

Fifth Sunday in Lent 3/4/22

Welcome

Call to Worship

'Yes, I will stand and praise You
before all the people. I will publicly
fulfil my vows in the presence of all
who revere Your Name.

The poor shall eat and be satisfied;
all who seek the Lord shall find Him
and shall praise His Name.

Their hearts shall rejoice with
everlasting joy.

The whole Earth shall see it and
return to the Lord; the people of
every nation shall worship Him.'

- Psalm 22 v 25-27

Hymn 558

Lord, I lift Your Name on high (sing twice)

Lord I lift your name on high
Lord I love to sing your praises
I'm so glad you're in my life
I'm so glad you came to save us

You came from heaven to earth
To show the way
From the earth to the cross
My debt to pay
From the cross to the grave from the grave to the sky
Lord I lift your name on high

Rick Founds

Prayer and Lord's Prayer

Lord God, today in Your Holy Presence, we praise You.

*As Your people, we bring You
our offerings and our thanks.*

We testify of all the wonderful things You have done.

We revere You in honour.

We stand in awe of Your Majesty and might.

We have cried out to You,

You have heard our cries and responded.

You have listened to us.

You have not ignored us

and never will.

Forgive us Father, for the times when we have ignored You.

When we have failed to thank You for sorting things out in our lives.

When we have left You out of the decisions that we have made.

*Forgive us Father, for the times when we have ignored our brothers and sisters in need and just
concerned ourselves with our own needs.*

Father, we need Your help in every situation, in every aspect of our lives.

*You long to involve Yourself in our daily living, so let us acknowledge this and bring everything to
You, day by day in our prayers.*

*Lord, how good it is to talk things through with You, to bring You our our thanksgiving and praise
as well as our worries and concerns.*

You are always ready and eager to hear what we have to say and to respond to us as Your children.

*Thank you Father, for Your willingness, at all times,
to listen to what we have to say.*

And we pray together as Jesus taught us:

*Our Father, Who art in Heaven
Hallowed be Thy Name;*

*Thy Kingdom come;
Thy will be done;
On Earth as it is in Heaven.*

*Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our debts,
As we forgive our debtors.*

*And lead us not into temptation;
But deliver us from evil.*

*For Thine is the Kingdom,
The power, and the glory,
For ever.
Amen.*

Old Testament Reading - Isaiah 53 v 3-12 (GNB) (Lynda McCraw)

‘The Suffering Servant.’

³ We despised him and rejected him;
he endured suffering and pain.

No one would even look at him—
we ignored him as if he were nothing.

⁴ “But he endured the suffering that should have been ours,
the pain that we should have borne.

All the while we thought that his suffering
was punishment sent by God.

⁵ But because of our sins he was wounded,
beaten because of the evil we did.

We are healed by the punishment he suffered,
made whole by the blows he received.

⁶ All of us were like sheep that were lost,
each of us going his own way.

But the Lord made the punishment fall on him,
the punishment all of us deserved.

⁷ “He was treated harshly, but endured it humbly;
he never said a word.

Like a lamb about to be slaughtered,
like a sheep about to be sheared,
he never said a word.

⁸ He was arrested and sentenced and led off to die,
and no one cared about his fate.

He was put to death for the sins of our people.

⁹ He was placed in a grave with those who are evil,
he was buried with the rich,
even though he had never committed a crime
or ever told a lie.”

¹⁰ The Lord says,

“It was my will that he should suffer;
his death was a sacrifice to bring forgiveness.

And so he will see his descendants;
he will live a long life,
and through him my purpose will succeed.

¹¹ After a life of suffering, he will again have joy;
he will know that he did not suffer in vain.

My devoted servant, with whom I am pleased,
will bear the punishment of many
and for his sake I will forgive them.

¹² And so I will give him a place of honor,
a place among the great and powerful.

He willingly gave his life
and shared the fate of evil men.

He took the place of many sinners
and prayed that they might be forgiven.”

Hymn 392

When I survey the wondrous cross

When I survey the wondrous cross
On which the Prince of Glory died,
My richest gain I count but loss,
And pour contempt on all my pride.

Forbid it, Lord, that I should boast,
Save in the death of Christ, my God;
All the vain things that charm me most,
I sacrifice them to His blood.

See! from His head, His hands, His feet,
Sorrow and love flow mingled down;
Did e'er such love and sorrow meet,
Or thorns compose so rich a crown?

Were the whole realm of nature mine,
That were an offering far too small;
Love so amazing, so divine,
Demands my soul, my life, my all

Isaac Watts (1674-1748)

Prayer - (Barbara Usher)

Holy God, we thank you for showing us yourself, in the person of Jesus. We thank you for His example of self-giving, of forgiveness even as He was nailed to the cross, for His love for all of creation which enabled Him to carry out his work on the cross to achieve victory against the powers of evil.

Jesus, we come before you as a people humbled and in awe of your courage, and your love for sinful humankind.

As the conflict in the Ukraine continues to develop, we who watch the unfolding story with unprecedented coverage and detail in the comfort of our homes, can only guess at the feelings of both civilian and combatant of either side. Intervene, we pray, to bring a decisively swift end to hostilities and a lasting peace.

We pray for the leaders of nations that they may be given wisdom, courage and insight at this time of darkness and fear. Give to all who exercise authority, a determination to defend the principles of freedom, love and tolerance with the strength to safeguard the innocent.

Lord in your mercy, Hear our prayer

We pray for wise government. We live in a divided society, and we pray that all will continue to work together in tolerance whilst constantly striving for peace, truth and justice, and that our small part of your divine kingdom may be a place where love and mercy flourish.

Lord in your mercy, Hear our prayer

We pray for all families represented here today. Each one is made up differently and faces the normal joys and sorrows of family life in different ways. We remember that Jesus too was born, nurtured and grew up in a family which would have known all the emotions that we know in ours as well as experiencing all the emotions and difficulties of a refugee. We pray that each family find a place for that selfless love, revealed to us through Jesus' concern for his family even while dying a horrific death. Even when in extreme agony, Jesus looked to the future of Mary and John, with the words 'Here is your son', and 'Here is your mother'.

Lord in your mercy. Hear our prayer.

We pray for the world-wide Christian church that it may continue to teach the Good News of Jesus with honesty, courage and sensitivity. Remembering Jesus whose betrayal, rigged trial and death represented the supreme injustice, we pray that we may embrace justice, helping bring to birth a fair society for all. In the words of Isaiah, he was 'wounded and bruised for our sins'; as Jesus' death has wiped our slate clean, may we preach the joyous freedom this brings, and so find within ourselves the grace to forgive others. We remember especially people facing religious intolerance, even violence. Give them courage to stay true to their beliefs and help us all to use every opportunity to build bridges between people and communities to promote understanding and tolerance.

Thinking of our own church communities in Ashkirk, Selkirk and the Valleys, we pray for all those in positions of responsibility, and all who lead, organise and contribute to the Church's vision of service and witness.

Lord in your mercy. Hear our prayer.

We pray for those sick, both at home and in hospital, or hospice. We think of the elderly, the housebound and those in care homes. And we pray for all those who care for them, both from within the family and from the professional and voluntary services. Lord Jesus, as you responded very powerfully to human needs, comfort and sustain those who are in need of your grace at this time. As we share a moment of silence together, we bring before you those known only to ourselves and name them in our hearts.

Lord in your mercy, Hear our prayer.

We remember those who face the pain of grief and the often unanswered questions that follow the loss of a loved one. We know you understand, as you grieved for Lazarus. Help us to actively support those who mourn.

Jesus, lifted up on the cross, you draw all of creation to you. We remember your mercy, and your solemn promise to the thief dying on the cross beside you, that that very day he would be in Paradise.

You turn our darkness into light; in your light shall we see light.

As you faced your darkest hour with faith, help us to seek no less than that same faith when we are faced with tough decisions.

Merciful Father, we ask these things in Jesus' name.

New Hymn

See, what a morning!

Bible Teaching - Luke 23 v 32-49 (GNB)

‘The Man on the Cross, The Nails in the Cross, The People around the Cross.’

This morning, on this Passion Sunday, we look together at the Cross and all that it means for you and me today.

The cross was a cruel, wooden construction used for execution in Roman times.

A condemned criminal would be fastened to it, until he died of exposure, asphyxia & loss of blood.

Of all the thousands of crosses on which men died during those barbaric times, there is one which towers way, way above them all.

The cross on which Jesus of Nazareth was crucified.

Today, as Christians, we use the image of the cross as a metaphor for what happened on it 2,000 years ago.

When we talk about 'The Cross', we mean the death of Jesus.

A death which was the most significant of all time - for each and every one of us!

Let's listen together to Luke's account of the crucifixion:

Luke 23 v 32-49 (GNB):

³² Two other men, both of them criminals, were also led out to be put to death with Jesus. ³³ When they came to the place called "The Skull," they crucified Jesus there, and the two criminals, one on his right and the other on his left. ³⁴ Jesus said, "Forgive them, Father! They don't know what they are doing."^[a]

They divided his clothes among themselves by throwing dice. ³⁵ The people stood there watching while the Jewish leaders made fun of him: "He saved others; let him save himself if he is the Messiah whom God has chosen!"

³⁶ The soldiers also made fun of him: they came up to him and offered him cheap wine, ³⁷ and said, "Save yourself if you are the king of the Jews!"

³⁸ Above him were written these words: "This is the King of the Jews."

³⁹ One of the criminals hanging there hurled insults at him: "Aren't you the Messiah? Save yourself and us!"

⁴⁰ The other one, however, rebuked him, saying, "Don't you fear God? You received the same sentence he did. ⁴¹ Ours, however, is only right, because we are getting what we deserve for what we did; but he has done no wrong." ⁴² And he said to Jesus, "Remember me, Jesus, when you come as King!"

⁴³ Jesus said to him, "I promise you that today you will be in Paradise with me."

The Death of Jesus

⁴⁴⁻⁴⁵ It was about twelve o'clock when the sun stopped shining and darkness covered the whole country until three o'clock; and the curtain hanging in the Temple was torn in two. ⁴⁶ Jesus cried out in a loud voice, "Father! In your hands I place my spirit!" He said this and died.

⁴⁷ The army officer saw what had happened, and he praised God, saying, "Certainly he was a good man!"

⁴⁸ When the people who had gathered there to watch the spectacle saw what happened, they all went back home, beating their breasts in sorrow. ⁴⁹ All those who knew Jesus personally, including the women who had followed him from Galilee, stood at a distance to watch

This morning, we look together at three very important aspects:

THE MAN ON THE CROSS

THE NAILS IN THE CROSS

THE PEOPLE AROUND THE CROSS

1st of all, THE MAN ON THE CROSS

There is something different, something special about this man.

His name is Jesus of Nazareth and He has been brought before the Roman governor Pilate and Herod, the king.

Listen to what Pilate says about him

"You brought me this man as one who was inciting the people to rebellion.

I have examined him in your presence and have found no basis for your charges against him. Neither has Herod, for he sent him back to us."

And Pilate concludes:

"As you can see, he has done nothing wrong!"

The Jewish authorities had paid false witnesses to testify against Jesus and made up fake charges.

Listen also, to the words of one of the two criminals who were crucified on either side of Jesus.
Speaking to his fellow criminal, he says:

"We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve, but this man has done nothing wrong!"

And, further to this, we have the testimony of the Roman centurion, who stood at the foot of the cross:

Seeing what had happened, when Jesus died, he praised God and said:
'Certainly he was a good man!'

Even amongst the Jewish leaders, this same opinion is stressed.

Joseph of Arimathea, a member of the Jewish ruling Council, the Sanhedrin is described as:

'A good and upright man, who had not consented to the Council's decision and action about Jesus.'

He also believed that Jesus was innocent!

The overwhelming evidence is that,
the man on the cross was different.

Different from those who hung on either side of Him and different from all the others who had been crucified before Him!

This man was INNOCENT!
COMPLETELY INNOCENT!
HE HAD COMMITTED NO CRIME!

We heard Lynda read the words of the prophet Isaiah:

"He had never committed a crime,
or ever told a lie!"

Over and over again, the message comes through loud and clear -

The man on the cross is INNOCENT!

His death is UNDESERVED!

UNDESERVED! UNDESERVED!

And so we move on to -

THE NAILS IN THE CROSS

And just as when we speak about the cross, we mean more than the rough timber, so when we speak of the nails in the cross, we mean more than mere sharpened pieces of iron.

If the man on the cross was innocent, then it wasn't his own crimes or sins which nailed him to the cross, it was something else.

So what was it?

What was it that brought about His death?

What were the nails in the cross?

To find the answer, we have to look at some of the words which the man on the cross uttered that day.

First of all there is a PRAYER

And secondly, there is a PROMISE.

There is a PRAYER for those who are crucifying Him and a PROMISE for one of the criminals being crucified alongside Him.

The PRAYER is: "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing."

The man on the cross is praying to God, his Father, pleading for forgiveness for those who are torturing and murdering him!

He is asking God to forgive their sins!

The PROMISE is made by the man on the cross to one of the two criminals beside him:

"I promise you that today you will be in Paradise with Me!"

Jesus is promising this man that, this very day he will be in Heaven with Him, that he will have eternal life!

The man on the cross IS different,
very different from all other men.

He has the power to ask God to forgive people's sins and He has the power to grant them eternal life!

And by pointing this out, Luke is telling you and me, here in this passage, that the man on the cross has the power to forgive OUR sin & the power to grant US eternal life!

So, if Jesus was innocent, if His death was undeserved, and we have discovered that He is offering each one of us forgiveness from sin AND eternal life, what does this mean?

It means that what nailed Jesus to the cross was not HIS OWN SIN,
but OUR SIN, yours and mine!

In some wonderful way, the effects of OUR sin have somehow been DIVERTED from ourselves onto Jesus!

They have been TRANSFERRED to Him!

He willingly took them upon HIMSELF!

The effects or results of our sin,
the Bible calls them the WAGES of sin - is death!

The Good News Bible says:

"For sin pays its wage - death!"

The CONSEQUENCES of you and I sinning is that we will all die.

But Jesus has died instead of us!

Jesus has died in our place!

Once again, we read earlier in Isaiah 53:

"But HE endured the suffering that should have been OURS, the pain WE should have borne.....
Because of OUR sins HE was wounded, beaten because of the evil WE did.

WE are healed by the punishment HE suffered, made whole by the blows HE received.....

HE willingly gave HIS life and shared the fate of evil men.

HE took the place of many sinners and prayed that THEY might be forgiven!"

And all of this is reinforced by Peter, Jesus' right-hand man; speaking of his Master's crucifixion he writes:

"He, Himself bore our sins on the tree!"

As Stuart Townend puts it in his hymn 'For every sin on HIM was laid'

It was common practice to nail to the cross of a criminal, an account of all the crimes he had committed.

But all that was nailed to the cross of Christ was a notice which read:

JESUS OF NAZARETH

THE KING OF THE JEWS

There was NO list of crimes, NO list of sins which He had committed - for He had committed NONE!

Someone has summed it all up by writing:

"It was MY pride and MY hardness that nailed Him to the tree.....

Those cruel nails O Saviour,

Were driven in by ME!"

Or, as Stuart Townend puts it:

Behold the Man upon a cross,

MY sin upon HIS shoulders.....

It was MY sin that held HIM there,

MY pardon HE accomplished;

HIS dying breath has brought ME life

- I know that 'It is finished.'

The MAN ON THE CROSS was completely innocent of any crime.

He had done nothing wrong.

His death was undeserved.

THE NAILS IN THE CROSS

were driven in by ME and by YOU.

Jesus suffered and died for US.

HE paid the penalty for OUR sins!

We move on, lastly, to:

THE PEOPLE AROUND THE CROSS

Many people were gathered around the cross on that first Good Friday -

The two criminals, the Roman soldiers, some of the disciples,

Jesus' friends both men and women, His mother Mary, Joseph of Arimathea, whom we mentioned, as well as those who were mere bystanders.

They witnessed for themselves the terrible scene that unfolded on that dark day.

They saw for themselves the terrible agony, the unspeakable anguish and the excruciating pain which the man on the cross endured

They heard Him pray those words of forgiveness to those who were executing Him.

They heard His promise to the criminal beside Him.

But they were not to know that these words also applied to THEM!

To each single one of them who heard them.

Jesus was PRAYING for forgiveness for each one of them!

Jesus was PROMISING eternal life to everyone who believed in Him!

But who else was around the cross on that first Good Friday?
Many of you will know the old American spiritual hymn,
'Were you there when they crucified my Lord?'

Now, I used to wonder about that hymn.

How COULD we have been there?
It all happened 2,000 years ago!
It just didn't seem to make sense.

But the second verse goes:
'Were you there when they nailed Him to the tree?'

We've just looked together at the nails on the cross and we have seen that the nails were OUR
SINS.

WE nailed Him to the cross!

So, in a sense, we WERE there, when they crucified our Lord!
You and me, we WERE there!

We were, in a manner of speaking, part of that Roman guard who nailed Jesus to that rough wooden
cross and watched Him die!

WE have heard the man on the cross pray for forgiveness for US!

WE have listened to Him promise us eternal life if we believe in Him!

We WERE there, each single one of us, without exception!

Jesus Christ, the Son of God, died for us ALL, for ALL our sins, past, present and future!

The 'Good News', in fact 'Good News' is not nearly sufficient to describe it.

The 'Best News Ever' is that Jesus Christ has paid the price for all our sins on the cross.

That is why He cried out from the cross:

"It is finished!

It is accomplished!

It is done!"

Earlier I mentioned a verse from Romans: "The wages of sin is death"

Now that all sounds very negative, doesn't it?

However the verse continues:

"But the free gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord!"

Much, much more positive!

And that free gift is available to all who believe that the man on the cross, God's Son Jesus, died there in their place, for their sins, so that they might be forgiven.

Many years ago, on Princes Street in Edinburgh, a painting of the Crucifixion was on display in one of the shop windows.

Jesus was on the cross, with Mary and the others around Him.

A man stood looking at this great work of art.

It had been a long time since he had allowed any thoughts like those suggested on the canvas to enter his mind.

But the artist's portrayal of this tragic scene brought back a memory of long forgotten truths.

He was impressed and troubled.

As he looked, he became aware of a wee boy, a ragged street urchin of the day, standing beside him, also staring at the painting.

The wee boy spoke to him:

"That's Jesus, sir, on the cross.

They nailed Him there with that crown of thorns on His head and killed Him sir.

He was a good man, He died for us.

And that's His mother standing there sir, looking at what they did to Him."

The man felt a lump rise in his throat as the wee boy continued:

"And He died sir, and they buried Him yonder sir.

It was all too much for the man and he turned away and hurried along Princes Street.

Soon he felt a tugging at his coat and turning around saw the wee boy, looking up at him.

Breathlessly the wee lad blurted out

"I forgot to tell you sir, I forgot to tell you HE ROSE AGAIN!!

(Hymn 549

How deep the Father's love for us

The Lord's Supper - Selkirk & Ashkirk.)

How deep the Father's love for us how vast beyond all measure
That He should give His only Son to make a wretch His treasure
How great the pain of searing loss the Father turns His face away
As wounds which mar the Chosen One bring many sons to glory

Behold the man upon a cross my sin upon His shoulders
Ashamed I hear my mocking voice call out among the scoffers
It was my sin that held Him there until it was accomplished
His dying breath has brought me life I know that it is finished

I will not boast in anything no gifts no pow'r no wisdom
But I will boast in Jesus Christ His death and resurrection
Why should I gain from His reward I cannot give an answer
But this I know with all my heart His wounds have paid my ransom.

Hymn 459

Crown Him with many crowns, the Lamb upon His throne

Crown Him with many crowns
The Lamb upon His throne
Hark how the heavenly anthem drowns
All music but its own
Awake my soul and sing,
Of Him who died for thee
And hail Him as thy matchless King
Through all eternity

Crown Him the Lord of life
Who triumphed o'er the grave
And rose victorious in the strife
For those He came to save
His glories now we sing
Who died and rose on high
Who died eternal life to bring
And lives that death may die

Crown Him the Lord of love
Behold His hands and side
Rich wounds yet visible above
In beauty glorified
All hail Redeemer hail
For Thou has died for me
Thy praise shall never never fail
Throughout eternity.

Benediction - 'And now may
the Grace of the Lord Jesus Christ,
the Love of God
and the Fellowship of the Holy Spirit,
be with you all, now and forevermore.'

(3 fold Amen)