

WEEK 1 – JESUS TAKES YOUR PLACE

MONDAY – The Cross and me



1 Peter 2: 24 *He Himself bore our sins” in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; “by His wounds you have been healed.*

This the power of the cross

*Christ became sin for us, took the blame, bore the wrath
We stand forgiven at the cross (Stuart Townend)*

The cross is the central symbol of our faith as Christians. But how do we view it? What exactly did Jesus do?

Images and concepts of the cross are not always easy to accept – a blood sacrifice and the violence of the act, do not make Jesus’ statement “*take up your cross and follow Me*” (Matthew 16: 24) sound a particularly attractive way of life. The first reason for the cross is substitutionary atonement – big words but simple meaning: Jesus takes your place. Or more colloquially – Jesus takes one for the team!

God longs to have a relationship with us but we mess up – a lot – and this alienates us from a perfect God. But our connection to God is restored through Jesus. Through His death, Jesus takes our wrongdoings upon Himself and offers us back to God. Jesus says “It’s ok, I will do this for you.”

As a parent, when our children face really tough and painful situations, we long to take their place and spare them the trauma and hurt. We can’t. But that is EXACTLY what Jesus did for us.

You are now welcome in the loving arms of God.

*Oh to see the pain written on Your face
Bearing the awesome weight of sin
Every bitter thought every evil deed
Crowning Your blood stained brow (Stuart Townend)*



Prayer: Thank you Jesus, for an act that I cannot even comprehend. May my life be ever close to You. AMEN

TUESDAY – We are not off the hook



Galatians 2: 20 *I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.*

*Were the whole realm of nature mine,
that were an offering far too small,
love so amazing, so divine,
demands my soul, my life, my all. (Isaac Watts)*

How can we not stand at the foot of the cross with a deep and profound sense of gratitude for what Jesus did for us. How does the symbol of the cross not become our most treasured image?

There were two people there that day: The Roman soldier declared “*Surely this man was the Son of God!*” And the criminal crucified with Jesus “*then said, “Jesus, remember me when You come into Your Kingdom.”* They must have seen and felt something at that cross which radically changed them.

What about you? Surely you are not unmoved by gracious gifts of generosity? Or acts of kindness

shown towards you? Shouldn’t then your response to the cross be “My Lord what can I do for You!”

“What Jesus performed was a self-sacrifice, a willingness to assume for us the punishment that we deserved so that we would not have to”. (Savior, Magrey de Vega)

Through the cross Jesus brings order out of our chaos; goodness out of our messes and sets us on the road to God.

We are not off the hook though – such an act demands a response. Can you say “Surely this was the Son of God?”

*All the vain things that charm me most,
I sacrifice them to His blood. (Isaac Watts)*



Prayer: Lord may I, this Easter, respond to Your cross with renewed gratitude and resolve to place my life in Your hands and to grow in faith and love. AMEN

WEDNESDAY – This changes everything



Romans 8: 31 & 32, 35 *What, then, shall we say in response to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but gave Him up for us all—how will He not also, along with Him, graciously give us all things? ³⁵ Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword?*

*A cross that changes everything
And a love that sets the captives free
A hope that resurrected me
And the power of God
For all who believe (Matt Redman)*

The cross and resurrection took Jesus from an amazing teacher to the giver of life. Suddenly God revealed His power and kept His promises and gave us a relationship with the Creator of the universe. Jesus did it all to give us freedom from the things that hold us; healing from all that afflicts us; a peace that passes understanding and a hope for the future. None of His promises depend on you but they are **all** meant for you. Jesus did what we cannot do for ourselves. And this changes everything!

This is real.

Reflect on:

- a small-town Jewish carpenter who lived 2000 years ago is

worshiped all over the world today by billions of people. If it was not real it would not have survived.

- Some of the greatest minds in history have declared Him Lord and Saviour: Isaac Newton, Robert Boyle, J S Bach, Rembrandt van Rijn, Martin Luther King, Mother Theresa, C S Lewis, J R Tolkien, Desmond Tutu. The list is vast.

And Jesus is holding all this out to you, waiting for you to accept the changes that the cross brings: freedom, healing, peace and hope.



Prayer: Lord meet me at the foot of Your cross. Open my eyes to see Your love and power there. AMEN

THURSDAY – But how?



Psalm 91: 1 & 2 *Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the LORD, "He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust."*

*Take my trembling heart
My simple faith and keep me strong
Take my every step, My hopes and dreams
And lead me on (Kathryn Scott)*

How do I claim all that the cross offers. How do I make it real? How do I put into practice this kind of faith? How do I trust?

GRATITUDE: Give thanks to God for what you have. Gratitude for the present, affirms your trust in Him for the future.

FEAR NOT: Fear makes you think you are powerless and eliminates God from your equation. Choose faith over fear.

SEARCH SCRIPTURE: Immerse yourself in the Bible stories and promises of God's faithfulness. Read what others have to say. There is encouragement in other peoples' stories. Memorize those verses of comfort.

PRAY CONTINUALLY: *"What a privilege to carry everything to*

God in prayer; Oh, what peace we often forfeit; Oh what needless pain we bear; All because we do not carry EVERYTHING to God in prayer."

Anytime and anywhere.

LEAP: You are going to have to leap off the cliff! Faith does not come from seeing ahead, but by trusting that God does. And you won't know that until you are in the air. It is at this point that your life intersects with the cross of Jesus.

All of this is difficult and it isn't a quick fix. You will still doubt and fear and lose hope. But on the difficult days ask God to meet you where you are. Step by step, bit by bit faith grows from that tiny mustard seed.



Prayer: *Lord, I'm letting go, Not looking down,
A leap of faith to holy ground
Catch me when I fall. (Kathryn Scott) AMEN*

FRIDAY – Abide in Love



1 John 4: 16 *So we have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in Him.*

*This must be a cross of love
for God to bruise His only Son.
Jesus, what a sacrifice to reach us.
It had to be a cross of love. (Steve Green)*

Jesus took our place.
Substitutionary atonement, pure
and simple = LOVE

“Jesus did for us what we could not do for ourselves. He, the “willing victim,” was killed in our traitorous stead, And God did not give us what we deserved. That’s the heart of substitutionary atonement.” (Savior, Magrey de Vega)

This is so immense that we might conclude that there is nothing more we can do in response to that! HOW WRONG! If the cross is reflecting love, are we not called to reflect such love to others? Can the cross open our eyes to the needs, pain and suffering around us, despite our own trials? Could

it be saying to us “I can do for others what they cannot do for themselves?” Could it be that this cross turns our hearts outwards and upwards?

Love is ultimately what the cross is about; and it shouldn’t just be about the past, it should be very much about our present. We received this love because we were unworthy, therefore we are expected to love those **we** consider unworthy. Jesus had EVERYTHING to lose, we have NOTHING to lose and EVERYTHING TO GAIN.

Peter, do you love Me more than these? (John 21: 15)

• Do you?



Prayer:

*Amazing love, How can it be?
That You, my King would die for me?
Amazing love, I know it's true.
It's my joy to honour You,
In all I do, I honour You. (Chris Tomlin)*
AMEN