

³² As they went out, they found a man of Cyrene, Simon by name. They compelled this man to carry his cross. ³³ And when they came to a place called Golgotha (which means Place of a Skull), ³⁴ they offered him wine to drink, mixed with gall, but when he tasted it, he would not drink it. ³⁵ And when they had crucified him, they divided his garments among them by casting lots. ³⁶ Then they sat down and kept watch over him there. ³⁷ And over his head they put the charge against him, which read, "This is Jesus, the King of the Jews." ³⁸ Then two robbers were crucified with him, one on the right and one on the left. ³⁹ And those who passed by derided him, wagging their heads ⁴⁰ 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." ⁴¹ So also the chief priests, with the scribes and elders, mocked him, saying, ⁴² "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. ⁴³ He trusts in God; let God deliver him now, if he desires him. For he said, 'I am the Son of God.'" ⁴⁴ And the robbers who were crucified with him also reviled him in the same way.

The Death of Jesus

⁴⁵ Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land until the ninth hour. ⁴⁶ And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, "Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?" that is, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" ⁴⁷ And some of the bystanders, hearing it, said, "This man is calling Elijah." ⁴⁸ 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. ⁴⁹ But the others said, "Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to save him." ⁵⁰ And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice and yielded up his spirit.

⁵¹ And behold, the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. And the earth shook, and the rocks were split. ⁵² The tombs also were opened. And many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised, ⁵³ and coming out of the tombs after his resurrection they went into the holy city and appeared to many. 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 and said, "Truly this was the Son of God!"

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It must be said, that the cross, has become a symbol, familiar to many within our society today. Yet does, our familiarity, blind us, to the power, of Christ's cross. For many, men and women, wear a cross, as an item of jewellery, yet I wonder, do those who wear it, have any understanding, of what it means, for our world, and more importantly, for them ?

Around the 11th century, the Greeks designed, the Missionary or Jerusalem cross, it has four arms, of equal length, and was adopted by the Crusaders, adopted it, as their symbol. In Christ Church Cathedral, in St. Louis, America, they have designed, one of these crosses, with each central panel, containing an artist's depiction, of society. It has the family, commerce, education and the arts, and it is said, to represent the way, that Christian influence, should permeate, all of life.

Indeed the cross, should touch, ALL of life, but it's real message, is much starker than this. For the cross, represents, the awfulness of sin, the condemnation of the law, the penalty of sin, and yet, **And Yet, AND YET, the greatness, of the love of God.**

Now the cross, it must be said, was not, a pretty, artistic picture, but a brutal execution. As one writer, puts it, "Jesus was not, crucified, between two candles, in a cathedral, but between, two thieves, on a cross."

So firstly, let us consider, The Price He paid.

In John chapter 19 and verse 30, Jesus' final words were: "**it is finished.**" Now Jesus, had fulfilled, His mission, of Redemptive Love, here on earth. Now the Greek word, for finished, 'teleo', has the idea, of bringing something, to a completion, especially in reference, to the paying, of a debt.

Now, a man called James Kennedy, popularised, the analogy, of the man, who sinned, just 3 times a day. A bad thought, a small lie, a wrong action. Accordingly, in one week, his sins, added up, to 21, in an average month, to over 90, in a year, 1095, and if he lived, for 70 years, he ended up, with 76,650 sins, with which, to face God. My friends, I'd like to suggest that is firstly and underestimate of our debt of sin, and secondly, however much, we try, we cannot, **WE CANNOT**, clear our "debt", before God, it is forever, beyond, our humanity's, means and resources.

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As a hymn Rock of Ages says in verse two: "Not the labours, of my hands could fulfil, Thy laws demands, Could my zeal, no respite know, could my tears, forever flow, These for sin, could not atone, Thou must save, and Thou alone.'

My Friends, that is what Jesus Christ, the Son of God, did, DID, upon the cross, for you and me **He paid, the debt, of our sin.**

Secondly, let us consider, The Path He cleared.

In Matthew chapter 27 and verse 51, there is the graphic description, of the temple curtain, being torn, in two, at the moment, of our Lords death.

Now, this veil, was the dividing curtain, within the temple, preventing access, to the Presence of God. Only a priest, on one day, of the Year, the Day of Atonement, could enter, the holy of holies, and meet, with God. But, BUT, through the cross, Christ, has cleared the way, for our access, to God, direct access, for you and me, no intermediaries, required.

For, as Hebrews, chapter 10, and verses 19 - 20 says: **"Therefore, friends, since we have confidence, to enter, the Most Holy Place, by the blood of Jesus, by a new, and living way, opened for us, through the curtain, that is, his body."**

My friends, that access, is to, the presence of God, whose very presence, is described, as a place of glory, and majesty. For as Exodus, chapter 40 and verse 35 says: **Moses, could not enter, the Tent of Meeting, because the cloud, had settled upon it, and the GLORY, of the LORD filled, the tabernacle.**

2000 years ago, the curtain, hid that glory, it was called, 'a veil of covering', in Exodus chapter 26. And even when, the High Priest, entered that Presence, once a year, he had to burn incense, to hide the glory.

But thanks be, to God, **we can enter**, His presence, **we can behold**, the glory of God, in our own lives, through Jesus Christ, and with Him, as our Lord, redeemer and Saviour, we too, can reflect, His glory in the world.

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For Paul, in 2 Corinthians, chapter 3 and verse 18 says : **“And we, who with unveiled faces, all reflect, the Lord's glory, are being transformed, into his likeness, with ever-increasing glory, which comes, from the Lord, who is the Spirit.”** Wow, we, you and I, can enter, into Gods presence, and we, WE can reflect, His glory, because of the victory, and the power, of the cross !!

And Finally, let us consider, The Plan, He fulfilled.

My Friends, I believe, I have no doubts, that the cross, was no accident, of history, but the fulfilment, of God’s plan of salvation, His redemptive love for the world, as forth told in the prophets, and the Old Testament scriptures.

For as we read, and know so well, from John Chapter 3 and verses 16 + 17 which say : For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.

Yes, Jesus came to save us, He came to show us, Gods grace, mercy, and forgiveness. God’s plan, in His Son Jesus, was to restore, a right relationship with God, for us and all humanity; giving us, as Jesus says in John chapter 10 and verse 10, **“a life in all - ALL its fullness.”**

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To Conclude : I heard of a newspaper which accidentally, and prematurely, printed, the obituary, of a prominent man. The man marched, into their office, and said, 'How dare you, I am alive, as you can see.' The editor shrugged, and said, 'I am very sorry, but it's too late, to do anything about it, now. The best I can do, is to put you, in the births column, tomorrow.'

My Friends, we all need, the new birth, the new life, which the New Testament writers, speak of. For God planned, that it should be ours, through the cross, of Christ

Finally : Through the immortal mystery, of the cross, we can know, the wonder, and power, of God's love; through the cross, we can have, victory of evil, we can know, our sins forgiven. Through the cross, we can know, new life, real life, as it is meant to be, with God. On this day of all day days.....Praise be, to Christ our Lord, Our saviour, Our redeemer and Our friend. AMEN !

Jesus, Today we pause to remember your sacrificial love
That shone light into the darkness
That bore life from such emptiness
That revealed hope out of devastation
That spoke truth through incrimination
That released freedom in spite of imprisonment
And brought us forgiveness instead of punishment.
Thank you that we can now walk in the light of your life,
Hope, truth, freedom and forgiveness, This day and everyday. Amen.

Well, Thank You for listening. Hope to see again, on Sunday, at 10:30, when we join together, for our Easter service, and hope fully share in bread and wine – juice of the grape in some form, anyway. But for now, may the blessing and peace of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, be with you, and those you love, this day and always Amen.