

INTRODUCTION TO THE WHOLE SERIES**CROSSROADS: CHOOSING THE WAY OF THE CROSS**

As we approach Lent this year we want to refocus our attention simply on Jesus Christ and Him crucified. (1 Cor 2v2)

Although we are aware that people are feeling beat up after two years of the pandemic, we also believe that this has fuelled a renewed interest on the teachings of Jesus and a desire to be challenged to choose the counter-cultural way of the cross. There's a possibility of getting a new sense of vision - a fresh 'call to arms' as a church.

We want to use this series to remind people of the forgiveness, freedom and salvation achieved by the cross. We also want to remind people that for Paul the cross wasn't primarily a means of getting into heaven, but that it modelled a way to live life now.

When faced with all the complex pastoral situations of a fledgling church community (such as Corinthians), Paul consistently reorientates the church back to the example of Jesus - laying down one's life in service of another.

The current cultural zeitgeist, compounded by the pandemic, puts the self above all else and pushes us further and further into individualism. As a church we instead want to lay down our lives for one another, just as Christ showed us. ***This is foolishness to the world, but for us it is the power of God!*** (1 Cor 1:18-31).

The series will be broken into two sections:

- The cross as a means and moment of salvation
- The cross as the call to a sacrificial lifestyle

Hopes for the series:

1. People have become Christians because they have understood the power and relevance of the cross of Christ. Offensive grace providing redemption for cancel-culture.
2. We are a holier people because the Holy Spirit has been able to challenge us in specific areas and we have repented on several occasions.
3. We are more confident in both Alpha and Safar - understanding the unique power of the cross which is ours to share.
4. We are less selfish and less self-referenced: people will have clearly distinguished the call of discipleship from the self-actualisation school of psychology which is so insidious in our midst.

Session One - The Way of Salvation 6th March**Reflect back**

- Do we have stories to share about making space for others this past week?
- What one thing stood out from this week's talk?

Review the teaching

The season of Lent reflects Jesus' 40 days fast in the wilderness and prepares us for Easter. The Orthodox Church call this the season of bright sadness. We reflect on our grief and sinfulness.

The "Crossroads" theme covers the way of salvation; surrender; generosity; forgiveness and encouragement

Col 1v13-23. The Jesus Hymn with dominion of darkness compared to Kingdom of Light.

Dominion of darkness - All is not well.

Early church saw this expressed as 'the world, the flesh and the devil'. Ironic that the day UK declared the pandemic over Russia invaded Ukraine. 108m died in war in 20th century. This belies the myth of human progress. Ecclesiastes has profound wisdom in the face of evil.

There is evil in the world but also evil in individual hearts. Post-Christian secularism has spawned "cancel culture" - all have sinned except me. The song from 'Frozen': 'let it go': "no right, no wrong, no rules for me."

Spirit v flesh: How do I feel good? Or How do I do good? We might appear good but what's on the inside?

Turning point - the cross. Jesus enters the mess, fully God, fully man, no darkness only light. He's the creator sustainer, Word made flesh who "moves into our neighbourhood" (John 1v14Msg).

How do you live a good life? Follow Jesus. 1Pet 2v24 Jesus bore our sins on the cross. We sing about him "bleeding and dying" but forget the nails, crown of thorns, his innocence, betrayal by a friend and we remove ourselves from the horror of crucifixion which he endured for the joy ahead (Heb 12v2). Jesus "trampled death by death" (Orthodox Church).

*"I have become convinced... that Jesus' death was seen by Jesus himself, and then by those who told and ultimately wrote his story, as the ultimate means by which **God's kingdom was established**. The crucifixion was the shocking answer to the prayer that God's kingdom would come on earth as in heaven"*

NT Wright "Simply Jesus", p181

Dallas Willard asks: How do we live eternal life now? And answers: we die to self. We become alive to Christ. "Faith" (Greek "pistis") is better translated "allegiance". It is more concrete. We die to darkness and have allegiance to Christ.

Read Rom 6v1-10. God chose to die for us. Death is common to all. Autumn is a prelude to new life. At the cross Jesus lays down his life and all evil is defeated. Death on the cross is the beginning of redemption.

In the Kingdom of light all will be well, all manner of things will be well. The divine conspiracy is that God's plan is to overcome evil with good.

Realise the value

Pete suggested 3 responses:

1. What strongholds do we as Christians have? (These are areas of darkness rather than light).
2. Have you considered baptism? A clear, visual demonstration of dying to self and rising in Jesus.
3. What does it look like for me if my primary allegiance is to Jesus?

As a collective, why not pray for one another, particularly if some are struggling with strongholds or finding allegiance to Jesus challenging? Do any want to be baptised? If so, contact Bill.