

Spring Communion - Why Crucifixion?

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[0 : 00] If you can turn to John 19 again and just reading in verse 16 there, John 19 and verse 16 where we read there, Pilate, so he delivered him over to them to be crucified.

Now, the question I want to ask today is, in some sense, why did Jesus die on a cross?

I mean, the cross is something that is very much central to our thinking of Jesus. It is central to our thinking of our Lord and Savior, and especially on a day like this when we gather together for a communion service, God willing, a bit later on we'll sit at the Lord's table, and the cross very much is at the center, rightly so as well.

The cross is very much at the center of our thoughts. But why is it that the Son of God was specifically, why is it that he was to die by crucifixion?

Because I'm going to try and argue today that that kind of a death, a death specifically on the cross, a death by crucifixion, that that was the perfect way for our Lord and our Savior to die.

[1 : 22] And as we think about this, I want us to really marvel at the wisdom of God and how the whole plan of redemption was put together in such a way that specifically Jesus was going to die in this way, not in some other way, that he was going to die specifically in this way, that he was going to be crucified.

Because you could, technically speaking maybe, you could argue that God could have ordained for Jesus to have died in some other way.

I know it's dangerous to kind of speculate like that, but you could make that argument. You could argue that the Lord and his plan, he could have ordained our Savior to suffer and to die in another way, maybe another kind of death.

We know that there was lots of different forms of execution, for example. That wasn't the only one. When you look at history and the history of execution itself, there's so many different kinds of execution, types of execution recorded for us right throughout history.

But the Lord, in his wisdom and his plan, he didn't ordain for Jesus to die in one of these other ways or in any other way. He ordained very specifically for Jesus to suffer on a cross.

[2 : 38] And specifically, not just a cross, but specifically as well actually Roman crucifixion. There was always the plan that the Lord was going to die on a Roman cross. That's really the theme that I want us to think about today as we approach the Lord's table.

Just to see the wisdom of God. I want us to see the wisdom of the Lord and how this plan actually involved crucifixion. I know straight away we instinctively think of the cross, but just to think of why it was that.

Why, out of all these other kinds of deaths, why it was the cross that was the method that the Lord had ordained for our Savior, the Lord, the Messiah, to die.

And you have to remember as well, when you're thinking about the gospel and you're reading through the gospel, it's no accident that Jesus ended up on a cross. You can perhaps wrongly read the gospel and think to yourself, well, this is just how it worked out.

You know, almost as though this is sort of plan B, that this was forced upon God because, well, the Pharisees had turned on Jesus. Pilate, obviously, by this point, had turned on Christ as well.

[3 : 47] The enemies of the Lord had turned on him. And perhaps the crucifixion was just plan B. This is the way it unfolded. This wasn't intended to be the case at all. But, of course, that's not true.

Although you can maybe mistakenly read the gospel like that and think this is just something that happened, that's not the case. It was always the plan. It was absolutely always the plan.

This was always going to happen to Jesus from the moment he was conceived there, from the moment he came into this world, from the moment he was born. It was always the plan that the direction was going towards the cross.

It didn't just end up there accidentally. This was always the intention. And we know that by the Old Testament because we read the Old Testament.

And there's so many prophecies there of speaking about the way in which not just that the Messiah was going to die, but specifically, really, that the Messiah was going to die by crucifixion, the cross.

[4 : 44] And we sang probably the obvious, the most obvious prophecy just a few moments ago there in Psalm 22. That is a psalm that's penned hundreds of years before the time of Jesus, which is quite amazing, really.

Undeniably so as well. Undeniably it's written hundreds of years before the time of Christ. But also, interestingly, hundreds of years even before the invention of Roman crucifixion.

And the reason I say that's amazing is because of the detail that you find in that psalm that so clearly speaks about crucifixion. We touched on some of them in the introduction to the singing of the psalm.

There's so many similarities, so many things, very, very vivid pictures that you see in Psalm 22 that so clearly describes the event of not just any crucifixion, but the crucifixion of the Lord himself.

And there's other places you can maybe point to as well in the Old Testament to show that this was always the plan. So this was absolutely always the plan of the Lord.

[5 : 48] And we want to look really at this question of why it was the perfect way for our Lord to die. That's what I want to think about.

Now, just to clarify the question I'm asking, I'm not asking here necessarily why did Jesus have to die. I'm not asking that question of why it was that he had to die.

I mean, that would be a good question, obviously, to look at theologically, very important question. I suppose a short answer to that question is, well, he had to die because in order for sins to be atoned for, he had to go through that.

That's something that's very clear in Scripture. The wages, the wages of sin is death. The wages of sin is judgment. And in order for the Lord to save his people, then he had to take that to himself.

He had to take that judgment. He had to take the wrath of God. He had to himself go through death. So in order to defeat death, he had to enter into death.

[6 : 48] So there's no question about that. I think all of us see the significance of that. There's no question of the fact that he absolutely had to die. He had to die absolutely in order for sin to be atoned for.

But that didn't necessarily mean, that doesn't necessarily mean that it had to be death on a cross. God, as I said earlier on, he could have used any of these other ways, any of these other means, another form of execution.

But he doesn't. He chooses this one. And he has a purpose for that. There's a specific reason why the Lord chooses the cross of all of these different ways in which Jesus could die.

And the reason for that is it communicates all sorts to us. And I've got six things, six reasons here of why death by crucifixion was the perfect death for Jesus to die.

Six reasons in terms of things that the cross actually communicates to us. So as terrible as crucifixion was, as painful as crucifixion was, if Jesus was going to have to die, this was the perfect way.

[7 : 58] This was the perfect way for him to die. Now, the first thing I've got here. So we'll look at five of them just now. And then the sixth one we'll look at, God willing, when we approach the table a bit later on. So first of these reasons as to why death by crucifixion was the perfect way for Jesus to die.

The first reason is that death by crucifixion highlights the fact that Jesus bore the curse of sin. So specifically, death by crucifixion, it highlights the fact that Jesus bore the curse of sin.

Now, what do I mean by that? What am I getting at there? Well, there's a verse in the Old Testament and in Deuteronomy, and it says, Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree.

Well-known verse. Cursed is anyone who is hanged on a tree. And this was part of a Jewish law where some criminals, and in certain circumstances anyway, some criminals, they were left hanging on a tree after they were put to death.

And the reason that they were left hanging on the tree was really a sign to onlookers that they were cursed. It was a sign that they were cursed by God. So quite literally, when someone was hanging on a tree, it was a sign.

[9 : 11] A sign that they were cursed by God himself. So the Jews connected those things together. So the Jews very much, they connect the idea of hanging on a tree. They connect that idea with the concept of being cursed by God.

And amazingly, when you see here in the crucifixion of Jesus, you have a form of death that is essentially him hanging on a tree. That's really what crucifixion is.

You don't see that in other forms of death. But in crucifixion, it is like that. It is as though the Lord is hanging on a tree. The cross clearly is a wooden cross.

It quite literally comes from a tree. And you see other parts of Scripture where the cross is referred to as a tree. That's how we're to see it. So as we read the passage of the crucifixion, we see Christ hanging there.

Yes, on a wooden cross, but hanging there on a tree. And it's right to think of Christ like that. Hanging on a tree. And if you think back to that version, the Old Testament, that's a sign. A sign that he is cursed.

[10 : 15] A sign that he is bearing curse. And he is. That's absolutely the case. When we look with the eye of faith to Christ on the cross, the whole reason he's hanging there on that cross, hanging there on that tree, is because he has taken our curse on himself.

Our curse as sinners. He's taking our guilt. He's taking our sin, bearing it, bearing our guilt, bearing our sin, and bearing our curse.

So for the Lord's people in here today, if your faith and trust is in the Lord Jesus Christ, then you're looking at the cross and you're seeing one there who has taken that curse, that curse that ought to be on you.

And he's taken, amazingly taken, that curse onto himself. Now, if we're outside of Christ, the opposite is true. That curse that we see Jesus bearing here is a curse that remains on us.

And that's a solemn reality and a solemn truth. But if we've come to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, we look to one who has taken our curse. And when we come to the table a bit later on, we remember these things.

[11 : 22] We think about the way in which Jesus has taken the curse of sin from us. And he's taken that to himself there on the cross. So this particular form of death, crucifixion, highlights that.

It communicates something of that. Another form of death wouldn't have done that. But crucifixion, hanging on a tree, it communicates taking the curse, cursed for us. And there's another link between tree and curse as well.

Because remember that curse that we all have from birth is a curse that comes our way because our first parents ate from a tree that they ought not have eaten from.

We've been reflecting the last two services, really, about events in the Garden of Eden. And the same is true here. Our curse traces its roots all the way back to a tree in Eden.

And now how amazing that in the gospel you have the Lord himself hanging on a very different tree at Calvary to undo that curse. So you can go all the way back to a tree in the Garden of Eden, the curse coming in.

[12 : 26] And then in the New Testament you have the Lord Jesus Christ on a very different tree undoing the curse. So our curse begins on a tree and it ends on a tree as well at Calvary. It begins on a tree in Eden.

It ends on a tree, on a tree at Calvary itself. It begins with Adam in disobedience approaching a tree. And the curse is brought to an end by the Lord himself on a tree.

And he's on that tree in obedience, suffering in order to save his people. So you see in the tapestry of how all that comes together, you see the beauty and wisdom of the plan of God.

That the death of Jesus was going to be the death of him dying specifically on a tree. The cross itself being like a tree. And we see how that highlights the way in which he's cursed.

Cursed is anyone who hangs on a tree. All these things are communicated to us. The link to Eden, you know, how it all comes together. It's a beautiful picture. Another form of death wouldn't have done that.

[13 : 32] Another form of execution wouldn't have done that. But specifically death by crucifixion, it communicates all of that to us. So that's the first thing. Crucifixion highlights that Jesus bore the curse of sin.

Secondly, death by crucifixion meant that Jesus' death was a death that was visible to all. So this is another important one. So crucifixion as a form of execution, it was really invented to be very visible.

It was designed to be very visible. The Romans, of course, they wanted every crucifixion to be a message. A message that everybody would see to effectively deter criminals.

To deter criminals from breaking the law and carrying out these crimes. So it was very much designed to be visible. It was high and lifted up. There was that visible public element to it designed for people to see and people to fear as well.

When you think of that, again, that is the perfect way for Jesus to die. Because his death, it wasn't the death of a criminal. Certainly, certainly not. Rather, it's the death of the sacrificial lamb.

[14 : 38] The death of the one who was laying his life down in order to save his people. And because of that, because of the nature of the significance of the death of the Lord, the Lord wanted everyone to see that.

It wasn't going to be a death hidden away in some corner. It was going to be something very visible. The death of Christ was absolutely intended by the Lord himself. In the sovereign plan of God, it was intended to be an open, public, visible death.

Very much a visible death. Because his death was going to be so fundamental to our salvation. So important to the salvation of the Lord's people.

And the nature of the death, it removes any possibility of anyone casting any doubt on whether Jesus died. On the reality of the death of Jesus.

You can't doubt it. It's a very public event. We have so many eyewitness accounts of the events themselves taking place. So many people, even the hardest of atheists today, can't really deny this.

[15 : 37] They can't really. Some of them try, I suppose. But they can't really deny that Jesus died on the cross. They can deny who Jesus is and why he died and all these things. But you cannot deny that he died on the cross.

It's because it's so visible. It's so clear. So it was imperative that the death of the Messiah was going to be one that was public. Going to be one that was visible to all.

And it was important, too, that it was visible. Because in salvation, when you think about salvation, we look by faith to the crucified Jesus.

That's what we're doing. By faith, we're looking to the crucified Jesus. And we're able to do that because of the sheer volume of content that we have in the gospel accounts. We have so much detail, don't we, of the events of the death of Jesus.

You know, little things. Small little things. The things he says. And all of that. We have all of that because there were so many eyewitnesses. So many eyewitness accounts that build this amazing picture for us that we have in all of the gospels.

[16 : 38] As we look to the crucifixion of Christ. We can almost imagine it in our mind's eye. We have that much detail of the events of the cross. And that reminds me of and links back again to another Old Testament narrative.

That's the Old Testament narrative of the bronze serpent. Remember Israel in the wilderness. And they're disobedient. They're complaining.

They're sinning in lots of different ways, really. And the Lord judges them for that. The Lord's just delivered them. Saved them. And they're complaining and they're being disobedient. And judgment comes.

And the judgment comes in the form of those fiery serpents. And the fiery serpents come in. Of course, the fiery serpent bites someone. They die. And it was resulting in the death of lots of people. And in the end, they acknowledge their wrongdoing.

They acknowledge the fact that they'd sinned. They repent. And they ask for mercy. They ask for healing from the Lord. And then that's when God tells Moses to put together this bronze serpent.

[17 : 39] And to put it on a high pole, specifically. It was going to be something elevated. Something high. And that meant that if the people were to be bitten, they would look at the bronze serpent. And they would be healed.

And because the thing was high and lifted up, it was visible. From all places in the camp. It doesn't matter where you were in the camp. If you were bitten, you could look up. And it was a very visible thing. The bronze serpent.

You would look. And you would be healed. And we know that that is a picture of Christ on the cross. You know, a reminder of that in the Gospels as well.

John reminds us of that fact. That just like the serpent was lifted up, so Christ is lifted up. Just as you were healed by looking to the bronze serpent.

We are healed, cleansed, saved by looking to Christ. We are to behold our Savior dying for us. And we will be forgiven. And again, crucifixion has that element to it of lifting up a visible thing.

[18 : 38] A visible death. So that we now have lots of detail about the very fact of the crucifixion. And some of what goes on. So that we can, as it were, look, with the eye of faith, look to the crucifixion of the Lord.

So that's the second thing. Death by crucifixion. It was a death that was visible to all. Visible to all. Another kind of death wouldn't have been like that. If it was a death that was in a hidden corner somewhere.

Or another kind of execution that wasn't as visible. You wouldn't have had that effect. But this one, very visible. A very visible death. Thirdly, death by crucifixion meant that he was still able to talk.

The Lord was still able to talk. Again, there are many forms of execution and death as well where the victim wasn't able to speak. Maybe just perhaps because of the time that it was a quick thing and no time to speak.

Or just physically not able to speak. But crucifixion, this was a form of death that meant that you could actually talk. You could actually speak. Albeit with great pain.

[19 : 44] Because in order to speak, what you'd have to do is put pressure down on the nail and the feet to be able to open up the chest cavity. To be able to speak with some degree of volume.

And that was painful. By the way, that's why they would break the legs to speed up the process. To stop you being able to open up your chest. So being able to speak was painful.

But it was something that was possible. The Lord was able to speak. This was a particular form of death where the Lord could actually communicate to us. And as a result of that, we have a number of recorded sayings of Jesus on the cross.

And these words become like an amazing window to us to understand something of what it is that the Lord is actually going through in his sufferings. It's amazing that we have that insight.

You know, it's one thing to get the eyewitness accounts of what people see happening on the cross. You know, whether it be the people around, the thieves. You can look at it from the perspective of the Roman soldiers.

[20 : 49] You have all these angles of the cross. And all these things are good. All these things are good ways of viewing the cross. And we can learn something. But nothing is like hearing the word of Christ himself. What he's saying. That's like a first-hand experience of what it is that he's going through.

So it was crucial for us, really, to get his own words. To hear what it is that he's saying on the cross. And when you see him there on the cross, you see him praying, Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.

And you see there the compassion, the love of the Lord, the mercy of the Lord in that wonderful prayer. And then you have, later on, you have that cry. We read of it there in that chapter.

That cry of, I thirst. I thirst. Speaking, of course, not just of this physical thirst that he's going through at the time. But something spiritual. This spiritual thirst that he's experiencing after being deprived for a time of his father's face and fellowship.

Something he hadn't experienced before. And he's going through this. And he's crying out, I thirst. And then, of course, famously, you have the great cry of dereliction. The words that you read at the beginning of Psalm 22.

[21 : 57] My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? We're hearing these things. We're hearing these cries. We're hearing that prayer from the Lord himself. And then, you know, as you get on, you see the whole plan coming to a climax, coming to that crescendo moment as he cries out, It is finished.

The work that I have come to do. It is finished. And there's so much in those words. So much in those words. It is finished. And then you see his authority over death itself in the end.

And you see him saying, Into your hands I commit my spirit. He's giving himself over to death. It's not that death came for him. It's not that death took him. He's the one with the authority there.

He is the one who's giving himself, handing himself over into it. So when you look at the words of Christ on the cross, it gives us this tremendous window into the spiritual suffering of what he's actually going through.

So even there, when he's suffering and all that pain, he's communicating to us. He's communicating to us something of what it is. Something, a glimpse even, of the depths of the darkness that he has entered into, and specifically entered into as a result of our sin.

[23 : 14] So death by crucifixion meant he was still able to talk. And that is important. He helps us to understand something of what it is that he's going through.

Many other forms of execution wouldn't have allowed that. Either the time wouldn't have been there, or he physically wouldn't have been able to speak. The person wouldn't be able to speak in certain kinds of execution.

But this one, crucifixion, this was a form of execution that meant that he was, he had that opportunity to speak. And again, you see God's wisdom in that. The plan of God, that that was the method, that the Messiah, the Lord himself, was ordained to die by crucifixion.

So that's the third thing. So death by crucifixion meant that he was still able to talk. The fourth thing I've got down here is death by crucifixion highlights to us the humiliation of Christ's suffering.

Now, again, when you think of death, there are many forms of death which you might say is, you know, a dignified way of dying. We speak about that a lot nowadays, you know, dignity and death.

[24 : 26] There's many a death that you might say is dignified, a dignified way of dying, or perhaps a peaceful way of dying. Now, death by crucifixion was far from that.

It was anything, anything but dignified, anything but peaceful. It was a death of unbelievable, unimaginable humiliation. I mean, you were left hanging naked there in all your pain, in all your sorrow, in all your suffering.

You were lifted up, hanging naked for all to see, and the crowds are there mocking, mocking and jeering. And we certainly know that was the case in the experience of Christ himself.

He experienced that mockery, that ridicule from the crowd. So the level of humiliation, the physical humiliation, that's actually on display in the cross is beyond our ability to comprehend it.

It's beyond words. But again, when you think of it like that, that was the perfect display of the spiritual humiliation that our Lord and our Savior is actually going through.

[25 : 32] I mean, he had left the glory of eternity to come down into this fallen world. He didn't have to do that. He came down into this fallen world from the glory of eternity in order to suffer, in order to die, in what is really the most incredible act of humiliation, the most incredible step down of humiliation that this world has ever known.

And how fitting it is, how fitting it is that his death, physical death, I mean, that his death, therefore, should be one that is incredibly humiliating. A humiliating death, because that highlights to us, the spiritual side, it highlights to us that spiritual humiliation that he faced.

A humiliation on the scale that this world can't really comprehend, you know, from, as we know, from glory to Golgotha, you know, from the greatest of heights, the greatest of heights to the very lowest of depths.

And specifically, death by crucifixion highlights that. More so than any other death would have done, that kind of death highlights the reality of that. So, that's the fourth thing.

Death by crucifixion highlights to us the humiliation of Christ's suffering. Now, fifthly, and this is almost the very opposite of what I've just said.

[26 : 54] Fifthly, death by crucifixion is a reminder not only of his humiliation, but also counterintuitively, it is also a reminder to us of Christ's exaltation.

So, death by crucifixion, it doesn't just remind us of a humiliation, it actually also reminds us of Christ's exaltation. And what I mean by that is his royal status, because the death of Jesus on the cross is not just the death of a mere man, it's the death of a king.

And specifically, it's the death of the king of kings himself. And how fitting that he should be put to death in a way that involves him being lifted up, exalted.

There is an element of exaltation there. And John, especially, you know, when you're reading the Gospel of John, John especially highlights this aspect when he's talking about the death of Christ. He speaks about the death of Christ in terms of exaltation.

He speaks about the death of Christ, or he writes about the death of Christ in terms of glorification. Almost like an enthronement is actually taking place. And that is what it is, because he is king.

[28 : 00] Our Lord and our Savior, he is king. So, yes, you can say it's a humiliation, and it absolutely is a humiliation. But there's also exaltation there as well. It's a picture of exaltation too.

There on the cross in Jerusalem, it is as though the Lord himself is enthroned, enthroned on the cross with that title above him, Jesus, king. Jesus, king, king of the Jews.

Now, of course, it's a very strange kind of throne. It's a throne of pain, a throne of humiliation, as I was mentioning earlier on, a throne of suffering.

It's a throne that's not so much marked by a crown of gold. It's a throne that's marked by a crown of suffering, a crown of thorns. But make no mistake, he is there, lifted up there as king.

King. A king absolutely like no other. A king who endures the suffering of the cross in order to save his people. But he is king. And as we bow before him, even in worship just now as we come, and even as we come to the Lord's table in a few moments' time, we come down bowing before one who is our king.

[29 : 12] Even as we think of him lifted up on the cross, we come acknowledging him as king. The crowds didn't see Jesus as king. They were mocking, mocking. The Roman soldiers didn't see Jesus as king.

The chief priests and the Pharisees and the religious leaders, they didn't even see Jesus as king. They just saw a criminal being lifted up there. But we, with the eye of faith, we look to our Lord and Savior lifted up, and we see one there who is our king.

Our king enthroned and lifted up and suffering for us. And it's interesting as well that as our king, his hands are wide open. They're nailed, of course.

They're nailed open. But even in that picture that you have of the king lifted up with his arms wide open, that posture itself speaks to us.

That posture itself says something. We see something there of the invitation of the king, the invitation of the gospel. Our king making it very clear that he's inviting all to come to him, that he's dying and suffering in order, that all who will come to him will receive, will receive that salvation.

- [30 : 20] His arms are absolutely outstretched, ready and willing to receive all who will come to him, all who will put their faith and their trust in the Lord. And that remains through today as well.

The Lord's arms continue to be outstretched, not nailed anymore. They're not nailed open like they were at the time of the cross.

But his arms are outstretched. His arms are outstretched in the proclamation of the gospel. His arms are outstretched as our king. And he comes to you in the gospel.

And he says to us, Come. The invitation is there. The invitation is there. Commanding us even to come. Receive that forgiveness. Receive that cleansing. Receive all the benefits that my death on the cross has purchased for those who are my own.

And that king, as his arms are wide open today, he's saying, Come and bow the knee. Bow the knee. And acknowledge me as Lord. Put your trust and faith in me.

- [31 : 20] Acknowledge me as your king. So, you see, this form of death by crucifixion, it highlights that to us.

It highlights the exaltation. It highlights the royal status, the outstretched arms, all these things. It speaks to us of that. Another form of death wouldn't have done that. But this specific one, you see, the wisdom of God, the plan of God, and how he has designed this great plan of redemption to climax at this moment of Jesus, not just dying, not just suffering, but specifically suffering on a cross, dying by crucifixion.

So, there's five ways in which we see how death by crucifixion is the perfect way for Jesus to die. Now, there is another one that I want to come on to in a moment, but we'll pause there just now and we'll pick up that next, that last one, the sixth one, when we approach the table of the Lord in a few moments.

So, we'll bow our heads now and just come before the Lord in prayer. Heavenly Father, we do give thanks for this opportunity that we have had to think about the wonder of the plan of God, your wisdom, and how the whole plan of redemption comes together, that wonderful tapestry of the Word of God that we see, and how we delight to see that, to see all these wonderful connections and see the infinite nature of the wisdom of our Lord and our God.

We ask that you would go before us now, bless that Word to us, remind us of that, of those outstretched arms, the way in which you not only invite, but indeed, as King, command your people to come to yourself.

- [33 : 07] For every one of us in here, make us able and willing to respond to that. And we ask, O Lord, that you would wash us now, that you would cleanse us from that sin.

And we ask it all for Jesus' sake. Amen. We're going to sing in Psalm 116 at this point.

So Psalm 116 in the Scottish Psalter. So Psalm 116.

And we're going to sing from verse 8. So verse 8, that's page 396. And verse 8, down to the verse marked 14.

For my distressed soul from death delivered was by thee. Thou didst to my mourning eyes from tears, my feet from falling free.

- [34 : 07] I in the land of those that live will walk the Lord before. I did believe. Therefore I spake. I was afflicted sore. I said when I was in my haste that all men liars be.

And then you have this question, what shall I render to the Lord? For all is gifts to me. The beginning of the Psalm speaks about salvation, conversion really, the way in which the Lord has delivered the psalmist. And now he's asking the question, what shall I now do?

What shall I render to the Lord for having saved me, having given me these gifts? And the answer, I'll of salvation take the cup. On God's name will I call. I'll pay my vows now to the Lord before his people all.

So in response to what the Lord has done for me, I will now show my love and devotion to the Lord. And of course we'll be doing that in a few moments, by literally doing that, by coming to the table and taking the cup.

So sing Psalm 116, verse 8 to 14, to God's praise. And we'll stand to sing. Psalm 116, verse 9, verse 9, verse 9, verse 9, verse 10, The dead's my mourning, I strong tears, my feet from falling free.

[35 : 31] I in the land of those that live will walk the Lord before.

I did believe, therefore I spake, I was afflicted sore.

I said when I was in my haste, that all men liars me.

What shall I render to the Lord for all his gifts to me?

I know salvation, take the cup, on God's name will I call.

[36 : 50] I'll pay my vows now to the Lord before his people long.

Now at this point it's our custom to fence the table of the Lord before we actually come to it in a few moments' time.

And that very simply just means highlighting who it is that ought to come and who it is that ought to sit at the table of the Lord.

Now I mentioned a few moments ago there when we were talking about crucifixion that one of the points was that death by crucifixion was a death that was visible to all, was visible to all people.

And I made the reference there to the narrative of the bronze serpent and the way in which when the bronze serpent, if the people were bitten, if they were to look at that bronze serpent that was lifted up, that look would heal them.

[38 : 03] But that was not a mere look. It wasn't just a mere look at the bronze serpent. That was a look of faith. That was a look believing.

The people looked believing that God would heal, believing that the Lord would enable them to live. It was a look that was absolutely full of trust.

And for the Lord's people, the Christian is really someone who has done just that. They are those who know that they've been bitten and infected with this terrible disease.

We're thinking about the spiritual leprosy on Friday night, the spiritual disease that all of us have of our sin, that spiritual leprosy that takes hold of us. The Lord's people are those who know that.

We know that. We're not dead to it anymore. We're alive to the fact that we have this disease, this illness. We know that we need saving. We know that we need healing and cleansing.

[39 : 01] But importantly, we've also turned to Christ. We've turned to Christ with the eye of faith and we've looked to Him. We've looked to Him, lifted up on the cross.

We've put our faith and our trust in Him. And when we do that, when we put our faith and trust, when we're leaning on the Lord, when we're trusting in the Lord, not just with some academic knowledge of believing in the existence of Jesus, but actually trusting in Him, putting our faith in Him, when we do that, we experience that healing.

And for those of us who are the Lord's, we know what that's like, that washing, our guilt taken away, our shame taken away, our sin taken away. We're made new. We're pardoned.

And that spiritual healing has an effect. There's evidence of it. It leads to something. It leads to all sorts of changes. Changes in our worldview, changes in our life, changes in our desires, gives us a love for the Lord.

We never loved Him before. Now we have this love, a love for the Lord, a love for His people, a love for being with His people, a love for fellowshiping with His people. This desire as well to worship.

[40 : 17] There was a day where the last thing we would want to have done is to come worship the Lord, perhaps. But this renewal, this new life that we receive, it produces in us this desire for worship, not to do it out of habit, out of routine, near mere tradition.

Again, like perhaps was the case for many of us, but rather to do it out of desire. It changes us. It's a salvation, a healing that has an effect. It actually changes us. We have this desire as well to seek to live obediently too.

Now, that doesn't mean that we become perfect. Absolutely not. We know that. And those who are sitting at the table just now, we know that we're not perfect. We are far from perfect.

But we do see evidences of the fruit of these things. We see evidences of the way in which the Lord has changed our hearts, our souls, our way of thinking, all of that.

And sometimes these things are more evident than they are at other times. I think we all know that's the case. There are some times when we feel like our faith is weak and there are other times when we feel like our faith is strong.

[41 : 23] And the qualification for who it is that should come to the table of the Lord is not whoever has strong faith. You know, those who are doing really well, then you can come to the table of the Lord. You know, you've reached a certain level if you're good enough, but then you can come to the table of the Lord.

That's not the qualification. The qualification is that we have faith and trust in the Lord. And sometimes that'll be weak. Sometimes that'll be strong. But you know what? In a way, when our faith is weak, that's probably when we feel most reluctant to come to the table.

When we're aware of the weakness of our faith. But the reality is that when our faith is weak, we need the supper then more than ever. More than ever. It is there to strengthen.

It is there to encourage and strengthen the faith of the Lord's people. And the qualification today to come to the table of the Lord is just that. That our faith and trust is in the Lord.

However weak, however fragile, and it can be fragile at times, however weak, however fragile our faith is, if we have faith, if we have looked and put our trust in the Lord, acknowledged to Him as our Lord and our King, then our place, very simply, is at the Lord's table.

[42 : 33] And we're going to sing in a few moments now in Psalm 118. And during the singing of this psalm, if you're not already at the table, I know many of you are already at the table, but if you're not at the Lord's table and if you're a member in good standing in any congregation, you can take your place at the table during the singing of this psalm.

So we're going to sing in the Scottish Psalter and Psalm 118. Psalm 118. Psalm we often come to and sing as we approach the table of the Lord.

We're going, that's page 398. Page 398. We're going to sing verse 15. We'll sing down to the verse Mark 21. Unless we need any longer, the presenter can go on if we need any longer, but we'll at least sing from verse 15 down to the verse Mark 21.

In dwellings of the righteous is 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 its sword, but not to death given over.

[43 : 54] O set ye open unto me the gates of righteousness. Then will I enter into them, and I, the Lord, will bless. This is the gate of God. By it the just shall enter in. And that is Christ himself.

He is the gate. I think we thought about that, was it on Friday or last night? I can't remember now, but that he is the gate, the way of access to the Lord. Thee will I praise, for thou me heardst, and hast my safety been.

And then, of course, it goes on later to speak about the stone being the head cornerstone. Again, a wonderful picture of Christ there as well. But we'll sing at least to verse 21, to the praise of the Lord.

Thee will is of the righteous, is there the melody of joy and death.

The Lord's right hand doth ever abundantly The right hand of the mighty Lord Exalted is on high The right hand of the mighty Lord Does ever abundantly The right hand of the mighty Lord The Lord shall not die But live and shall

[45 : 56] The words of God discover The Lord have been The Lord have been Just by his sword But not to death Give no more O set ye open Unto me The gates of righteousness Then will I enter The gates of God

The gates of God The gates of God The gates of God The gates of God The gates of God The judge shall enter here.

Thee will I praise, for thou behest, and hast my safety been.

Well, I've been giving reasons today in our sermon as to thinking about why crucifixion was the perfect way for our Lord and our Savior to die, in terms of any other way of death or execution than it was specifically through death on the cross.

And we've seen, so first of all, how crucifixion reminds us that Jesus bears the curse of sin. So, cursed is anyone who hangs in a tree.

[48 : 19] We saw how that communicates to us, the way in which he takes our curse. Secondly, we saw how it was a death that was visible to all. So, that idea of him being high and lifted up, a death that we see with the eye of faith.

Thirdly, we saw that it was a death that meant that he could still speak. So, we actually hear his words. We're able to hear what it is that he's saying as he expresses something of the anguish of soul, something of what it is that he's going through at the time of crucifixion.

Fourthly, we saw that it was a death that highlighted his humiliation as well. Incredibly humiliating death. That speaks to us of that spiritual humiliation that he goes through.

And then, fifthly and importantly, it's a form of death that highlighted his exaltation as well.

So, his exaltation, that picture of him being lifted up as king, as our king, as yes, suffering, yes, humiliated, but also exalted as the king himself.

[49 : 30] And I said there were six things. And I've got one other thing noted here as well. And this is an important one too. And that is that crucifixion is a form of death that teaches us something about the spiritual suffering.

It's an indicator to us of something of the spiritual suffering that our Lord and Savior actually went through. Because as we know, we talk much about the physical nature of crucifixion and the physical pain, the physical death that's experienced there.

But the physical pain and physical suffering, we know that is not in and of itself what atoned for our sins. That is not what paid the price for our sins. The spiritual suffering, that is the crux of it.

The spiritual sufferings of our Lord and Savior. That involves the wrath of God being experienced. Last night we thought about the sword of justice, God's sword of justice coming through the soul of his own son.

That's a spiritual thing that's going on. That divine abandonment that takes place at the cross itself. These are spiritual things. These are things that we can't see.

[50 : 37] They're invisible to us. And we really can't fully grasp it either. We can't grasp these things. But death by crucifixion, because of the incredible pain, the excruciating pain, and by the way, that's where excruciating comes from, crucifixion, the excruciating pain of crucifixion, that becomes an indicator to us of what's going on inside the soul of Christ.

So it's like we're seeing on the outside a picture of something far greater, of what's going on on the inside. Now, to think of that, to illustrate that, think of an industrial furnace.

One of these furnaces you can't see into. There's no window at any, you can't see into these furnaces. And all you see is this temperature gauge on the outside. And if you stood there, looking at one of these furnaces in operation, you'd see that gauge going up, the temperature going up.

And that would be an indicator to you that the temperature's going up. But that doesn't mean that you know what it feels like to be in there, inside that furnace. We can see the number going up and see whatever figure it reaches. But that's nothing like actually experiencing what it's like to be inside that furnace.

And of course, nobody would want to experience what's going on inside a furnace like that. But the indicator communicates that to you. You don't see what's going on. You have no idea, no comprehension of what's going on inside the furnace.

[51 : 55] But the indicator tells you something. The indicator tells you outwardly something of what's going on on the inside. And crucifixion, the nature of that form of death, it is like that as well.

It is the outward indicator to us, the physical indicator to us that speaks to us of what's going on inside, of what's going on inside the soul of our Lord and our Savior as He suffers there on the cross.

So in other words, the extreme nature of death by crucifixion, it's used by the Lord to communicate something of the extreme spiritual suffering that our Lord and our Savior is going through at that time.

And the amazing thing when we look at all that is that He did that for us, that He went through all of that for those who are His people. And when we come to the Lord's Supper, as we're doing just now, and as we partake of the bread, and as we partake of the wine, remembering the broken body, the shed blood, what we're doing is we're remembering all that He's gone through, the Lord has gone through, and that reminds us of the incredible love that the Lord has for us.

How loved we are that He would go through that, that He would experience all of that for people like us. We don't see ourselves as valuable or precious or lovable, but in the eyes of the Lord, that's exactly what we are.

[53 : 23] And those of us who are His people, we are precious, valuable, so precious, so loved, so valuable, that He would go through, He would go through all of these things in order to save us, in order to bring us to Himself, in order that now that we can sit together as a family of the Lord's people at the Lord's table and pass these things on.

And as we partake, and as we remember, we're going to be strengthened. As I mentioned earlier on, there are times when you come to the table and you are weak, and maybe that's the case for a number of us in here.

You feel that sense of weakness, that sense of maybe even, oh, I shouldn't be here. We can feel like that. I shouldn't be here. But like I was saying earlier on, as we partake, as we remember, as we think of what He's done for us, what the Lord has done for us, what He continues to do for us, it strengthens us.

It gives us the strength that we need, the nourishment that we need to keep on going. So as you, in a few moments, partake of the bread, as you take these symbols of the physical sufferings of the Lord, let's think of all that He went through physically, spiritually, and why He went through it.

That He went through it to save us, to wash us, to cleanse us, to bring us to Himself and bring us together as a family of the Lord's people too. So we're now going to read our scriptural warrant for the sacrament of the supper.

[54 : 46] We're going to read in 1 Corinthians 11. 1 Corinthians 11, and we'll read from verse 23, where we read there, For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus, on the night when He was betrayed, took bread, 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. In the same way also, He took the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.

For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes. Whoever therefore eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty concerning the body and blood of the Lord.

Let a person examine himself then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself.

Amen. We pray for the Lord's blessing on that portion of His holy and inspired word. So according to the institution and the command and the example of our Lord and Savior there, we're going to do as He did, and we're going to give thanks.

[56 : 20] So let's bow our heads and give thanks to Him. A heavenly Father, as we now come to the Lord's table, we do pray, O Lord, that we would have that real sense of your nearness and your strengthening.

Whether we are coming to sit at the table of the Lord for the first time and how encouraging it is to be in that situation of being joined by one who does sit for the first time or whether it is that we are sitting for the last time.

We do not know. We do not know what an hour or a day may bring about in our experience. But whatever our situation, however young in the faith, however old in the faith, we pray, O Lord, that this would be a means of strengthening us and help us to focus our minds as we take the elements.

We pray, O Lord, that You would set them aside for us for that holy use and that we might see in the elements something of the wonder of what our Lord and Savior has done for us.

Help us to remember the way in which we have been reconciled, not only with the Lord Himself, but also with one another. Because whenever we come to sit at the Lord's table, we know that's an important factor, not just that we come in communion and fellowship with You, O Lord, but that we are aware of that fellowship that we have with our brothers and sisters in the Lord Jesus Christ.

[57 : 47] and help us to be mindful of that too, that we are part of a family. We belong to one another. And our prayer too is, even for those who sit behind the table, that these things would speak, that the nature of the separation at a time of communion itself speaks, itself is illustrative of that final separation that will take place at the end of time itself for those who continue in their rejection of the Lord.

And our prayer is that as those behind the table witness the elements, that they themselves would know something of the Spirit of the Lord at work in their hearts, the Spirit of the Lord awakening and quickening.

May You make them able and willing to lay hold of the One who we have heard about today, that wonderful King, our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. So bless us now as we partake, do us good, strengthen us and feed us.

We ask it all for Jesus' sake. Amen. Well, the Lord Jesus, on the night when He was betrayed, He took bread 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. In the same manner also, He took the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new covenant in my blood.

[59 : 20] Do this as often as you drink it in remembrance of me. For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes.

And remember that as we partake, we're proclaiming. We're proclaiming something. We'll sit in silence. One of the only times, whatever, in silence, in complete silence, in church, and yet at the same time, we're proclaiming.

We're speaking. And we're proclaiming the death of our Lord and our love that fought Him. Amen. Amen. Well, we now rise from the table.

We have tasted, quite literally tasted, and seen that God is good in His provision. We have taken, and we've been strengthened.

And that is our prayer, that we would go forward in the strength of that, nourished by our time here at the table, and encouraged, to press on.

[61 : 03] And we need every encouragement to keep pressing on and moving forward in this pilgrimage journey that we are on. And as we rise from the table today, let us do that.

Let us be energized, spiritually energized, spiritually strengthened, to push on in the life of faith. And until that day, when our Lord and our Savior returns, or indeed until that day, when He calls us to Himself.

So we'll conclude our time of worship by singing to the praise of the Lord in Psalm 72. Psalm 72, page 314.

So that's a Scottish Psalter again. Page 314. Psalm 72. Those last three stanzas. His name forever shall endure, last like the sun it shall.

Men shall be blessed in Him, and blessed all nations shall Him call. So we'll stand to sing those last three verses to the praise of God.

[62 : 05] It may forever shall endure, last like the sun, His night before night.

May it shall be blessed, in Him I'm blessed, all nations shall be born.

Now blessed be the Lord The Lord our God, the God of Israel.

For He alone doth wondrous world, in glory that may sell.

And blessed be His glorious name to all eternity.

[63 : 36] The whole earth let His glory fill.

Amen. And now may the grace of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the fellowship and communion of the Holy Spirit continue with you all now and forevermore.

Amen. Amen.