



No series of events in the history of the world has had a greater impact on our temporal and eternal destiny than the actions of Jesus – who through His crucifixion, resurrection and ascension fulfilled God’s long-standing promise to rescue the world from mutiny and death.

There is only one God, one Creator. As Christians we believe in monotheism – one God, one way to Him – through Jesus’ sacrifice for our sins.

I would like to start by reading some of the words of prophecy contained in the Old Testament – Isaiah 53. Isaiah 53 is one of the more specific prophecies about why Jesus came to earth and why He died on a cruel cross.

Isaiah speaks of the Messiah Jesus who would suffer for the sins of all people – that includes you and me. You may find it hard to believe that God would choose to save us through a humbling Jesus instead of a glorious king.

Many today still find this difficult to accept. It is contrary to human pride and worldly thinking. But God often works in ways we don’t expect.

Isaiah 53:3-9. New Living Translation Bible.

³ He was despised and rejected—a man of sorrows, acquainted with deepest grief.

We turned our backs on Him and looked the other way. He was despised, and we did not care.

⁴ Yet it was our weaknesses He carried; it was our sorrows that weighed Him down. And we thought His troubles were a punishment from God, a punishment for His own sins!

⁵ But He was pierced for our rebellion, crushed for our sins. He was beaten so we could be whole. He was whipped so we could be healed.

⁶ All of us, like sheep, have strayed away. We have left God's paths to follow our own. Yet the LORD laid on him the sins of us all.

⁷ He was oppressed and treated harshly, yet He never said a word. He was led like a lamb to the slaughter. And as a sheep is silent before the shearers, He did not open his mouth.

⁸ Unjustly condemned, He was led away. No one cared that He died without descendants, that His life was cut short in midstream. But He was struck down for the rebellion of my people.

⁹ He had done no wrong and had never deceived anyone. But He was buried like a criminal; He was put in a rich man's grave.

John 3 records another message directly from Jesus to Nicodemus, a Pharisee who came to Him at night.

Jesus tells him: no-one has even gone to heaven and returned. But the Son of Man (the title Jesus gave Himself) has come down from heaven. And as Moses lifted up the bronze snake on a pole in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up so that everyone who believes in Him will have eternal life.

In the Psalms we are also told who Jesus is. Psalm 22 The Good Shepherd who dies for His sheep. Psalm 23 The Great Shepherd who lives for the sheep and cares for them. Psalm 24 The Chief Shepherd who comes for the sheep to take them to Glory.

We are the sheep.

If you deny the inspiration of the Bible or the deity of Christ – then Scripture should challenge you. For it prophesies of Jesus' death and resurrection.

From the beginning God's plan to redeem the world was focused on the cross. It was here that God's Sinless Son would die in the place of sinners.

In the cross God deals with our alienation. We are separated from God by our sins and are unable to rectify the situation on our own.

Today, we all are experiencing COVID19 in some way or other and we will come out the other side.

But we will be changed – our beliefs, expectations and lifestyle will have changed and will influence how we live our life post COVID19.

Let's go back to the Ministry of Jesus. He spent just over 3 years with His disciples performing miracles, signs, changing the way the impoverished and suffering were treated.

He taught love, acceptance and self-worth for all people but most of all – hope in God and the Kingdom of God.

Jesus would be the free gift to all, to take our place for the judgement of sins, to die instead of us.

Only one who was sinless could die for sinners. The mystery and wonder of the cross is explained by God in Scripture – “God made Him who had no sin to be sin for us, so in Him we might become the righteousness of God.”

On Good Friday it was as though God had turned the lights out, hiding the shame of the cruelty that was there. And then the darkness was pierced by Jesus' cry **it is finished** which announced the work of

redemption was complete. A new and living way was opened up for all who turn to God in repentance and faith.

Now although Jesus had spoken of His impending journey into Jerusalem, it seemed the disciples hadn't fully understood or perhaps chose not to.

Like COVID 19, we may hold the changes to our life at a distance. It is "out there" and we try to live our life the way we always have.

But of course we can't – we must follow the Health and Government strict conditions. Our way of life is changing, resulting in fear and confusion in many people. And we question – when will this end? The rug has been pulled from under us – will this now be our life – where is our hope?

Let's rewind to Holy Week.

On Palm Sunday, Jesus rode in and was welcomed and praised as the King of the Jews by the crowd.

Today – Good Friday Jesus is still called the King of the Jews. But His colt has been replaced with a wooden cross. No palm leaves wave – 6 inch nails are driven into His wrists and feet. A crown of thorns is imbedded into His scalp. He had already been whipped and beaten, causing His flesh to be torn and His muscles and intestines were clearly seen.

A very different image from Sunday to Friday. And I won't apologize for sharing it. Yes you may cringe at hearing this, but we all need to acknowledge the truth and the sacrifice Jesus made for our lives. Don't turn your eyes away or shut Him out.

With COVID19, we may be trying to do that, ignore and shut it out while still asking – where is my hope?

But we can do neither.

The disciples' lives were dramatically changed on Good Friday – they thought they had lost their hope and future when Jesus was crucified.

They ran away, trying to distance themselves from the sacrifice of Jesus.

Are you doing that? Refusing to accept the truth of Jesus' death for us.

As Jesus' life was slowly and painfully ending as He remained fixed to the cross, He looked upon the many witnesses – those who loved Him; those who deserted Him; those who condemned Him and He cried out to His Father – Forgive them for they know not what they do.

But this cry to forgive also applied to all of us today – all the sins we have committed and will commit in our lifetime.

Jesus cried – It is finished before He died in the most horrendous way.

This is Good Friday –you may ask what's good about it?

It leads us to Resurrection Sunday. We have to take the path that Jesus did – we have to be on the Good Friday road as that is the only way we can reach Resurrection Sunday – for that is where our hope is.

The disciples found their hope again, on Resurrection Sunday.

During this pandemic we can also find our hope in the Living Jesus.

We are the wandering sheep and God sent Jesus to bring us back into the fold. We have God's inspired Scripture to reveal to us today the identity of the promised Messiah who came and died for our sins.

But if we know all that Jesus did and still reject Him our sin is much greater than the ancient Israelites.

Have you ever given your life to Jesus Christ, the Good Shepherd or are you still going your own way like a wandering sheep.

Jesus gave His life willingly for you and I let's give our life over to Him.

When you feel like you are drowning under the weight of COVID19 and its impact on your life – reach out to God – cling to Him. For He is our hope and safety and comfort.

If this sermon and the Scriptures have challenged you this morning and you would like more information or have questions, please call me. I would love to hear from you. My number is on our webpage.