

NOTES: ● Sean to lead ● Dan to preach ● John Gillan from FYP to share

PHIL/BAND TO PLAY

WELCOME & INTRODUCTION

SONG 1: I stand amazed in the Presence **MP 296**

NOTICES 1: ● Easter Cards ● Session Clerk

ALLAGE: Ferrywell Youth Project with John Gillan part 1

- a. Sean will do a wee intro
- b. Show a photo of where FYP is
- c. The put up the slide below and ask the young folk to pick 2 of the pictures to hear more about
- d. you could do a quick summary of what else you do that includes Marjorie
- e. Marjorie would you be up for sharing a very short story/something you love about FYP?
- f. Sean does a short **prayer** for you and FYP before the young folk go out.

SONG 2: Jesus strong and Kind

Young folk to leave (creche & summer club)

SONG 3: His mercy is more [Matt Boswell and Matt Papa]

SONG 4: Wonderful grace **MP 966**

**PRAY (Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving, Supplication)
& THE LORD'S PRAYER**

NOTICES 2:

Ferrywell Youth Project with John Gillan part 2

- a. Same slide goes up
- b. share a bit more (good news stories & challenges) if you have a couple of stories that would be great.
- c. you share some prayer points

SONG 5: According to thy gracious word **CH4 668**

SERMON INTRO

BIBLE: Luke 23:32-43

SERMON

SONG 6: All my days **CH4 467**

PRAYER, BENEDICTION & OFFER OF PRAYER MINISTRY

PHIL/BAND TO PLAY

SERMON: Jesus' words from the cross 3:
Truly, I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise

On the cross, Jesus is recorded saying seven things. He may well have said more that wasn't recorded. We're considering 4 of Jesus' statements in our build up to Easter Sunday.

Here are the first words from Matthew 27:46 that we considered two weeks ago with Cat. ***Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?*** (which means **"My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"**).

As well as being a body wrenching, raw and honest cry about how Jesus is feeling, we discovered that Jesus is quoting from and appropriating this pre-existing cry from Scripture in Psalm 22. Psalm 22 is filled with and hurt and hope.

So, core to Jesus is the Word of God, that when he is cut, he bleeds Scripture. This makes sense if Jesus is the Word of God made flesh (as Gospel writer John maintains in his introduction).

What we find is that the Word of God sustains Jesus and is something he can hold onto whilst going through the absolute physical, emotional, relational and spiritual worst on the cross.

And as abandoned as Jesus feels and was in that moment, God the Son, still directs his cry to God the Father.

For the joy set before him, Jesus is willing to endure the scorn and shame of the cross - for the joy of being reunited with God the Father and the ones he loves/the sinners he came to save.

As Cat reminded us from two weeks ago, Jesus enduring God-forsakenness and divine separation on the cross means we don't have to. If Jesus was willing to go through all of that on the cross then for us, it means he will not abandon us now – whatever it is we are going through. Jesus crying **My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?** also means we can be real with God the Father and with each other about how we are *really* doing and how we are *really* feeling. We don't need to pretend or put up a front.

Dying in prolonged, excruciating agony, Jesus speaks and reveals his heart and character and nature. In the presence of his executioners, and enemies and mockers and haters Jesus is recorded speaking again, saying...**Father forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.**

Last week, Sean asked us...*what do you make of that?*

What do you make of Jesus, being crucified and taking the punishment, saying...**Father forgive them** with you and me and us in mind?

I wonder what your reaction to that was and is?

That Jesus sufferers, how Jesus sufferers and what he says on the cross as he is dying has a profound effect on one of the haters.

In the Gospel according to Matthew, we read that the two rebels crucified next to Jesus *both* began by mocking him. This is from Matthew 27:38. We'll get to Luke's account in a moment.

³⁸ Two rebels were crucified with him, one on his right and one on his left. ³⁹ Those who passed by hurled insults at him, shaking their heads ⁴⁰ and saying, "You who are going to destroy the temple and build it in three days, save yourself! Come down from the cross, if you are the Son of God!" ⁴¹ In the same way the chief priests, the teachers of the law and the elders mocked him. ⁴² "He saved others," they said, "but he can't save himself! He's 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 rescue him now if he wants him, for he said, 'I am the Son of God.'" ⁴⁴ In the same way the rebels who were crucified with him also heaped insults on him.

So, both of them! Both criminals joining in and heaping on the insults. So this kind of thing... *OOO - I'm the Son of God! I'm the King and saviour! Save us - you can't even save yourself...Look at you! Son of God – you're not loved...you're Godforsaken!* So, what happens that one of the rebels went from mocking and ridiculing Jesus and calling him all kinds of names to calling on his name to be saved? What did he see? What did he hear? What did he experience that made him say...**Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.**

What could cause a dying by execution criminal...

...to put his hope in another dying, ridiculed, mocked, man being executed on a cross?

...to hail Jesus as the Lord of Life and the true King, as the Roman Empire and powers of darkness looked like they were triumphing and as the life blood was draining from both their bodies?

Well, here's a really interesting point, it wasn't Jesus' resurrection. Because that hadn't happened yet. This is not a '*he's walked out the tomb!*' or a '*he's back from the dead!*' moment.

What turned the heart of the criminal, was seeing: that Jesus suffered, the way Jesus suffered and died and the words he spoke. That Jesus suffered, the way that Jesus suffered and died, and the words he spoke, opened his eyes to the possibility and reality of a greater and more glorious God.

Gospel writer Luke shares more of the story and fills in the blanks. Luke draws our attention to both criminals hearing Jesus say...**Father forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.**

From Luke 23:32-43. This is the word of God...

³² Two other men, both criminals, were also led out with him to be executed. ³³ When they came to the place called the Skull, they crucified him there, along with the criminals—one on his right, the other on his left.

³⁴ Jesus said, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.”^[c] And they divided up his clothes by casting lots.

³⁵ The people stood watching, and the rulers even sneered at him. They said, “He saved others; let him save himself if he is God’s Messiah, the Chosen One.”

³⁶ The soldiers also came up and mocked him. They offered him wine vinegar ³⁷ and said, “If you are the king of the Jews, save yourself.”

³⁸ There was a written notice above him, which read: THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS.

³⁹ One of the criminals who hung there hurled insults at him: “Aren’t you the Messiah? Save yourself and us!”

⁴⁰ But the other criminal rebuked him. “Don’t you fear God,” he said, “since you are under the same sentence? ⁴¹ We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong.”

⁴² Then he said, “Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.”^[d]

⁴³ Jesus answered him, “Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise.”

One criminal is and remains totally unimpressed with Jesus.
He joins in and continues with the sneering.

“Aren’t you the Messiah? Save yourself and us!”

This criminal sees the **This is the King of the Jews** sign above his head, he's heard some of the Messiah's coming to the rescue stories, he looks at Jesus and concludes no way this stripped of clothes, stripped of dignity, bloodied and battered, helpless victim can be the Messiah. ***Father forgive them?! – weak, weak, weak! Worthy of worship?!!! No way. To be despised – absolutely!***

But something happens to the other criminal. Jesus' words **Father forgive them** cut him deep...*What kind of a man says 'Father forgive them' about his executioners?! What kind of a man says 'Father forgive them' about his jeerers and sneerers and the ones who plotted and are cheering on his death?!*

Another thing that is really interesting here is that Jesus is not stoic on the cross. He doesn't mask the pain. He doesn't pretend the pain isn't real or sore. He doesn't harden his heart, so he doesn't feel the barbs. He feels it all and is real about it all. There's no false bravado, no pretence and where curses and words of death and condemnation are fired at him, when all hell is let loose, he blesses and speaks words of life and unleashes heaven.

Jesus is fully human and showing what being fully human looks like. The criminal senses that and is drawn to that but there is more. This criminal also senses there is something of the divine here. That Jesus is suffering, the way that Jesus is suffering and the words he is saying is like nothing else he has seen or experienced.

What happens is a godly reverence and fear falls upon the criminal. This criminal is now convinced of Jesus' innocence and is willing to challenge the other mocking criminal. ⁴⁰ **But the other criminal rebuked him. "Don't you fear God," he said, "since you are under the same sentence? ⁴¹ We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong."**

Facing death is a sobering thing.

For all our avoidance of suffering and death and avoiding talking about suffering and death, particularly in the 21st Century Western world, there are times we are confronted by it.

For years I wasn't confronted by death.

It didn't intrude into my life, so I didn't intrude into its realm.

For years I actively avoided conversations about suffering and death.

It was pretty easy because none of my friends seemed to want to talk about it.

I even remember a time in late teens and early 20s mocking death, because I felt I was indestructible. One occasion stands out. There's a park in Victoria, Australia that has a hill and rock out crop called the 'Jaws of Death'. I remember me and my travelling friend standing in the 'Jaws of death' laughing and squaring up to death....*Come on death. Come and have a go if you think you're hard enough!*

And then a couple of years later one of my best friends got ill and died.

I remember watching his life ebbing away at the hospital.

I couldn't believe how unreal it felt.

Life and then no life.

Here and then gone.

Alive and then dead.

Whilst being very unreal it was as real as real could be.

Being confronted by death was and is incredibly painful and incredibly sobering.

As well as the overwhelming sense of loss, sadness, confusion and anger I had some other very disturbing thoughts, feelings and reality checks.

I remember thinking – *I could die*. No laughing now.

I remember having this sense that if I were to die and if there was a God and I was 'going to meet my Maker,' it would not be as friends.

No way it could be as friends given how I'd lived my life with me at the centre of universe, given the total lack of respect and acknowledgement I given him.

I hadn't felt anything like it before.

I could only describe it as a kind of godly fear and reverence.

If I stand before him, he'd be absolutely within his right to say guilty as charged. And I'd have absolutely no come back.

I remember being bothered - really bothered.

I was aware of the worst things I had done and aware that good things I had done were often done to look good in front of others. I was aware of my sin – acutely.

I remember thinking - what can be done?

I can't undo or make right all my wrongs!

What hope, what chance do I have?

There seems to be something of this going on with the criminal on the cross.

⁴⁰ ...**"Don't you fear God," he said, "since you are under the same sentence?**

⁴¹ **We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong."**

But that's not all that's going on for the criminal. As well as sensing Jesus' innocence and his own guilt, the criminal is not repelled by Jesus, he's drawn to Him...because of what he has seen and heard. And because of what he has seen and heard, he turns to Jesus and says..."**...remember me when you come into your kingdom.**^[d]"

And what's really interesting is how he addresses Jesus. It's worth digging into this a bit. So, stepping out of the crucifixion scene for a moment and into an imaginary one...

Imagine meeting and having a conversation with a man when it suddenly dawns on you that it's King Charles. You know, and he knows that this fact has dawned on you. Now, earlier on in the conversation you were slagging off the King – way more than just objecting to monarchy. Your insults were personal and pointed, and you mercilessly ridiculed his character, nature and appearance, calling him all kinds of names.

Knowing all this, knowing that he knows all of this, how do you address him in your next sentence? There's a lot riding on this! Your majesty? Your grace? Or Charles?! Surely not Charles! The presumption, the nerve!

The criminal in the passage doesn't say...

... Lord - **remember me when you come into your kingdom.**

... Messiah - **remember me when you come into your kingdom.**

... King - **remember me when you come into your kingdom.**

I can imagine the criminal thinking and wondering to himself...

Oh...[fill in the blank].

What do I do? Where do I go with this?

I have a sense that there is much, much more to this person.

I have a sense there is something divine about this very real and full Human?!

What do I call him after mocking and ridiculing and calling him all kinds of names?

What do I call him if he is the true King, the Lord of life, The actual Messiah and Saviour and Son of God?

What do I call him if he has the power to save and bring me into the kingdom come.

The criminal says...Jesus

Jesus - remember me when you come into your kingdom.

The criminal calls Jesus by name.

The appeal is personal.

First name terms personal.

In saying, **remember me when you come into your kingdom.**

The criminal is saying...

I think you are a greater king and yours is a greater kingdom.

I see you suffering with me but could it be that in some way you are suffering for me?

I think you are able to save...yourself...and maybe even a sinner like me

I'm not sure you are dying here because you have to

Maybe you dying here is the end.

I don't know very much about you, but I know and have seen and heard enough to throw myself on your mercy and call you by name.

I think you might just be the Son of God

Jesus - remember me when you come into your kingdom.

It is boldest of moves. How does Jesus respond?

⁴³ Jesus answered him, "Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise."

There's so much we could go into in this reply. Here's a few things!...

Jesus says 'yes' to the man's appeal for mercy. The criminal's forgiveness does not come cheap. There is a debt to pay. In order for God to be just there must be justice and judgement. Jesus saying 'yes' to the criminal is also him saying 'yes' to Jesus taking the criminal's debt and punishment. Not just for the crime of human rebellion and robbery. But for the punishment of rebellion against God – sticking his two fingers up at God and cursing and mocking him. That is something we are all guilty of when we make ourselves the centre of the universe and every time we declare 'Not your will be done on earth but mine.' *Call yourself the real king. I'm the real king!*'...

Whether we declare it in a wild and reckless effing and blinding ill-mannered way. Or a respectable, passive aggressive, smiling through our teeth, well-mannered way.

I remember thinking at the age of 26 when the reverence and fear of God hit me, *what a nerve me asking God for forgiveness.* I was unsure of whether God, Jesus would forgive me and whether he would want anything to do with me. If I jumped, would he catch me? How many chances would he give me. What if I messed up and blew it!

What if *I, I, I, me, me, me.*

⁴³ Jesus answered him, "Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise."

Jesus in his answer says *salvation comes in and through me not you*.

Here's a Tim Keller analogy that I've used before that I find really helpful when it comes to trust and trusting in Jesus. It's an analogy I've shared whilst preaching and with someone who was close to death at the time.

This person was in pain and troubled. They shared that their faith seemed at times strong and other times weak. I asked if I could share a story that I thought might help? They said *yes*. So, I said...*imagine...*

IMAGINE: that you are being chased by a ferocious bear on top of Corstorphine hill. The bear is closing in on you when you reach the steep cliffs of the quarry. You see a tree hanging over and into the quarry. The tree has branches that you can jump onto. You spy a branch that could save you and you leap. Is it important if you leap with a little faith or with a lot of faith? The answer is no - what really matters is the strength, quality and saving power of the branch.

I looked this person in the eyes and said, *"Jesus is the life-saving branch, he will catch you, he will hold you fast, you can trust him."* This person nodded, smiled and breathed a sigh of relief.

As I said at Bill's funeral this week, as I say at pretty much every funeral, *what really counts is trusting in Jesus' goodness not our own*. Jesus' goodness and saving power does not wax and wane or rise or fall depending on whether we are having a good day or bad day or whether we are at our best or worst - for every sin on him was laid.

That's not to say there aren't consequences or things to work through this side of heaven, because there are. We are to be seekers and champions of justice now.

Jesus willing, and gladly taking every sin includes past, present and future sin. What does he do when we mess up and keep messing up and come to him for forgiveness? He continues to forgive us. Despite us adding to his pain and suffering – he continues to forgive us. That is the measure of his goodness and mercy.

All the criminal can do, all any of us can do is boldly approach Jesus asking for mercy to find that...

Forgiveness is given not withheld

Forgiveness is not given *after* probation or a period of good behaviour or by going through purgatory.

Forgiveness is not obtained by paying penance or by self-flagellation.

⁴³ Jesus answered him, “Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise.”

The word for ‘today’ σήμερον (sémeron) in the original Greek means...this day, at present, hitherto, now! No waiting. That is good news indeed!

One last point on Paradise or heaven. My goodness, there are lots of view about what heaven will be like and what paradise is!

From the 1980s chocolate Bounty Bar adverts ‘*the taste of paradise*’.

To song after song...George Ezra’s Paradise, to Cold Play’s *para-para-paradise oh-oh-oh-oh-oh!* To Gun’s and Roses *Take Me down to the Paradise City, where the grass is green and the girls are pretty*. You may have noticed there’s a common theme in many portrayals of paradise! And if ever there was a man-made idea of paradise and heaven it’s the one about 72 virgins promised to tend to the faithful male follower.

Good news! The kind of paradise that Jesus is pointing to is infinitely better.

Way more than fallen man can imagine.

Way better than the best the world has to offer.

Far exceeding human imaginations. It’s a paradise that will fulfil to the nth degree the deepest longings, hope and desires of the human heart and quench all human (male and female) thirsts.

The word used in the original Greek text is παράδεισος, paradeisos (par-ad'-i-sos) means garden. On the cross Jesus is pointing to a garden. Which garden? It’s *The Garden* – the original Garden of Eden, before things went wrong. Where there was life and flourishing because the source of life and light and love - God was present and up close and personal! No sickness, suffering, sin or death. Not just the absence of darkness and strife and selfishness but peace and right and joyous relationships between human and human and humans and God.

As Jesus point back to the Garden of Eden, he looks forward to the garden being both future and present.

⁴³ Jesus answered him, “Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise.”

And with this statement, Jesus makes the most incredible claim – *heaven involves me*. There is no paradise, there is no heaven without Jesus. Heaven and Jesus are inseparable. In the book of Revelation, John is recorded getting a glimpse of risen Jesus returning bringing heaven with him...to renew the earth. With a union and

consummation that will make all earthly bliss look like a sneeze in comparison. Jesus, the source of life and love and light is on the throne, at the centre in a city garden.

21.... “Look! God’s dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. ⁴ ‘He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death’^[b] or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.”

I know that many of you are longing for that now. Asking God *how long?!...why not now?!...as you see loved ones suffer and as you suffer*. I can’t give you an answer to that. But what I can do is look to the cross. To see the God who suffers - for us and with us. Whatever suffering and even prolonged suffering means, it doesn’t mean God doesn’t love us. And what I can encourage you to do is say to God the Father how you really feel and bring all your strong, confusing and at times conflicting thoughts and feelings to him because that’s what Jesus God the Son does.

What I can say is a day is coming when...⁴ **‘He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death’^[b] or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.”**

And point and look forward to the garden...**22 Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb ² down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. ³ No longer will there be any curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him. ⁴ They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. ⁵ There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light. And they will reign for ever and ever...¹³ I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End...¹⁶ “I, Jesus, have sent my angel to give you^[a] this testimony for the churches. I am the Root and the Offspring of David, and the bright Morning Star.”**

¹⁷ The Spirit and the bride say, “Come!” And let the one who hears say, “Come!” Let the one who is thirsty come; and let the one who wishes take the free gift of the water of life.

Jesus’ arms on the cross were open to both criminals.

Jesus’/God’s arms are open to us all. He invites us to come and keep coming to him.

When our time comes, when we meet our Maker what will you say?

Who or what will you trust in? I'm saying Jesus....

⁴² Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.^[d]"

⁴³ Jesus answered him, "Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise."

*I will trust in the cross of my Redeemer,
I will sing of the blood that never fails;
Of sins forgiven, of conscience cleansed,
Of death defeated and life without end.*

*Beautiful Saviour, Wonderful Counsellor,
Clothed in majesty, Lord of history,
You're the Way, the Truth, the Life.
Star of the Morning, glorious in holiness,
You're the Risen One, heaven's Champion
And You reign, You reign over all.*

⁴² Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.^[d]"

⁴³ Jesus answered him, "Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise."