

9.3.25 am Communion Sunday morning Service: The Curtain and the Cross

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Date: 09 March 2025

Preacher: Reverend Iain Macritchie

[0 : 00] Good morning. Good morning. A warm welcome to the service this morning. It's good to see everybody here.

And any here visiting, I haven't had a chance to scan properly, but any here visiting, I'd especially welcome those new faces or faces we haven't seen for a while, I'd especially welcome too.

We would usually have tea and coffee after the service. We don't have that today, but we have a fellowship. This evening. So the service this morning is the communion service. We have the sacrament of the Lord's Supper at the end of this.

And those who may be members from any other denominations are welcome to join in the Lord's Supper. It's the Lord's table, not the North Harris table or the Free Church table or whatever.

It's the Lord's table. And so the Lord's people are called to come and sit. And as we do so, let's always remember we sit and we make two professions as we sit. We say that we are great sinners.

[1 : 01] That's our confession. When we sit at the table, we don't sit saying that we're righteous in ourselves. We're saying that we are great sinners, that Christ is our great saviour. We are not worthy, but we are trusting the one who is worthy.

And so all who can put their amen to that are welcome to join at the Lord's table. The service this evening will be at six. And afterwards, we'll have a time of fellowship.

And Ian will take these services this morning and this evening. And we're thankful to him for his ministry over the years and over this weekend with us as well.

The retiring offering, we usually have a retiring offering on the Sunday evening of communion weekend. And the offering this evening will go to Slavic Gospel Association, who will be here in a few weeks actually, and in particular for the work of the gospel in Ukraine at this time.

Good news and intimation. Good news. We have two new members this communion. We were delighted last night as a session to receive Flora Morrison, Flora Brownie as we know her, and also Maria Price, whom we've been praying for and looking for for a long time.

[2 : 21] And we welcome them today into the Communicant membership of the congregation. And we pray the Lord's blessing on them as they sit for the first time here.

So these, I think, are all the notices. There are a thousand more, but you've seen them on the screen. And I'm not going to take time to go through them. So I'll hand over now to Ian. Thank you, David.

Good morning, friends. Good morning. Once again, a great joy and privilege to gather as we come on this Resurrection Sunday and remember our Lord and Saviour until he comes again.

And we're going to do that now by singing firstly from Sing Psalms. This is Psalm 103 at the beginning of the psalm. We're going to stand to sing, if you're able, verses 1 to 11 to God's praise.

Praise God my soul with all my heart. Praise God my soul with all my heart.

[3 : 44] Let me exalt his holy name. Lord, yet not all his benefits.

This praise my soul in song proclaim. The Lord forgives you all your sins.

And kills your sickness and distress. Your life he rescues from the grave.

And drowns you in his tender name. He satisfies your deep desires.

From his unending source of good. So that just like the evil strength.

[5 : 21] Your youth will make a grace renewed. The Lord is born for righteousness.

And justice to the trodden ones. To Moses he may know his ways.

His mighty deeds to Israel's son. The Lord is mercy full and kind.

To anger slow and full of grace. He will not constantly reprove.

His grace. For in his anger behind his face. He does not perish our misdeeds.

[7 : 00] His grace. Oh, give her sins their just reward. How great is love as thine as hell Towards all those who fear the Lord Friends, let's unite to join in prayer.

Let's pray. Lord our God, what a privilege is ours this day to take to our lips these words that we have sung one with another.

That you are a God who does not punish your people according to their misdeeds. You are not a God who punishes your people according to their sin.

But rather you are a God who has outstretched his arm of mercy and has given unto us that living hope.

That hope whereby as we gather together for these few short moments we are reminded of that identity that is ours. We are in Christ.

[8 : 37] What a blessed assurance that Jesus is ours. As we look around us at the chaos and confusion that so often characterises the world that we live in.

We know not what a day or an hour is going to bring in our nation, in our world, in our communities, even in our own hearts.

For we come and we confess that we find within us by nature a battle, a sense of battle, a sense of battle, a sense of battle, a sense of battle, a sense of battle against the world, the flesh and the devil.

But yet as we gather here today we praise you all the more for that glorious reality that the battle belongs to the Lord. And that if we are in Christ we are more than conquerors through Christ Jesus who dwells in us.

And so we pray that for these few short moments we would be still and know that you are God as we seek to come around your word and sacrament.

[9 : 51] As we remember, remember that great and mighty sacrificial act of love that was manifested on Calvary's tree.

That act of love where if we are yours today we can say, He died for me. As we look upon the cross, as we look upon our beloved Saviour, we pray that our hearts would be humbled before you in worship.

That we would look upon you and that we would find ourselves with that sense of awe and adoration for the security, the hope, the peace and the purpose that today belongs to your bride, your people that you've loved with an everlasting love.

And we praise you, Lord, today that you're continuing to build up your church. That even although we see days of confusion and chaos in our world, that nonetheless you're a God who is drawing men and women to yourself.

We give thanks especially this day for the profession of our sisters in Christ, for Flora, for Maria. We give thanks, O Lord, that they join us together as sinners who have put their trust in that great Saviour.

[11 : 16] We pray, O Lord, that you would protect them and be with them today as no doubt they come with their varying emotions and thoughts. That you, O Lord, would truly strengthen them and presence yourself with them and that they today would know that blessing that follows obedience.

Take, eat, do this in remembrance of me. We thank you then that you've given to us this visible reminder of what you've done for us and also what you will do for us, for that glorious reality that this is but a temporary arrangement, that we are doing this until you come again.

And so we pray, O Lord, that in the meantime, as we find ourselves together as your people, as your beloved bride, that you'll be pleased to presence yourself with us, that today would not be any mere religious routine or ritual where we go through the motions, but rather that God himself would be known here in our midst, that our hearts would burn within us as we remember and as we think upon the beloved Saviour that is ours.

And so we pray that you would lead us and guide us in this short time of worship, thinking especially of those who cannot be with us, those who are perhaps joining us on the live stream, those who would desire dearly to be here with your people today, that you would presence yourself with them and that they even in the quiet of their home would know something of the presence of the Lord, drawing them even into this time of worship.

We pray for those who are here but are yet to come and to profess your name publicly, those who perhaps look upon the Lord's table with heavy hearts and are so aware perhaps that they ought to be there themselves.

[13 : 25] We know that the evil one puts so many distractions in our minds as to why we ought not to profess your name if we are yours even, that we're not good enough.

And we confess that that is indeed true. We are not good enough. But all the more we come with hearts of worship, acknowledging that our righteousness is not found in ourself, our worth is not found in anything that we today can offer, but rather we come and we find ourselves pleading the righteousness of Christ, the one who cried out victoriously, it is finished.

And so be with us now, we pray. Lead us in your truth and still our hearts and our minds for this time of worship. Lord, we ask, we ask, seeking forgiveness for sin. In Jesus' name, amen.

Amen. Well, it's good to see some young friends with us here today. If you'd like to come forward, just come and maybe take a seat here. That would be good. And anyone else who's joining us?

Good to see you all. Oh, come on. The boys and girls and Greyfriars do it a wee bit louder than that.

[14 : 55] Matin, what? Oh, yeah. That's some good Heroch Gaelic for you. Lovely to see you. How are we all? Good. Now, why are we here today? Tell me why we're here today.

What is it we're doing here today? It's not a trick question. Yes, sir. We're here for the communion. Good lad. Now, what do we do at the communion?

Or what do some of us at least do at the communion? The clues behind me on the table. Have a wee look. What do we do? What's on that table?

Yes, sir. Drink the bread and wine. We drink. We drink. We drink. We don't drink the bread. We drink the wine. I know exactly what you mean. Absolutely. We drink the wine and we eat the bread.

Now, why do we drink the wine? Well, I'm going to tell you why we drink the wine by telling you all about my favourite drink in the whole world.

[15 : 59] Do you want to see what it is? This is my favourite drink. This is a really fancy coffee capsule that I got in your minister's house.

Really fancy. It's called an espresso. That's how they do it in your man's. And it's lovely, lovely coffee. Really nice coffee. But you know what? Coffee can tell us about why we're drinking wine.

Do you know how? I'm going to show you. I'm going to show you the word coffee. All right? And each letter of this word tells us why we are drinking the wine and eating the bread today.

So, who's going to guess what the first word stands for? A C. Now, it's another word for God. I'll give you a clue.

Beginning with C. Or it's the second half of Jesus. It's hard sometimes when we look at a letter.

[17 : 08] We try and think on the spot. I'm not very good at thinking on the spot, I have to say. Sorry, sir. Yeah? Christ. Is it? Yeah. So, Christ is the first word.

Now, what does Christ do? What does Jesus Christ do? A word beginning with O. What does he do? If I'm to give you, if I'm going to say to you, do you want a cup of tea or do you want a drink of juice?

What am I doing? A word beginning with O. I am something you. I'm giving you a... Any adults like to help?

Christ offers. Yeah. Thank you. Christ offers. Good. Okay. So, what does Jesus Christ offer to you and to me and to all of Harris and to the whole of the world?

What does he offer to us? Any idea? Beginning with F. It's hard, is it?

[18 : 21] Is it tricky? It would not be like E. Could be E, but it's not E, it's F. Yeah. Eternal life. Eternal life. He does offer eternal life. That's good. Forever something.

No, it's not... It is forever what he offers. That's all good answers, but that's not what this F stands for. Any ideas? He offers... I'll give you a clue. It doesn't cost anything.

Free. Free. Oh. Have I got the right word here? Yes. I had a panic there. Yeah. See, I made a wee mistake earlier.

I had to change it. So, Christ offers free. Now, he offers all of us something that costs him a lot, but doesn't cost us anything.

What does Jesus Christ offer us that's free? Now, if someone does something bad to you, and they say sorry to you, what do you do?

[19 : 20] What do you do? Any... Uh-huh. You forgive. Good. Okay. So, Christ offers free forgiveness. That's what he did on Calvary, on the cross.

He offers free forgiveness. And who does he offer free forgiveness to? Is it only really special holy people? People who are really godly.

A certain type of person. Is that who he offers free forgiveness to? Uh-huh. Good. He offers free forgiveness to everyone, including you.

Where? Just in North Harris? Just in Tarbert? Everywhere. Everywhere. Absolutely. Christ offers free forgiveness for everyone, everywhere.

All right? So, the next time, anyone in your house... I don't know if they drink coffee quite as fancy as this. But anyone in your house is drinking a cup of coffee. This you put in a machine and you press a button and it all comes out.

[20 : 31] Remember, Christ offers free forgiveness for everyone, everywhere. And would you like to take that to Sunday school? And you can have it. And maybe you can show someone else at another time.

All right? Well done. You've listened really well. And I'm just going to say a wee prayer for you. Lord, our God, we thank you for the forgiveness that you offer. And we pray for our dear young friends here today, that they themselves, that they don't already know that forgiveness, that you would touch their hearts and that they would grow up in this world knowing Jesus as their father and their friend.

Be with them in Sunday school today and the teachers as well. And forgive us for Jesus' sake. Amen. Amen. We're going to sing now again as our young friends go to Sunday school.

This is when I survey the wondrous cross on which the Prince of Glory died. My richest gain I count but loss and poor contempt on all my pride.

We're going to stand to sing, if you're able, to God's praise. 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 poor contempt on all my pride.

[22 : 18] For the good Lord that I should boast, saving the death of Christ my God.

All loving things that charm me most, I sacrifice them to His blood.

See from His head, His hands, His feet, Sorrow and love promingle down.

In e'er such love and sorrow meet, Our forms compose so rich a crown.

Where the whole realm of nature mine, That where an offering far too small, Love so amazing, so divine, Demands my soul, My life, my all.

[24 : 17] Well friends, we're going to turn now to read God's Word. And just for the sake of the screens, if we could skip forward to verse 32, That would be great.

We're just going to read a few verses from verse 32 to 56.

Let us hear the Word of God. This is Matthew 27, verse 32. As they went out, they found a man of Cyrene, Simon by name.

They compelled this man to carry his cross. And when they came to a place called Golgotha, which means place of a skull, they offered him wine to drink mixed with 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.

[25 : 22] 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 are the Son of God, come down from the cross. So also the chief priests and the scribes and the 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.

[26 : 25] And about the ninth hour, Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama 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 others 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. The tombs were also 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.

[27 : 42] 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.

So an amen. This is the word of the Lord. And we pray that he would bless it to us today in our reading of it and out hearing of it also. Before we come back to part of this chapter, at least, we're going to sing once more, this time in Gaelic, Psalm 116.

And I think I've got three verses down. I think we'll just sing two verses instead. Psalm 116, verse 13. We'll sing those two verses to the praise of God.

Psalm 116, verse 13.

Psalm 116, verse 13.

[29 : 45] Psalm 116, verse 13.

Psalm 116, verse 13.

Psalm 116, verse 13.

Psalm 116, verse 13.

Psalm 116, verse 13.

[32:15] Psalm 116, verse 13. Psalm 116, verse 13. Psalm 116, verse 13. Well, let's turn back together now to God's word as we find it in Matthew's gospel, chapter 27.

And as we come to this chapter, friends, we're reminded that it's sometimes the smallest of details that speak the loudest of truths.

many of us perhaps have been brought up
hearing in various services like today that saying that the curtain of the temple in the
authorized version was rent in two. The curtain of the temple was torn in two. But why
does this detail, why does it punctuate the narrative of Calvary?

What is its significance to us here today? On Friday night, if you were here, you'll remember we thought about the cause of the cross. The cause of the cross is sin. Last night we thought about the call to the cross, a call that had within it mockery, but then overriding all of that mockery was majesty. And as we move on from both of these, the cause of the cross, the call to the cross, we're going to focus in more closely as to what that majesty really looks like. And as we focus in on this majesty, we're going to hang our thoughts on two headings, the curtain and the cross. The curtain and the cross. Firstly, then the curtain or the veil. And to understand what this curtain is all about, what we need to do, and bear with me for a moment here, what we need to do is go back.

We need to go back to Old Testament worship. Sometimes we can find the Old Testament difficult to understand. But it's important. It's God's word. It doesn't sit or stand in isolation on its own.

[35 : 08] It's not a random collection of stories that really have little or no meaning to us here today. Because what you find in the Old Testament is that golden thread of redemption being woven all the way through, from Genesis right through, all the way to Revelation, in fact, we see that thread, that thread that tells the story of why we're here today. And this reading that we come to is no exception. Exodus 26, verse 31, we're traveling back 3,500 years. And as we do so, we find detail of the tabernacle, that place of worship for the God of Israel. Detail that is relevant to our text today, relevant to our being together here today. And so I'll read these verses. This is Exodus 26, verse 31. And you shall make a veil of blue and purple and scarlet yarns and fine twined linen. And it shall be made with cherubim, skillfully worked into it. And you shall hang it on four pillars of acacia, overlaid with gold, with hooks of gold, on four bases of silver. And you shall hang the veil from the clasps, and bring the ark of the testimony in there within the veil. And the veil, or the curtain, shall separate for you the holy place from the most holy. You shall put the mercy seat on the ark of the testimony in the most holy place, also known as the holy of holies. And you shall set the table outside the veil, and the lampstand on the south side of the tabernacle, opposite the table, and you shall put the table on the north side.

Interesting detail. But what has this got to do with us coming and remembering the Lord's death on this communion Sunday morning? How does it fit in with the cross? Well, bear with me, because here, in this very description that we've just read, we find Jesus. Because what the New Testament does, friends, is this, it shines a light on the Old Testament. It reveals to us how seemingly obscure details, just like that which we have read, fit so beautifully into that great plan of redemption.

What we've just read describes a curtain. It describes that veil, as it were, a curtain or a veil that was found in the tabernacle of Moses. Now, this was a portable place of worship. We have a place of worship today that's, of course, fixed, as it were. This was a portable place. It was a place that went with the children of Israel wherever they went, and it would be assembled, almost like a flat pack place of worship. That's what it was.

It would be assembled wherever they went. What did it look like? Well, if you imagine just a shape like this, a rectangular courtyard that had within it the tabernacle, the tent of meeting itself, which wasn't that big, maybe 14 meters long and four and a half meters wide. But at the end of that tabernacle, that tent of meeting, was this curtain. So imagine at the end of the building, this curtain dividing one space, one area from another area. What did it separate? Well, it separated the holy place from the most holy place, the holy of holies. Now, the holy of holies was a special room, and this was a special room that had within it the Ark of the Covenant. Now, the Ark of the Covenant, amongst other things, it had within it, it was a box, and it had within it God's law. It had that law written on tablets of stone. So within this holy place, the holy of holies, behind this curtain, there was this

Ark of the Covenant, this chest, if you like, that contained God's law. But more than that, this was a special room, because within this little room was the place that God would meet with his people. He would come in a cloud and meet with his people in this most holy place. We might think, well, how wonderful, how wonderful to have a room in your church that you can go in and you can meet with God assured of his presence there. Well, not really, because this was a room that was completely out of bounds, and not without good reason. So much so that this room was so out of bounds that those who were in the main place of worship, the main tabernacle, they wouldn't even dare to peer behind the curtain. Why? Because if they did so much as look behind the curtain, they would die.

[40 : 35] Why? Because they were sinners. Because God was holy, and a holy God cannot look or be in the presence or the nearer presence of sinners in such a way as that, apart, of course, from one exception.

So no one's allowed into this room apart from one person, and that was the high priest. Now, there was a job of the high priest just once a year, it was called the Day of Atonement, to go through this curtain. So once a year, he would go through this veil, into this holy of holies, and what he would do is he would take with him blood, the blood of a freshly sacrificed animal. And what he would do is, taking this blood, he would sprinkle it on the lid. Do you know that, the Ark of the Covenant that I spoke of, that chest, if you like, it had a lid. The lid would open, and in it was the law of God, and amongst other things. And what he would do is, he would sprinkle the blood on the lid. That was his job. And we might ask, well, how did he not die? He didn't die, because that's what God had asked to happen, that this man would come, he would represent the people once a year, and he wouldn't die. But it is said, whether this is true or not, we don't know, but it's said that this high priest, he would have a long rope tied to his garment, just in case, so that for whatever reason, he did die in the holy of holies. No one else would have to go in and take his body out and risk dying themselves.

And so this rope would be there to pull him out of the holy of holies, just as a precautionary measure. And so this was the way of God's people. This sounds very strange to us today, I know, but this was the way of God's people. If you were a child of God back then, this is something that you would be well acquainted with. This was the way of God's people for over 1500 years, year after year after year after year, never really wanting to get close to God through fear. The holiness of God preventing them from ever coming into his nearer presence. And for them, they had lives that were really saturated in perpetual ritual, going through this ritualistic religion in order to offer up their worship, as it were. That was, of course, bringing us to our second point, until Jesus dies on the cross.

Because all that happened in the Old Testament, the reality is, it was inadequate. All that we see, even in this tabernacle, as we've thought about, it was inadequate. It wasn't enough.

It was inadequate in not only dealing with the sins of the people, but also inadequate in allowing the people to have fellowship with God. And we can see exactly why. And we're reminded of this in Hebrews 10.

[43 : 56] For since the law has but a shadow of the good things to come, instead of the true form of these realities, this is Hebrews 10 verse 1, it can never by the same sacrifices that are continually offered every year. Otherwise, they would not have ceased to be offered. In other words, this wasn't going to forgive their sins. Otherwise, we would still be doing that just now, if this was an adequate way of dealing with our sins. Otherwise, would they not have ceased to be offered? Since the worshipers, having once been cleansed, would no longer have any consciousness of sins. But in these sacrifices, there is a reminder of sins every year. For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins. And so what we see is, as we have a reminder today of what Christ has done for us, what we see in all of this ritualistic religion was a reminder for the people of their need of forgiveness. The blood of bulls and goats could never take away their sins, only the blood of Jesus.

So really, that all that happened in the tabernacle, it was a shadow, a symbol of what was about to come. It was pointing towards the Lord Jesus Christ. So that all that we see in the Old Testament, it's always pointing towards the Lord Jesus Christ in one way or another. Pointing towards the shedding of the blood of the sacrificial lamb, the one who would cover the law, the law was under the mercy seat, would cover the law with his blood. He would fulfill the law and come in between sinners, who have broken the law and God. So that now we can come into the presence of God, the nearer presence of God. And that was the testimony of the Old Testament believers.

By faith, laying hold of the reality, how much of it they understood, we can't be sure, more than perhaps we think. Laying hold of the reality that of all that they were doing, would one day be fulfilled by all that would be done. We look back to the cross today. They looked forward. And as we look back, friends, we begin to make sense of this, of the relevance of this curtain. What do we read in verse 50 and 51? 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.

A curtain that's said to have been so strong, so thick, that a historian at the time, Josephus, he said that if you were to tie a horse to either side of the curtain, and each horse was to pull, the curtain still wouldn't tear. And yet now, as we find ourselves on Calvary's Hill at this time of the crucifixion, the curtain that had been there for so many years had been such a part of the worship of the people of God, it's torn. It's ripped in two. Picture the scene. It's 3 p.m.

This was the beginning of the evening sacrifice. And at the beginning of the evening sacrifice, this most holy of place that has been out of bounds is now laid bare for all to see. You can just imagine the thoughts rushing through the minds of all those who caught a glimpse into that which they had never seen before. Were they going to die? Yet none of them died. Why? Because of those glorious words that Christ had cried out, it is finished. The curtain preached the sermon of all sermons. A sermon that spoke of greater things. A sermon that tells us today, and we rejoice in this, there's no need for types or shadows or symbols. If you're wondering why we don't have worship like they did, this is why. There are many of the religious activities that were ingrained into the lives of the Jewish people, they're now redundant. Why? Because the curtain was torn in two? No, not because of that. But because of words that we find in Hebrews 10. They may be on the screen.

[48 : 55] In Hebrews 10, verse 19. Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, not made of cloth, the curtain that is his flesh. What is this telling us, friends? It's telling us that today we have confidence. Confidence for what? To access the holy of holies, to come to God himself. Why? Because the curtain of his flesh has been torn. Because he died for us. Because of the communion that God the Son had had with God the Father had been torn in two. Because the dignity of the most holy God in the person of Jesus Christ, in taking to himself the darkness, the depravity of hell that should have been ours if we're in two. And as it is today, that dignity was completely torn in two, ripped apart. It's because of this that that new and that living way has been opened up. That access to the holy of holies is ours today through the crucified Christ.

Christ. But one thing, friends, that isn't torn, one thing that remains intact in all of this, is the love of Christ for his people. A love that tore the curtain of separation through the cross of reconciliation. That because his flesh was torn, because that communion with the Father was torn, today you and I are reconciled with God through Christ. That means we can know God. We can come close to God. He's not distant. He's not detached. He's not far away. We don't need to cower in his presence with fear of being struck down to death. No, all of that's done. Because Christ is our mediator.

There's God. There's us. There's that great gulf in between God and us that's been bridged by the Lord Jesus Christ, the one who died so that we might live, so that we might come boldly to a throne of grace, so that we might come and seek forgiveness, to seek his face, to seek his favour, to be recipients of living communion with God through Christ. Not once a year through fear, through a priest and by the offering of the blood of a bull. Not through any of that, but continually and constantly through the great high priest. That's who Jesus is. That's why he's called the great high priest. So much greater than who went in once a year. He is a great high priest who is interceding on our behalf.

The one who is a sacrifice once and for all. It is finished. The curtain and the cross.

[52 : 40] Or should I say the cross that tore the curtain opening that new and living way for us today. That's the gospel. And I don't know if all of us here today understand that. I don't know your hearts.

But that's the gospel. That's the new and living way. So that for all of us here as we come to the Lord's table, as David said at the beginning, we don't come professing ourselves to be special or better than anyone else.

Far from it. But rather those who have put our trust in one who is far more special, who is far greater than anyone else. The Lord Jesus Christ. He is our testimony. He is the one today in whom we put our trust.

Amen. We pray that he'll bless to us these one or two thoughts. Friends, we're going to come to just think for a moment really about who should be at the table.

We see a separation today, don't we? We see those who are at the Lord's table and those who are not at the Lord's table. And it's helpful for us really to ask ourselves the question, well, who is the Lord's table for?

[54 : 09] And quite simply, we've really touched on it. We've really thought about it this morning. The Lord's table is simply not, as I said, for those who are better than other people.

The Lord's table is quite simply for those who have seen Jesus. Those who are no longer behind the curtain. Maybe you're not at the Lord's table because you can't see Jesus.

You can't see, you know about him, you know about him as a historical character, you know the stories, you know everything, but you can't see Jesus. You don't really understand or even accept the reality of what he's done for you or for mankind.

You can't see Jesus. You're behind, as it were, the curtain. The Lord's table is for those friends who've had that curtain torn.

What curtain has been torn? Well, quite simply, the curtain of self-reliance, the curtain of self-righteousness, a curtain that is torn in twos, that today we see the beauty not of ourselves, but we see the beauty of our Saviour.

[55 : 30] One who is close to us. Not one who is far away in the Holy of Holies, but one who is close to us. One who is with us, not just at the Lord's table, but every single day.

One who is in our hearts, dwelling in us. That's a wonderful text from Scripture. Christ in us, the hope of glory. That God dwells in us by his Holy Spirit.

That's what it is to be in his nearer presence. Those who have, as it were, have the scales taken from their eyes so that they can say, my Lord and my God.

And I wonder, is that you today, friends? That you see Jesus as your personal Saviour. Whatever it is, your place is at the table. And yes, of course, for all of us, myself included, there's times when our view of Christ can be obscured, overshadowed.

We're not in a state of perfection, far from it. We find ourselves not seeing the beauty of Jesus as we ought to through our own sinful hearts and even our own sinful desires.

[56 : 44] Things can obstruct our vision. But yet we know he's there. We know he's there. And because we know he's there, we come to the Lord's table, not because we're perfect, not because we're the finished article, not because we're worthy, but because we're weak and we need to be strengthened.

We need to be sustained by the supper. And in a moment, by faith, we drink of that wine, we take of that bread, we bow our hearts in humble praise and adoration.

We're acknowledging that this cup of faith, this strengthening ordinance, and that's what it is. We use language sometimes, theological language, and maybe don't explain what it is.

This is a strengthening ordinance. The Lord's table is an ordinance. It strengthens us. It feeds us. It reminds us of who we are in Christ.

It's not that we feel any different, but we're reminded of what it is we believe. We believe that our saviour is perfect, that our saviour is the finished article, that our saviour is worthy.

[58 : 01] And our focus is not on ourselves, but on him, the one who drank the wrath of God so that we wouldn't have to. And Horatius Boner knew something of this himself.

We know these words. I heard the voice of Jesus say, Behold, I freely give. The living water, thirsty one, stoop down and drink and live.

I came to Jesus and I drank from that life-giving stream. My thirst was quenched. My soul revived.

And now I live in him. This supper, friends, is really just a demonstration of that, that we don't live in ourselves. We live in Christ.

He is our strength. He is our song. He is our saviour. Before we do that, we're going to sing from Psalm 118, before we come and remember his death in that way.

[59 : 07] Psalm 118, verse 15. And as David said, if you are a communicant member in another church and you're yet to take your place at the Lord's table, please do so as we sing these words, In dwellings of the righteous has heard the melody of joy and health the Lord's right hand doth ever valiantly.

We'll sing then verses 15 to 23 to the praise of God. In dwellings of the righteous. In dwellings of the righteous, His heart, the melody of joy and health of joy and health the Lord's right hand doth ever valiantly.

The right hand of the mighty Lord exalted is on high The right hand of the mighty Lord Lord's right hand doth ever valiantly.

I shall not die but live and shall the works of God discover The Lord hath me just as his soul but not to death in the Lord O set ye open up to me the gates of righteous land then will I enter into and and I the Lord will bless this is the gate of

God by it the just shall enter in! Thee will I praise for the we hearse and my safety be Thee will I praise for the we and pass my be whoever whoever whoever whoever whoever whoever Friends, it's good to see you again.

[62 : 51] Today we've been thinking about the curtain and the cross. And we might ask ourselves the question, well, where does communion come into all of this?

And it's important for us to know why we're doing what we're doing. That we're not going through as we thought about any kind of ritualistic, religious act that we do.

And we're not really aware of where it comes from or why we do it. So for a short time, friends, we're going to think about why we are doing exactly what we're doing.

And to understand that, we go back to Luke's Gospel, chapter 22. And we're going to read verses 8 to 18. Luke 22, verses 8 to 18.

So Jesus sent Peter and John saying, Go and prepare the Passover for us, that we may eat it. They said to him, Where will you have us prepare it?

[63 : 56] He said to them, Behold, when you have entered the city, a man carrying a jar of water will meet you. Follow him into the house that he enters, and tell the master of the house, The teacher says to you, Where is the guest room that I may eat the Passover with my disciples?

And he will show you a large upper room furnished. Prepare it there. And they went and found it just as he had told them, and they prepared the Passover.

And when the hour came, he reclined at table and the apostles with him. And he said to them, I've earnestly desired to eat the Passover with you before I suffer.

For I tell you that I will not eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God. And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks, he said, Take this and divide it among yourselves.

For I tell you that from now on I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes. This is the Last Supper.

[65 : 03] The famous Last Supper. A Last Supper that's extraordinary because it changed in its purpose halfway through.

It started off as the Passover meal. And really for us to understand what we're doing here today, friends, we need to very briefly just remind ourselves of what the Passover meal was, what it symbolized.

And essentially it was a meal that God's people, just like we saw going into the Holy of Holies, the high priest doing so that God's people had partaken of for hundreds of years.

It was a meal that was established by God on the night that the Hebrew people had been freed. They'd been liberated from that slavery that was there in Egypt.

You might remember the story that at the hands of Pharaoh, the people were worked within an inch of their lives. They were in bondage. They were suffering.

[66 : 06] They were those who were recipients of great injustice. But God released them. He released them by destroying the enemy.

He spared his own people. And he did this by sprinkling, having blood sprinkled on the lintels of the houses of all his people that were to be saved.

And the blood that was on the lintel of the houses of those that were to be saved, the angel of death, if you like, was to pass over.

That's why this meal was called the Passover, a memorial of God's deliverance of his people.

And at this meal, they would have been wine drunk, just like we have here today. But there would have been four cups. And after the first cup was drunk, the food for the Passover would be brought in.

[67 : 04] It was unleavened bread, which means bread without yeast, flat bread that wouldn't rise. And this was bread that would be prepared in a hurry.

Why? Well, symbolically, just to remind the people of the hurried nature of God's people from Egypt. That sense of moving quickly.

There was also bitter herbs. And they would be taken as a reminder to the people of the bitterness of their providence, of their bondage, the affliction that they as Hebrew people had to endure whilst in Egypt.

There was also a thick paste of stewed fruit and ground nuts. They would dip the bread into that. And of course, primarily, there was the roast lamb.

That lamb, that sacrifice, that symbolized rather the sacrificial lamb from which the blood came from for the lentils in order to provide deliverance.

[68 : 07] And when all the food was brought in, the youngest person, there's young folk here today, when all this food would have been brought in, traditionally what would happen was the youngest person would stand up and ask the question, why do we eat these foods?

That question would be asked audibly. And then this would be followed by the father, the head of the house, retelling the Exodus story, reminding them why they were eating these foods.

That's why it's important for us to be reminded why we're eating these foods today. That we don't just do it out of ritual or routine, because that, of course, is not what God expects from us as we come and worship.

And just before the food was eaten, what would happen was the father, he would hold up the plate of unleavened bread. And he would say, this is the bread of affliction, which our forefathers ate in the land of Egypt.

Let everyone who hungers come and eat. Let everyone who is needy come and eat of the Passover meal. And that's what he's saying to us today.

[69 : 23] And, of course, they would respond with what was known as the Hallel, the singing of Psalms 113 to 115. And at various points, cups of wine would be passed around until the last cup, the fourth cup, when that was passed around, that would be a sign that the Passover was now over.

And this had gone on for various centuries, for a long, long time, until today. Until the point that we have before us in the chapter that we've just thought about in that upper room, in that Passover meal.

Because this was a Passover meal with a difference. We read in verse 14 there. It was crucial to Jesus that he ate this supper with his disciples.

Why? Through the usual ritual. Far from it. Jesus was and he is. I'll never forget this, friends. He is revolutionary. So much so that he takes it upon himself in the middle of this Passover meal to alter the meal, to change the meal, to change what had been done for centuries.

You see, when the bread was broken and distributed by the head of the house, it was always eaten in silence. That's just what happened. But not today.

[71 : 08] Because when Jesus breaks the bread with his disciples, what does he do? He speaks into the narrative. He speaks new words into the proceedings.

And he took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, this is all new. This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.

And then, of course, after the third cup of wine would be distributed, Jesus said, and likewise the cup after they had eaten, saying, this cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood.

And the verb here, giving thanks, the Greek word is eucharisto. That's where we get the word eucharist. And some would call the communion, the eucharist, that giving of thanks.

But before we come to the eucharist, the giving thanks ourselves, what's going on here? Why is it that Jesus has taken it upon himself to change the Passover ritual?

[72 : 22] Well, quite simply, because within the next 24 hours, he himself would physically change the necessity of the Passover. What had it previously symbolized?

God's deliverance of his people from the bondage of Egypt. And what was about to happen on the cross was far more significant than this.

Jesus was going to deliver his people from the bondage and oppression, not of the Egyptians, but of sin itself. A deliverance that would apply his blood, not to the lintels, but to the hearts and lives of his people.

Of you and me, giving thus that way of escape from the bondage, not of building bricks as the Egyptians had with God's people, but from the tyranny of sin.

A deliverance would mean that he himself would become the Passover lamb. And that's today, friends, why we're not partaking of the Passover supper, but the Lord's supper.

[73 : 27] A supper that in the same way he was with the disciples in the upper room, the Lord promises to be with us here today. He's here. He's a desire to be here.

I think I said this the last time I was here at communion. With desire, I have desire. With a fervent desire, he says, I have desire to eat this meal with you.

And that's his desire today, friends, that he's with us, so that as we take of the bread and of the wine, we lay hold of his promises by faith.

That's what it is. Not that anything supernatural takes place or we feel any differently, but we just lay hold of his promises afresh.

We remind ourselves by faith. He died so that I might live. We'll now read our warrant for the sacrament.

[74 : 22] 1 Corinthians 11, verse 23 to 29, For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, This is my body, which is for you.

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

For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. Whoever therefore eats the bread or drinks of the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty concerning the body and blood of the Lord.

Let a person examine himself then and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself.

Following his example, friends, we're going to give thanks. Let's give thanks. Lord our God, we thank you for this supper, this feast, this reminder of who you are and of who we are in you.

[75 : 59] We come and we confess our sin before you today and we acknowledge that, yes, we forget. we get so tied up with the things of time and sense that our eyes can be obscured to the beauty of who King Jesus is.

And so we pray that afresh your Holy Spirit would reveal to us the beauty of our Saviour, the one who died so that we might live, the one who enjoyed eternal riches but became poor so that we, through his poverty as he took to himself the pains of hell itself, that we might enjoy eternal riches at his expense.

Behold what manner of love is this that the Father has bestowed upon us that we should be called the children of God. What an honour is ours this day and we pray that as we remember your death that we would do so with that glorious hope at the front of our minds that we do so until you come again.

Bless this supper then, this feast to our soul we pray and forgive us for Jesus' sake. Amen. The Lord Jesus, on the night that he was betrayed, he took bread and when he had given thanks, he broke it and he said, this is my body which is for you.

Do this in remembrance of me. And in the same way, also, he took the cup.

[77 : 56] He took the cup after supper and he said, this cup is a new covenant in my blood. Do this as often as you drink it in remembrance of me.

For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

Well, friends, we thought about how Old Testament brothers and sisters in the Lord, they were looking forward to the cross and we thought about how we ourselves have been looking back to the cross.

But in another way, in a very real way, today we are also looking forward. verse 18 of that chapter from which I read, for I tell you that from now on I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes.

These were words of assurance to the disciples. Words that reminded the disciples that Jesus would come again. That in reality, the Lord's Supper, even what we're doing today, it's an unfinished meal.

[79 : 14] What do I mean by that? Well, you might remember I spoke about four cups. We didn't go into great detail about each of these. We didn't have time. And the fourth cup, having been drunk, would be a sign that the Passover meal was complete.

And yet here, at the Lord's Supper, much like we have this cup here, the cup was left untouched. This was a sign that there is a now and also a not yet.

1 Corinthians 11, 26 reminds us that we are remembering the Lord's death until he comes again. And in fact, I've heard in some churches that once the cup, in the days when the cup went round, once it came back empty, the elders would fill it up to the top again as a sign that he's coming back, that there is that cup that is untouched.

That day when he'll come back and we can drink freely of every spiritual blessing in Christ, without any barriers, without any sin, reminding ourselves that today the best is yet to come.

So as we rise from the table today, friends, we do so leaning upon the one who's promised that other meal, the marriage supper of the lamb, that great and glorious celebration of the bride of Christ, of God's people being brought home never to part again.

[80 : 59] You think of the folk who have been part of your life and who are no longer here but are in glory, reunited, one with another and with our Saviour, never to part again.

But until then, until then the Lord has given to us this supper, but also one another. And we need to remember that, that our profession here today, it's not sitting at the Lord's table two or three or four times a year, but rather by being with one another every day, in the ordinary every day, building one another up as one body.

We are the body of Christ. We are his people, encouraging one another, meeting one another. Why? Because we need one another.

God, we identify with one another as one sinner to the next. We walk this wilderness journey with one another until he comes again.

So be encouraged, especially our two sisters who've joined us for the first time at the Lord's table. Be encouraged that this is a feast to strengthen us and remind us that we are strong in the Lord and in the power, not of our own might, but in the power of his might and of the joy of the Lord.

[82 : 38] And I hope and I pray that today we are reminded of that joy that is ours, the joy of the Lord that is our strength. Amen.

We pray God would bless to us these few thoughts. And we're going to conclude singing to God's praise. Those familiar words of Psalm 72. Psalm 72 reading at verse 17 His name forever shall endure last like the sun it shall.

We see the eternity of God there, the eternity of his people intertwined with that. Men shall be blessed in him and blessed all nations shall him call.

We'll stand to sing if you're able, verses 17 to 19 in conclusion. His name forever shall endure. His name forever shall endure!

As life as life the sun it shall. Men shall be blessed in heaven blessed, all nations shall be called.

[84 : 11] ■■■■■ And blessed be His glorious name to all eternity.

The whole earth is glorying will. Amen. So let it be.

Conclude with a benediction. In the name of the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, in the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, rest on and remain with you now and always. Amen.