

Summer Communion 2025- Morning Service

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Preacher: Rev. Gordon Matheson

[0:00] Well, would you please turn in your Bibles with me back this morning to John's Gospel, that! that passage we've read in John 19. We'll read again from verse 28. Verse 28.

Verse 28.

We were reading last night in the passage on the Transfiguration, these wonderful words, this is my beloved Son, listen to Him. Tonight, Lord, this morning rather, we need, Lord, desperately to hear these words. We need to hear the words, it is finished.

And so we pray, Father, that you would give us today ears to hear and hearts to believe and receive that wonderful good news. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Last night, I was saying my theme for the three services over this communion weekend is the idea of simply seeing Jesus.

[1:55] Last night, we were looking at the Transfiguration. Jesus takes Peter, James, and John. They go up the mountain, and Jesus is transfigured before them into the glorious appearance of His divinity.

And the Father speaks out of the cloud and says, this is my beloved Son, listen to Him. And how we need to be people who see and hear Jesus if we are to thrive in our lives and as disciples.

This morning, we're coming to the Lord's table, and we will be, those of us who are taking communion, will be feasting on Jesus.

We have a very tangible today way of seeing Jesus. We see the broken bread, the poured out wine, and we see there symbols that remind us of what Jesus has done.

So in a very visible way, we see something of Jesus today. It's not that He's physically present in the bread and in the wine, but there is by faith a receiving of Christ in these things.

[3:05] And so we have to perceive these things. We have to understand them. We have to see what they mean. And part of that today is found in this passage, where in the darkness of the cross, it's not recorded in John's gospel, but it's in the other gospels, that there was darkness over the face of the land during these three hours of the crucifixion.

And that in the midst of that darkness, sounds are heard coming from the cross. And some of these sounds, these sayings of Jesus are recorded for us.

We've got some of them in this passage. Woman, behold your son. And then to John, behold your mother. That duty of care that He places upon His disciple.

And then we also see these two statements. I thirst. And then these wonderful words. It is finished. We want to begin today then by asking who it is who thirsts upon this cross.

And on the face of it, it's a very simple answer. The person who's there thirsting is Jesus. That much is pretty clear to us.

[4:19] But who is He? John has told us remarkable things about this man, Jesus, in his gospel.

If you were to go back to John 1, we'll read some of that this evening. But in John 1, John says to us, this was the Word made flesh. The eternal logos of God, the Word of God, is made flesh and dwelt among us, John says.

So this Word made flesh is the one who is now at the cross. This is none other than God Himself, the second person of the Trinity.

This is God the Son, who has come into human experience, who has lived some 30 plus years and has experienced during that time already considerable sorrow in his life.

He has experienced moments and times of rejection, often by his nearest and dearest. His own brothers and sisters have rejected him.

[5:28] They have scorned him. They've scorned his messianic claims. He's faced confusion by the crowds, many of whom have completely misunderstood his ministry and his purpose for coming, and have wanted him to crown him as a rebel king, rejecting the Roman authorities, seeing the kingdom of God as something not of immense global significance and of eternal significance in the lives of every man, woman, and child on the face of this earth, but seeing him just as a little minor political revolutionary who can overthrow the Romans and restore something of Israel's past.

Can you imagine that? If you've come to resolve the eternal division between God and sinners, and people say, oh, you're just a revolutionary, you're just a Che Guevara.

How perplexing it must be, that experience of Jesus' rejection. And of the very people who ought to know better, the chief priests, the scribes, the religious authorities, they want nothing to do with him. In fact, they see him as a threat to their power and their control, and so they want him crucified.

They want him rejected. They want rid of him. Pontius Pilate, the final court of appeal, the ultimate human authority of justice, the one who holds the power of life and death, he too compromises and says, no, fine, crucify him.

Get rid of him. This is the word made flesh. This is very God of God, who by all human standards has now been rejected.

[7:28] All human authority has said, we do not want him. We will not have him. He is done with us. And now he is to be put away to the cross as a place of rejection.

The fact that he thirsts is today a confirmation to us of the opening of John's gospel.

John, in the opening of his gospel, has said very simply, the word was made flesh and dwelt among us. And some people would say that Jesus, because he is God, can't experience these petty human experiences of hunger or thirst.

And yet here at the cross, we know that just can't be the case. Because thirst is part of crucifixion. We know that from numerous accounts that tell us what actually would happen when someone is put on the cross. A Roman cross was designed to kill you by a process of slowly asphyxiating your body.

[8:47] You would for a while be able to lift yourself up on your legs, take the pressure off your ribcage. But eventually the pain because of the nails driven into your feet would be so severe doing that that you would once again collapse forwards and hang off the cross.

Your arms in agony because the nails there are stretched out and pulling your ribcage against your chest. Breathing becomes almost impossible. And so there's this slow but agonizing process of propping yourself back up, struggling for breath, and then somehow collapsing again.

And it just happens over and over and over relentlessly. In Jesus' case, only three hours. In many cases, it was a death that would last 12 or more.

As people would struggle on. And this God of ours came to be one of us, to do something for us. So much so that today we have no doubt at all in our minds that we have a Savior who was human. We have a Savior today who didn't just go through something impassively, but who was affected bodily by the experience.

[10:08] He thirsted to fulfill Scripture and to show His humanity was real. He was made the perfect sacrifice for us.

That's why the Word had to become flesh. He had to experience this as one of us because He was doing it for us.

So we can ask then, why is He thirsty? And of course, we can rattle through very quickly all of the physical reasons for that. It's not just that the crucifixion itself was brutal and thirst-inducing, but it's because of everything else that has been going on around about it, the story in John's Gospel.

You can go back about five or six chapters and you can read there the events from literally the night before in the upper room. There's the experience of one of His closest friends who has been with Him for some three or four years, Judas Iscariot, who goes out to betray Him.

That sense of betrayal by one of His closest friends. There's the experience of the Garden of Gethsemane where Jesus wrestles in prayer with His Father and where the very real sense that we get of the agony of His soul.

[11:36] If it's possible that this cup might pass from me, if there is any way that this burdensome duty and responsibility that I have taken can pass, then let's find it.

But if not, then not my will but yours be done where He surrenders Himself finally as the God-man to this experience not just of human rejection which we see, but something much more profound, something between Him and God that He's about to endure.

He's taken, the story goes on, to the high priest's house. He's taken to the palace of the high priest and actually between two addresses because there's the high priest but there's also the power behind the throne, the ones who are really calling the shots.

And He appears before them and is condemned by them. He's taken to Herod's palace and then, sorry, to Pilate's palace first of all and then Pilate actually sends him over to see Herod in his temporary palace in Jerusalem as well.

So these two Roman authorities and a Jewish authority reject Him as well. He has strange conversations with them, Pontius Pilate, asking the question, what is truth in all of this?

[13:02] Again, here is somebody who's coming to bring salvation for men and women, to offer hope in the darkness of the lives of men and women and he has an opportunity with Pontius Pilate standing right in front of him saying, what is truth?

To be so misunderstood. And then he's taken out by the Roman soldiers and the garrison batter him and beat him. They press a crown of thorns into his head, thorns of great size penetrating into his scalp and into his skull.

He's forced to carry a cross beam from the Antonina Palace all the way out to Golgotha's cross, Golgotha's hill, sorry, unable to do so, assisted by someone who's come in from the country.

And in the end, after many hours of all of this, says, I thirst. And he says it simply because he is. But there's also a deeper stress going on here, the stress that creates thirst in our own souls. We know this in our own experience, don't we? Times of great stress lead us to just be parched.

[14:31] Our tongue kind of swells a bit. Saliva glands kind of dry up. And that's because what Jesus is experiencing is stressful, not just because of the physicality of it, but because of the relational aspect of it too.

We've sung about it today already in Psalm 22. That insight that David had into what was happening at the cross. My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

Remember, this is not just a man at the cross. This is the second person of the Trinity who for all eternity has known fellowship with his Father.

If we're to think of anything, in fact, this is why our God is so unique. Our God is not one person. Our God is a Trinity, three persons who for all eternity have lived in harmony and love for one another.

The Son has always been loved by the Father. The Father has always loved the Son and the Son has always loved him back and in their love they resolved in the eternity before the creation of the world.

[15:57] They resolved this plan and purpose that they would create people in their own image whom they could love and who would love them but that these people would rebel and their sin would separate from their loving God.

And the Son covenanted with the Father and said, well, I will resolve the separation between us by taking their place.

I will go into the world that we are going to create. I will take on flesh and I will experience separation from you.

I will experience lostness. I will experience what it is to bear the consequences of their sin. And that covenant agreement between the Father and Son was made before the foundation of the world and yet it's not experienced until this day, this Friday at Golgotha where he goes to the cross and where he experiences the forsakenness of the Father.

His glory veiled in the darkness over the world. Just a few weeks earlier having been seen at the Mount of Transfiguration, that radiance of his divinity shining through is now masked in the darkness and the forsakenness of Golgotha's cross.

[17:52] And he says, I thirst. As we reflect on all of that, it's really tempting to say, well, I would probably be quite thirsty too.

And we would. And when we go through pain, those of us who've been in hospital, we've experienced this. You know, you're longing sometimes when you're incapacitated. You're longing for someone to give you a drink, just someone to help you do something just to take away the dryness and the pain.

And there's one level at which you could say that's true of Jesus. He's in agony and he wants to cry out in his pain and wants a drink.

But it's not just a complaint. The reason that he cries out, I thirst, is so that something will be done but which will enable something even clearer to come forth.

And simply put like this, the words of the cross, they're not words that are cried out with a preacher's clarity. I mean, today, I have a little bit of a cold, but even with just a little bit of a cold, you can still hear very clearly what I'm saying to you.

[19:23] And we have a tendency to think, well, everything Jesus said must have been like that. The words of the cross would have been croaked and broken, barely discernible, not much more than a whisper.

over. But it comes to the last thing that Jesus says, and he wants that to be abundantly clear. He wants there to be no uncertainty about what's actually said.

There are some things today that God does not want you or I to be in doubt over. And the bit that matters is not that Jesus was thirsty, important though that is.

The bit that matters is that he then says it is finished. And the question really is what is finished? So we've seen who was thirsty, we've seen why he's thirsty, but now we need to see what is finished. And what is finished is simply this, the glorious work that he came to do.

[20:40] What is finished is the Father's great mission. You remember the Son comes into the world to fulfill the covenant agreement, to take on himself the fulfillment of the agreement that he had with the Father before the foundation of the world, that the plan of God is at stake here.

And that plan, that eternal plan for your salvation reaches its climax at the cross.

The eternal plan of God is accomplished. It's a strange thing. I mean, the cross was a great injustice.

It ought not to have happened. But in the midst of it all, Jesus is not a powerless victim. He's not simply sitting by passively and allowing these things to happen to him.

His death was planned. It was mapped out in excruciating detail. There's a very clear sense that you see it repeatedly, actually, in John's description of this.

[21:50] In order to fulfill Scripture, in order to fulfill Scripture, the Father had a plan for all of this. The Father has mapped all of this out, and it's been revealed from many, many centuries, even millennia beforehand, that there is a great purpose being unfolded here, a great plan being worked out.

And all of it is done in detail. So the work of the cross itself is now finished. The life of Jesus has kind of led to this point.

now it's done. Just the way Peter, on the day of Pentecost, when he preaches, he says, yes, wicked men did this, but what they did was the purposes of God being fulfilled.

God being fulfilled. And so we have to remember that the cross achieves something of the Father's purpose.

The cross, it achieves an end, certainly, to the payment for your sin. Your sin, and mine, for all who believe in Christ and who put their trust in him for salvation, the cross is an end to paying for sin.

[23:13] Your sin is paid for if you believe in Jesus. And that's a remarkable statement. This is what sets us apart from Roman Catholicism.

Roman Catholics don't actually believe that. Roman Catholics believe that you still have to pay for your sin, and therefore, when you die, you will go to something hellish, not hell, but something

hellish in purgatory, and make up what's lacking in the payment for your sin. And out of that, Roman Catholic doctrine builds ideas of how sin can be removed, the weight and burden of purgatory can be lifted off you, and you can be delivered from it. But that's not what the Bible teaches. The Bible's unequivocal. It is finished. The sin bearing of Jesus, in its totality, it's done.

The fullness of your sin is now born and carried, and it's swept away in the grace of God because Jesus has paid for it. Now, there's an implication there as well, which is that if you're not in Christ, that none of your sin is paid for.

[24:40] And I want today just to speak just for a moment to anyone here who is not a believer. This is why you must be saved. Because if Jesus has not paid for your sin, then you will.

sin is a debt to God for our rebellion and our treachery and our rejection of him.

And it is a solemn thing. sin is a sin. Because if you have not come to Christ and received your debt paid in him, then what you're saying is, I will bear that debt myself.

And that is a horrifying prospect. Because Jesus, in bearing sin at the cross, went into the darkness of separation from the love of his father.

And he said, I thirst. It was awful. But for believers, the repayments are ended.

[25:57] Sin's debt is covered. Another thing that's finished is actually the power of sin itself. It's really interesting that the cross isn't just a, it isn't just a legal transaction.

It is actually directly a victory. It is a moment of triumph. Sin's power is actually beaten at the cross. Death's grip is removed because Jesus is raised by the father.

So there is the promise of eternal life and the resurrection. But that's only possible because the father has wholly accepted what Jesus has done at the cross. And so sin's power over us is defeated.

Satan's grip is gone. The powers of darkness are rejected and done away with. There's nothing left of them. It's finished.

And so today we can rejoice that Satan's power is done. And that flows over into our lives. That's why it's necessary for us to see Jesus. That's why today we have to partake of the Lord's Supper.

[27:04] because we need these reminders that what Jesus has done is tangible. It's real. It's not just a legal thing that's happened far away from us between the father and the son. There is something that actually physically happens to us.

There is a material change in us. Sin's power over us is beaten. sin. And so as you come as a Christian to see and savor Jesus, your sanctification is fueled.

You're reminded of what has justified you. You are renewed in your spirit. By looking to Jesus, you're renewed by seeing what he has done and the transforming effects of that vision of the glory of Jesus revealed at the cross changes your fight against sin in your own heart.

It changes the conflict that rages within you. It empowers and enables you to go on. It is what looking to Jesus, it is looking at the cross that enables us to live upright lives in this moment.

That's what Paul says to Titus. That because the grace of God has appeared in the person of Christ, we are therefore able to live godly and upright lives.

[28:18] And so today, this is part of looking to Jesus so that we might live to his glory. the other thing that's ended is insignificance. Not that it doesn't matter, but the Jews had this idea that salvation from God was for them and for them alone.

And they are just a tiny little corner of the world. They're just a tiny little speck in the whole ocean of humanity. And the Jews thought this is just for us.

And what Christ does at the cross is he finishes the work of bringing reconciliation. Paul says this in Romans. At the cross, Christ brings reconciliation between Jew and Gentile as well.

He reconciles both of us together to God. And so the cross represents and is an overflow, a hyperabundance of God's grace to the Gentile nations of the world.

This was for everyone. God's And that's why when he died, the temple experiences a radical transformation.

[29:24] The curtain that blocked access to God is torn from the top to the bottom. The curtain which was a barrier becomes a gateway through which all people can pass to see the glory of God.

And today that's there for us. The finished work of Jesus makes it possible for us to see and savor the abundant grace of God, the overflow of God's glory for all sinners.

And there is good news, therefore, for each and every one of us. It's therefore an end to that work, an end ultimately to death, and a glorious dawning of life.

And so today I just wonder, can you simply find peace in the finish line? Last weekend it was the Stornoway half marathon, and I was talking to one of my pals who ran in it, yesterday actually I was talking to him, and I said, how are you feeling a week on?

And he said to me, my legs still hurt. But I got to the finish line. The finish line matters. The finish line is where the glory is.

[30:51] It's where the prize is to be had. And Jesus said, I thirst because he wanted us to clearly know he reached the finish line. The work was done, and the glory is there to be had.

And so today we, in partaking of the Lord's Supper, we revel in his finishing. We rejoice in the finished work of Jesus, and we receive it by faith.

Let's pray. Heavenly Father, help us just now to receive this by faith. Help us to receive the finished work of Jesus in all of its fullness and glory and splendor.

Help us to receive the good news. Help us to open today our hearts to the gospel. Work in us by your Holy Spirit that we might know Christ and him crucified.

And that we would see why it matters and what it has done. We ask this in his name. Amen. In just a moment, we're going to sing from Psalm 118 as we come forward to the Lord's table, as the elements are brought out as well.

[32:04] before we do that, it's always necessary, this thing that we used to call fencing the Lord's table, this idea simply of asking the question, who should be sitting at the Lord's table? It's a privilege to come.

And so who is that privilege for? And if I can go back to my kids talk for just a moment, it is not for people whose tires are perfect. It is for people who know that they need to get to the garage to get their tires replaced.

It's for people who know that as they're going on, their tires are flat and they need to be refreshed. It's for people who know that without Christ, their tires are threadbare and dangerous and will result in absolute calamity.

And so they come to Jesus, who is the finished work of God. This is for people not today who are perfect. It is for people who are needy.

It is for people who languish in that need, but who reach out in faith to Christ and who find in him deliverance. And so it is for people today who want the Father's work.

[33:15] Do you want the Father's work? Do you want what he has done for your salvation? Do you want what he has done for your deliverance? Do you want what the cross achieved?

Do you want your debt paid for? Do you want the freedom and the liberty of eternal life given to you? Do you want these things? And I say that because they're good things to want to have, but actually, by nature, we don't want them.

That's what the rejection of Jesus means. That's what the rejection of the gospel means. We don't actually want these things. We'll be satisfied with something else. And so today, do you want Jesus?

Do you want the one who has finished this for you? Do you want him? I should say as well, it's not a free church table, it's the Lord's table. So if you're a visitor with us today, I don't know, you're very welcome.

If you're in good standing with your own church at home, you're very welcome to join us and come forward to sit together at the Lord's table. There's space on the table here, I think, at the sides as well, to come and sit. And the kids are going to be coming back in as well.

[34:27] So let's sing to God's praise just now as we come to the table in Psalm 118. This is the Scottish Psalter verse on page 398. We're going to

sing from verse 15.

I think I told the presenters, I think it's five stanzas, but however many are necessary for everything to be made ready. So we'll sing from verse 15. And dwellings of the righteous has heard the melody of joy and health.

The Lord's right hand doth ever valiantly. The right hand of the mighty Lord exalted is on high. The right hand of the mighty Lord doth ever valiantly. I shall not die but live and shall the works of God discover.

The Lord hath me chastised sore but not to death given over and so on. Let's sing to God's praise. We'll stand to sing. Amen. In dwellings of the righteous is the melody of surely and hell the Lord's white hand doth ever valiantly.

! I shall turn off the mighty Lord I shall turn off the Lord, is on high, the right hand of the mighty Lord, doth ever by yet live.

[36:38] I shall not die but live and shall die the works of God is sober, the Lord hath reached as I said sore, but not to death in the world.

or set ye open unto me the gates of righteousness, then will I enter into them and I the Lord well bless.

This is the gate of God by it the just shall enter in thee will my praise for thou thee and my safety been.

. Thank you.