

# Salford Methodist Circuit



**5th Sunday in Lent - The Passion, The Cross - 21st March 2021**  
**John Brocklehurst**

Welcome to worship on the fifth Sunday of Lent, Passion Sunday.

Let us take a few moments to silently reflect on the cross of Jesus.

[Silence]

The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.  
Jesus calls us to serve and follow him,  
and promises that if we do, we shall be with him.  
Come, be with him now.  
Serve him, follow him, and give glory to God.

And so we continue to give glory to God as we sing 'O Lord my God, When I In  
Awesome Wonder'

## **Hymn: O Lord, My God, When I In Awesome Wonder**

*O Lord, my God, when I in awesome wonder  
consider all the works thy hand hath made,  
I see the stars, I hear the mighty thunder,  
thy power throughout the universe displayed:  
Then sings my soul, my Saviour God, to thee:  
how great thou art, how great thou art!  
Then sings my soul, my Saviour God, to thee:  
how great thou art, how great thou art!*

*When through the woods and forest glades I wander  
and hear the birds sing sweetly in the trees;  
when I look down from lofty mountain grandeur,  
and hear the brook, and feel the gentle breeze:  
Then sings my soul...*

*And when I think that God, his Son not sparing,  
sent him to die, I scarce can take it in  
that on the cross, my burden gladly bearing,  
he bled and died to take away my sin:  
Then sings my soul...*

*When Christ shall come with shout of acclamation  
and take me home - what joy shall fill my heart;  
then shall I bow in humble adoration,  
and there proclaim: my God, how great thou art:  
Then sings my soul...*

Let us pray:

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Lord God, you have held your arms open to your people.  
In the arms of a baby in a manger, waving in delight at strangers from near and far,  
You embraced all humanity.  
On the cross, you held your arms open to the world.

God incarnate, God crucified and risen,  
we praise you for all you have sacrificed to welcome us.  
And help us to give up our pettiness, our selfishness,  
in order to embrace others in the welcome that comes from you.  
Yours, Lord, were the arms stretched wide on the cross,  
A welcome to all in the midst of your agony.  
Yours were the arms spread in blessing after the resurrection.  
Crucified Lord, risen Lord,  
We adore you in your pain and in your victory,

Your welcome ever the same,  
Gathering us to you and blessing us,  
Enfolding us in your loving embrace.

Forgive us for revelling in the presumed privilege of being your children.  
Help us to break down barriers to you; because we cannot keep you to ourselves.  
Help us to welcome, unconditionally, all who seek you,  
And to take your welcome wherever we go – to be church without walls.

God, thank you for welcoming us back no matter what we have done;  
For that initial embrace that welcomed us, though we were sinners;  
For the forgiveness that greets us every time we turn back to you.  
Help us to embody your forgiveness in our dealings with one another  
And with those outside the flock.  
May our welcome be the sign of the greater welcome that comes from you.  
Amen.

## **Lord's Prayer**

*Our Father, who art in heaven,  
hallowed be thy name;  
thy kingdom come;  
thy will be done;  
on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread.  
And forgive us our trespasses,  
as we forgive those who trespass against us.  
And lead us not into temptation;  
but deliver us from evil.*

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*For thine is the kingdom,  
the power and the glory,  
for ever and ever.  
Amen.*

Hymn: The Right Hand Of God Is Writing In Our Land

*The right hand of God is writing in our land,  
writing with power and with love;  
our conflicts and our fears,  
our triumphs and our tears,  
are recorded by the right hand of God.*

*The right hand of God is pointing in our land,  
pointing the way we must go;  
so clouded is the way,  
so easily we stray,  
but we're guided by the right hand of God.*

*The right hand of God is striking in our land,  
striking out at envy, hate and greed;  
our selfishness and lust,  
our pride and deeds unjust,  
are destroyed by the right hand of God.*

*The right hand of God is lifting in our land,  
lifting the fallen one by one;  
each one is known by name,  
and lifted now from shame,  
by the lifting of the right hand of God.*

*The right hand of God is healing in our land,  
healing broken bodies, minds and souls;  
so wondrous is its touch,  
with love that means so much,  
when we're healed by the right hand of God.*

*The right hand of God is planting in our land,  
planting seeds of freedom, hope and love;  
in these many-peopled lands,  
let his children all join hands,  
and be one with the right hand of God.*

**Bible Reading: Psalm 51 : 1 - 13**

*Generous in love—God, give grace!  
huge in mercy—wipe out my bad record.  
Scrub away my guilt,  
soak out my sins in your laundry.*

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*I know how bad i've been;  
my sins are staring me down.  
You're the one i've violated, and you've seen  
it all, seen the full extent of my evil.  
You have all the facts before you;  
whatever you decide about me is fair.  
I've been out of step with you for a long time,  
in the wrong since before I was born.  
What you're after is truth from the inside out.  
enter me, then; conceive a new, true life.  
Soak me in your laundry and i'll come out clean,  
scrub me and I'll have a snow-white life.  
Tune me in to foot-tapping songs,  
set these once-broken bones to dancing.  
Don't look too close for blemishes,  
give me a clean bill of health.  
God, make a fresh start in me,  
shape a genesis week from the chaos of my life.  
Don't throw me out with the trash,  
or fail to breathe holiness in me.  
Bring me back from gray exile,  
put a fresh wind in my sails!  
Give me a job teaching rebels your ways  
so the lost can find their way home.*

## **An introduction to our reading from the Gospel according to St John.**

In this reading, we find that some Greeks had travelled to Jerusalem and they speak to Philip, who in turn speaks to Andrew and they both go and tell Jesus. Philip and Andrew have learned that no one is too much trouble for Jesus and they are confident in bringing people to him, even people who might normally be seen as outsiders. And then Jesus goes on to speak about his death and resurrection and finishes with an assurance that he will draw everyone to himself.

## **Bible Reading: John 12 : 20 - 33**

### ***Some Greeks Seek Jesus***

*Some Greeks were among those who had gone to Jerusalem to worship during the festival. They went to Philip (he was from Bethsaida in Galilee) and said, "Sir, we want to see Jesus."*

*Philip went and told Andrew, and the two of them went and told Jesus. Jesus answered them, "The hour has now come for the Son of Man to*

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*receive great glory. I am telling you the truth: a grain of wheat remains no more than a single grain unless it is dropped into the ground and dies. If it does die, then it produces many grains. Whoever loves his own life will lose it; whoever hates his own life in this world will keep it for life eternal. Whoever wants to serve me must follow me, so that my servant will be with me where I am. And my Father will honor anyone who serves me.*

## **Jesus Speaks about His Death**

*"Now my heart is troubled—and what shall I say? Shall I say, 'Father, do not let this hour come upon me'? But that is why I came—so that I might go through this hour of suffering. Father, bring glory to your name!"*

*Then a voice spoke from heaven, "I have brought glory to it, and I will do so again."*

*The crowd standing there heard the voice, and some of them said it was thunder, while others said, "An angel spoke to him!"*

*But Jesus said to them, "It was not for my sake that this voice spoke, but for yours. Now is the time for this world to be judged; now the ruler of this world will be overthrown. When I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw everyone to me." (In saying this he indicated the kind of death he was going to suffer.)*

## **Hymn: What Kind Of Love Is This**

*What kind of love is this  
that gave itself for me?  
I am the guilty one,  
yet I go free.  
What kind of love is this,  
a love I've never known;  
I didn't even know his name -  
what kind of love is this?*

*What kind of man is this,  
that died in agony?  
He who had done no wrong  
was crucified for me.  
What kind of man is this,  
who laid aside his throne  
that I may know the love of God -  
what kind of man is this?*

*By grace I have been saved;  
it is the gift of God.  
He destined me to be his own  
such is his love.*

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*No eye has ever seen,  
no ear has ever heard,  
nor has the human heart conceived  
what kind of love is this?*

Today is Passion Sunday, when we focus on the suffering and death of Jesus. In normal situations when we talk about 'passion' we think of relationships between people but we will not be thinking of the passion people have for each other or the passion people have for things; like people have a passion for stamp collecting, they look at them and see all the different countries of the world. People have a passion, like myself, for ships, and quite often you can see me on the computer looking at the ships going in and out of the various ports. People have passion for all kinds of things, although that is important, it isn't the main thing. No, we are thinking of the Passion of the cross. That God in his infinite love sent his Son to die on the cross for each one of us. The ultimate gift, the gift of love.

We live in a world where appearances mean everything, people want branded trainers, they want the best fashion and technology and people like to wear jewellery, rings, watches, necklaces and bracelets and so often people like to make a show of it. We have seen many times the number of people that have a cross on a silver or gold chain around their necks. And I must admit I have two, one that I wear everyday all day and another which is a cross of nails. And they mean so much to me but how many people who wear it really understand what it stands for? Or is it just a fashion accessory to them, a bit of bling? Something nice to wear. But when we wear one as followers of Jesus and Christians it is a constant reminder of what Jesus has done for each one of us. His love and grace.

Despite their differences of detail, the focus of the Passion narrative in all the gospels is straightforward enough: the cross. Although our bible reading does not mention the cross, its shadow is cast over the whole passage: talking about a grain of wheat must die in the soil before it gives new life. And Jesus must die so he can be resurrected. So let us look at the passion of the cross. While I have been mulling over this theme for a few weeks a chorus has always come to mind which I cannot get out of my head. So let's just hear it now:-

*At the cross at the cross where I first saw the light  
and the burden of my heart rolled away  
it was there by faith I received my sight  
and now I am happy all the day*

The theology of the cross is uniquely Christian and may be viewed from different angles. At its simplest, the cross is a swap. Christ dies in our place for our sins. And that Jesus took the penalty that was rightly deserved for Barabbas and for each one of us.

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The cross is the price of salvation. When we read about the cross, and we look at pictures of that scene, we see people standing around. But who are those standing at the cross? Who is watching the action? It is the rulers, soldiers, curious on-lookers and one of the two criminals who sneer and misunderstand the word 'save' to mean something quite trivial, but the other criminal acknowledges that punishment for misdeeds is just: sin has implications. Whenever we do something wrong we expect to be held to account. So if we break the law and get caught we expect to go to court and take whatever punishment is handed out. In Luke 23 the other criminal knew he had done something wrong, he admitted it and in so doing received the forgiveness of Jesus. Yese, even at that late moment in his life. But even then h e spoke to the other criminal and rebuked him. "Don't you fear God," he said, "since you are under the same sentence? we are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong." then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom."

The cross forces us to evaluate Jesus.

The community to which Jesus came expected the Messiah. They expected a Messiah to be the deliverer from Roman occupation, coming in riding on a mounted horse.

But that wasn't the view, that wasn't the interpretation of Jesus; Jesus was going to come meekly and on a donkey. And in one of the most beautiful chapters of the Old Testament, the prophet Isaiah prophesies about the coming Messiah and in 53 verse 12 it says: - "therefore I will give him a portion among the great and he will divide the spoils with the strong because he poured out his life unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors. For he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors" and the whole of the chapter reveals a Messiah who is the suffering servant, saving by bearing our punishment and coming to serve. The cross is the true measure of Jesus' kingship.

The cross brings unmerited mercy. Only Luke's account includes the penitent thief and his plea, that is intended to motivate each one of us to come to the same response. Then the thief said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." This calls us to accept that if we admit our faults it lays the ground for free forgiveness and a welcome into the Kingdom. There was no time for the thief to bear the fruits of his repentance but Jesus, even on the cross, turns to the thief and says, "truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise." It shows that salvation that Jesus gives is by grace alone.

The cross destroys the barrier between sinners and God.

Before the death of Jesus there was always a barrier between humankind and God. If you look at the Temple it was divided from the Holy of Holies by a curtain

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and so the priest had to mediate between the person and God, a go between to intercede for humankind. Now that barrier is broken as the curtain separating the people from the holy of Holies is torn apart. Henceforth there is free access to God for those formerly kept apart by their guilt. It gives us a direct phone link to God.

But most importantly the cross converts. Luke is cautious about putting Mark's words 'this was the son of God' into the Centurion's mouth, but the impact on the Centurion and the bystanders is such as to strike to their hearts it made a lasting impression and a change of direction. The conclusion of the crucifixion narrative shows the cross can still have an impact today on all who read the word of the cross and take them to heart.

The cross has different meanings to different people. So how does the cross impact on our lives today?

Is it the price paid for our salvation, our freedom?  
Does it help us to evaluate what Jesus has done for me and for you?  
Does the cross make us deserve the unmerited mercy of God in our lives?  
And does something in our lives separate us from Jesus and create a barrier?  
But most of all, has the cross been the means of converting our lives with the love of Jesus so we can bring that love to others?

And when we look at the cross it is not simply two pieces of wood thrown together, but it is the instrument that was used by God to show his love to the world in that he gave his own Son to die so we could live. That is the grace of God given to each one of us and in the end it is our decision whether we let Jesus in our lives or leave him hanging on the cross.

Amen.

## **Hymn: God Forgave My Sins In Jesus' Name**

*God forgave my sin in Jesus' name;  
I've been born again in Jesus' name,  
and in Jesus' name I come to you  
to share his love as he told me to.*

*He said:  
'Freely, freely you have received,  
freely, freely give;  
go in my name and because you believe,  
others will know that I live.'*

*All power is given in Jesus' name  
in earth and heaven in Jesus' name;  
and in Jesus' name I come to you  
to share his power as he told me to.  
He said...*



Prayers of Intercession.

Let us first of all just take a few moments and join in the fellowship of silent prayer.

[Silence]

Lord Jesus Christ  
We remember you today  
How your concern throughout your ministry  
Was not for yourself but others -  
the vulnerable, the distressed, the sick, and the depressed

All those who are marginalised in society -  
the downtrodden, oppressed, rejected  
You came as the man for others  
Come to our world today.

We remember how you had a special place in your heart for the poor  
And so we pray for the millions suffering still under the yoke of poverty  
With all the attendant misery that involves -  
Victims of failed harvests, natural disasters and civil wars,  
Crying to us for help,  
Begging for food to stave their hunger,  
Homes to house their children,  
Resources to build a better future,  
An opportunity to start again free from the shackles of debt.  
You came as the man for others  
Come again to our world today.

We remember how you suffered at the hands of others  
And so we pray for all who endure violence and cruelty,  
All who are wounded in body, mind and spirit by acts of inhumanity.  
We pray for victims of racism and discrimination  
Of verbal and physical bullying  
Of assault and abuse  
Intimidation and torture  
Terrorism and war.  
You came as the man for others  
Come again to our world today.

Lord Jesus Christ



You lived for others  
You died for others  
And you rose for all  
Help us to live in turn as your people  
Seeking to serve rather than be served  
To give rather than to receive.  
Teach us to reach out in love  
And so to make real your compassion  
And represent your people here on earth.  
You came as the man for others  
Come again to our world today.

We ask that you will take all of these prayers, those spoken aloud and those spoken within the sanctuaries of our hearts, take them, use them and answer them in accordance with your perfect will, through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.

## **Hymn: Meekness And Majesty**

*Meekness and majesty,  
manhood and deity,  
in perfect harmony -  
the man who is God.  
Lord of eternity,  
dwells in humanity,  
kneels in humility  
and washes our feet.*

*Oh, what a mystery -  
meekness and majesty:  
bow down and worship,  
for this is your God,  
this is your God!*

*Father's pure radiance,  
perfect in innocence,  
yet learns obedience  
to death on a cross:  
suffering to give us life,  
conquering through sacrifice -  
and as they crucify,  
prays, 'Father forgive.'  
Oh, what a mystery...*

*Wisdom unsearchable,  
God the invisible,  
love indestructible  
in frailty appears:  
Lord of infinity,  
stooping so tenderly,  
lifts our humanity  
to the heights of his throne.*

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*Oh, what a mystery...*

Go now,  
With love in your hearts  
Light in your eyes  
And life in your souls  
Go in the service of Christ  
To proclaim what he has done for you  
And share what he has given,  
To his glory.  
Amen.

And may the peace and love of God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit be with each one of us, this time and forever more.  
Amen.

CCL: 30925

O Lord, My God - Stuart K. Hine

vv. 1, 2, 4 based on O store Gud 1885 by Carl Gustaf Boberg (1859-1940)

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