

Sermon Transcript from 18th April 2025 – Good Friday

Sermon TLDR

On Good Friday, we reflected on the conflicting emotions this day evokes, considering its name and the events it commemorates.

The crucifixion marked the culmination of Jesus's suffering and his mission on Earth. His declaration, "It is finished," signified completion rather than defeat, turning the darkest day into a triumph. The sermon highlighted the power of the cross and the forgiveness it brings.

John Rile, the 20th-century Anglican Bishop of Liverpool, emphasized Jesus's sacrifice, asserting that Jesus represented humanity, suffered for us, and paid our debts. This act of restitution guarantees our new life through the Holy Spirit, enabling us to live godly lives.

Rile's teachings remind us that Christ's death grants us spiritual freedom, a privilege worth understanding and embracing. Reflecting on these truths, we are encouraged to seek cleansing and renewal through Jesus, ensuring we experience the full extent of these blessings daily.

The sermon closed with a call to reflect on the freedom Christ offers and a prayer for understanding and embracing the blessings described by John Rile, asking Jesus to help us live in accordance with what He has done for us.

Link to the Start of this Sermon (on YouTube)

<https://youtu.be/9VPvhSRnjnk?t=1627>

Sermon Transcript

Well good morning everyone.

I think today is one of the most confusing days of the year - we call it Good Friday.

And pretty well, all of the events indicate that that's a bad name for it, but we know, of course, and we've just been singing about it. I hope perhaps not, I haven't been singing too well in that verse and chorus, because it's a favourite of mine and the words have so much meaning, and I couldn't resist singing as loud as I could. So I hope the voice holds out.

There was a sense of confusion also this morning when Andy and I looked at the order of service and the titles of all the songs that we have sung and we sing were different. And I remembered that Paul last night had said at what I don't know, 8:45 or so. "Well, I've got to go home now. I've had over 100 e-mail messages. I've had over 100 telephone calls during the day, but I've got to go and put the order of service onto the system." And I thought he got it wrong, but in fact, just to confuse things a little bit the titles for each of the songs is slightly different from the words of the first line, and so on, so there was no confusion at all. If we'd known that.

But turning to today, Chris has read to us earlier that final account of the crucifixion, where Jesus exclaimed at the end "It is finished." It was the culmination of 24 hours or so of unimaginable suffering. Jesus, himself going through great torture, unfair trials, beaten, falsely accused.

And the people themselves, in that week, having gone through a roller coaster of emotions and experiences. The disciples, the crowds, the religious leaders and the Roman occupiers.

The supper we celebrated last night, followed swiftly by Jesus arrest and subsequent trials. And we need to be clear, very clear this morning. Then when that when Jesus said it is finished. It was an exclamation of a fact of something, finished, a job done. Not one of acceptance.

Earlier he had gone through pains of accepting the pathway ahead. But his cry from the cross, his very last words were ones which are gloriously true, it is finished the task he had left heaven for and come to Earth. Not an exclamation of defeat or failure.

We sang that Keith Getty Song “Oh to See the Dawn”; which goes on to speak of the darkest day, and in many ways it was that. As I say, making Good Friday sounded quite improper term for the day. But the conclusion of that song was this:

*This the power of the cross.
Son of God slain for us.
What a love, what a cost.
We stand forgiven at the cross.*

Hope we can all claim that as an absolute truth in our life, but what Jesus did. For all who will turn to him is the truth in our life. I stand forgiven at the cross.

Based on that, let's consider the claim that a 20th century first Anglican Bishop of Liverpool, John Rile made about Jesus on the cross. Let us set fully before our eyes the doctrine of Christ dying in our place, he writes; “His substituted death and rest, our souls on it, let us hold on firmly to the mighty truth that Christ on the cross. Did these things for us. He stood in the place of his people. He died for his people. He suffered for his people. Was counted a curse and sin for his people. He paid the debt of his people. He made restitution for his people. He became the guarantee of his people. Became the representative of his people. Quickly looking at each of them, Jesus stood on that cross.

Not a lightning one to darken one there. On a dusty rubbish tip just outside Jerusalem. He stood there. In the place of his people, those who have put their trust in him. To follow him, Jesus was on the cross. In place of you and me. He died for his people. No question that he gave his life. That we might live.

He says his death on the cross with no accident. It wasn't just the culmination of all those enemies, the religious leaders, the Roman rulers. He died willingly, giving his life for his people. He suffered for us.

Those of you who took part in the telling of the Easter story to the children, the local schools will have seen, some almost gruesome, not perhaps quite so gruesome as other films of the torture and suffering that Jesus went through, but he suffered for us, his people.

He was counted a curse and a sin for his people. Writes in Galatia to the Church of Galatia, reminding them that in the Book of Deuteronomy one of the laws was that God put a curse on those who've died by death on a cross.

And instituted the fact that they should be taken down and buried before nightfall, something which? We will think of more fully over the whole Easter weekend.

Jesus paid the debt of his people. The death of sin. The debt to overcome that sin. Jesus paid it all. We owe it all to him.

He made restitution for his people. Put right, the things that were wrong to bring us into a living relationship. With a living God. And who can be made alive in us by the Holy Spirit? Jesus on the cross made restitution for his people. Cross on the cross became the guarantee of his people.

It isn't what you and I do that makes us effective Christians alive. Christians. It's the work of the Holy Spirit within us.

The one whom Jesus sent. We cannot of ourselves live godly lives. We cannot of ourselves, these lives pleasing to God. But through Jesus sacrifice on the cross. He was able to send the Holy Spirit to enable us to do that. To make the new life a continuous one. One which will carry on until we meet Jesus face to face.

And finally, he became the representative of his people. He represented all of mankind. And all of those who were willing to accept him. To that new life that we have.

Bishop Raw concludes in his rooted in him the mighty truth of Christ's Cross, that in this way Christ obtained his people's freedom. Let us understand this clearly and then we will see what a mighty privilege it is to be made free by Christ. This is a freedom which above all others is worth having.

The question for you and me this morning is do we have that freedom? Two questions.

Am I one of the people that John Rile wrote off? Simple. To turn to Jesus, accept our sinfulness and ask him to cleanse us from all sins and to make us new in him.

And then for us as Christians, have we appropriated all of those blessings, not just some of them, but all of them, so that we can experience true spiritual freedom daily.

We'll spend a moment or two in reflection and I'll close with a short prayer before we sing our final [song].

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Father, thank you for this day.

Thank you for sending Jesus to be our example and then on the cross to die for us.

Help us to understand that's what it meant to you, the holy one, but also what it should mean to us in our daily lives, that we might experience all of those blessings and more [as] described by John Rile.

Lord, as we conclude this service with our final song, accept our heartfelt thanks. Help us to understand a little more fully what you've done for us?

We pray this in the name of Jesus our saviour. Amen.