

31.3.24 am

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Date: 31 March 2024

Preacher: Stuart King

[0 : 0 0] well good morning everyone it's wonderful to be with you on such a glorious morning and it's great to have visitors with us there's quite a few on the way in so don't judge the ministry of this congregation by this sermon I'm not the minister here David is away and we pray that he'll have a restful time away with the family and that he will be blessed in our time together as we worship God today I'll just work my way through the intimations I've not got a sheet so I'll just go through them as we see them the service this evening will be at 6 p.m. and it'll be a Gaelic service led by the Reverend Donald MacDonald and I'd encourage you to come along if you're able to come to that and especially as well I come along to do the live stream I've got no Gaelic but I would particularly commend Reverend Donald MacDonald to you because he does give you all his points in English and he gives you a brief summary so whether we know the language or not we're still worshipping together and there'll be a fellowship afterwards there's no youth fellowship this evening but there'll be a fellowship an English fellowship after the Gaelic service from about half seven onwards and we'll hopefully hear from Richard I saw him on the way in I don't know where he is just now and we'll be hearing from Richard he'll give a bit of a testimony a little bit of background of his time in Japan as well if you were at the recent island study conference I'll apologize it's going to be largely similar to the message that he shared there and so if you were at that there's no harm in coming to hear it again and if you weren't then I would encourage you to come out about half seven this evening to hear what Richard has to say of God's work in Japan attendance at the community lunch last Monday was steady with a good range of people and thanks to all who were there another 300 pounds was donated to Crossroads and there's another one there'll be another community lunch next month ladies fellowship meet tomorrow 8pm if there's any information you require get in touch with Lucy or others little fishes will be on as normal on Tuesday road to recovery will meet Tuesday evening for anyone struggling with addiction please be encouraged to come along there on Tuesday evening a prayer meeting will be led by Richard killer and apologies

Richard I didn't know you were doing prayer meeting as well and I probably wouldn't have asked you to do tonight so I'm putting you to work apologies as I mentioned earlier David's off at the moment with the family and if there's any pastoral issues get in touch with one of the elders in the first instance and Reverend Ian McRitchie from Graver is on standby for the congregation no Friday clubs with it being the holiday nothing at all this this week or next so pray for the young ones as they have time on holiday and then next Sunday we've got Reverend Donald McDonough again taking both services church cleaning rota you can I'll not shout out your names just in case there's a couple of crumbs that we find in the next couple of weeks and we won't name and shame and again that one this has been up for a couple of weeks now not Reverend the soon to be Reverend in a few years Scott McLeod Fiona his wife and their daughters are hoping to be with us for placement from September of this year through until 2026 so if there's anyone that knows of a property nearby ideally as close to Tarbert as possible then please do get in touch and we can hopefully look forward to having their them with us come September Nigel

Kennedy Nigel Kenny sorry Scotland officer for Christian Institute is making a heartfelt plea for us to collectively respond to the government's public consultation I recently filled it in last week and it is quite a weighted document so it does take a little bit of time to go through but the the closing date is Tuesday and so I would encourage you to go on and fill in that that document which would effectively make what David does here potentially a crime and so I would encourage you to go and fill that document and and if you google and there's the Christian Institute they've got they've pulled a document together that gives you some answers and a little bit of a help for some of the questions that will be coming up I don't know if that's me is that me done for the intimations it's nearly time for um coffee already um so uh Friday 19th of April uh there'll be cafe nights with uh Solas I Andy Bannister is one of the I think he's in charge of Solas I think David Robertson was the founder of Solas so be encouraged to come along to those in Stornoway there's a couple of nights there and I think there was posters uh up on screen as well so be encouraged to go along to them no booking required so make your way over where you can or maybe that's me fantastic thank you so uh we'll begin our public worship of God today by singing um to God's praise in Psalm 22 Psalm 22 and we'll sing the first five verses uh of Psalm 22 and on Easter Sunday uh as we are today we we see this Psalm uh that speaks of uh Christ as he was on the cross and we remember uh today especially as we should every day uh of God's uh life death and his resurrection so we'll read we'll sing the first five verses my God my God why hast thou me forsaken why so far art thou from helping me and from my words that NINGNINGNINGNINGNINGNINGNINGNING

For Savior, why so far? Art Thou from hell, made me and from my words that roll in the air.

All in my heart to Thee I cry, yet I'm not heard by Thee.

[6 : 14] And in the season of the night I cannot silent be.

But Thou who art holy, Thou that dost inhabit Israel's place, Our fathers hold in Thee, they hold, and Thou didst them release.

When unto Thee they sent their cry, To them deliverance came, Because they put their trust in Thee, They were not good to share.

Let's join together in prayer. Let's pray. Our gracious and ever-blessed Father, Lord, we give You thanks that You have afforded us another opportunity to come into Your house, to look at the God that is sovereign over each and every one of us, the God that is so loving.

We thank You, Lord, that on a day such as this, we are able to come into this house to hear Your Word, to read it, to not feel the pressure of persecution as we come to Your Word.

[8 : 21] We bring before You those places this very morning that don't have such a wonderful privilege, Lord. We pray for those persecuted churches around the world, Lord, and ask that You would be with them, that You would be in the situations there, Lord, as we are able to comfortably sit in the seats today, Lord, as we look to You this Easter Sunday, Lord, we give You thanks for the glorious gift, that loving gift of Your only Son, Him who knew no sin, who became sin for us.

We thank You, Lord, that to receive that gift, You don't require us to meet a certain standard, You don't require us to act in a certain way or to have a level of status, Lord.

You simply ask that we receive that glorious gift, that gracious gift that was provided to us by Your love, that was a plan instituted before time began.

You saw fit for that salvation plan to be the golden thread that runs through our Scripture, and it was fulfilled on the cross and with the resurrection three days later, Lord.

And we remember that, especially at this time of year, although we ought to be remembering each and every day, not just at one time of year, Lord, but particularly this time of year, we give You thanks that we are able to gather, that we are able to remember that, that we are able to pray and give thanks for that glorious gift.

[9 : 51] And we pray for those this very morning that don't sit in seats here today or don't join us online, Lord. We pray for those who woke up this very morning with no thought of You, with no thought of that glorious gift, no thought of the sin in their own lives, no thought of eternity.

And we pray for them, Lord. We ask that You would make Yourself known to them, that You would reveal Yourself to them, that they would be mindful of the sin in their own lives, Lord, and that it would seek to see them turn away, to turn away from a life of sin and to turn towards an almighty God and an almighty Saviour, Lord.

So we give You thanks for that gift, Lord. We pray for the congregation here, Lord. We give You thanks for the wonderful gifts that You've given to us, the wonderful provisions, not just of a building and of a servant over us and David, Lord, but for the wonderful gifts that You've given many in the congregation, Lord, that are used each and every week.

We thank You that the intimations are long, Lord. We thank You that the work going on in the congregation here is plentiful, Lord. But we pray that we would not be complacent, that we would not think that the work is done, but we would continue to seek to be a beacon of light here in Tarbert, Lord.

A light that radiates not just a light, but a warmth as well, as we seek to welcome those into the church here, Lord, whether from young babies and toddlers, little fishes, through to the oldest in the community here, Lord.

[11 : 30] We pray that the opportunities that we have to share the gospel with them would be taken, that we would be bold in sharing the gospel with those that we interact with, not just each Lord's Day or on a Wednesday evening or at the respective clubs, Lord, but wherever you've placed us, Lord, whether it's in the workplace, in school, on a fishing boat, in the shops, wherever we are, we pray that you would give us opportunities and the boldness to take the opportunities to share the gospel with those that we interact with.

We thank you, Lord, again for the churches in our islands here as well, Lord. We pray for Scalpy and for South Harris as well. We pray for the congregation and the Church of Scotland here in Tarbert as well, Lord.

And we pray for all congregations this very morning where Christ crucified is preached, Lord. We pray for them and ask that those who hear that word would be transformed by it, that we would see a change in the hearts of those that hear the gospel message, that it would turn them away from that life and turn them towards the risen Saviour.

We give you thanks again, Lord, for David and Mary and for the girls, Lord, and for the ministry here. Pray that they would have a restful time away at this time, Lord, that they would come back refreshed and energised and ready to continue your work, to continue to do your will, to see your kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven, Lord.

So we pray for them and ask that you would bless them at this time, Lord. We think of our wider denomination as well, Lord, and for the work going on there and the church plants that they're seeking to do at the moment, Lord.

[13 : 05] We pray that you would set it upon the hearts of men to go out and to share the message with all those around this country, Lord. We see so clearly the country that we live in here, once well acquainted with your book, is now a dark place, is a place where we see legislation seeking to be passed that would see words being preached, the truth being preached from a pulpit, being seen as criminal, Lord.

So we pray for that. We pray for that consultation as we heard of during the intimations, Lord, and ask that those who are able to would be able to respond to that, Lord. They would be able to respond that Christians, parents, loving family members would not be criminalised for seeking the best for their young ones and for those around them, Lord.

That the truth of your word would go out, Lord. That it would not be railed against, Lord. And we pray as legislation and other leaders in our nation seek to do their work each and every day that they would seek your counsel, that they would seek your wisdom before going any further in their day.

Every morning we ask that they would seek your face, Lord, for all that they do. That they would not seek the counsel of the world, but they would seek God's counsel in all that they do, Lord.

So we pray for them, Lord. We pray for the young ones. We pray for them as they're on holiday at this time, Lord. We give you thanks for the many young ones that come into your church here as well, Lord. We pray for them and ask that they would come to know you in the days of their youth.

[14 : 38] But we pray, Lord, for those young ones that aren't here, for those that we maybe saw yesterday at the Easter Funday just across the road, Lord. For those many faces that we don't see, we pray for them, Lord, and ask that they would indeed be welcomed in and that they would come in to hear the glorious gospel message and that it would indeed transform their lives, Lord.

So we pray for these young ones, that they would have a nice time over the holidays, but they would be continually remembering what they're taught in Sunday school and Jam and Connect and Rooted and YF, that they would remember you, that they would know of what you've done for them, Lord, and that they would see you as their Lord and their Saviour and they would have a loving relationship with you, Lord.

So be with us just now, be round us, keep us, pardon our many sins in Christ's precious and most glorious name we pray. Amen. Amen. Okay, boys and girls, if you want to come out, please.

I should have said at the beginning, I think, I'll double check what Gordon is at, Sunday school for primary school. So if you're of primary school age, after we sing, please do, welcome, have a seat.

Yeah, so after we do our children's talk, we'll have a singing and then after the singing, if those are of primary school age can just follow the rest of them here, we will be able to have them through at Sunday school.

[15 : 59] So I'm going to show you something. Some of you will not have a clue what this is, some of you will have an idea what this is. Is, oh, James, are you okay? Does anybody know what this might be?

Shawnee, you were first and you went, so we can go with you. The bags from the Easter hunt. The bags from the Easter hunt. Oh, this one's empty, so whoever had this one didn't do a good job. So there was an Easter hunt and it was just over the road, wasn't it?

So what was the aim of the game? You got a bag and did you just stand and open it and hope that these eggs would jump in? What did you do? You had to go and find them. Absolutely. I went with Anna, because Emily's a wee bit older, I didn't have to take her around, but I went with Anna around the top of the garden and she didn't have a clue what was happening, but I overheard a little boy, I don't know who he is, but he's a little bit older than Anna.

I don't think they go to school and he was picking up all of the eggs, but did you maybe see some of the chocolates that were little square packages? They weren't all eggs, but there were some Cadbury square ones and this little boy said, oh, I don't want one of those, I don't know what they taste like.

So he didn't have a clue. He thought, all of the eggs, they're absolutely chocolate, I'm happy to pick them up, but wasn't comfortable picking up the square one because he didn't know what it tasted like. So I want to give you a wee example.

[17:16] Imagine that little boy or somebody else that's never tried a chocolate egg before. Comes in, they stand in the middle, the little gap they've nicely made, they stand there. What sort of words, now I need you all to give me some words here, what sort of words would you do to describe what chocolate is like to be seen?

This little person that's never tried chocolate before, give me some words that you would tell. Michael. Empty. Empty. So that's what it tastes like, it tastes empty. It tastes chocolate.

Chocolatey, yeah. What if they go, what is chocolate, I've never tried chocolate. What else? Sweet. Sweet, yeah. Anything else? Emily? Sugary, yeah. Any other thoughts?

Creamy? Yeah. Yeah, that was a good one. I could see that was in your head. Any other thoughts? What other things would you say to them? Delicious. Delicious, yeah. These are some of the words that you would say.

But, what if they turn around and say, I don't know what chocolate is, I don't even know what sugary is, I've no idea what you're talking about. What would be the best way to share with them what chocolate tastes like?

[18:19] Opposite of a healthy bar. It is opposite of a healthy bar, that's absolutely true. Although, it's from a bean, so it's technically salad. So, imagine, what's the best way that you can tell or show somebody that this egg or this little bit of chocolate tastes good?

Like that little boy yesterday didn't have a clue what was in that square. What could his parents have done? Opened it and then done what? No, not themselves. They would have given it to them.

And I want to read a very brief first line of Psalm 34, well, 34 verse 8. There's a passage, we all know it, we all know it very well. It says, Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good.

Have you heard that before? Taste and see that the Lord is good. And I want you to think about one special word there and it's is. We don't always think of the word is as being a special word, do we?

But he doesn't say here, oh, taste and see and you might think, try that the Lord is good or see what you think to see if the Lord is good. What does it say? The Lord may be good, the Lord is good.

[19:23] And it's the same, unless you don't like chocolate, but those that do like chocolate, if you're telling somebody this is tasty, are you going to say, oh, it's all right, it's not too bad, or we tell them, this is amazing.

You would tell them, wouldn't you? You'd be really strong about how amazing that chocolate is. So I just want you to remember, as we look at this, that the Lord is good and you can only tell that by trying them.

So if you've got maybe friends that aren't here, you've probably got people that you were at the Easter hunt with yesterday that are your friends in school and maybe they've never come to church, maybe sometimes they come to jam, but they've never come on a Sunday.

Maybe speak to them, ask them, maybe come, try, come and see that God is good because he'll look after us, won't he? Yeah? What did we do? What did we remember at this time of year?

Why did we have this whole egg hunt yesterday? What are we remembering at this time of year? Jesus. Jesus. And what happened to Jesus at this time? Johnny? He came back.

[20 : 22] Yeah, so he rose again. He rose on the third day. He rose again. And we remember that every day, especially though at Easter, we remember Jesus' death on the cross and him rising again on the third day.

But I want you to encourage your friends in school, wherever you are, that God is good and that they should come, taste and see that he is good. Invite them along to jam, connect. Don't think you go to rooted, you're a bit too young for rooted.

But make sure you invite them along and let them see that the Lord is good. So we say a quick word of prayer before you go to Sunday school after the singing. Lord Jesus, we give you thanks that at this time of year we have the opportunities to use a simple thing of a chocolate egg to share a most glorious message with the young ones in our community and in our congregation.

Lord, we thank you that the simplicity of that message is able to get through, that the Lord is good. Not the Lord might be good, can be good, but the Lord is good and all we have to do is come, taste and see.

You don't require anything of us other than coming, tasting and seeing that you are indeed good, Lord. So we pray for the young ones here with us, those that are maybe on holiday as well that aren't able to be with us.

[21 : 38] We bring them before you, Lord, and ask that they would remember you in the days of their youth, Lord. And we thank you that they come and they're so willing to learn, Lord, whether it's at Sunday school or at the various clubs or even the holiday club once a year.

We thank you for the enthusiasm that they come with, being able to learn more about a wonderful risen saviour, Lord. So be with them just now as they go and learn more today in Sunday school and pray for the teachers with them today, Lord, and that they would be blessed as well as they share a word with them.

So go before us just now, Lord. Forgive us for all of our sins. In Christ's name we pray. Amen. Okay, well, just before you go to Sunday school, we'll sing to God's praise again, this time from Mission Praise 458, Man of Sorrows.

We'll sing the whole of this hymn. Man of Sorrows, what a name for the Son of God who came, ruined sinners to reclaim. Hallelujah, what a saviour. Bearing shame and scoffing rude, in my place condemned he stood, sealed my pardon with his blood.

Hallelujah, what a saviour. And then that last one, when he comes, our glorious king, all his ransomed home to bring, then anew this song we'll sing. Hallelujah, what a saviour.

[22 : 53] We'll sing this hymn, Man of Sorrows, and we'll stand to sing to God's praise. Man of Sorrows, what a name, or the Son of God who came, ruined sinners, do we play?

Hallelujah, what a saviour. Bearing shame and scoffing rude, in my place from empty sooth, sealed my pardon with his blood.

Hallelujah, what a saviour. NINGNINGNINGNING The Father's free, stop the sum of God was He, full atonement, can it be, hallelujah, what a Savior.

Lifted up was he to die It is finished was his cry Now in heaven it's haunted high
Hallelujah, what a Savior When he comes a glorious ring All his ransomed home to bring
Then a new this song we'll sing Hallelujah, what a Savior Anyone of primary school age,
feel free to go through it.

You're a visitor so you can have a wee chocolate egg before you go. No one else gets one. Any visitors? There might be chocolate through there, I don't know. I'm probably setting you up. Hopefully there's some munchies for you through there.

[25 : 33] And for those that are left remaining with me, unfortunately for you, if we go to the Gospel of Matthew in chapter 27 please. We've got the Gospel according to Matthew chapter 27 and we'll read from verse 32 and a short few verses into verse 28 as well.

Matthew chapter 27 from verse 32. As they went out, they found a man of Cyrene, Simon by name. They compelled this man to carry his cross.

When they came to a place called Golgotha, this means place of a skull, they offered him wine to drink, mixed with a gall, but when he tasted it, he would not drink it. And when they had crucified him, they divided his garments among them by casting lots.

Then they sat down and kept watch over him there, and over his head, they put the charge against him, which read, This is Jesus, the King of the Jews. Then two robbers were crucified with him, one on the right and one on the left.

And those who passed by derided him, wagging their heads and saying, You who would destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, save yourself. If you're the Son of God, come down from the cross.

[26 : 55] So all the chief priests with the scribes and elders mocked him, saying, He saved others. He cannot save himself. He is the King of Israel. Let him come down now from the cross, and we will believe in him.

He trusts in God. Let God deliver him now, if he desires him. For he said, I am the Son of God. And the robbers who were crucified with him also reviled him in the same way.

Now from the sixth hour, there was darkness over all the land until the ninth hour. And about the ninth hour, Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lemma sabachthani?

That is, My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? And some of the bystanders, hearing it, said, This man is calling Elijah. And one of them at once ran and took a sponge, filled it with sour wine, and put it on a reed and gave it to him to drink.

But the other said, Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to save him. And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice and yielded up his spirit. And behold, the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom, and the earth shook and the rocks were split.

[28 : 05] The tombs also were opened, and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised. And coming out of the tombs after his resurrection, they went into the holy city and appeared to many. When the centurion and those who were with him, keeping watch over Jesus, saw the earthquake and what took place, they were filled with awe and said, Truly this was the Son of God.

There were also many women there looking on from a distance who had followed Jesus from Galilee, ministering to him, among whom were Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James and Joseph and the mother of the sons of Zebedee.

When it was evening, there came a rich man from Arimathea named Joseph who also was a disciple of Jesus. He went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Then Pilate ordered it to be given him.

And Joseph took the body and wrapped it in a clean linen shroud and laid it in his own new tomb which he had cut in the rock. And he rolled a great stone to the entrance of the tomb and went away.

Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were there sitting opposite the tomb. The next day, that is after the day of preparation, the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered before Pilate and said, Sir, we remember how that imposter said while he was still alive, after three days I will rise.

[29 : 22] Therefore, order the tomb to be made secure until the third day, lest his disciples go and steal him away and tell the people he has risen from the dead. And the last fraud will be worse than the first.

Pilate said to them, You have a guard of soldiers. Go, make it as secure as you can. So they went and made the tomb secure by sealing the stone and setting a guard. Now after the Sabbath, toward the dawn of the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb.

And behold, there was a great earthquake for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled back the stone and sat on it. His appearance was like lightning and his clothing white as snow.

And for fear of him, the guards trembled and became like dead men. But the angel said to the women, Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. He is not here, for he has risen, as he said.

Come see the place where he lay. Then go quickly and tell his disciples that he has risen from the dead. And behold, he is going before you to Galilee. There you will see him. See, I have told you.

[30 : 28] So they departed quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy and ran to tell the disciples, and behold, Jesus met them and said, Greetings. And they came up and took hold of his feet and worshipped him.

Then Jesus said to them, Do not be afraid. Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee and there they will see me. Amen. And may the Lord bless the reading of his holy word.

To us, we will now, just before we go back to that passage, we'll sing in Gaelic and we remain seated to sing in Gaelic the last two stanzas of Psalm 16. And I'll just read from verse 8 to the end of Psalm 16 in English.

Before me still the Lord I set, sith it is so that he doth ever stand at my right hand I shall not move be. Because of this my heart is glad and joy shall be expressed even by my glory and my flesh in confidence shall rest.

Because my soul engraved to dwell shall not be left by thee nor wilt thou give thine holy one corruption to see. Thou wilt me show the path of life of joys there is full store before thy face at thy right hand are pleasures evermore.

[31 : 34] We'll sing the last two stanzas of Psalm 16 to God's praise in Gaelic and we'll remain seated. NINGNINGNING!

NINGNINGNING! NINGNINGNING! SONG PLAYS SONG PLAYS SONG PLAYS

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SONG PLAYS SONG PLAYS SONG PLAYS SONG PLAYS SNING upon your word, to chew upon it, that we won't just hear and read it and then discard of it as we leave these doors, Lord, but we would take it with us and it would be used and the Holy Spirit would work in us as we seek to learn more about who you are, gaining greater knowledge and understanding of you as we seek to follow you. And for those that do not follow you, Lord, we pray that this truth would be made known to them and that they would recognise that you are indeed the Son of God and our Saviour, Lord. So be with us just now, be round us, keep us and pardon our sins, in Christ's name we pray, Amen. Well if you could turn back in your Bibles to chapter 27, Matthew chapter 27, and we'll take our text from verse 54. So we saw obviously the death of Jesus and then reading from verse 54, we read there, when the centurion and those who were with him, keeping watch over Jesus, saw the earthquake and what took place, they were filled with awe and said, truly this was the Son of

God. And for the time remaining, I want us just to look at that text and specifically looking at the centurion's conclusion that he came to and ultimately his conversion. And then just at the end of the sermon, I'll briefly circle back to a passage earlier on in verse 27 and it's a question I think we all ought to be considering as we go and leave this place today. So looking at the events of the crucifixion of Jesus, let us just consider this centurion for a few moments and his conclusion that he arrived at there, that truly this was the Son of God. And at the last words of Jesus, as we read in that passage, the stillness at Calvary was shattered by a powerful earthquake. The testimony of Jesus cannot be silenced even by his death. And as we see from the text, even in death, Jesus confronts those around him with a question, who do you say that I am? That's the question that we're all confronted with today. Even in our own society that we have, people have various answers to this question. Some think that

[37 : 28] Jesus was just a good man that lived on earth a couple of thousand years ago. Some maybe say he was a social revolutionary and he was executed after causing a bit of a disturbance in Jerusalem.

Jesus lived on in the hearts and minds of followers, but many say he certainly did not physically rise from the grave. Christ was little more than a kind helper to them and a good example for us to follow.

Society nowadays says that they no longer need Christ. They no longer feel that that power of Christ is sufficient for them and we ought not to be deceived by this. The question to ask ourselves, who do you, who do I, who do we say that Jesus is? At the conclusion of his crucifixion, this question received an answer and amazingly that answer came from a Roman centurion. He was compelled at this time to give an answer and he so beautifully confessed that truly this was the son of God. Of all people at this time, the confession that we hear of here was made by a Roman centurion. He wasn't however on his own. He didn't just make this confession in isolation. Just look again at that verse, verse 54.

When the centurion and those who were with him, keeping watch over Jesus, saw the earthquake and what took place, they were filled with awe. These weren't just casual onlookers. These were people that were actively engaged in the most cruel mockery of Jesus that led up to his crucifixion.

They attempted to ridicule him by dressing him up in royal robes, putting a crown of thorns over his head. They proceeded to revile him by spitting on him and striking him. They were so perverse as to enjoy that ridiculing of this humble Jesus who offered absolutely no resistance. The very fact that the man we read of here, this centurion in this text, was a leader of, they called a centurion because they were a leader of no less than a hundred stalwart Roman soldiers. The fact that that testimony comes from this person tells us something about this man that they called Jesus and his conclusion about who Jesus was. These centurions and the soldiers were men of iron will. They were tough, hard men, men of war, not easily moved, affected by, they were never affected by anything such as crucifixions. This was routine day-to-day work for them. They were used to suffering and bloodshed. The gruesome reality of death was not something that fazed them at all, which serves to make this conclusion and confession from the Roman centurion even more astonishing. This centurion and his soldiers had no pity or sympathy for those that they dispatched from this life. Although we are not told of it in this text, I highly doubt that this was the first crucifixion this centurion was involved in. Yet it's at this crucifixion we see this centurion, the working of the Spirit.

[40 : 37] It's such a great impact on him that his entire life was changed. We see and read of many strange things that occurred at the cross. We read it there in that passage. But that impressed upon the heart and mind of this centurion that this crucifixion was different to any of the previous crucifixions that he had done. Not only was the crucifixion different, but the man on the cross was different as well. Just look at verse 36 briefly. We read it in 36. Then they sat down and kept watch over him there. So that's the soldiers. They sat down and kept watch over him there. This centurion was sat down and was watching with his soldiers. They watched on as Jesus, though he was the object of cruel ridicule and mockery. He did not defend himself in word or in action. No, as these soldiers drove nails into his hands and his feet, what did they observe? Well, they observed a man who submitted to the will of his father. What they would hear Jesus say was, Father, forgive them for they know not what they do. What else would they have seen as they watched on? We see there in that verse of 36, they were watching this whole event take place. They would have seen one of the robbers who at first, along with the others, had reviled Jesus very suddenly and mysteriously had a change of heart.

Verse 44 shows us there that these two robbers also reviled him. Yet we know that one of these robbers eventually defended Jesus as righteous and then asked to be remembered by Jesus in his kingdom.

What must this centurion and other soldiers have thought seeing that? And then what else does the centurion witness? Well, all of a sudden there was an unnatural darkness during this time when the sun would normally have shone brightly. The light had completely gone. This heavy blackness was all new and not anything natural. It wasn't the result of an eclipse or any other astrological event. No, this lasted for hours. This was not explainable. And as suddenly as the darkness came, suddenly it left.

Not even the most hardened of hearts that opposed Jesus would be able to wave away this event as just something of a coincidence. But undoubtedly it was probably the loud cry of Jesus at the end that would have had a lasting impact on this centurion. I'll briefly read, you don't have to go there in your Bible, but I'll briefly read a couple of verses in the parallel passage in Mark's gospel. Mark 15 verses 37 to 39.

It says there, 37 to 39, sorry. And Jesus uttered a loud cry and breathed his last. And the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. And when the centurion who stood facing him saw that in this way he breathed his last, he said, truly this man was the son of God. The centurion saw the way in which he breathed his last.

[43 : 43] The power of Jesus's voice showed that Jesus was still very strong at the moment of death. The centurion would have therefore realised that Jesus's life had not been taken from him, but had been voluntarily given to the father by him. This Jesus had not been conquered by death.

This Jesus had power to control death as only one who was God's son could. But then came an earthquake, a very powerful earthquake as the text makes plain. The temple curtain was torn in two, the earth shook and even the rocks split. Is it any wonder why the centurion watching on concluded that this was the son of God? The centurion knew this earthquake was no mere accident, no more than the awful darkness was. The shaking of the earth was a divine response to the suffering and death of this man, Jesus, the King of the Jews. He and those who were with him would have been greatly distressed as they would have recognised this earthquake as a sign of judgement. It pointed to the truth that this earth, even the earth as we live in it today, even the rocks themselves, they are cursed, they're under a curse. It's temporary. This world is temporary. It's crumbling.

It's altogether fleeting. All the amazing events that surrounded and occurred at this crucifixion could point to only one thing for this centurion and it was that indeed that God's son, his only begotten son, was this man Jesus. When the centurion declared truly this was the son of God, he was rather interestingly responding to the charge which had been brought against Jesus by the Jews.

The centurion would have known full well what charge was being laid by the Jews against and being levelled against Jesus. The charge was that this man, Jesus, said that he was the son of God and it was on this basis, on that charge, that the Jews had declared he ought to be crucified. They accused Jesus of blasphemy because they said he lied when he maintained that he was the son of God and therefore they felt he was worthy of death. Though the centurion would not have been at the trial before the Sanhedrin, the centurion knew that the Jews sought Jesus' death based on that charge.

Look at verse 43 of the passage in Matthew. Sorry, I'm still in Mark. Verse 43 tells us what they said, he trusts in God, let God deliver him now if he desires him, for he said I am the son of God, for he said I am the son of God. So it was clear and evident to those onlookers, the soldiers, the centurion, that it was that charge and it was that reason that he was hanging on the cross. Those that mocked him said as much, for he said I am the son of God. From then on and throughout the hours of this crucifixion, the question of who Jesus was confronted this centurion and he felt compelled to answer that question. Was Jesus a liar? Did he blaspheme? Was he guilty?

[46 : 48] Is he the son of God as he claims? These would have been the questions going around the centurion's mind and ultimately the centurion was answering the most crucial of all questions. Whom do you say that I am?

And the conclusion for him was that he truly was the son of God. And that word truly is important because it shows us that this confession was intended to contradict the accusation that Jesus was a blasphemer when he claimed to be the son of God. No, truly he is the son of God. Jesus had spoken the truth. Jesus is the truth. This man was the son of God, meaning that this immense miscarriage of justice was a dreadful crime against God himself. They had taken to the cross God's beloved son.

God himself had been the object of ridicule. Yet the centurion knew truly this Jesus was the son of God. Of course the centurion did not understand, like the thief on the cross, did not understand yet the implications of that confession and the theological implications of their confession. But they understood in the way that they understood, sorry, it was no more than that of a little child. The centurion could not explain in detail the necessity for salvation. He could not explain to you how Jesus was a fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy. He did, however, recognize immediately that there was some divine plan and purpose to the cross. The centurion knew Jesus was God's son. That would mean that God loved him as father. God the father was watching and judging and ultimately controlling everything that concerned his beloved son. At any time, and we know this ourselves, at any time, Almighty God could have stepped in and intervened, but he refrained. And surely when God refrains, it's for a purpose. Surely God had some purpose for permitting his son to be crucified, would have been going through the centurion's mind.

It was clear from the awesome power of the earthquake, that unnatural darkness and the temple curtain being torn in two, that if God wished for his son to be delivered from it, it would have happened. Jesus, however, had given up his spirit as the son of God. He had not been conquered by death. He had commanded his spirit into the hands of his father. And this centurion, even as a child in faith, believed that at the cross there was atonement and forgiveness of sins. For the centurion, this was more than a mere response to a logical conclusion of the evidence. He didn't just see the evidence and think, well, this is the only logical conclusion. It was a confession and a conversion prompted by the spirit. The truth that this Jesus was God's son came as a revelation that struck him in such a way that he could not contain himself. He did not desire to go away for a time, mull over the things that he'd seen. He must make known his sudden awareness of who Jesus was, and he made it known. He believed Jesus was the son of God, no matter how strongly the Jews denied it.

Looking through Luke chapter 23, I'll quickly move over to Luke chapter 23. It tells us there in verse 47 what the centurion did. So again, a parallel passage. We're in Matthew, we've looked at Mark briefly, and looking at Luke chapter 23 and verse 47. We see in that parallel gospel passage.

[50 : 25] Now when the centurion saw what had taken place, he praised God, saying certainly this man was innocent. So we see there that this centurion didn't just confess what his conclusion was, but he praised God. Even before the first catechism was written, this centurion is praising God.

Just remember for a moment, this centurion had himself been involved in the dreadfully wicked abuse of Jesus. He led his soldiers in this way. They would have seen him. Those soldiers wouldn't have done any of that had they known it was outwith their remit. He led the soldiers in this way.

He had overseen the crucifixion itself. He too had joined in the crucifixion of a righteous man. He too had reviled God's son. Someone who had actively participated in this, he could have remained silent in his guilt, but he didn't. He didn't only come to the conclusion that he was a son of God, but he began to glorify God at that moment. The centurion would take the words, forgive them, for they know not what they do, and he would cling on to them as words of grace that apply to him personally. The cross is the place where our salvation is powerfully and sovereignly worked out. And as we near the end, I want us to circle back to a passage slightly earlier in the chapter. So we didn't actually put this up on screen, but if you can go to verse 15 of Matthew 27.

I'm going to read verse 15 to 23. And this is prior to the crucifixion, where the crowd choose Barabbas, where Jesus is before Pilate. So verse 15 through to 23. Now at the feast, the governor was accustomed to release for the crowd any one prisoner whom they wanted. And they had then a notorious prisoner called Barabbas. So when they had gathered, Pilate said to them, whom do you want me to release for you, Barabbas or Jesus who is called Christ? For he knew that this was out of envy and that they had delivered him up. Besides, while he was sitting on the judgment seat, his wife sent word to him, have nothing to do with that righteous man, for I have suffered much because of him today in a dream. Now the chief priests and elders persuaded the crowd to ask for Barabbas and destroy Jesus. The governor said to them, which of the two do you want me to release for you? And they said, Barabbas. Pilate said to them, then what shall I do with Christ, Jesus who is called Christ?

Then they all said, let him be crucified. And he said, why? What evil has he done? But they shouted all the more, let them be crucified. And the important question I want us to take away today is in verse 22 there, what Pilate says. Pilate said to them, then what shall I do with Christ, Jesus, sorry, what shall I do with Jesus who is called Christ? We've looked at the conclusion that that and the confession of that centurion. So what now? And this is where I think this question is really important to us. What Pilate said there, then what shall I do with Jesus who is called Christ?

[53 : 40] Christ. That question is as relevant and as pressing for you and for me as we sit here in Tarbert this Lord's Day. The question, this question, sorry, was not asked just once as a historical event. It wasn't just Pilate that asked that question one moment in time 2,000 years ago. No, it's being asked and answered every single day as people either reject or accept Jesus as their saviour. It's a question that will always have an answer. Whether it's the right answer or not, it's a question that everyone is answering even here today. Everyone does something with Jesus who is called Christ.

We all did something with Jesus who is called Christ this very morning. We will all do something with Jesus who is called Christ as we leave the doors today. Doing nothing is doing something.

We each have to answer this question. The question will have to be answered. The question will have to be faced and the question will have to be addressed. Whether young or old, all will be called to give an answer to this question. All are faced with it. We are faced with it now in 2024, 2,000 years after this event took place. Every time God's word is read, whether in your home, whether on a phone, whether on a bus, wherever you are, every time God's word is read, we're faced with this question. Every time his gospel is preached, we are faced with this question.

Every time David stands here before you in this pulpit, we are confronted with this question. What do we do with our Bibles? What are we doing with the word of God? Does it gather dust on a shelf?

Do we look at it on a Sunday and then not open it again until the following Sunday? Do we read it? Do we study it? Do we hear God's voice speaking to us in that word? Then what shall I do with Jesus who is called Christ? What is your answer? And I ask myself, what is my answer as we live our lives here in 2024? And for those among us that know the Lord, then like this centurion that we looked at, you're assured of the hope found in Christ's life, death and resurrection. R.C. Sproul, the late R.C. Sproul writes nicely of the resurrection in this line here. He says, a Christian is a person with a burning heart, a heart set aflame with certainty of the resurrection. A Christian is a person with a burning heart, a heart set aflame with certainty of the resurrection. And that applies to the centurion, to the Christian here today as well.

[56 : 21] You're able to confidently sing, and we'll sing this hymn at the end, you're able to confidently sing the words of that hymn. And the verse that says, when I stand in glory, I will see his face, and there I'll serve my king forever in that holy place. We know that we will end up there in eternity. And for those that are not yet believers, I urge you to trust in the Lord, that you would also confess, as the centurion did, that truly this man was the Son of God.

Jesus was the only one qualified to bear that immeasurable burden of God's wrath against our sin. He forgives people. He forgives even those who abused him with their own hands. He forgave the thief on the cross who'd ridiculed him. He forgave the centurion who had actively participated in his crucifixion. Jesus is the very Son of God who saves undeserving, hard-hearted sinners. And those words of that centurion, truly this man was the Son of God, they ring powerfully in life, but oh how they will ring louder and more harrowingly in eternity if you've not yet trusted in him. We will all one day be able to say with confidence that truly this was the Son of God. But I pray that you would be uttering those words in life and not in a lost eternity apart from God. I'll go back to Pilate's question, what shall I do with Jesus who is called Christ? Don't leave it too late. Don't let the sun go down on another day without making your calling and election sure. Today is the day of salvation.

And just as the centurion did, I pray that you would say truly this man was the Son of God in life and not in a lost eternity. Amen. And may the Lord bless his very brief thoughts and reflections on his word. We'll say a word of prayer before we conclude by singing. Heavenly Father, Lord, we pray again and give you thanks for your word. We thank you that we are able to open it, we're able to study your word and meditate upon that word, chew upon it and we pray that we would do that this very day, that we would take it away with us and that we would look at the words of that centurion and say truly this man is the Son of God. And as we think of the prospect of many that will say those words in a lost eternity, Lord, we pray that that would not be the case, that they would say it in this life, that they would know and they would have that hope in Christ, that they would turn away from a life that is not pleasing to you and they would turn in a life that turns to you, Lord, and that they would indeed follow the first catechism as we look at it, that our chief end is to glorify God and enjoy him forever. And as that centurion laterally did, glorified God and would have enjoyed him forever, Lord. So we pray that those here today, whether in this house, whether online, who do not yet know you, Lord, would turn to you as a centurion did, that they would pray and ask for you to come into their lives, Lord, and that they would be used mightily for you, that they would not go away and confess away in silence, Lord, but would be as a centurion did and boldly proclaim that you are indeed the son of God, Lord. So we give you thanks again for this word, Lord, and we pray that as we think of that question, what shall we do with Jesus who is called Christ, that we will all answer it this very day as we leave your house, as we enter into the world today, we will be answering that question in our own hearts, Lord. So we pray that those that have not yet done so would answer that you truly are the son of God and that they would live a life that is pleasing to you, Lord. So be with us just now, Lord. Go before us in all that we do. Forgive us for all of our sins. In Christ's name we pray. Amen.

And we'll sing the words of that hymn that I mentioned, Mission Praise 673. And as we look at Christ, we see that he is our redeemer. And I'll just read through the hymn just now.

There is our redeemer, Jesus, God's own son, precious lamb of God, Messiah, holy one. Thank you, oh my father, for giving us your son and leaving your spirit till the work on earth is done. And that last one, as I alluded to in the sermon there, the confidence that that centurion had, it says, when I stand in glory, I will see his face and there I'll serve my king forever in that holy place. And I pray that that is your confession as well as we leave his house today. So we'll sing Mission Praise 673, the whole hymn, and we'll stand to sing to God's praise.

[61 : 11] Jesus, God's own son, precious lamb of God, Messiah, holy one.

Holy one. Thank you, oh my father, for giving us your son and leaving your spirit till the work on earth is done. Jesus, my redeemer, name above all names. Precious lamb of God, Messiah, O Lord, for giving us your son and leaving your spirit till the work on earth is done. When I stand in glory, I will see his face and there I'll serve my king forever in that holy place. Thank you, oh my father,

Lord, for giving us your son and leaving your spirit till the work on earth is done.

Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy and to the only God our saviour through Christ Jesus our Lord be glory, majesty, dominion and authority before all time, now and forever. Amen.