Of this man, You're going to take it, Until we reach the place, Where it is going to be crucified.

And you might think that, The main reason they would do that, Is that Jesus by this time, Was feeling the effects, Of his flogging, Of the abuse, That was meted out to him, And that he was beginning to flag, Maybe even, On the point of collapse, Some people think, That that's the reason, Why Simon was compelled, And taken, As a substitute, For Jesus himself, To carry, The cross of Christ, From this time onwards, To the place of crucifixion, And indeed, That's a very, Very understandable way, Of looking at it, Because by this time, The abuse that Jesus, Had been through, Was tremendous, He had been flogged, He had been abused, There was so much, As you read through the gospel accounts, Of his trial onwards, And of course, Before that too, There was a lot of suffering, In the life of Jesus, So by this point, It's understandable, That he would be tired,

[30:00] That he would be almost, Giving way under the weight, Of the cross, It wasn't a light thing, It was substantially heavy, And so, You can see, That there's a, In that point of view, That he was just too weak now, To carry it further, That that's the reason, That they compelled Simon, To carry the cross for him, But there's another view, And that's the view, We're going to tease out tonight, For a little time, And this other line of thought, Actually has to do with, Christ's humiliation, That this was, That this was, In fact, A humiliation for Jesus, That somebody had to carry the cross, For him, Instead of himself, That he was deprived, Of the opportunity, Of taking that cross, On which he was to be crucified, All the way through, To Calvary, The place of crucifixion, There's a line of thought, Always in the gospels, An underlying message,

That actually sets out, What you understand, As you read the gospel, By actually showing us, The lack of understanding, Of those that are spoken about, In the gospel, Such as here, Let me give you, An example of that, Chapter 15 here, Verses 16 to 19, You'll find the, Account there, Of the way in which, A crown of thorns, Was twisted, And put on him, And they began to, Salute Jesus, Hail, King of the Jews, Striking him with a reed, Mocking him, Stripping him of the purple cloak, Putting on his own clothes again, Leading him out, To crucify him, Hail, King of the Jews, Now as you read that, As a reader, Who knows the gospel, As someone who knows, Who Jesus was, And is, You're saying to yourself, As you read that, But he was the king, They were mocking him, As if he wasn't the king, They were using that title, And the opportunity, To mock him with it, Although you know, At the same time, As you read that,

That they were wrong, That they were actually using, A truth about Jesus, In their way, Mocking him, But you know, That that is actually, The truth about Christ, As you read that, The same in verse 26, As you go forward there, You'll see, The same sort of idea, Coming across to you, The inscription of the charge, Against him read, The king of the Jews, And then verse 32, You find a similar thing there, Let Christ, The king of Israel, Come down now from the cross, That we may see and believe, In other words, The passage is presenting us, With the fact that Jesus was the king, Not recognized here, Crucified, But nevertheless crucified, As the king that he was, But unrecognized, What are we saying by that?

Well, The fact that he was, Actually the king, Meant that he could, Requisition anything, For his own needs, Out of the whole creation, You go back to chapter, 14 for example, And the way in which, The upper room, The room in which, The Passover was to be, Prepared, On the first day, Of the unleavened bread, When they were sacrificing, When they sacrificed the lamb, His disciples said, Where will you have us go, And prepare for you, To eat the Passover?

And he sent two of his disciples, And said to them, Go into the city, And a man carrying a jar of water, Will meet you, Follow him, And wherever he enters, Say to the master of the house, The teacher says, Where is my guest room, Where I may eat the Passover, With my disciple?

[33 : 41] And he will show you, A large upper room, Furnished and ready, There, Prepare for us. Now notice, What they were to say was, The teacher is saying, Where is my guest room?

He wasn't going to say, They weren't going to say, To the owner of this house, Where is your guest room? Where is the room, In which you entertain guests, At dinner? It is the master who sent us, And he is saying, Where is my guest room?

He's requisitioning, That guest room, For himself, Because ultimately, He owns it, As he owns the whole creation, He is in the world, As the king of the creation, Unrecognized, In the state that he's come, In the state of a servant, But underneath it all, He is the king, And he is the one, Who actually owns everything, Into which he's come, And he has rights to it, And what this is leading up to, Is this, You cannot, Bestow more humiliation, On a king, Than to deprive him, Of what is his right, Of what he owns, Of what belongs to him, And what they're doing, In taking the cross, Away from Jesus, Is depriving him, Of the right to carry, That cross, To the place of crucifixion, He will not be able, To say, Even as criminals,

Did say, At least I was able, To carry my cross, Until I reached the place, Where they crucified me, They took that away from him, They took that privilege, If you like, Away from him, And so they, Grabbed this man, Simon of Cyrene, And the message of Mark, Really is, As we're taking it, In this line of thought, That the king, Is being deprived, Of something, That he had every right, To requisition, That he had every right, To himself, The privilege, Of carrying, This cross, Solemn, Course though that was, And so, To deprive a king, Of anything, That belongs to him, Rightly, Is to, Give him, The greatest, The greatest, Humiliation, To, The greatest, Humiliation, After the, First world war, Tsar,

Nicholas, The second, Of Russia, Who was, At that time, The most powerful, Man on earth, And probably, The richest man, On earth, He had fabulous, Wealth, He had fabulous, Power, Or at least, Almost total power, He was an autocrat, He could requisition, Anything in Russia, For his own use, That's who he was, That's the status he had, And to actually deprive him, Of any of that, Would be to say, This is not rightly you, So you can't have it, And when you see, What happened to him, When, He abdicated, When the Bolsheviks, Took over, And another, A government, Was placed, Instead of, The Tsar, Ruling over the country, He went, You might say, Literally, From, His grand palace, To, A railway carriage, To other places, Of residence,

[37:11] Before he was shot, Along with his family, Now you can see, How that is from, One level, To a much lower level, And you can see, That depriving, The Tsar, Of his possessions, That belonged to him, Have, Whatever you might say, About how he got them, We're not going into that, But, They were his, They belonged to him, They belonged to his family, And to deprive him, Of the right to have them, And even of the right, For his, To his life, Was to actually, Bestow the greatest, Humiliation, On that, On that, Tsar of Russia, But that's nothing, Or very little, Compared to, Taking from Jesus, The rights that were his, As the king of creation, Now bear in mind, They weren't doing this, In a way that Jesus himself, Had nothing to do with it, He gave himself over, To the abuse, That he suffered, He gave himself over, To the deprivations,

That he needed to go through, As the savior of his people, He gave himself over, To everything that happened to him, And was done to him, And he did so willingly, It was part of his will, It was part of his suffering, For his people, Everything that he did, He did willingly, For his people, And nevertheless, To deprive him of this, Is depriving him of something, That he had a right, To himself, And you know that, That carries on, All the way through, To the cross, He was deprived, Of all vestiges, Of status, Nothing was left him, Really outwardly, That showed his kingship, He was deprived, Of status, He was deprived, Of comfort, He was deprived, Of everything, That he had a right to, And when it came, To the cross itself, He was deprived, Even of his clothes, They stripped him, And you mustn't think, That they left him, Something, Of the clothes,

That he was wearing, They didn't, Even the inner tunic, Which was one piece, Worn next to the skin, That too, Was removed from him, Because, He was put, To an open shame, The shame, Of the cross, The shame, That he despised, The shame, That he took, Willingly to himself, As the writer, To the Hebrews, Puts it, That's the shame, That we remember, When we remember, The Lord's death, In the Lord's supper, The shame, That Jesus, Experienced, And suffered, So that you and I, Would not be put, To an everlasting shame, Now you compare that, With the first Adam, And Eve, Having been created, By God, Placed amongst, The garden of Eden,

With all its plenty, You contrast that, With Jesus, The son of God, The creator, Who came into this world, He wasn't placed, In the midst of plenty, He willingly gave himself, To be, In the midst of poverty, In the midst of want, In the midst of suffering, In the agonies, That he suffered, Right through to the cross itself, And look at this, What does Genesis tell you, About the man, And the woman, When you look at the final part, Of Genesis chapter 2, Verse 25, The man and the woman, They were naked, And were not ashamed, There was no shame, Because there was no sin, And whenever you find, Jesus, And his cross mentioned, Think of the shame, Think tomorrow, As you remember him, In his death, In the Lord's supper, Think of the shame, That he put himself to, Willingly,

For you, And for me, Think of how, It reached to the extent, Even, Of being completely, And utterly deprived, Of everything, That was his, Outwardly, That's what it meant, Compelling, This man, Simon of Cyrene, To carry his cross, And look at, Secondly, The sons of Simon, That are mentioned here, The father of Alexander, And Rufus, They compelled, Simon, Their father, To carry the cross, Now why are they, Mentioned there, Well we, Don't want to speculate, But when you go to, Paul's letter to the Romans, And chapter 16, And verse 13, You'll find, A mention there, Of such a name, As Rufus, And, At verse, Verse 13, Of Romans 16, Where you find,

[42:18] This name appearing, Rufus, And greet, Rufus, Chosen in the Lord, Also his mother, Who has been a mother, To me, As well, This is Paul writing, To the Romans, Now there's a very early tradition, That Mark actually, Wrote his gospel, To Christians in Rome, And it could very well be, That the Rufus, Who is the son of Simon, Who carried the cross of Jesus, Is the same Rufus, As you find mentioned, In that last chapter, Of Romans, Whether that's the case, Or not, It's an interesting observation, We can't say, It is definitely, The same person, But it's a very interesting link, It's an intriguing link, It could very well, Be the case, Especially, If Mark indeed wrote, To Christians in Rome, And you can carry that forward, Into how intriguing, A thing it is, That this man, Simon of Cyrene, Would have been influenced,

Positively, By being forced, To carry the cross of Christ, And that his two sons, Then became followers, Of Jesus as well, Or at least one of them, Rufus, Well be that as it may, It raises interesting, Points and suggestions, But it does actually remind us, Of the importance, Of family, Of family, Christianity, Because for one reason, Or another, These people are mentioned here, Along with their father, Alexander and Rufus, They were known to Mark, Obviously, They were known to, Those that Mark was reading, Was writing to, And that's especially interesting, If he indeed was writing, To those in Rome, And reminds us of, How important it is, To actually pass on, To our family, And through family life, The truth about the cross, The truth about Christ, The reality of the cross, The importance of the cross, The significance of the cross, The significance, As we'll see now, Of carrying the cross, Ourselves,

In a moral, Spiritual way, So what it meant for Jesus, And this intriguing reference, To the sons, Of Simon, Alexander, And Rufus, But let's turn back to, Mark chapter 8 now, For a final point, Which is the image, Of discipleship, That you find there, In references to carrying, Or taking up the cross, Mark chapter 8, And at verse 34, He called to him, The crowd with his disciples, And said to them, If anyone would come after me, Let him deny himself, And take up his cross, And follow me, And you can see, The three elements, That are so closely, Joined together there, That each of them, Really amounts to the same thing, As the rest, In other words, To deny yourself, Essentially, Is the same as, Taking up your cross, And that's the same, As following Jesus, If we're following Jesus, It involves, Self-denial, And self-denial,

Involves, In a spiritual way, Taking up the cross, Now think of what it meant, As you saw, Simon of Cyrene, Carrying the cross of Jesus, Jesus himself, Carrying his cross before that, When you saw, Anybody carrying a cross, To a place of crucifixion, You undoubtedly, Were able to say then, That person is going to die, That person is going to their death, They're carrying the instrument, Of their death on their shoulders, There's no other conclusion, It means, Certain death, And when you take that with you, To what it means, To carry the cross, As a disciple of Jesus, To deny yourself, If you would follow him, He must deny himself, Take up his cross, And follow me, It does mean, That there's a death involved, In coming to follow Jesus, That there's a death, To self, You deny yourself,

You take up your cross, In other words, You're determined, As you begin to follow Jesus, And continue to follow Jesus, You actually, Are expressing your desire, To die, To every form of self, Self-righteousness, Self-confidence, Self-pleasing, However many times, Other references to self, You can find, As part of our, Sinful condition, Our sinful way of life, Self is always, At the heart of it, That's why we need to deny it, By the grace of God, By the power of God's spirit, But when you see somebody, Coming to say, I am now a Christian, You expect that person, To be putting, Self to death, To be dealing with sin, In such a way, That once rid of it, Finally, Once and for all, But all the way through this life, Struggling with it many times, As we all, I'm sure,

[47:24] Do, And nevertheless, In the struggles that you have, With sin, As you're conscious, Of sin, As you're conscious, Of needing daily, To express, Your sin to God, And your sorrow to Jesus, That you are still, Finding yourself, Sinning against him, Even same sins, Perhaps as you've done many times, But as you do so, You do so, And I do so, Hopefully, With this desire, With this mindset, That says, Lord, I want to put this self to death, I don't want anymore, To live for myself, To live for my own righteousness, To live as if I could look after my own life, To live as if I could by myself, Prepare for eternity, Let him deny himself, But you notice, The context there, In Mark chapter 8, And especially verses 31 to 33, Here is Jesus teaching, Disciples,

That the son of man, That's himself, Must suffer many things, And be rejected by the elders, And the chief priests, And the scribes, And be killed, And after three days rise again, He said this plainly, And Peter took him aside, And began to rebuke him, Peter took him aside, And said, As we find in other gospels, The record of the other gospels, Peter said, This is not going to happen to you, Put that out of your mind, This is not why you're here, You're not going to die, That's not what's going to happen, We won't allow that to happen, All of that was built into his thinking, Into his words, But turning and seeing his disciples, Jesus rebuked Peter, And said, Get behind me, Satan, For you are not setting your mind, On the things of God, But on the things of man, What's happening there?

What's happening there, Is that Satan, Is trying to divert Jesus, From the whole purpose, Of his being in this world, That's why, When Jesus replied, He said, Get behind me, Satan, He didn't say, Get behind me, Peter, Get behind me, Satan, Satan operating through Peter, Through Peter's thoughts, Through Peter's words, Trying to divert Jesus, From the path, That led to the cross, And when you go back to, The temptation in the wilderness, That you find, Recorded in the gospels, Of Matthew and of Luke, You'll actually find, That this is precisely, The same thing, That Satan is aiming at, Where he says, He shows them, The whole, All the kingdoms of the world, And the glory of them, And says, All this I will give you, If you fall down, And worship me, What is that saying essentially, It's saying to Jesus, You don't need to go through, With the cross, You don't need,

In order to gain, These kingdoms, You don't need to actually, Go through, Finally, With the kind of death, That's ahead of you, That you're saying, Is ahead of you, In the cross, All you've got to do, Is fall down, And worship me, And of course, Jesus dismissed him, But it reminds you, Doesn't it, That the path, For Jesus, Was one of, Well we can say, Self-denial, If we say it carefully, Because of course, Jesus did not have, Any personal sins, Of his own, With which he struggled, But nevertheless, There was always, There was always, The temptation, Particularly from the evil one, And from what was, Thrown at him, By the world, Always the temptation, Not to proceed, The temptation, To go back, The temptation, Not to finish the work, And that's why, It's tied up, In Mark chapter 8, With the self-denial, That is involved, In following Christ, Because when you're,

Following Christ, You're following, His example, For one thing as well, And the example he said, Was, See it through, Do God's will, Don't be diverted, Don't take a step back, Don't let Satan divert you, Don't let your mind, Actually be, Taken aside, And focus on something else, Instead of, Following him, Faithfully, If anyone will come after me, Let him deny himself, Take up his cross, And follow me, Well you might say, Jesus, Is setting the bar very high, Well of course he is, Very high indeed, And he goes on to say, For what does it profit, A man, Whoever would save his life, Will lose it, Whoever loses his life, For my sake, And the gospels, Will save it, For what does it profit, A man to gain the whole world, And forfeit his life,

[52:19] What can a man give, In return for his life, For whoever is ashamed, Of me, And of my words, In this adulterous, And sinful generation, Of him, Will the son of man, Be ashamed, When he comes, In the glory of his father, With the holy angels, Of course, Of course Jesus, Of course Jesus, Is setting the bar very high, But why is he doing that, It's not, So that you, And I will turn away, And say, That's just too much, That's just asking too much, That's what happened, In John's gospel, Remember in chapter 6, Many, Who are following him outwardly, Then turned away from him, And walked no more with him, When Jesus then turned, To the disciples, And asked them, Do you also want to go away, Will you also go away, And then Peter, Again spoke up, Your member, Or to whom shall we go, You have the words, Of eternal life, And we have come to believe, That you are the Christ,

The holy one of God, How can we turn away, How can we, Not deny ourselves, And keep following you, No, It's not so that we'll turn away, It's not so that we'll say, That bar is set too high for me, It's not so that you'll find, In anything there at all, An encouragement, Not to follow him any longer, It's not so that you'll say, That bar is so high, I can't possibly join those, Who are going to take communion, Tomorrow, That's not why he's doing it, Why else?

Well it's so that you will not be surprised, When you meet the challenges, That are involved in being a Christian, So that you'll not be surprised, When the world challenges you, When there are struggles, That you need to overcome, When there are temptations, To go back, Whatever comes our way, By way of challenges, They're part and partial, Of following him, And because they belong to following him, He himself, Is more than capable, Of upholding us through them, During them, Beyond them, Above them, If anyone will follow me, Let him deny himself, And take up his cross, And follow me, Tonight I hope, We're not in any way ashamed of Christ, You know,

Because, To turn away from, What he commands, In disobedience to him, Is effectively, To be ashamed of him, Whether it's in going to the Lord's table, Or any other aspect of life, If we're turning away, From doing what we know, The Lord requires us to do, Or commands us to do, Then effectively, That is being ashamed of him, Not coming to do what he says, Knowing that he has promised, He will never leave us, And never forsake us, And so you find there, In these verses, In Mark chapter 8, The encouragement, To come and follow him, Into every avenue, Of Christian discipleship, And you will never find, There's too much in that, For Jesus, To actually cope with, And carry you through, That's his promise to you, That's the reality of it, And that's why, When we come,

To the Lord's supper, As he himself said, This do, In remembrance, In remembrance, Of me, In remembrance, Of his suffering, In remembrance, Of the deprivation, That he suffered, In remembrance, Of how low, He was brought, And how willing, He was to be brought low, In remembrance, Of what he had to endure, In remembrance, In remembrance, In remembrance, Of the death he died, In remembrance, That your sin, Was placed upon him, So that you wouldn't pay, Eternally for it, Remembrance, Of Christ himself, So Simon, Carrying Christ's cross, Is a reminder to us, Of the importance, Of willingly coming, To follow him, And take the steps, That are involved, In showing,

[57:01] We love him, Who first, Loved us, Let's pray, Almighty God, We know, That your word, Requires us, To look beyond, Our own strength, And we thank you, For the assurance, You give us, That your strength, Is made perfect, In our weakness, That your strength, Comes into its own, When we come to acknowledge, Our weakness, And our inability, Of ourselves, Lord bless us, We pray, As once again, We come to your word, And learn, Its teaching, For ourselves, We thank you, For the many details, That are given us there, Of the sufferings, Of the Lord, Of his commitment, Even to the death, Of the cross, And of how that, Itself sets for us, A path, That we too, Must follow, So bless us now, We pray, And continue to watch over us, Into the following day, If it please you, We ask it all, For Jesus' sake, Amen.

Well our final psalm of praise, Just now is Psalm 138, Psalm 138, On page 180, Singing these three verses, Six to eight, The tune, I'm told, Is O Wally Wally, Otherwise known as, When I survey the wondrous cross, So verse six, On page 180, Although the Lord God dwells on high, The lowly person he protects, Whereas the proud, And haughty one, He knows afar off, And rejects, Although I walk, A troubled path, Your tender care, Preserves my life, You raise your hand, Against my foes, Your right hand, Saves me from their strife, The Lord will certainly, Fulfill, For me, The purpose, He commands, Your love endures forever, Lord, Preserve the works, Of your own hands, Although the Lord God, Dwells on high,

The lowly person, He put it, Whereas the proud, Now I hour him from your life, If it's free, And he failed to Butter, The coming to me, Aris, Although I walk, I mong with my a troubled path, Your tender care, Preserves my love, You'll meet your heart against my foes.

Your right hands in me from their strife. The Lord will certainly fulfill.

For me, the power holds the command. Your love endures forevermore.

[60 : 45] Please bear the word of your own hand. If you allow me to get to the main door, please, after the benediction.

Now may the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you now and evermore. Amen. Amen.

Amen.