

The Cross of Christ

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- [0 : 0 0] Well, we're taking a break from 1st Timothy for this Sunday, next Sunday as we, in this Easter season, look at the crucifixion this morning and the resurrection next week.
- And we read from Matthew's account of the crucifixion. And Matthew's account, if you were following along, you might have noticed this, that it's very factual with a lot of details.
- And it doesn't really say much by way of interpretation like John does, for example. It just gives you facts and it gives you a lot of the surrounding details about the crucifixion.
- But actually one of the interesting things is it says very little about Jesus himself in the event of the crucifixion. So if you notice, it talks about two authors of wine, about Simon of Cyrene and Elijah and the darkness and the resurrection bodies and the temple being torn into and the earthquake and the rocks being split.
- But it only has one verse that turns to focus on Christ. And that is verse 46 where it says that he lifted up and he shrieked. He cried out, my God, my God, why have you forsaken me?
- [1 : 0 7] And that's the only moment that focuses on Jesus himself. And what you've got to say then, Matthew, that must be the centerpiece of the text. If you give me all these surrounding details, but then there's one moment where it turns to the man on the cross.
- And when you look at this passage, I think one of the ways to read it is actually to come to Paul's interpretation of the cross.
- And if you look at Paul's interpretation of the cross in 1 Corinthians 1, it maps out very closely to the way Matthew presents the cross here. And what does Paul say about the cross in 1 Corinthians 1?
- And he says to some people, the cross is utter foolishness and to others, it is the power of God to salvation. And so that's what we have to see this morning, that the cross on the one hand is foolishness and on the other hand, it's the power of God.
- And that's exactly what Matthew does here. So let's look at that. Verses 31 to 50 highlights constantly that the cross is foolishness to the world.
- [2 : 1 4] If you look at 1 Corinthians 118 in fact, where Paul says that carefully, he doesn't just say the cross is literally nonsense. He says the word of the cross is nonsense.
- And there's two ways to take that. On the one hand, he's saying when anybody tells another person about the story of Jesus, it's almost like it's foolishness in the eyes of the world.
- And we'll see why in just a moment. But there's a second way to take that. And that's that Paul uses the Greek word there, logos. The logos of the cross is nonsense.
- And he knows very well from John that Jesus is called in the gospels the logos himself. He is the word. And so when Paul says the logos of the cross, the word of the cross is foolishness, he's saying it's not just the gospel message, but the man.
- That in the eyes of the world, the man himself hanging on the cross is foolishness. And when you come back to Matthew, that's very clear that that's exactly what Matthew is showing.

- [3 : 18] One commentator points out that if there's one key thing in Matthew's take on the cross, his testimony of the cross, it is that the mocking of Christ is overwhelming.
- And it's a holistic mocking, you might say. And one commentator points out that it exists at four levels. So let me show those to you. First, the soldiers mock him.
- Verse 31, they mocked him, they stripped him of his robe. Just before that, they put a purple robe on him to make fun of him because of his claim to kingship.
- And then they pressed the thorns into his brow, both acts of mockery. Verse 32, they make Simon of Cyrene carry the cross beam. What is going on here?
- Simon of Cyrene is forced to carry Jesus' cross beam because they were mimicking a kingly royal processional. So it's as if he has a servant in front of him carrying an announcement that the king is coming up the hill.
- [4 : 17] But it's all ironic. It's for the sake of mockery. Verse 35, they strip him naked. And they gamble away his garments and they hang him completely naked on the cross.
- In verse 37, the soldiers, they put the king of the Jews above his head. You see in all this, the soldiers treat this as an ironic enthronement.
- They're trying to say, this man claimed that he was king, now let's make him a king. And they do it as an act of mockery. Now the second level is the civilians. We read the story of Palm Sunday entering into Jerusalem where the civilians lay down their coats and worship him.
- And now a week later in verse 39, it says they, quote, hurled insults, wagged their heads, abuse. It's actually a Greek word you'll recognize.
- It's the word blasphemon. They committed blasphemies against him. They said, son of God. You see, the soldiers say, he's the king and they laugh.
- [5 : 21] And now the civilians say, son of God. And they laugh at him. They mock him for that claim that he had throughout his ministry.
- In verse 47, they say, is he calling down Elijah? And you know why they say that? Because that's, Matthew gives us the Aramaic. And you hear in the Aramaic when he says, Eli, Eli, my God, my God, it sounds like Elijah.
- And so they say, is he calling Elijah down? And when they reach to give him wine, why? It's not that they're being kind. It's that they think in his calling Elijah, he's losing consciousness.
- He's going crazy in his suffering. And so the wine, the sour wine was meant to regain consciousness so that he could suffer longer. And that's why a spectator says, wait, wait, wait, don't give it to him yet.
- Let's see if Elijah really will come down, which is an act of mockery. Don't give him his consciousness back. He's going crazy. Let's watch. Let's see what happens here.
- [6 : 23] Verse 49, they see it as an entertainment activity. The reason that this is possible is because crucifixions always happen, by the way, along a main thoroughfare. And so you could literally just pass by on the street and see whoever was being crucified at the time.
- Today it was Jesus. Third level, the chief priests. This is how much Matthew is highlighting this. Verse 41 says, also the authorities mocked him.
- Meaning Matthew's saying, have you noticed yet that I'm highlighting the mockery, the civilians, the soldiers, also the chief priests, the scribes, the elders, and how do they do it?
- They say in verse 41, if you're really God, save yourself. Come down or tell God to send somebody. And if we're blaspheming you, then why don't you do something about it?

That's how they mock him, the chief priests. And then finally the criminals, verse 44, two men who are being executed on either side of him for their crimes, mock him for being crucified as the king of the Jews.

[7 : 30] And you see, Matthew is saying like Paul, that every type of person, poor and rich, and every degree in between, it doesn't matter your socioeconomic status, your race, your creed, any of it, human beings mock Jesus Christ.

They regard the cross as foolishness. It doesn't matter where you come from or when or what your background is. The cross is nonsense, Paul says. The Logos is a fool, Paul says, in the eyes of the world.

And that's because we learn here that he's a God at the cross who's appearing to the eyes of the world weak, a pretender to the throne, he's naked and he's shamed publicly here.

Now John Stott commenting on this, the great Anglican theologian, this is what he asks. He says, what kind of a religion would have a God who dies in weakness at the hands of his own creatures?

And he points us to evidence that that really was the question in the first and second centuries. And this is what he says, no matter whether their background was Roman or Jewish or both, the early enemies of Christianity lost no opportunity to ridicule the claim that God's anointed and man's savior ended his life on a cross.

[8 : 51] The idea was crazy. This is well illustrated by Grafito from the second century, discovered on the Palatine Hill in Rome, on the wall of a house considered by scholars to have been used as a school for imperial pages in the court.

It's the first, this is an important historical note, we have the first surviving picture of the crucifixion just after the turn of the century, 100 AD, still today, and it's a caricature and it's a crude drawing that depicts a man stretched out on a cross with a donkey as his head.

And you see the response to the cross throughout history, one pastor points out how whether it's from the religious or the ouriligious has always been what Paul says, foolishness.

For example, when Islam looks at the cross, Islam says that the cross is inappropriate for the prophet of God. And so the story, Islam accepts the story of the crucifixion, but it says that at the last minute Jesus was replaced on the cross by Simon of Cyrene or some other man that Jesus never actually died because it's foolishness for the prophet of God to be killed in such a way or if you go to Hinduism, Gandhi, the great modern prophet of the Hinduism, this is what he says, I could accept Jesus as a martyr, an embodiment of sacrifice and as a divine teacher, but not as the most perfect man ever born.

And his death on the cross is a great example to the world, but that there was anything in it like a mysterious or miraculous virtue that we cannot accept.

[10 : 30] That's the religious response, but the ouriligious, the anti-religious response, you can go to the greatest atheist thinker that's ever lived, Friedrich Nietzsche, the great German philosopher of the 19th century and listen to what he says about Jesus and about the cross in his book, The Antichrist.

He says, true happiness is a feeling of power when it increases in your life. And the most harm then that we can do is to have active sympathy for the ill constituted and the weak.

Therefore Christianity in taking the side of everything weak, base and ill constituted has done the most harm to the world. Because the religion of pity, it preserves what is ripe for destruction and it thwarts the law of evolution.

At the center is the contemptuous God on a cross, weakness incarnate. You see, ancients, moderns, every class, religious, ouriligious and today books are still being written.

The cross is unjust, it's cosmic child abuse, that's the more modern favorite way to go. It's ultimate weakness on display. And so here's Stadegan, the Christian's choice of a cross therefore as a symbol of their faith is surprising.

[11 : 53] When we remember the horror with which crucifixion was regarded in the ancient world, we can understand why the message of the cross was to many of Paul's listeners foolishness in the first century, even madness, Paul says in 1 Corinthians 1.23.

How could any sane person worship as a God, a dead man who had been justly condemned as a criminal subjected to the most humiliating form of execution?

This combination of death, crime and shame put him beyond the pale of respect, let alone worship in the mind, the Roman mind of the first and second centuries.

And yet, Jesus Christ's cross turned the world upside down and millions and billions of people look at the cross and say the power of God into salvation.

And so we've got to turn in and ask, how, why? And Matthew sets it up for us, he tells us about the foolishness of the cross at every level of society, but then he thwarts it to tell us that the cross is the power of God, secondly the power of God in the cross.

[13 : 02] Everything we've said so far means that Jesus Christ, the Logos, the Word is divisive. He's divisive. If he came into the world and he divided people from the beginning and he still does that, people bow, they trip and they bow before him or they trip and stumble, frustrated and angry, rejecting him.

And I've mentioned this before, but I think since I've been back, I can't remember actually, but when I was in Germany several years ago, one of the really incredible memorial pieces that Germany has put in place since World War II and the Holocaust is the Stolpersteine in German, the stumbling stones.

So if you're in Germany in Berlin or Frankfurt or Stuttgart, other places, you'll walk along the sidewalk and all of a sudden you'll trip over a stone that's been set two inches off the normal pavement.

I mean, every lawyer's nightmare that there's these purposeful trip hazards all over the pavement in Germany, but they're there. And where they put them is out in front of homes where Jews were ripped from the home and they're home and murdered and taken to concentration camps and the names are often written in Hebrew and they're there to say, remember what humans can do.

Remember the possibilities of sin. And they're all over Germany. Where do they get the idea of the Stolpersteine, the Stolpersteine, Simon, I hope will tell me I'm pronouncing that correctly, the stumbling stones.

[14 : 31] It comes from the Bible, right? Jesus Christ is the cross, is the stumbling stone. You have to trip over it and you trip over it because of a number of things.

And this is the main reason and Acts chapter two tells us Peter, whether you're a Roman, did you, a modern Scott, an American, whatever, wherever you're poor or rich, whatever a criminal, a saint, Gandhi, Nietzsche, everybody trips over the cross.

And the reason for that is Acts two. Peter is standing in Jerusalem in Acts chapter two and there's a crowd of thousands and most of the people there had not been present physically for the crucifixion.

And yet Peter looks out and says, you crucified him. Let's use the Southern American. It's the best way to say it. Y'all crucified him. It's the plural. You have to have a plural you.

You all crucified him, all of you. And he says it to people that were not there. And what does he mean by that? He's saying that every single person that has ever lived cried out, crucify him.

[15 : 38] And we did it, we mocked him and we said full because we shook our fist at God from the day we were born. Adam crucified him and I crucified him and everybody has crucified him.

We shouted that because human, you know, by human nature, we reject anything that limits our autonomy, our power. And we're happy to maximize our freedom in life and we're happy to follow a Messiah.

If that Messiah is to lead in a way that we expect, that would give us more and more freedom and more and more power as individuals. Let me give you an example of how Nietzsche was right, how we all desire power.

And so we reject anything that thwarts it. Nietzsche was right because in the first century, the expectation of the Messiah, whether you're Roman, Greek, Jew, whatever, the Messiah, the Messiah was to be a person who came in the Jewish mindset to start the revolution and to take back Israel from Rome and to march straight to Rome with an army and displace Caesar from the throne.

And so the Messiah was expected to come in immense physical power. If you're Roman or Greek, if you're looking for a Messiah, you expect him to be Hercules, to be the strongest, to be the fittest, the prettiest, to look like Saul from the Old Testament in every way.

[16 : 57] And that's why in that way Nietzsche is right, natural humanity, natural humanity. If the Messiah should come and he should show power and maximize my freedom, then I'll follow him.

Now Matthew comes here and he says, then the reason why the cross is not foolishness and the reason why the cross is the power of God is because of the deepest irony moving throughout the thread of sacred history.

And the deepest irony of all of sacred history is this, that Jesus came to claim ultimate victory by way of ultimate loss.

And it's the thread that Nietzsche would not accept and it's the thread that we don't first accept, but it is the power of God. And it's so unexpected, it stands so counter to every human instinct.

Look, this might be old hat to you, you've sat in the church for a long time and you've heard the cross, but recognize the true revolution of the cross is that God came to earth to ultimately win by ultimately losing.

[18 : 05] And it's the grand irony of history, it doesn't make sense in the stories that we want to write. And that's why Nietzsche hated it. And where does Paul then say the power of God to salvation, where can we find it?

And let's turn towards the end by saying two ways. Two ways you can find the power of God here on to salvation. The first is this, Jesus Christ manifest here the power to choose.

And when you pay careful attention to the text, the crucifixion story that Matthew writes, you see on the one hand the mocking is intense and it's holistic, but on the other hand Matthew writes it in such a way that you begin to recognize over time that it's deeply ironic.

And for example, let me just show you this, in verse 40 the civilians say, you said Jesus, you're going to tear down the temple and in three days you're going to raise it back up again.

But look at you now. And verse 43 the scribes say, you say you're God, why don't you deliver yourself, why don't you raise yourself up from the cross right now and as soon as you hear something like that, look you should do what Nietzsche seemed to fail to do.

[19 : 18] And what you want to say to Nietzsche is did you read the next chapter? Did you read the next paragraph? And this is, look next week is Easter, but Jesus Christ is alive today as well.

And here's the question, the theologians have been exploring for centuries. You raised Jesus Christ from the dead and we say God did, God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit.

And you know what that means? That means on the third day the Son of God, Jesus Christ, raised himself from the dead. That's been the confession of all of Christian history.

And that means that what's happening in this moment is not utter weakness. It's that Jesus Christ has decided and determined to voluntarily condescend and give himself as a display of utter weakness.

The issue is not that he's weak, it's that he is absolutely strong and has determined to give himself for us an ultimate weakness. You see he's commanding the Son of God from eternity is commanding this very moment as he dies.

[20 : 33] It's not passive, it's active, he chose to die like this. He determined that that was not a secret in the Gospels, not at all. Jesus says, Mark 9, the Son of man will be betrayed into the hands of men and they will kill him and in three days he will rise again.

He told him, he told him point blank what he was going to do. Or Matthew 26, the chapter just before this, he says, do you not know that the Son of man is about to be handed over to crucifixion and that the Apostle said, don't do it, no.

And he said, if I wanted to, I will call on my father and he will send a legion, 12,000 angels to my aid, if I just say the word. That's my power.

You don't even have to go to the resurrection account to find the irony. It's right here. This ultimately, the way Matthew presents the story is ultimately to be read as a tragic comedy in the classical sense of that term because first it appears to be tragedy but at the very end there's a great irony, almost comedic irony.

In the midst of great sorrow and it's in verse 54 and did you catch it when we read it? The rocks have split, the earthquake has come, the land is dark and all of a sudden the centurion that had stripped Jesus naked and mocked him mercilessly, he lifts up his head and he said, this really is the Son of God.

[21 : 57] Before we ever get to the resurrection, the soldier says it, he realizes it, he wakes up that this really is the man of power who is giving himself and utter weakness for us, only the soldier at the end of this story could see it.

This is the voluntary condescension of God himself and this is what it means. Jesus Christ in the middle of history let death swallow him so that he could destroy it from the inside out.

It's not weakness, it's absolute power meets absolute love displayed for the mocker, me and you.

Now that leads us to the second and final thing, the second power on display in Matthew's story and that's the power of Jesus to forgive. At the very center of the story as we mentioned at the beginning is the cry in Aramaic, my God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

Why is it in Aramaic? You read the whole book and it's all in Greek and then in one moment all of a sudden there's a sentence in Aramaic. And we're told here in the Greek that it was a shriek very literally, it was a cry, not just a yell but a gut wrenching shriek, a cry.

[23 : 18] We call it the cry of dereliction typically. And it says here that God, why have you forsaken me? Jesus says that God the Father had forsaken him in that moment.

And this is why it's in Aramaic, the same reason that it says that God forsook him. If you're trying to write a story, a religion into history in the first century and you're trying to convince the Romans and the Greeks and others whose gods come down to earth and display themselves in utter power, the demigods, Hercules and others, would you ever write a story where you claim that God the Father and God the Son were God the Father abandoned his Son?

You would never do it. It's foolishness. It's not on the first past a convincing narrative and that is the same reason that it's written in Aramaic.

You see, why is it written in Aramaic? Because Jesus said it in Aramaic. That's why. Because it happened. I mean, you couldn't write this story. You couldn't make it up.

You would never write a story where God the Father abandoned and forsakes God the Son and where he cries it out in Aramaic. It's written that way because that's exactly what happened in the middle of history.

[24 : 34] You see, it's power. This is a subordinate thing, but it's power, it's reality is in the claim itself. How could this be anything other than true?

And we know that from the moment he rises from the dead that so many that saw this day saw him alive again, more than 500 witnesses and the message spread throughout all the land and Larry Hurtado, one of the former scholars at New College right across the street here wrote a very helpful book just before he died a few years ago, sadly, about this and he said that the only way to account for the power of this message just spread across the first and second century Roman and Greek landscape in the midst of what they expected for a God was if the resurrection really happened.

That was the only way as a historian he could figure it out. Now here's the real power though, the power of forgiveness and we see it in just a couple ways very briefly.

First when he says this, when Jesus cries out in dereliction, this is the power of Jesus to fulfill the Old Testament prophecy. And this is from Psalm 22, verse one, my God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

It's a Psalm of David and let me just say that there are statements in Psalm 22 that the commentators will say we can't make sense of because they don't ever seem to have happened to David anywhere.

[26 : 01] So let me give you just one or two quick examples in verse seven and eight of Psalm 22. This is what it says, everyone who sees me mocks me. They make their mouths at me and they wag their heads.

They say he trust in the Lord, let the Lord deliver him, let him rescue him for he delights in him or flip the page, verse 16 and 17.

Where could we ever say this about David? Where in the Old Testament? And this is what it says, dogs encompass me, a company of evildoers encircles me.

Here it is. They have pierced my hands and my feet. I count all my bones in pain. They stare and gloat over me.

They have divided my garments amongst themselves and for my clothing they cast lots. See this Psalm 22 is the son of God writing about the son of God.

[27 : 05] It's the son of God telling you so long ago exactly what the son of God would do for you when he cries out. And here's what that means, that means that when Jesus says, my God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

These are covenantal words. This actually comes from the Abraham story. My God, my God. When God says to Abraham, I'm going to make you my people, I'll be your God and you can say my God, my God.

And so Jesus is reciting a covenantal phrase here that God is covenant with Israel. When you read through the gospels, one of the things that you may notice is this, that at every point of Jesus' life, Jesus looks like Israel.

He goes through the Exodus like Israel did. He goes into the wilderness like Israel did. And over time in Matthew's gospel, you start to see something. Jesus Christ stands in the place of Israel.

He is Israel. You see, Israel was meant to fulfill the covenant. Israel was meant to be perfect and to usher in salvation for human history and they failed at every point.

[28 : 12] And Jesus comes to be the new Israel, to be the covenantal man, one with God, and at every point he relives Israel's life perfectly.

You see that when he hangs on the cross, he is the only human being in history that's ever deserved to say, my God, my God, and to hear my son, my son.

He's the only one that's ever deserved it. And yet Israel heard it. Israel heard God say, my son. And you today can hear God say, my son, my daughter, only because when Jesus cried out, my God, my God, he heard deafening silence.

He was abandoned. And this does not mean he felt abandoned. He was. And he went into the hell of hells. This is Christ's descent into hell, as the creed tells us.

When he hangs here and he's forsaken by God, he experiences the wrath of God fully and finally in this moment, completely in our place. We call this the great exchange.

[29 : 13] He died for me so that I can be in him. You see, the cloud of darkness covers the land and the rocks split and the earthquake comes.

This is not the first time we see this in Scripture. This is exactly how the prophets of the Old Testament describe the coming of the day of the Lord, the day of judgment. And when does the day of the Lord come that Amos and Jeremiah and others talked about?

The darkness descends the land in the middle of history and the rocks split and the earthquake comes. You see, this is the ultimate judgment of God being poured down. Jesus descended into hell and he didn't deserve it.

We did. And he did it. You see, absolute power of giving oneself and ultimate and absolute love for his mockers.

And that's every single human being that's ever lived. This is the power of forgiveness. He could take that so you could get his righteousness, the great exchange to close.

[30 : 17] What is so hard about looking at the cross and saying power, the power of God? Why is it that Paul is so right and Matthew that we struggle to do that? And I think it's this.

Here's a simple statement, but an incredibly controversial statement in the 21st century. The cross demands that every single person recognize and come face to face with their own guilt.

That you're guilty, that I'm guilty before God. That I'm not right. That I'm not what I should be. That I'm broken. That I'm centered. That I'm bent. That I'm going in the wrong direction. And that I deserve the wrath of God.

And another way that it's hard for us to accept the cross. The cross says to you that when you said no to him, God said yes to you.

And that's hard as well to accept because it requires saying I cannot be my own God. I can't be my own savior. I can't be autonomous.

[31 : 16] But God has come to you in Christ Jesus and you are the ultimate. You're the apple of his eye. And that's why nature was so wrong.

The last thing I'll highlight here. The text tells us again, I want to highlight this again, that he was stripped naked. And it's important to cast away all the paintings that you've ever seen.

They're not right. We're told here like every other person who was crucified in the first century by the Romans that they were, he was stripped naked. And he was here.

His garments were gambled away. He was naked and shamed publicly. And there's a real reason for that. Not only is it an act of humiliation. But in Genesis 3, when Adam and Eve broke the world, God sent a curse upon humanity.

One of the things he cursed was the ground, we're told. And theologians often call that the curse of the thorns. They drove the ground was cursed. The world was cursed.

[32 : 22] Everything's broken. Nature is broken. And its representative symbol in Genesis 3 is the thorn. And here they drive the curse into his head. Now, he doesn't just bear your sin.

He bears everything wrong with the world, the curse of the thorn. He doesn't stop there. The second curse that was given is the curse of death. And he yields his spirit. He dies.

He bears it. But the one term in Genesis 3 that encompasses the whole of what's wrong with the world is that when God comes to be present with Adam and Eve, they say, I'm naked and I have to hide.

I'm ashamed. Nakedness, you see in Genesis 3 is the metaphor and the actuality that represents everything that's wrong with the world and with us and with humanity inside and out.

It's an external representation of an internal problem. And Jesus was stripped. He was hung naked and shamed because we are naked and ashamed before the Lord unfit to be in the presence of God.

[33 : 27] And when the curtain temple is torn into, that is not just saying that now you can go in. It's saying that God has been let out, that God has extended himself to heal the whole world, the whole land from top to bottom.

You see, it's not just about your forgiveness. That's huge, the power of forgiveness. But Jesus, don't just think of it in the negative. Jesus came for my sins. Jesus came for you, not just your sin, but for you, your person.

That God, you see, the point is that God wants to be with you. He wants to have a relationship that lasts forever. That's the point of the cross. So here's the diagnostic question this week.

Is the cross in resurrection? The man of power who lost everything for you, is he the heartbeat of your life as we enter Easter week?

Can you say today, I know he came for me. And more than that, I know him. And the cross in his resurrection is the heartbeat of my life, of what I live for, how I live, how I understand myself, what I came to do.

[34 : 30] I'll give the last word to Malcolm Muggeridge. Malcolm Muggeridge was an English journalist in the middle of the 20th century. John Stock quotes him in his fantastic book, The Cross of Christ.

Malcolm recalls rejecting the cross in his childhood. And this is what he says. I would catch a glimpse of a cross, maybe two pieces of wood accidentally nailed together on a telegraph pole, for instance.

And suddenly my heart would stand still. In an instructive, intuitive way, I understood that something more important was that issue than our personal good causes.

However admirable my intentions might be, this symbol, which was considered to be foolishness at my house, was yet the focus of inconceivable hope and desire.

And as I remember this, a sense of my own failure lies lettently upon me. I should have worn the Jesus of the cross over my heart, my whole life.

[35 : 30] A precious standard, never to be rested away from my hands. It should have been my religion. It should have been my uniform. He should have been my language, my life.

I have no excuse. I cannot say that I didn't know. I saw the cross from the beginning. I knew from the beginning and I turned away.

But then Malcolm didn't turn away any longer. And he turned to Jesus and the foolishness became power to him. And that's an invitation.

The invitation is this, as it's put by one modern hymn writer. I stumble out into the light, raise my fist up to fight, but then I catch your eye so full of love.

And I'm disarmed by the cross. Let's ask that God would make that our heart. Let's pray. Father, we ask now that you would disarm our enmity to you and cast our eyes on the love on display in the cross of Jesus.

[36 : 40] Pray this for all of us today. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.