

Good Friday Service 2017

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[0 : 0 0] Well, good evening everyone, and it is lovely to see you. My name is Graham, I work here at the church, and if this is your first time maybe at Brunswick, if you're a visitor, then it is lovely to welcome you to our church this Good Friday.

Thank you so much for everyone who's participated so far, for those who have read, for the band in leading us in singing. It has been so helpful just to focus our minds on Jesus Christ crucified that we come here to remember.

But I want to start this evening by asking you to think about if there is anyone here that has a surname, or who has had a surname, that reveals something about you.

Now, I'll give you an example. So, my wife's maiden name is Griffith Jones, and she wouldn't marry me until I could spell it, okay? So, G-R-U-F-F-Y-D-D, Jones. Now, what does that reveal about her? Anybody?

She is Welsh. There's Welsh blood in her family. In fact, it's her dad who is mad Welsh. And he phoned me a few months ago, and he said, Graham, he's got an English accent, but he is Welsh.

[1 : 1 5] Graham, how do you fancy going to the rugby? Coming up to Edinburgh in a few weeks' time, how do you fancy going to rugby? Now, I must admit, I'm not massively into rugby. I'm more into the sport with the proper round-shaped ball rather than the one that looks like an egg.

But he was paying, and I said, I'd love to go to the rugby. And we come to match day, and we start walking to Murrayfield. We start walking to the ground, and I leave the house totally disinterested in the game.

But three hours later, I leave fully enthused about the game of rugby. Now, why was that? Well, we won. That helped. But what really got me into the game, what really got me into the game of rugby was the passion of the crowd.

A passionate crowd. They were there, cheering on their team. A passionate crowd. When was the last time you found yourself amongst a passionate crowd?

Well, here's what I want to do this evening, just over the next 15 or so minutes, is just as we think about Jesus on the cross, as we think about everything that happened that first Good Friday, I want us to think about two very passionate crowds.

[2 : 3 7] And they're two very different crowds, in two very different places, who are shouting two very different things. Now, why? Well, because they have two very different opinions on who Jesus Christ is.

And it's the Apostle John that tells us about these two very different and two very passionate crowds. And if you've got your Bibles there, maybe you can track with me this evening. And the first passionate crowd that I want us to think about is that angry crowd that we meet in John chapter 19.

Now, what is this crowd's take on Jesus? Verse 4 of chapter 19. John records this.

Pilate went out again and said to them, See, I am bringing him, that is Jesus, out to you that you might know that I found no guilt in him. So Jesus came out wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe.

Pilate said to them, Behold the man. When the chief priests and the officers saw him, they cried out, Crucify him!

[3 : 52] Crucify him! Now, what is the shout of this passionate crowd? Crucify him! In fact, it's interesting, if you've got John chapter 19 open there, that every time we meet this crowd and their interactions with Pilate, we are told that they are shouting.

Three times, in fact, we are told that they shout. This crowd, made up of chief priests and Jewish leaders, now they are baying for Jesus' blood.

What do they demand is the fate of this man, Jesus Christ. What do they want to happen? Well, crucifixion.

That brutal Roman execution method, this prolonged and agonizing form of death, reserved for those of the lowest standing.

Now, we've got to ask, haven't we, why are they baying for this man's blood? Well, you read John's gospel. He's been building up to it at this point. We see that this crowd are passionate and angry because they have concluded two truths about Jesus.

[5 : 04] They've concluded in their minds two things about Jesus. Firstly, that he is a liar. This man, this man who claimed not just to be from Galilee, but this man who claimed to have come from the very presence of the Father, to have come from heaven itself.

This man who's been claiming to be the one who was with God in the beginning. This man who's come and he's claiming to be the only one who has come to show us the Father.

And this man who has the audacity to come and to claim that he is the only way to the Father. What absolute arrogance, what utter blasphemy.

Jesus is a liar. It's the first thing they've concluded. Second thing they've concluded is that Jesus is a threat. This man who's come in here and he's been flipping over tables and calling our temple his Father's house.

This man who's strolled in to our lives and who is calling us to change our ways and to examine our hearts. This man who's calling us to repentance. And this man who is associating with the wrong kind of people.

[6 : 23] And this man who people are beginning to believe. And this man who people are beginning to follow.

Well, we will not have this man as our king. And so this crowd, this passionate crowd, this first passionate crowd that we meet shout, crucify him.

Crucify him. They reject him. Fulfilling everything that John had said at the beginning of his gospel that Jesus, he came to his own and his own did not receive him.

But as we were singing in one of those hymns just a few moments ago, it wasn't just his own who did not receive him. The world did not receive him. He came as the light into our world of darkness.

And the darkness wanted nothing to do with the light. The creator, he stooped down into creation to deal with his creature's mess.

[7 : 33] And yet we wanted nothing to do with him. As Charles Wesley famously said in this hymn, "Tis mystery all, the immortal dies." And that's why, as we hear this passionate shout of this first crowd, well, we can see ourselves in this picture.

This rejection was our rejection of him. The darkness that drove him to the cross was, it was our darkness.

The sin that he came to deal with and to die for on the cross, that was our sin. So this first angry, passionate crowd, they look at Jesus and they shout, crucify him.

And so Jesus endures the most hideous form of torture in all its fullness and ugliness. Now I wonder if you've ever asked yourself why we call this day Good Friday.

Have you ever asked that? I mean, I was thinking on it this week, I've got an imagination that kind of goes from time to time. I'm trying to imagine that I was in, had a time machine and I somehow managed to get back to this day, AD 33, and I was able to meet some of the original disciples.

[9 : 00] And I'm asking them, listen, followers of Jesus, centuries down the line, generations later, we're going to, we're going to have one adjective that's going to describe this day that we mark Jesus' death as we remember it.

Could you guess what that adjective is? Is it bleak Friday? No, it's not bleak Friday. Is it, is it dark Friday? No, it's not dark Friday.

Is it despondent Friday? No, it's not despondent Friday. Is it ghastly Friday? No, it's not ghastly Friday. Come on, just put me out of my misery. What is the word? What is the adjective? Well, it's good Friday.

Okay. Good Friday. Good Friday. I imagine that they would have been perplexed and they would have most likely been massively offended because of the suffering, shame and rejection that they had just witnessed.

The man that they thought who had come to save their nation and their world had just endured. Have you ever asked that question? Why do we call this day Good Friday? Well, let me take you to the second passionate crowd that John tells us about.

[10 : 12] And it's this crowd that we read of in Revelation chapter 5. Verse 6, John tells us about this crowd as he describes what he sees in the courts of heaven.

Revelation 5 and beginning at verse 6, this is what he sees. And between the throne and the four living creatures and among the elders, I saw a lamb standing as though it had been slain with seven horns and with seven eyes which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth.

And he went and took the scroll from the right hand of him who was seated on the throne. And when he had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the lamb, each holding a harp and golden bowls full of incense which are the prayers of the saints.

You see this crowd? This heavenly crowd of elders and creatures. Now, John goes on and he records what he hears. So what is the shout of this passionate crowd?

Well, here's the amazing thing. The shout of this crowd is not one of accusation. The shout of this crowd is one of adoration.

[11 : 45] Look what he records and this crowd, they sang a new song saying, worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals for you were slain and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation and you have made them a kingdom and priest to our God and they shall reign on the earth.

Now, what is this crowd's take on Jesus? What is their passionate shout? Well, the first crowd's shout was crucify him.

This crowd's shout is worship him. Worship him. And would you track with me, would you notice just a few things about this shout? What do they declare the slain lamb to be?

What do they declare Jesus to be? Worthy. Why is he worthy? Two reasons. Firstly, because he was slain.

What did Jesus do? Do you see the language there? We've already sang it. He purchased. That is, he paid a price to buy something. Now, who did he purchase?

[13 : 03] Well, do you see it there? He purchased a people a people from every tribe and tongue and language and nation. This is a global people, a universal people.

And with what did he purchase them? With his precious blood. And here's the million dollar question. It's one that my two-year-old at the minute is always asking, why?

Why did he purchase them? Why did he purchase them? Well, would you see that this purchase wasn't purposeless? As Jesus died on the cross, if I can put it ever so reverently, it was no act of meaningless martyrdom.

His death was not a symbolic gesture of goodwill. Why did he purchase a people? For what end? Well, do you see it there? encapsulated in those two most beautiful and potent words.

Why did he purchase them? For God. For God. That is the purpose of the cross. That Jesus defeated, as we've been singing, the power, he defeated the power of sin.

[14 : 23] That Jesus crushed the stronghold of Satan. He is the serpent crusher that we're reading about in Genesis 3. Not so that his people could be simply forgiven, but so that they could be restored and adopted.

He purchased his people for God. The God who created all things. The God who made us in his image.

Who made us male and female in his image. The God who created us. Humanity for our relationship with him. And this holy God from whom we were separated because of our sin.

Is this God that Jesus came to reconcile us to. And so what does that mean? Well, it means today as we remember that first Good Fridays, we remember as we picture Jesus on the cross, what do we see there?

Well, we see the throbbing heart of a loving heavenly father who is desperate to win his people to himself. Now, here's the incredible thing.

[15 : 41] Said earlier that as we thought about that first passionate shouting crowd, he shouted, crucify him, that we could see ourselves in that picture. Well, here's the amazing thing. The incredible news is that by God's quite staggering and amazing grace, that as we look at this passionate and adoring crowd, that we can see ourselves in this picture.

We are part, get your heads around this, we are part of this people that Jesus Christ has purchased for God. And is it not incredible to think today that as we sit here, that we are part of a people, not only numerous around our city and around our nation and around our continent, but we are part of a people numerous around the globe that God has won to himself, celebrating, we celebrate the life that we have with God through Jesus Christ because of this slain lamb.

That's what's good about Good Friday. It was Pastor Frederick Leahy who said this as he thought about the cross and let's finish with these words.

As we stand in thought before that cross, our emotions are mixed. And this is what he says. Oh, how dreadful and yet how wondrous is this place.

Two very passionate crowds, two very different crowds in two very different places with two very different shouts about Jesus. Let me leave you with this question.

[17 : 30] What is the shout of your heart this evening as you remember Jesus on the cross? Does Good Friday find your heart in good form? Does Good Friday find your heart in good spirits and good voice?

Why? Because the lamb was slain to buy us, to purchase us, to reconcile us for God. Just before we just close with a reading from Romans 5, why don't we just take just a few moments just to be quiet and let's still ourselves and just reflect on what we've heard from God's word this evening.

Romans 5, verses 6 to 11. for while we were still weak at the right time Christ died for the ungodly.

For one will scarcely die for a righteous person, though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die. But God shows his love for us in this that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Father, we thank you so much for your amazing grace to us. Oh, this, the power of the cross that Christ became sin for us.

[19 : 03] He took the blame, he bore the wrath. We stand forgiven at the cross. Lord, what a great and awesome God you are. Father, help us never to lose the wonder of Good Friday.

Lord, be with us the rest of our time together, we ask in Jesus' name. Amen.