

Sunday 15th April, 2022

Service for Swansea & Charlestown Presbyterian Church

Welcome

Romans 5:6-10 tells us: *"6 You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. 7 Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person someone might possibly dare to die. 8 But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. 9 Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him! 10 For if, while we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life!"*

Lets' Pray. Our Lord and Heavenly Father, we come to you today with hearts full of praise, with hearts full of joy. For we know that this time of year is where we very specifically remember the boundless love you hold, even for sinners who rejected your rule over their life. Lord, we thank you for the beauty of this gift. And Lord, we count the cost. We recognise that we crucified Jesus as much as Pontius Pilate or the Roman guards. We recognise that we denied Jesus as Simon Peter did. We recognise that we mocked you as the robber or the soldiers who forced the crown of thorns onto his head. We recognise that we often worship in secret, as Nicodemus did. And yet Lord, you have loved us enough to send your Son to die and then to call us and reveal this truth to us.

As we ponder your sacrifice, make us a people who sacrifice for others. Help us to give up time, money, reputation, pride – these earthly trappings – for that which is so much better. Make us a people who submit, who love, who give sacrificially, not for our own glory, but to shine the love Jesus showed on that first, strangest of all Good Fridays. Keep this uppermost in our mind, Lord. Many are in need in our community right now, Lord. Open opportunities for us to help meet those needs all around us.

Father, we pray you will comfort and protect those who are vulnerable. As they struggle with various needs, often in silence, we pray that the message of Easter will be prominent. Help those who are lost to realise their need for you and your limitless love. Encourage them to come to you in humble repentance, accepting the gift that Jesus offered as he gave up his life for them. Father, we pray that even through the unusual societal impact of COVID-19 that you will bring people back to you. In the name of Jesus, we bring these petitions to you. Amen.

Song – Glories of Calvary [The Glories of Calvary - YouTube](#)

1. Lord, You're calling me to come
And behold the wondrous cross
To explore the depths of grace
That came to me at such a cost
Where Your boundless love
Conquered my boundless sin
And mercy's arms were opened wide

2. Sinners find eternal joy
In the triumph of Your wounds
By our Saviour's crimson flow
Holy wrath has been removed
And Your saints below
Join with your saints above
Rejoicing in the Risen Lamb

Chorus: My heart is filled with a thousand songs
Proclaiming the glories of Calvary
With every breath, Lord how I long
To sing of Jesus who died for me
Lord, take me deeper
Into the glories of Calvary

Chorus x2
Bridge: For all eternity we will sing worthy
Our God has set us free
We'll sing the glories of Calvary
Repeat Bridge
Chorus

Bible Reading – Mark 14:53-15:15 (NIV)

⁵³ They took Jesus to the high priest, and all the chief priests, the elders and the teachers of the law came together. ⁵⁴ Peter followed him at a distance, right into the courtyard of the high priest. There he sat with the guards and warmed himself at the fire. ⁵⁵ The chief priests and the whole Sanhedrin were looking for evidence against Jesus so that they could put him to death, but they did not find any. ⁵⁶ Many testified falsely against him, but their statements did not agree. ⁵⁷ Then some stood up and gave this false testimony against him: ⁵⁸ “We heard him say, ‘I will destroy this temple made with human hands and in three days will build another, not made with hands.’” ⁵⁹ Yet even then their testimony did not agree. ⁶⁰ Then the high priest stood up before them and asked Jesus, “Are you not going to answer? What is this testimony that these men are bringing against you?” ⁶¹ But Jesus remained silent and gave no answer. Again the high priest asked him, “Are you the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed One?” ⁶² “I am,” said Jesus. “And you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven.” ⁶³ The high priest tore his clothes. “Why do we need any more witnesses?” he asked. ⁶⁴ “You have heard the blasphemy. What do you think?” They all condemned him as worthy of death. ⁶⁵ Then some began to spit at him; they blindfolded him, struck him with their fists, and said, “Prophecy!” And the guards took him and beat him.

⁶⁶ While Peter was below in the courtyard, one of the servant girls of the high priest came by. ⁶⁷ When she saw Peter warming himself, she looked closely at him. “You also were with that Nazarene, Jesus,” she said. ⁶⁸ But he denied it. “I don’t know or understand what you’re talking about,” he said, and went out into the entryway. ⁶⁹ When the servant girl saw him there, she said again to those standing around, “This fellow is one of them.” ⁷⁰ Again he denied it. After a little while, those standing near said to Peter, “Surely you are one of them, for you are a Galilean.” ⁷¹ He began to call down curses, and he swore to them, “I don’t know this man you’re talking about.” ⁷² Immediately the rooster crowed the second time. Then Peter remembered the word Jesus had spoken to him: “Before the rooster crows twice you will disown me three times.” And he broke down and wept.

15 Very early in the morning, the chief priests, with the elders, the teachers of the law and the whole Sanhedrin, made their plans. So they bound Jesus, led him away and handed him over to Pilate. ² “Are you the king of the Jews?” asked Pilate. “You have said so,” Jesus replied. ³ The chief priests accused him of many things. ⁴ So again Pilate asked him, “Aren’t you going to answer? See how many things they are accusing you of.” ⁵ But Jesus still made no reply, and Pilate was amazed. ⁶ Now it was the custom at the festival to release a prisoner whom the people requested. ⁷ A man called Barabbas was in prison with the insurrectionists who had committed murder in the uprising. ⁸ The crowd came up and asked Pilate to do for them what he usually did. ⁹ “Do you want me to release to you the king of the Jews?” asked Pilate, ¹⁰ knowing it was out of self-interest that the chief priests had handed Jesus over to him. ¹¹ But the chief priests stirred up the crowd to have Pilate release Barabbas instead. ¹² “What shall I do, then, with the one you call the king of the Jews?” Pilate asked them. ¹³ “Crucify him!” they shouted. ¹⁴ “Why? What crime has he committed?” asked Pilate. But they shouted all the louder, “Crucify him!” ¹⁵ Wanting to satisfy the crowd, Pilate released Barabbas to them. He had Jesus flogged, and handed him over to be crucified.

Announcements

Easter Services.

Resurrection Sunday:

Swansea 8am

Charlestown 9:45am & 6pm

HOPE Explored. We would like to personally invite all those who come to church this weekend to a three week presentation called HOPE Explored. HOPE Explored is a short presentation of what Christians believe around three topics that should interest all of us – Hope, Peace and Purpose. It will be held in weeks 1 to 3 of Term 2, starting Monday 25th April. There will be Sessions in the day and at night on Tuesdays, Wednesday, Thursdays and Fridays, in women’s groups and men’s groups and mixed groups. So why not join us? To find out more details just ask the person who invited you to Church today or ring one of the Church workers on the front of this bulletin. It might be the best decision you make for years!

School Holidays. NSW School holidays start this weekend. This means the regular activities of the Church will go into recess for the next two weeks. But during that time please keep our focus on outreach in your prayers and it would be great if we could all pray for that people from outside the Church will come to our outreach events over Easter.

Song – Hear Our Prayer [Hear Our Prayer - YouTube](#)

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| <p>1. Hear our prayer, God above
As we come to you and seek your patient love
Hear our hearts, hear our minds
Hear the echoes of the words we cannot find</p> | <p>3. Hear our prayer, faithful one
Shape our yearnings to the gospel of your Son
Free our hearts, free our minds
From the war that sin will wage till you arrive</p> |
| <p>2. Be our hope, be our guide
In our wanderings of weakness break our pride
Not for ease shall we pray
But for strength that we may walk with you this day</p> | <p>4. Be our joy, be our stay
Give us eyes to see you answer prayer this day
Hear us praise all you've done
We rejoice as we receive the victory won</p> |

Chorus

So we pray in faith, your will be done
As we long to see your kingdom come
We ask with one voice
Through Jesus Christ our Lord

Pastoral Prayer Points – 15th April

- **Pray for Hungary.** In 2000, Hungary celebrated 1,000 years since its conversion to Christianity. However, Hungarian people have now mostly lost contact with the gospel. They seek answers to life's problems in material possessions, personal pleasures, alcohol, and false religions. Ask God to expose all false teaching and empty philosophies, and to reveal Christ as the truth in this historically Christian nation. Pray also for the Christian Church as they show hospitality and love to the refugees from Ukraine.
- **Pray for a restful Easter break.** Safety on the roads. A break from work. And that God would open their hearts to the real meaning of Easter so that many might find hope and peace in Jesus.
- **Pray for Vanuatu** as COVID continues to grow amongst a community that doesn't have the health system to cope. Pray for wisdom for their leaders. Pray that measures might be found that will help when social distancing is almost impossible in the housing they live in and medicines are in short supply. Pray that the Christians leaders will take a lead and help shepherd their people with love and care.
- **Pray for those recovering from the floods** that help might come to their aid quickly. That they might find their ultimate help from their heavenly father.
- **Pray for the Barnes family** as they navigated little Emily's cancer.

Bible Reading – Mark 15:16-41 (NIV)

¹⁶ The soldiers led Jesus away into the palace (that is, the Praetorium) and called together the whole company of soldiers. ¹⁷ They put a purple robe on him, then twisted together a crown of thorns and set it on him. ¹⁸ And they began to call out to him, "Hail, king of the Jews!" ¹⁹ Again and again they struck him on the head with a staff and spit on him. Falling on their knees, they paid homage to him. ²⁰ And when they had mocked him, they took off the purple robe and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him out to crucify him. ²¹ A certain man from Cyrene, Simon, the father of Alexander and Rufus, was passing by on his way in from the country, and they forced him to carry the cross. ²² They brought Jesus to the place called Golgotha (which means "the place of the skull"). ²³ Then they offered him wine mixed with myrrh, but he did not take

it. ²⁴ And they crucified him. Dividing up his clothes, they cast lots to see what each would get. ²⁵ It was nine in the morning when they crucified him. ²⁶ The written notice of the charge against him read: THE KING OF THE JEWS. ²⁷ They crucified two rebels with him, one on his right and one on his left. ^[28] ^[i] ²⁹ Those who passed by hurled insults at him, shaking their heads and saying, "So! You who are going to destroy the temple and build it in three days, ³⁰ come down from the cross and save yourself!" ³¹ In the same way the chief priests and the teachers of the law mocked him among themselves. "He saved others," they said, "but he can't save himself! ³² Let this Messiah, this king of Israel, come down now from the cross, that we may see and believe." Those crucified with him also heaped insults on him. ³³ At noon, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon. ³⁴ And at three in the afternoon Jesus cried out in a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?" (which means "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"). ^[k] ³⁵ When some of those standing near heard this, they said, "Listen, he's calling Elijah." ³⁶ Someone ran, filled a sponge with wine vinegar, put it on a staff, and offered it to Jesus to drink. "Now leave him alone. Let's see if Elijah comes to take him down," he said. ³⁷ With a loud cry, Jesus breathed his last. ³⁸ The curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. ³⁹ And when the centurion, who stood there in front of Jesus, saw how he died, ^[l] he said, "Surely this man was the Son of God!" ⁴⁰ Some women were watching from a distance. Among them were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James the younger and of Joseph, ^[m] and Salome. ⁴¹ In Galilee these women had followed him and cared for his needs. Many other women who had come up with him to Jerusalem were also there.

Sermon – Life is not fair!

Life is not fair. It isn't! And we all know it. Why do we in Australia have clean, modern, sterile hospitals to give birth in and there were those women in Ukraine giving birth while mortars reigned down all around their hospital? How come the tennis player Novak Djokovic gets to leave the asylum hotel in Melbourne while there are some there from Afghanistan in the very next room who have been in detention for over 10 years?

Slide 2

Why is still true today that the colour of your skin still determines your education level, your health prospects and the average age of your death? How come I can drive home one night and get home safely but another person driving home minding their own business is killed when a drunk driver crosses over the other side of the road and crashed head on into their car? How come one person gets COVID and gets a mild cold and another ends up dying a painful death in hospital?

Life just isn't fair. And nothing seems to ever be done about it. Why is there still racism? Sexism? A divide between the rich and the poor? The west and the east? Doesn't God care? Can't he do something about it? Why does it just continue to go on and on and on?

Well, this morning we are going to go back to one of the greatest miscarriages of justice ever seen in this world. The trial and death of Jesus Christ and as we work through the events of the last few hours of Jesus life, we will see something there that might just open our eyes. That might surprise us. That might help us to see something we have never seen before. The truth is that God is so powerful that He is even at work even in injustice. Even in violence. Even in death. God is powerful enough to work through even the worst that life throws at us, to save and transform his people. So let's begin by looking at

Slide 3

1. A Travesty of Justice.

⁵³ "They took Jesus to the high priest, and all the chief priests, the elders and the teachers of the law came together... ⁵⁵ The chief priests and the whole Sanhedrin were looking for evidence against Jesus so that they could put him to death, but they did not find any. Many testified falsely against him, but their statements did not agree."

Mark tells us about Jesus' trial. Just a few hours ago the religious establishment had sent guards and troops to the Garden of Gethsemane to arrest him on the sly. Now they seek to try him behind closed doors. Mark says they know the verdict that they were looking for, death, they just needed to find a way to justify that sentence and to do it quickly. And so as they to achieve that they broke almost all of their own rules that applied to capital cases.

Slide 4

For example, these sorts of cases couldn't be held at night. If a guilty verdict was reached a second Session was required to ensure a fair trial. The trial must be held within the temple precinct. It couldn't occur on the eve of any of the great feasts. Witnesses needed to be warned against presenting rumour or hearsay. The defendant needed to be properly represented. And a charge of blasphemy could only be upheld if the accused actually cursed God's name. Now none of these things happened. And yet even then there was not enough evidence to condemn Jesus.

Slide 5

Until the chief judge became the chief accuser. Verse 61, *"the high priest asked him, "Are you the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed One?"* ⁶² *"I am," said Jesus. "And you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One & coming on the clouds of heaven."* ⁶³ *The high priest tore his clothes. "Why do we need any more witnesses?" he asked.* ⁶⁴ *"You have heard the blasphemy. What do you think?" They all condemned him as worthy of death."*

Jesus is condemned in a travesty of justice. In order to condemn Jesus to death the Sanhedrin, the religious court, had to commit crimes that under Jewish law should see them all die. For if you were responsible for an innocent man's death, you then should share his fate. That was what justice looked like in those days. But Jesus didn't get justice, not at all!

Slide 6

And yet there is something inside of us that craves justice. We carry inside of us all a moral outrage. When we see these sorts of things go wrong. It is just not right, is it? And yet I know that despite this I haven't always been just in all my dealings. Wouldn't you say the same thing? We have all jumped to conclusions too many times that ended up wrong. We have judged many books and people by their cover or their colour. We all have gone quiet when we should have spoken up to defend an innocent person. I have played my part in the travesty of justice. And yet that is only the start of the wrong things that happen to Jesus.

Slide 7

"They all condemned him as worthy of death. ⁶⁵ *Then some began to spit at him; they blind folded him, struck him with their fists, and said, "Prophecy!" And the guards took him & beat him."* The members of the court add insult to injury by beating Jesus in a shameful manner. They make fun of this defenceless victim. They humiliate him by firstly spitting on him.

Have you ever been spat upon? I have, during a soccer game! It was gross. I was being treated with utter contempt. And here they spit on this innocent man and they strike him with their fists and mock him and abuse him.

Slide 8

I hate it when I see on TV a mob attack a lone person. It's terrible when we resort to violence in order to put someone in their place. Because we all know that isn't right. From one country invading a weaker country to take what is not theirs to a situation of domestic violence when someone throws their weight around to get what they want. It shouldn't happen. We know deep inside of us it's not right. But it continues to happen in this world.

Slide 9

Jesus endures the shame of unfair violence, the stain of an unjust trial as well as the dagger of denial coming from his best friend's cowardice. Peter, the leader of his 12 disciples, the rock on which the Church was going to be built upon three times denies that he was with Jesus, that He knows Jesus, that He is a

follower of Jesus. Just a few hours ago Jesus had predicted this very thing would happen, before the cock crows three times you will deny me three times. But Peter, full of bravado, had assured Jesus he was willing to die for him. But when push comes to shove, he couldn't stand the heat in the kitchen or in the courtyard.

And according to verse 71 *"He began to call down curses, and he swore to them, 'I don't know this man you're talking about.'"* Earlier on in the night Peter was talking when he should have been listening. He was sleeping when he should have been praying. And now he fails Jesus by denying him when he should have been confessing him.

Slide 10

And that's also something we all know too well. When someone lets us down. When we have let someone else down. When we have let God down. Balthasar Hubmaier has been called the "Simon Peter" of the evangelical Baptists of the sixteenth century. He was the movements greatest theologian and served God in some amazing ways but under severe persecution, he wilted and compromised and denied his commitment to Christ on at least two occasions before being brought by God to deep repentance. In a work titled "Short Apology", he wrote, *"O God, pardon my weakness. It is good for me that you humbled me."*

Slide 11

But even as Peter folded like a deck of cards, Jesus remains resolute. And yet his pain and suffering had only just begun because now he is bound and led away and brought to the provincial leader, Pontus Pilate. You see the Jews couldn't sentence anyone to death but Pilate could. And so after condemning him to death for blaspheme, the charges are conveniently changed to Jesus claiming to be the Messiah, a King, the King of the Jews.

And you can tell from Mark's account that Pilate sees through the chief priest's little game. Verse 10 states that ¹⁰ *"knowing it was out of self-interest that the chief priests had handed Jesus over to him."* So Pilate interviews Jesus and sees there is nothing deserving of death. But he is also weak at the time he should have been strong. He gives way to peer pressure when he should have stood alone for the truth. Causing further injustice. Jesus is now sentenced to death by crucifixion, even though he was not the kind of king that would interfere with the Roman empire.

Slide 12

So Jesus is let down because of another's person's weakness. And then he cops a mouthful from all and sundry as he makes his way to the cross. ¹⁶ *"The soldiers...put a purple robe on him, then twisted together a crown of thorns and set it on him. ¹⁸ And they began to call out to him, 'Hail, king of the Jews!'" ¹⁹ Again and again they struck him on the head with a staff and spit on him. Falling on their knees, they paid homage to him... Then they led him out to crucify him."*

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²⁹ *"Those who passed by hurled insults at him, shaking their heads and saying, 'So! You who are going to destroy the temple and build it in three days, ³⁰ come down from the cross and save yourself!'" ³¹ In the same way the chief priests and the teachers of the law mocked him among themselves. "He saved others," they said, "but he can't save himself! ³² Let this Messiah, this king of Israel, come down now from the cross, that we may see and believe." Those crucified with him also heaped insults on him."*

Completely alone, humiliated, naked and beaten nearly to death, now Jesus endures ridicule, shame, pain and abuse by all those who are gathered around him. This is getting worse and worse by the hour but it is about to get much, much worse.

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Because his last life line, the one who had been with him for all eternity, his Father God, was about to abandon Him. ³³ *"At noon, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon. ³⁴ And at three in the afternoon Jesus cried out in a loud voice, 'Eloi, Eloi, lema*

sabachthani?" (which means "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?").

In the words of preacher Tim Keller *"this forsakenness, this loss was between the Father and the Son, who had loved each other from all eternity. This love was infinitely long, absolutely perfect and Jesus was losing it. Jesus was being cut out of the dance... Why (because) Jesus was experiencing our judgement day... Jesus was forsaken by God so that we would never have to be. The judgement that should have fallen on us fell instead on Jesus."* God abandoned Jesus because God can't be where sin is. And my sin and your sin and the worlds sin was now upon Jesus shoulders. And so, God turned his back on his one and only son.

We all know what it is like to be alone. Well Jesus was really alone. I remember finding myself sleeping on a park bench in Athens because I had run out of money on my European adventure and realizing I was alone, really alone. So alone that no-one knew where I was and if someone attacked me and killed me and robbed me of my wallet and passport then there was a chance that no-one would ever be able to find out who I really was.

But what I went through was nothing compared to the loneliness of the cross, coupled with the agony of Jesus crucifixion, the worst way to die according to Roman historian Josephus. Dying that way was excruciating, that's where the word comes from, the noun crucifixion. You were naked, with stakes in your hands and feet, trapped on a cross, unable to breathe and completely powerless and vulnerable. And Jesus was there for 6 hours, including 3 hours of complete darkness.

There has never been such injustice and pain in the history of the world. The worst death, accompanied with abuse and physical torture. Let down by friends. Condemned in an unjust trial. Put on the cross because the person in control lacked the courage to stand up to the people around him. And abandoned by God. It doesn't get any worse than this.

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So let me ask you a question? Does Jesus understand when injustice comes our way, when there is senseless violence? When people are abused or let down. Alone and friendless? Yes, he does. God's Son Jesus endured all this and more, much, much more. He is not a God in his ivory tower up there in heaven who doesn't care. He got himself down and dirty. Abused and bloodied. He knows. He cares. He understands.

But let's go one step further. If you were there on that first Good Friday you might be tempted to say, where is God in all of this? Why hasn't he come down and rescued this innocent man? He could have intervened, couldn't he? He could have stopped all of this. So where is God when there is injustice? Where is God when there is violence? Where is God when there is abuse and loneliness and pain and death?

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You know when I look around at my world, our world, I often ask that very same question. The news is full of it. My life is full of it. So where is God? I heard a story recently, about three Jews being hung by the SS during the second world war. Two of them were men, and they died quite quickly before the rest of the prisoners in the concentration camp. The third Jew was a youth, and he lasted a bit longer. As the crowd watched him die, a voice was clearly heard to all those standing around, "Where is God in all of this? Where is God?"

Silence, complete silence followed. Until the answer came forth from someone else, "He is there, there on the gallows." God is there. Amongst both the good and the bad in this life.

Good Friday tells us that God is here, involved in this world. We may not know what he is doing. We may not be able to understand what his plan is. But that doesn't mean he is absent. He had a plan on Good

Friday & that plan meant sending his Son to suffer & die. He has a plan today. As the scripture says, "All things work for the good of those who love him"

So, let's have a look to see what God was actually doing in this travesty of justice and what we will find is that he is weaving a

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2. Tapestry of Grace.

Let me briefly point out four things that God is doing in this historical event. Now there are more than four things happening but these four things that I am going to point out might give us the eyes to see God at work. And maybe we might then see even more things that God is doing through the death of Jesus and doing through the world's misery even today.

Firstly, Jesus was condemned by Pilate for being the King of the Jews. A sign was put on the cross with the written notice of the charge against him "the king of the Jews." Jesus was claiming to be a king. But kings are born in palaces and Jesus was born in a shed. Kings are rich and Jesus was poor. Kings rule from their throne and Jesus rules from the cross.

Because Jesus kingdom is different from any other kingdom. It is not a political kingdom or a geographical kingdom or a racial kingdom it is a spiritual kingdom. In John's gospel Jesus says to Pilate "My kingdom is not of this world." And because his kingdom is not of this world it looks differently to the way this world does things. It has different ethics. Different power structures. Different members.

So when bad things happen all around us, we need to look to God's word to inform us what is really going on here? What is God doing in the muck of this world. How is King Jesus still ruling? And when we ask those questions, we see something else in our passage. And that is the irony of what the chief priests said while Jesus hung on the cross. "He saved others", they said, "but he can't save himself."

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Yes, throughout his life Jesus had save others. He had risen dead bodies back to life. He had cured others of major illnesses. He had rescued people from storms. He had fed them when they were hungry. Jesus went about saving people. But his ultimate act of salvation was Jesus dying on the cross. While he was hanging there, he took on the sins of the world. All the injustice of the world. All its senseless violence. All the abuse, pain, suffering and death was transferred onto his shoulders.

And in order to save others, he needed to not save himself. You see he could only save others or himself but he couldn't save both. And so he chose not to send angels down to help him. Not to defend himself in his various trials. Not to come down from the cross. Because he wanted to save sinners. Because he wanted to save people like you and me.

A number of years ago, three friends were in a small boat just off the Queensland coast. A storm came and they got themselves into big trouble and the boat was overturned. Luckily though they managed to scramble their way back onto the upturned hull but they were in a precarious situation, because a little later they started being circled by a number of hungry sharks who began to knock the boat. So it didn't look like any of them were going to survive.

That was when one of the three made a decision, a courageous decision. He waited for an opportune time and when it came, he dived into the water swimming frantically, so that he could lure the sharks away. He sacrificed his life but that act of bravery enabled his girlfriend and his mate to be spared. And fortunately, later they were both rescued. He knew it was a choice, them or him. He died to save the lives of those who meant the world to him. But Jesus died to save the world. In order to save you and me he chose not to save himself.

You see when Jesus died ³⁸ *"The curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom."* The curtain that stopped people having access to God was torn from top to bottom by God Himself. The curtain that stopped the Gentiles and the Jews from being God's children, God's new humanity was broken. From then on, we all have access to God through the death of Jesus. Our sins can be forgiven through the death of Jesus. The differences between us can be erased through the death of Jesus.

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And because of this death, *"the centurion, who stood there in front of Jesus, saw how he died, he said, "Surely this man was the Son of God!"* He saw what no-one else saw. He saw what Pilate and the Chief Priests and the crowds and even the apostles failed to see. That Jesus was not just a man, but the Son of God. Not just a king of the Jews, but the king who was reigning in God's place over the God's world.

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In the midst of the injustice, the pain, the suffering and the death, this man sees something that you and I need to see. That God can produce good out of bad. Salvation out of evil. Hope out of suffering. Life out of death. God can use the worst day in history to achieve his purposes. God can take the worst evil that mankind throws at him and still bring out of it something beautiful. Our salvation. And the salvation of those who are all around us.

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You see life is not fair. And it will continue to be unfair. But in the travesties of justice, you and I need to look for the tapestry of grace, God's grace. God has not left the building. God has not walked away from his people. God still cares for the poor, the widow and the refugee. God still wants to bring the sinner to himself. God still wants to show us what forgiveness looks like. God still wants to give us hope in a hopeless world.

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The question is can you see where God is at work all around? Can you see where God was at work in the cross of Jesus? Do you see? Now if I am honest, I don't always see it myself. Because I am looking at the world through my eyes not Gods eyes. But Good Friday reminds me that Jesus is the King. That he didn't save himself, so that he could save you and I. That his death gives me access to God like never before. And so I need to be like that Centurion and acknowledge that He indeed is the Son of God. And trust that it is through the horror of the cross of Christ that God wants to draw me back unto Himself. I now see that, do you?

Song – No other name [No Other Name - YouTube](#)

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|--|---|
| <p>1. There is no other name
In heaven can be found
Through whom we are redeemed
Through whom your grace abounds
No other name can save
But Jesus Christ our Lord</p> <p>Chorus: My joy in sorrow's tears
My strength to cast out fears
No other name but Jesus, Jesus
My hope in darkest night
My broken soul's delight
No other name but Jesus, Jesus</p> | <p>2. There is no victory
But Jesus crucified
No other cure for sin
But that our Saviour died
No other hope we have
But that he rose again</p> <p>3. No other throne endures
No other song remains
But 'Worthy is the Lamb
Who was for sinners slain'
When every knee shall bow
And tongue confess you are Lord, You are Lord</p> |
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Closing. ³⁹ *And when the centurion, who stood there in front of Jesus, saw how he died,^[1] he said, "Surely this man was the Son of God!"*