

# Mark 10.32-45

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## *Jesus is... the ransom for many*

Amington

Sunday 28 October 2018

Mark: Seeing Jesus [29]

### **Love**

What's the first word that pops into your head when I say the word 'love'? Any takers?

Mine was 'Jess' – followed by, I'm ashamed to admit it, 'pizza'.

How does it feel to love and be loved? Who loves you the most? Whom do you love the most?

Jesus said that the two most important things we should do are first to love God, and then to love one another – following God's own example of love.

In Deuteronomy (7.7) we read that God didn't choose his people Israel because they were the biggest or best nation around – he chose them because he loved them (see also 10.15).

God's love came first in the Old Testament.

And God's love comes first in the New Testament as well. The apostle John says **J**,

We love because he first loved us.

*1 John 4.19 (NIV)*

Paul makes it personal **J**,

I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

*Galatians 2.20 (NIV)*

Jesus **loved me and give himself for me**, Paul says – and he loved you and gave himself for you. In our reading this morning, we heard Jesus describe that to his disciples before it happened:

‘We are going up to Jerusalem,’ he said, ‘and the Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests and the teachers of the law. They will condemn him to death and will hand him over to the Gentiles, who will mock him and spit on him, flog him and kill him. Three days later he will rise.’

*Mark 10.33-34 (NIV)*

Jesus did that – he gave himself *for you* – because he loves *you*.

# Sin

Why?

Just now I asked what's the first word that pops into your head when I say the word 'love' – well, what's the first word that pops into your heard when I say the word 'sin'?

If you're doing Slimming World you might answer 'chocolate cake' or 'a glass of wine' – an advert for ice cream had the strapline, 'It's so good it's sinful'. In today's world the word 'sinful' often means 'something enjoyable'.

But Jesus didn't give his life simply because of a few accidental mistakes or because we ate one too many slices of chocolate cake.

Several years ago there was a series of letters in a newspaper under the heading, ¶ 'What's wrong with the world?' Supposedly one of the responses was this ¶:

Dear sir,

I am.

Yours sincerely,

GK Chesterton

*Source unknown*

A minister rose to address his congregation: 'I have become aware that there is a man among us today who is flirting with another man's wife. Unless he puts £10 in the collection box, his name will be read from the pulpit.'

When the collection plate came in, there were nineteen £10 notes, and a £5 note with this note attached: 'Other five on payday.'

Arthur Conan Doyle, author of *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*, used to say he believed every man had a skeleton in his closet. At one dinner party he was challenged to prove his theory – so Doyle had his guests select the most unlikely candidate they could think of: they selected a well-known clergyman. Doyle sent him a note saying, 'All is discovered, flee at once!' – the man disappeared and was never heard of again.<sup>1</sup>

True or not, these stories all convey the same thing: that there is something *very* wrong, *deep* within us, that causes us to feel guilty and ashamed. 'Sin' has been trivialised by Slimming World, adverts and others, but it is powerful and dangerous. Minimising it will not solve the problem, will not make it go away.

*That* is why Jesus had to **give his life as a ransom for many** (45).

The Old Testament prophet Jeremiah put it like this ¶:

[The Lord says,] ‘My people have committed two sins:

They have forsaken me,

the spring of living water,

and have dug their own cisterns,

broken cisterns that cannot hold water.’

*Jeremiah 2.13 (NIV)*

These are the ¶ two parts of all sin: (1) rejecting God, and (2) ¶ deciding to go our own way. My people are thirsty, God says, but they won’t come to me, the source of living, never-ending, water. To make matters worse, they try to quench their *own* thirst – but their cisterns will never hold enough water to quench their thirst.

St Paul put it like this:

They exchanged the truth about God for a lie, and worshipped and served created things rather than the Creator.

*Romans 1.25 (NIV)*

Being greedy with chocolate cake, making mistakes, telling lies, gossiping – and of course more serious wrongdoing – these aren’t the problem, they are *symptoms* of the deeper problem.

Hear these famous words from Isaiah:

Surely he took up our pain  
and bore our suffering,  
yet we considered him punished by God,  
stricken by him, and afflicted.  
But he was pierced for our transgressions,  
he was crushed for our iniquities;  
the punishment that brought us peace was on him,  
and by his wounds we are healed.  
We all, like sheep, have gone astray,  
each of us has turned to our own way;  
and the Lord has laid on him  
the iniquity of us all.

*Isaiah 53.4-6 (NIV)*

**Iniquity** is an unusual word – so let's watch a video to help us understand what it means.

*f Show the Bible Project video 'Avon' (4:45).*

In our reading this morning, an example of a crooked or bent out of shape way of thinking is the way James and John wanted the top spots in Jesus' kingdom. ] **'Let one of us sit at your right and the other at your left in your glory,'** they said (37).

They wanted to sit on glorious thrones and rule over other people – not understanding that Jesus' glory was his obedience to his Father – even to death on the cross.

On Thursday this week I was told about someone who has lied about me and misrepresented me to people in Amington. Now, part of my anger is justified and righteous – but most of it is not. And I can't tell you how crooked and bent out of shape my week has felt since then – because I have allowed my anger to get the better of me, instead of forgiving as I have been forgiven by God.

## Cross

**The Son of God loved me and gave himself for me** (Galatians 2.20). Jesus said, **‘the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many’** (45).

Crucifixion was – and is, because people are still crucified today – a terrible way to die. And yet nowhere does the Bible go into any of the gruesome details – Jesus uses only four words to describe what would happen to him: **mock, spit, flog** and **kill**. The gospel writers don’t elaborate much on those four words, and nor should we. That’s because the physical pain – though awful – wasn’t the most important thing that happened when Jesus died on the cross.

Listen to the true story of Maximilian Kolbe, told by Nicky Gumbel as part of the Alpha Course.

][Show the Alpha video ‘Maximilian Kolbe’ \(2:48\)](#).

Like Maximilian Kolbe, Jesus died willingly. He was not forced to die by an angry or cruel God, as some people describe it. He knew the cost, he knew the pain, and yet he still gave himself freely, for you and for me.



And, like Maximilian Kolbe died in place of Francis Gajowniczek, but in a far greater and even more wonderful way, Jesus died *in our place*. ¶ The Bible gives several pictures of how this works:

- We are ¶ **released** from the burden of guilt and shame, as Jesus takes it and carries it for us, destroying it on the cross.
- We are ¶ **restored** to be the people God made us to be – the legal term is ‘justified’, it’s ‘just-as-if-I’d’ never sinned.
- We are ¶ **reconciled** to God, one another, and creation – our relationships are healed, we are made into a new family.
- We are ¶ **ransomed** and set free – as Jeremiah said, we have abandoned God, the living water, and tried to quench our thirst by ourselves. God’s just punishment is to give us what we ask for: if we abandon the *living* water, what happens? We die – except Jesus gave his life in our place, so we don’t have to die. He paid the ransom; we are set free.

## Forgiveness

It’s not fair on Jesus, and we don’t deserve it, but that is the wonderful, amazing, extravagant love of God.

And, to be honest, it’s hard to receive.

Whether it's because we are British, or plain old human pride, it's difficult to receive God's overflowing, over-the-top, abundant love. We don't want charity, and deep down there is part of us that thinks we don't really need it. Other people are worse than me, we tell ourselves, let *them* go first.

But friends, that shows the profound truth that Jeremiah shared: our natural and sinful instinct is to reject the living water God offers us, whether it is his gift of life, or his gift of forgiveness.

Receiving God's forgiveness is part 1. Part 2 is learning to forgive, others *and* ourselves. That is often equally difficult, sometimes more so. But the two go together: as we learn to receive God's forgiveness, so we are more able to forgive others, even ourselves. As we learn to forgive others, even ourselves, so we are more able to receive God's forgiveness. And that is going to be the focus of the rest of our service this morning.

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<sup>1</sup> See <http://message.snopes.com/showpost.php?p=397159&postcount=7>.