

## On the Cross with Christ - Easter 2015

**TITLE SIDE**

I thought it would be great to hear some of the full resurrection story this morning from the Gospels, but what I want to focus on is 1 verse from Galatians. Its a verse we actually skipped over when we went through the chapters, but it is one that we saved for today. Some of you might be a bit sick with this letter now, but if you are like me, you might be wanting more.

This verse **SLIDE** is talking directly about the cross and the crucified Jesus, and I have 2 points? I want to make this morning. Then we are going to spend some time reflecting on the cross and share in communion together.

**SLIDE**

Today we celebrate the resurrection of Jesus. It's Easter Sunday, and probably most churches throughout the world will be enjoying a sermon centered around the Cross of Christ. But every Sunday should be a resurrection sunday, because the cross is at the centre of the gospel, the centre of the Christian faith and what is saying is that it is the centre of Christians lives.

**SLIDE** However, we have kind of romanticised the cross and the crucifixion story, so much that to some its not as shocking or as meaningful anymore. And to get full meaning, we HAVE to be shocked and amazed at the Cross and see it more that a symbol or as the youth called it this week, God's company logo. It is more than just a label. Be have to be affected by what the cross was and is today.

But this watering down might have been what was going on in Galatia when the church there had taken their eyes off of the cross, and Jesus, and gaining their salvation through faith alone, and started to desire to be under the law again.

**SLIDE**

For those who are visiting today, we have been going through this letter over the last few months, and what happened is that a group of people had come into the church, and said that to be true followers of Christ they need to be like the Jews and be circumcised, and be under the law as well as Jesus' grace. But Paul gets angry about this and writes this letter to set the record straight and say that you can not live under both Christ and the law, because Christ fulfilled the law, and being in Christ we are free from the law.

But then we can ask, how? How are we free from the law. It is through Christ, as I have just said, but how is that possible?

**SLIDE**

Well the answer lies in the cross. And we can open up this passage to find out more.

## **Galatians 2:20 New International Version (NIV)**

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.

So these words are pretty strong, and some might say a bit exaggerated. Paul is claiming that he is crucified with Christ and that it is not him living but Jesus instead.

So the 2 things I want to open up is what it means to be crucified with Christ and how it is actually Christ inside us that is living.

So some of us know about the horrible scenes that we can read about Jesus' journey to the cross. The ridicule, the whipping, the crown of thorns, the nails through the hands and feet, the pain, the suffocation, the casting of lots for his clothes, his last cry and breath, and the spear in the side to confirm that he was in fact dead.

But does that mean that we have to go through all that as well? That we also have to martyr ourselves to be true Christians... No. Really not. **Paul is talking about our relationship with the risen Christ.**

We have to remember that Paul is angry here, and when we get angry, we exaggerate. But we also see with a lot of Paul's writings that he takes his examples to the extreme to get his point across, and in this we see that it is not so much of an exaggeration.

When I chose to follow Jesus, I chose to say that my past is gone, that I had messed up many times and had been going the wrong way, and now to put my faith in Jesus, who died for me, so that I would not have to suffer what I should have suffered eventually. I had to put to death the old, and make way for the new. So in that decision, I was essentially choosing to be crucified with Christ.

So we don't actually die, we don't stop breathing when we put to death the old, and let the new begin. Christ did so that we didn't have to.

### **SLIDE**

To give an example, a caterpillar... is literally recreated inside the cocoon.

### **SLIDE**

This is a scientific study of what actually happens inside a cocoon during the transformation, and this is done using MRI and xrays. And you can see that there is a change, but the caterpillar is still alive there.

It's body is broken down, and reformed into something new **SLIDE** , with wings. No, it hasn't been living off of Red Bull. But It doesn't physically die, like us, there is a miraculous transformation. Ok, so I doesn't look exactly like in the kids book, but we can all dream.

For new life to start, the old must be put to death. I never died though when I became a Christian, its still me inside, but I have a new purpose now, just like the caterpillar, its new purpose is to be a butterfly. But the caterpillar didn't actually die. But it comes out and has new life.

Paul is also saying that it is still him, but the old him has passed. The old Paul was actually called Saul, and it was his job and passion to go around killing Christians for what they believed. And there was a turnaround in his life, and I think the image of the old Paul, or Saul has never been clearer than it is now with recent heartbreaking tragedies in Syria, Iraq and very recently Kenya.

But in Paul we see this verse in person. We see the amazing changes that happen in a person when Christ is in them, and in this example the transformation is miraculous. Paul is no longer Saul, and as Paul, we can see all he has done to point people towards Christ, because the old Him was crucified with Christ.

Every time someone comes to follow Jesus and make that choice a miracle happens. And its a miracle that we focus on when we look at the cross.

### **SLIDE**

And we still need to remember that the miracle that happened on the third day was indeed a miracle. Without this, without the resurrection, we have no saviour. Jesus was just a crazy guy with a big ego if He didn't come back to life. **It is the resurrected Christ is who Paul is talking about here.** And this is important to how we view this verse and what happened on Resurrection Sunday.

Because Christ takes on a new form when he is ressurected. Physically, the two he appeared to didn't recognise him by face, and it wasn't until they realised who he was by what he said that they actually recognised him. It is the same Jesus, but in a different form. He is the triumphant Jesus who has just beaten death.

### **What it looks like!**

When we are crucified with Him, He did the work, but we put all our trust into Him. We give him our all. And just like the orchid, he cuts us down, and grows new life within us. He cuts away, and prunes what will stop us from growing, and give us new life... and like the caterpillar, we are transformed into something even we never thought would be possible. A beautiful work of art.

That is because **it is** the triumphant resurrected Christ in all His glory that lives in side of us. It **has to be** the resurrected Christ that lives in us.

That is the potential in all of us. He wants us to be crucified with Him, so that he can show us our full potential. And it's not that He didn't love us before, He loves us with or without any transformation, before and after we did anything wrong, and turned away from Him. No more or no less.

But He loves us too much not to want this for us. He wants us to live this with Him. He wants us to be the best we can be. But that involves giving all of ourselves to Him. Not just the bits we dont like, or not happy with. Even the bits we like, the parts we are proud of.

Because its often those parts that end up tearing us away from Jesus. When we want to keep the best bit back for ourselves, we are saying that they are more important than God. That he can't be trusted with them. and then that puts a block in our relationship with him.

And it doesn't have to be that the best bits will be gone. He gave us the good bits for a reason. our gifts, our talents. But He wants us to use them for him, and not just for self gain. When we give all of us to Him, He puts it all in perspective, He give us new desires. And we will desire the things that last and that build the world up.

When I first chose to follow Christ, I had the biggest desire to be an artist in the theatre world, an artist of light, and I was doing so well (**SLIDE**) this is one of the images I was most please with creating... But the more I pressed into Jesus, and gave Him more and more of me, my desire changed. And it wasn't just reading that I needed to be more selfless and did what I could. My desires actually changed. He replaced desire of temporaryness amd doing things just for my own gain, with desires for permanence. For that is proof enough that He is living in me. **And in faith I need to let Him.**

I'm still not perfect. As I self reflect, I see old desires being uncovered, and some i try to hold to. But I have only followed Jesus for 9 years, and He still has a lot of work to do. Each time I need to come back to the cross and crucify them on the cross with Jesus.

#### **SLIDE**

And this letter isn't the only place in the Bible that talks about this. There are many, and this is one of them..

2 Cor 5:17

If anyone is in Christ, the new has come, the old has gone.

We see this symbolised in baptism.**SLIDE**The symbol of being fully submerged, the old being washed away and the new beginning when we come out of the water is the physical example that comes to mind here. Something that Jesus asks of Christians when they come to have

faith in Him, but a choice by us nevertheless. And we will be offering baptism to anyone who desires this summer at the end of June, so start thinking about this now if you wish to be baptised.

A new beginning is a necessary part in following Jesus. When He gives us a second chance (sometimes even a 10th chance), he has to break us down.

#### SLIDE

And I want to leave you with one more image before we have time to focus on the cross more personally.

In Revelation, in the letters to the seven churches, we read about a refiners fire that purifies gold. And what they do to purify gold is to heat up the gold in the fire, and then all the impurities come to the top, and then the refiners can scoop the impurity out, and the gold is purer. And this is a process that happens over and over again to purify gold. Jesus wants to refine us, and when we are in Him, He can do that by living in us and through us.

And I believe that He is good, so he will keep the good, and make it better. And I need to trust Him in that and have faith in that too. Some people have naturally God given talents, but I believe when we use them for Him, they become so much better, and are so much more appreciated by the right people.

Response:

Even when we have been following Christ for a while, many many years even, still some of the old will creep back in, or maybe it not that it creeps back it, but we still haven't let it go.

There are many reasons for not letting something go. Many people who believe in no-regrets believe that everything that happens shapes them, and we should regret or change because of it. But thats not entirely true, because or mistakes can shape us, even strengthen us. But when we let the mistakes become a part of our identity, we are holding on to the old, and hindering anything new that could happen in us.

#### SLIDE

**So to reflect**, I have made available some pieces of paper, which are under your seats and a piece of ribbon. And what I invite you to do is if you are holding on to something that you know you shouldn't be, whether it is for many many years, or something from just last week. **But write down something that you know needs to be crucified with Jesus.**

It might be something or someone that you need to let go of, some unforgiveness, a part of you that you have been keeping your identity in that is actually causing more pain than is good for you.

**SLIDE** Write it down on the piece of paper, fold it up, put the ribbon through the whole to see it so it doesn't open up for the world to see, and tie it around the cross.

The choir have prepared a song, so we have sometime for you to sit and reflect, and there will also be plenty of time after the service to sit and reflect too. This is between you and Jesus.

It might not be anything in particular, but as a response this easter, you might want to just write 'I give you everything'. Ultimately, that is what he wants.

Communion **SLIDE**

We need to remember that our relationship with Jesus, His redemption plan for our lives, and the new beginning is always through the cross...Always.

And one way we can remember this is to share in Holy Communion with each other. As we come to the cross, there is no status, there are no titles or hierarchy, only sinner and saviour.

This is also an invitation to come to Jesus for the first time, and put our faith fully in Him. So if you have never put your faith fully in Him, before and would like to, then I invite you forwards for communion and you can see your eating of the bread and drinking of the wine as a confession of faith.

**23** For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, **24** 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." **(Break the bread)**

**25** In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me." **26** For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. **(Hold wine up)**.

At Fishers Creek we recognise the different branches of the church represented here, so when you come forward you can take the bread and wine in which ever way is comfortable to you.

You can take a piece of bread, hold your hands and received the bread, you can break some bread off, you can dip it in the wine, you can drink from the cup or take a small glass of wine.

We also leave it up to the parents to communicate if their children are ready to received the bread and wine. If not, let me know and I will pray a blessing.

Blessing to end **SLIDE**

2 Corinthians 13 : 14

May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

**SLIDE (He is Risen)**

**Once it is over.**