

The Cross that Counts

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Preacher: Rev. Murdo M Campbell

[0 : 00] Well, if we could, this morning, with the Lord's help and the Lord's enabling, if we could turn back to that portion of Scripture that we read, Colossians chapter 1. Colossians chapter 1.

We're going to look at verses 19 and 20. Colossians chapter 1.

If you have the Pew Bible, it's page 983. And we'll read again in verse 19. For in Him, that is Jesus, the Son of God, for in Him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through Him to reconcile to Himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of His cross.

And particularly those words at the end of verse 20, where it says, making peace by the blood of His cross. Making peace by the blood of His cross.

Now, today is a significant day. Today is a significant day, not least because it's the Lord's day. It's the day of resurrection.

[1 : 17] It's the day of renewal. We worship not a Savior who's dead, but a Savior who is living. But today is a significant day because it's also our wedding anniversary.

Alison has done well, hasn't she? She's had a lucky 13 years with me. But today is a significant day because it's the beginning of a new week. It also marks the end of a month, the month of June.

Which means that tomorrow is the beginning of a new month. It's the 1st of July. And the significance of this week is that on the 4th of July, Thursday the 4th of July, we're having a general election.

And by this time next week, we will more than likely have another new prime minister. Making that six prime ministers in the last 10 years.

But when our present prime minister came out of 10 Downing Street and to stand us, everybody saw it, he stood there in the pouring rain on the 22nd of May. No one expected him really to be calling a general election at the start of our summer holidays.

[2 : 24] And of course, it has now been revealed that there have been people in different places. They've been placing bets and they've been bidding that there would be a general election on the 4th of July.

For some, as you know, the 4th of July is Independence Day. It's Independence Day for all Americans. And there are, I'm sure, some Scots who hope that the 4th of July will be Independence Day for them too.

Now, maybe you're wondering this morning, well, Murdo, why all the focus and why all the fuss about the general election? Well, that's because today is not only a significant day and tomorrow is the start of a significant month, but also because 2024 is a significant year.

2024 is a significant year because during this year, half of the world's population is able to participate in their particular polling day.

Half of the world's population, that's over 4 billion people. So we have about 8 billion people in the world. Over 4 billion people are going to put across or get the opportunity to put across on their ballot paper.

[3 : 38] Now, the reason I highlight the general election to you is not because I want to persuade you about politics or that you're to vote for a particular politician or a particular party, but because on the day that Rishi Sunak stood in the rain to announce the general election, the Christian publishing company called 10 of those.

They sent out an email advertising a gospel tract, a gospel tract that relates to our general election. And at only six pence each, I thought, well, I'll buy them.

So I bought 500 of them. And hopefully you'll be handed one at the end of today's service, which I hope you'll read. And then I hope you'll not put it in your drawer, but pass it on to someone else.

The rest of the gospel tracts of the 500 that I bought, they'll be distributed and delivered to hopefully the homes in our community. And as you can see, gospel tracts, it says there right on the front, it speaks about the cross that counts.

The cross that counts. And that's what I want us to think about this morning. I want us to think about the cross that counts under three headings. The first heading is the cross that's chiar.

[4 : 58] The second is the cross that kisses. And the third is the cross that counts. So the cross that's chiar, the cross that kisses, and the cross that counts.

So first of all, the cross that's chiar. The cross that's chiar. It says there in verse 20, through him, so through Jesus, he reconciles to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.

The cross that's chiar. Now, I know I'm stretching my addiction to alliteration with this heading, but I'm sure you'll forgive me, because forgiveness is actually what we're thinking about this morning. Forgiveness through the cross of Jesus Christ. That's our focus this morning, forgiveness through the cross of Jesus. But as you know, the cross, boys and girls listening, the cross has been a symbol of Christianity since the third century.

And it's said that the cross has been a symbol of Christianity, and it first appeared during the reign of the Roman emperor Constantine. Because Constantine was the first Roman emperor to convert from paganism to Christianity.

[6 : 10] And when Constantine, when he became a Christian, he played this pivotal role in protecting Christians from persecution, because many of them were put to death. And he not only protected Christians, he also elevated the religion of Christianity, and sought to evangelize the Roman empire.

And it was during the reign of Constantine that the cross, the symbol of the cross, became a symbol for Christianity. And it has been a symbol of Christianity, as you know, ever since.

And of course, the Roman Catholic Church, they use a crucifix, which has the depiction of a crucified Christ on the cross, while many in the Protestant tradition, they have a cross without a crucified Christ on it.

And as you know, many Christians, they wear the symbol of the cross, they wear it as a piece of jewelry, as a necklace around their neck. But the symbol of a cross, it's not only known for being a symbol of Christianity.

We also use the symbol of the cross in many areas and many aspects of life. One area, boys and girls, one area in particular would be the classroom.

[7 : 20] Because it's in the classroom that we're not only trained, as you know, we're also tested. And when we're tested, we get things right, and we get things wrong. There are some answers that are kjarsh, and there are some answers that are kjar.

There are some that are kjar. And you know, that's what I used to hate about school. I didn't like school. I should maybe say that with the boys and girls present, but I didn't like school. I would try my best, and I would try to do as good as I could, but sometimes my best wasn't good enough. And I used to hate it. I used to hate it when I would do my work in class, and I would try so hard, and maybe the boys and girls can relate to this. Maybe you can relate to it too when you think back to school. I would try so hard to make my work neat and tidy.

All my writing at time make it neat and tidy. And when I finished my work, I would go to the teacher's desk with my jotter and hand it over to be marked. And back then, when I was in school, you usually had to stand there waiting for it to be marked and watch the teacher marking your work.

And sometimes while she was marking my work, she would look at me, and then she'd look back down at her work, at my work. And sometimes she would look at my work and shake her head. Other times she would raise her eyebrow.

[8 : 33] And then after a few minutes, after standing at the teacher's desk, waiting and wondering what my fate was going to be, it was usually worse than I could have imagined. Because when the teacher handed my hard work back to me, all marked, it had some little ticks on it where I got things right.

But with me, there were many crosses where I got things wrong. And as you know, the crosses, they were never in blue pen, they were never in black pen, but I don't know why teachers, they always use red pen.

And they were always red crosses. And they were never little red crosses. They were always big red crosses. They were always big red crosses.

And human nature being what it is, I would always focus not on what I got right and how many I got right, but I would always focus upon what I got wrong.

And that's because we don't like being told that we're wrong, do we? None of us like being told that we're wrong. We all like to be told that we're right. We all like to be told that we're good. The world will always tell us that we're right, and we have rights, and that we're good.

[9 : 41] We're good people. We like to be kjarst. We don't like to be kjarst. And yet our Bible reminds us that we're not kjarst. We're not right.

We're all kjarst. We're all wrong. We're not kjarst. We're all kjarst. We're not right. We're not good. And we'll never be good. We'll never be good enough for God.

Because as Jesus said, we looked at this a number of weeks ago, Jesus said, there's none good but God alone. Because there's something inherently wrong with all of us.

Because we're all kjarst. We're all wrong. We've all transgressed God's law. We've all sinned, says the Bible. We've all come short of God's glory. We're all broken people, living broken lives in this broken world.

No matter how much we want to hide it from one another, we're all broken people. Which is why we need the good news of the gospel. Because the good news of the gospel is that there is one who is kjarst.

[10 : 45] There's one who is right. There's one who is righteous before a holy God. There's one who is good, and he's gracious, and he's great. There's one person who is absolutely perfect.

There is one sinless Savior for sinners. And that, as Paul says, he is Jesus Christ, the Son of God. And as you know, that's the glory of the gospel.

That the one who is kjarst became kjar for us. The one who is kjarst became kjar for us. The one who is right and righteous became sin for us.

And this is what Paul is teaching us. This is what he's telling us here. That through his big red cross, through the blood of his cross, he who knew no sin became sin for us.

He who is absolutely kjarst became kjar for us. Why? So that we could be made kjarst with God. So that we might be made right and righteous in the sight of a holy God.

[11 : 56] And I've said to you before, this is Calvary's great transaction. And I think it's the most beautiful thing about the gospel. Calvary's great transaction. That we're on that big red cross, and through the blood of his cross.

This is what Paul is teaching us. The worst about me. This is what you can say as a Christian. The worst about me was laid upon him. The best about him was laid upon me. My disobedience reckoned to him.

His obedience reckoned to me. My sin, my shame transferred to Christ. His salvation, his security transferred to me.

My ruin all credited to him. His riches credited to me. My rags of righteousness, they were all removed. His robe of righteousness was received.

It's Calvary's great transaction. That through his big red cross, through the blood of his cross, his cross, a cross that's chiar, was all so that we might be made cursed with God.

[13 : 04] Through a cross that's chiar, we would be made cursed with God. And you know, we've been reminded this morning that the qualification, therefore, to come to Christ for salvation is not the question, are you kjarst?

But are you kjarr? It's not, are you good enough? But do you see that you're bad enough to come to this cross? Do you see your sin?

Do you see your sin in the sight of a holy God? Do you see your need of the sinless Savior? Do you see your need of the blood of this cross to cleanse you from all sin?

Do you see the importance of the cross that's chiar? That's what Paul's reminding us this morning. Do you see the importance of the cross that's chiar?

But you know, it's at Calvary that we not only see the cross that's chiar, we also see the cross that kisses. We see the cross that kisses.

[14 : 11] That's what I want us to think about. Secondly, so first of all, we see the cross that's chiar, then the cross that kisses. Because Paul tells us that through him, he reconciles to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.

And as we saw and as we said, the cross has been a symbol for Christianity for centuries. We also use the cross as a symbol of something being chiar, being wrong.

In fact, there are crosses actually outside in the car park. The elders were talking about and the office bearers were talking about all these crosses that are on the road, all the way up. On the road, you might see them when you're driving home.

We don't know why they're there. We're trying to work out what they're all about. But we use this symbol, the symbol of the cross in different ways. The symbol of the cross being chiar. We also use the symbol as a symbol for displaying and demonstrating love.

We use the cross as a symbol for displaying and demonstrating love. And I say that because, you know, whenever we write a card for someone we love, whether it's a birthday card, a thank you card, or an anniversary card, we often conclude that card with a little, a few kisses.

[15:30] But our kisses aren't symbolized by big red crosses that you'd have on a school jotter. The kisses, they don't mean chiar. We use little crosses of kisses in order to display and demonstrate love.

We also put little crosses of kisses at the end of text messages to display and demonstrate our love towards someone, whether it's a family member or it's a friend.

And, you know, as Christians, maybe we should be more careful, more considerate when we use little crosses of kisses. It may give the wrong message. And we don't want to give the wrong message to someone, especially someone of the opposite sex.

But, you know, there was certainly one kiss in the Bible that gave the wrong message. There was one kiss in the Bible that gave the wrong message, and that was the kiss when Judas betrayed Jesus with a kiss.

You remember how Judas, he had handed Jesus over to be crucified for the price of a slave, 30 pieces of silver. And then Judas, he demonstrated and displayed his betrayal of Jesus by kissing him.

[16:44] But what must have haunted Judas, haunted him all the way to hell, was that when Judas leaned in to give Jesus a kiss, do you remember what Jesus said to him?

Judas leans in to give Jesus a kiss, and Jesus says to Judas, Judas, would you betray the Son of Man with a kiss? Would you betray the Son of Man with a kiss?

And as we read in the Gospels, he did. Judas kissed Jesus. He betrayed the Son of Man, the Son of God, with a kiss and sent him to the cross.

But, you know, there's another kiss that we'll be singing about later. Because at the end of Psalm 2, Psalm 2 calls us and commands us to kiss the Son. We're to kiss the Son.

Not that we're to betray the Son of God with a kiss like Judas did, but that we're to bow down before the Son of God with a kiss. We're to kiss the Son. And we're to kiss the Son by submitting and surrendering our lives to King Jesus.

[17:50] That's what Psalm 2 is telling us. We're to submit and surrender our lives to King Jesus by kissing the Son. But, you know, the symbol of the cross as a kiss, a kiss that displays and demonstrates love.

It's a symbol that God the Father also uses. God the Father, as you know, He displayed and demonstrates His love towards us as sinners. He uses this symbol of a kiss that God the Father emphasizes.

He expresses towards us as sinners. Because I don't know if you noticed earlier in Psalm 85, it's a beautiful psalm. In Psalm 85, we sang about the cross that kisses.

In Psalm 85, we sang about the cross that kisses because we read there in Psalm 85, truth met with mercy and righteousness and peace kissed mutually.

Truth met with mercy, righteousness and peace kissed mutually. And what Psalm 85 is telling us there is actually a foretelling and a foreshadowing of the cross of the cross that kisses.

[19:02] Where Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who describes Himself as the way, the truth, and the life, He met at the cross with the mercy of God the Father. That's what was taking place at the cross of Jesus Christ.

There is truth and there is mercy. And it was there at Calvary that the righteousness of God the Father and the peace, the Prince of Peace, were told that they kissed mutually.

They kissed mutually. It was the cross that kisses. The cross that kisses because truth met with mercy, righteousness and peace kissed mutually.

And as you know, my friend, the cross is a symbol that demonstrates and displays love. The love of God for sinners. The cross is a symbol that emphasizes.

The cross of Jesus Christ is a symbol that emphasizes and expresses the love of God towards us as sinners because our Bible reminds us, not once, not twice, but repeatedly throughout it, our Bible reminds us that God has demonstrated and displayed His love towards us in that whilst we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

[20 : 17] And you know, it's the Apostle John. John, he points us all the time to the cruel cross of Calvary and he proclaims there and he says to us that at Calvary, the cross that kisses, and he says, look there, behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us that we should be called the children of God.

And John tells us, he says, you read his letter, he says, look at the cross here in His love. Here in His love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us.

And He sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sin. He sent His Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sin. He sent His Son so that He would make peace through the blood of His cross.

You know, our Bible points us to the cross that kisses. And it says to us, God so loved this world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believes in Him, whosoever believes in Him, would not perish but have eternal life.

Our Bible tells us to look at this cross, the cross that kisses because greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. Do you know, my friend, it's through the blood of His cross that we see the cross that kisses because it's at Calvary that truth met with mercy and righteousness and peace kissed mutually.

[21 : 50] Which is why we're being exhorted and encouraged this morning to kiss the Son. If you can see the cross that kisses, if you can see the love of God displayed and demonstrated to you through the death of Jesus Christ, you are being exhorted and encouraged and encouraged this morning to kiss the Son by submitting and surrendering your life to King Jesus.

You're to submit and surrender your life to King Jesus by kissing the Son. And so we consider the symbol of the cross.

When we consider this symbol, we see the cross that's chial, the cross that kisses, and lastly, the cross that counts. The cross that counts.

The cross that's chial, the cross that kisses, and the cross that counts. Paul tells us that through Him, through Jesus Christ, the Son of God, He's reconciled to Himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of His cross.

Now, we mentioned earlier that 2024 is a significant year because it's a year of democracy. It's a democratic year.

[23 : 08] That's a significant year because throughout 2024, throughout this year, over 4 billion people, they're going to be able to put a cross on their ballot paper.

You're included in that 4 billion. You're able to put a cross on your ballot paper this Thursday. So, over half of the world's population in over 60 countries throughout the world, they're going to be able to go to their polling station and vote for their preferred politician on their particular polling day. The largest population going to the polling station this year was, of course, India. Their polling took over a month where 1.4 billion people made their cross count.

Then there's the second largest population at 333 million people. They're going to the polls later this year in the United States of America where they will, as a nation, decide on either Joe Biden or Donald Trump.

And as well as here in the United Kingdom, there have been and there will be elections this year in Bangladesh, Brazil, Indonesia, Mexico, Pakistan, Taiwan, recently South Africa and just to name a few.

[24 : 27] There's also going to be European elections where they were held actually earlier this month. So there's all these elections throughout the world taking place. Over 4 billion people casting their vote and putting their cross on their ballot paper.

But you know, including all of these elections, when you think about all these different countries throughout the world, there are the wealthiest and there are the poorest countries.

There are the most powerful and there are the most populated countries. There are the most, you could say, dictatorial and the most delicate of nations in the world.

And while there will be many nations that test the limits of democracy, there will be other elections that are nothing but an exercise in rubber stamping. One such rubber stamping would be probably Russia.

The presidential election in Russia was held back in March. No surprise that Putin won with 88% of the vote. In fact, for many, it was a foregone conclusion that he would find himself with a fifth term in office.

[25 : 37] But you know, when you look at all these people, all these governments, all these empires, all these rulers, regardless of who rules in the nations of this world, as the church of Jesus Christ, we are called, we are commissioned, and we are commanded in Scripture to pray for the royals and to pray for those who rule over us.

We are called, commissioned, and commanded in Scripture to pray for the royals and to pray for those who rule over us. We're to pray for those in high positions, whether it's presidents or prime ministers or politicians.

More than that, Scripture and our Savior teaches us that we are to be subject to governing authorities. Because the authority of every government in the globe is actually authorized by God Himself.

And whether they're aware of it or not, whether they're aware of it, those who are elected to positions of power and political influence, they're there only by the divine appointment of Almighty God.

And therefore, they are accountable and answerable to Almighty God on the Day of Judgment.

Which is why, you know, it's so important that we make our cross count on polling day.

[27 : 01] It's so important that we make our cross count on polling day. But as you know, what's more important, what's of the utmost importance, is making this cross count.

We make the cross of Jesus Christ count not on the 4th of July. No, no, that's too far away. You're to make the cross of Jesus Christ count today.

Today. Because as we said, today is a significant day. Not just because it's the Lord's Day or an anniversary, but because our Bible teaches us that now is the accepted time.

Now is the accepted time for you to make this cross count, the cross of Jesus Christ. Now is the accepted time for you to make the cross of Jesus Christ count in your life.

Because today is the day of salvation. Today is the day of salvation. Not tomorrow. As my good friend J.C. Ryle used to say, tomorrow is the devil's day.

[28 : 13] Today is God's day. Today is the day of opportunity. Today is the day of salvation. And this is why Paul, this is why Paul proclaims to us here that we can only have peace through the blood of his cross.

We can only have peace through the blood of his cross because Jesus, as you know, he wasn't a president. He wasn't a prime minister with power. Neither was he a politician with a political manifesto.

No, Jesus, he was a powerful and persuasive preacher with what you could say was a personal and even a passionate manifesto.

His manifesto was meaningful. And it was meaningful because unlike many politicians and many political parties who make promises that they know they can't actually come through on, the amazing thing about Jesus is that he makes good on all his promises.

Jesus makes good on all his promises. And what I love about the promises of Jesus in the Bible is that most of them are personal. You can take them to yourself.

[29 : 23] And I love the personal promise where it says to us that if we confess our sin, if, as we were saying to the children, if we say sorry to God, if we confess our sin, he is faithful, he is just to forgive us our sin and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Why? All because the blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanses us from all sin. It's all through the blood of his cross.

The blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from all sin. Do you know, my friend, the symbol of the cross shows us that the cross of Jesus Christ, it's a cross that's chiar.

He became sin for us even though he knew no sin. It's a cross that kisses where truth met with mercy and righteousness and peace kissed mutually.

But for all of us this morning, whether here or at home, online, this is the cross that counts. This is the cross that counts.

[30 : 29] And our Bible reminds us that we have to make this cross count today. We have to make this cross count by enjoying peace and experiencing the pardon that it promises through the blood of Jesus Christ, through the blood of his cross.

And so as we go to polling day on Thursday, I want you to remember this cross, this cross that counts.

But to think about it today, don't put it off till tomorrow, don't put it off till Thursday, don't put it off till a better time or a more convenient time in your life today.

Today is the day to make this cross count in your life for time and for eternity. Well, may the Lord bless these thoughts to us.

Let us pray. Oh Lord, our gracious God, we give thanks for the blood of his cross and to be reminded of the simplicity of the gospel and to know that it is a wonderful message, a message for sinners such as we are, that we are undeserving of the least of it.

[31 : 48] And yet, Lord, our God who promises to speak to us in his word. And we pray that our ears are open, that our eyes are open to see the beauty of Jesus, that our hearts are receptive to thy truth.

Lord, bless us, we pray. Remember us as a nation as we go towards a general election and that whatever the outcome, help us to know that thou art the God who is enthroned on high and who is doing all things well, that heaven is thy throne and the earth is thy footstool.

Bless us, Lord, together we pray. Continue with us, we ask, for we ask it in Jesus' name and for his sake. Amen. Well, we're going to bring our service to a conclusion.

This morning, we're going to sing in the second half of Psalm 2. Psalm 2 in the Scottish Psalter, so it's page 201 of the Blue Psalm book.

Psalm 2, we're singing from verse 8 down to the end of the psalm. So page 201, Psalm 2 at verse 8.

[33 : 01] But before we sing, I have some questions. I'm looking for some answers. Okay. Are you ready, boys and girls? Yep. Question one, who was the Roman emperor who became a Christian?

What's his name? Constantine, yep. So it wasn't Julius Caesar, it wasn't Nero, it was Constantine. Okay. Question two, in what room do you see the cross?

Is it the bedroom, the classroom, or the living room? Classroom. I won't ask, do you see it often?

Question three, what two psalms mention kissing?

Psalm 2 and Psalm 85, well done. Okay. Question four, on what day should the cross of Jesus Christ count?

Today. So not tomorrow, not Tuesday, but today. Well done. Good job. So we're going to sing Psalm 2, verse 8, down to the end of the psalm.

[34 : 11] Ask of me and for heritage, the heathen I'll make thine, and for possession I to thee will give earth's utmost line. Down to the end of the psalm, kiss ye the sun, lest in his ire you perish from the way.

If once his wrath begin to burn, blessed all that on him stay. So we're singing these verses of Psalm 2 to God's praise. Psalm 2 Psalm 2

Psalm 2 Psalm 2 Is he the sun, blessed in his ire, ye perish from the way.

If once his wrath begin to burn, blessed all that on him say.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all now and forevermore. Amen. Amen. Amen.