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Leaders notes



**"WHOEVER WANTS TO BE MY
DISCIPLE MUST DENY THEMSELVES
AND TAKE UP THEIR CROSS
AND FOLLOW ME."**

Mark 8:34

INTRODUCTION

The aim of these notes is to help our young people obey the command of Jesus to **'carry their cross'** – **Mark 8:34**.

The first three sessions will focus on the theology of the cross, with the last one primarily application. The apostle Paul declared, **"For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified"** 1 Corinthians 2:2.



SESSION

1

Redemption



REDEMPTION DEFINED:

Brought back to where you belong

1. What does the word ransom mean?

The word ransom is a concept taken from the slave market. If someone was owned by another, a price would be paid, and the person redeemed. The clearest example of this is to be found in the book of Ruth.

The meaning goes even deeper than merely buying back, for to redeem was to 'bring something back to its original position'. To redeem was to bring a person back to the one who they truly belonged to.

2. Why do we need to be redeemed?

READ: Colossians 1:13–14

In **Genesis 1-2** we are introduced to a world where God's relationship with Adam and Eve is perfect. Their rebellion in **Genesis 3** creates a new world where God is viewed as the enemy to be feared, instead of a Father to be loved. From now on mankind belongs to the power of darkness, as Paul explains in **Colossians 1:13**.

3. How does God redeem us?

READ: Mark 3:23-29, 10:45, Colossians 1:14-15, 2:13-15, Romans 3:24

Mark 3:23–27

Here the Lord Jesus illustrates what Paul speaks of in **Colossians 1:14-15 & 2:13-15**. The devil is the strong man, and the Lord Jesus the one who ties him up, and takes the plunder. The Kingdom of light triumphs over the powers of darkness, so the captives are set free.

Mark 10:45

If we are to be redeemed, we must let the Son of God serve us. The giving up of his life is the key to our redemption.

Col 1:14–15

The key word in these verses is rescue. The only way that we will be 'brought back to where we belong' is if Jesus rescues us from the powers of darkness. Once rescued and redeemed we are forgiven.

Col 2:13–15

Another way of describing what it means to belong to the powers of darkness, is to say we are 'spiritually dead'. If we are to be redeemed God must breathe spiritual life into our dead bodies (2:13).

The picture Paul describes, is very similar to the parable in **Mark 3:23–27**.

- **2:13** – The cross forgives all our sin.
- **2:14** – The cross cancels all charges which once condemned us.
- **2:15** – The cross disarms and completely triumphs over the powers of darkness.

Romans 3:24-25

Here Paul explains the price that's paid so we can be redeemed. We once stood before God condemned and deserving of judgment (3:9), but through the sacrificial death of Jesus we are redeemed (3:24).

4. What difference does our redemption make to our daily life?

God's redemption gives you a new purpose (1 Peter 1:17-21)

- **1:17** – Being brought back into a relationship with God helps you see the world in a completely different way. No longer is this world all there is.
- **1:18–19** – What redeems you becomes what is most precious to you. Living for anything else but Jesus seems incredibly empty.

God's redemption gives you a new power (Titus 2:11-14)

The purpose of our redemption is to remake us into the likeness of Jesus. These verses give us two motivations for that change.

God's Grace

- **2:11-12** – The grace that redeems, motivates you to say no to what the saviour hates, and yes to what the saviour loves.
- **2:14** – We are taken from the powers of darkness so as to be changed. We no longer obey our old master Satan, but instead we are eager to listen to and obey our redeemer.

Jesus Return

- **2:13** – Our eagerness to change is the clearest evidence that we are waiting for Jesus.

God's redemption gives you a new future (Romans 8:22-24)

A broken and fallen world reminds us that our redemption is not complete. When our saviour returns, he will bring all of creation 'back to where it's meant to be'. In the new creation death and decay will be replaced by eternal life and liberation.

TALK OUTLINE

INTRODUCTION



Six things that make logos most successful:

1. Immediately recognisable
2. Reflects the brands message
3. Stands out from the crowd
4. Works any size anywhere
5. Minimalist design
6. Builds trust

The cross is the Christian's logo but what does it actually mean?

1. BROUGHT BACK

Mark 10:45

Redemption defined: Brought back to where you belong.

Col 1:13-14

By nature we are part of Satan's Kingdom.

God rescues us from the Kingdom of Darkness.

2. AT A COST

The Lord Jesus completely defeats and humiliates Satan by rescuing us.

The Lord Jesus takes the punishment we deserve (**Rom 3:21-26**).

3. TO BE CHANGED

The Father brings us back, to make us like the Son.

The precious blood of Jesus, rescues us from our empty life (**1 Peter 1:17-19**).



Small Group Questions

UNDERSTAND

1. What is redemption?

To be brought back to where you belong

Col 1:13-14

Mark 3:23-29

Mark 10:45

Rom 3:24

1 Peter 1:17-21

Titus 2:11-14

DISCUSS

2. Is it good to belong to Jesus? Why?

3. How often are you reminded of belonging to Jesus?

4. How might thinking about the fact that “we belong to Jesus” change the way we live?

5. How can we remind ourselves that we belong to Jesus?

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SESSION

2

Justification



JUSTIFICATION DEFINED:

Hiding in the righteousness
of Christ

Introduction

The first step in teaching justification is to try and understand how our culture thinks about God, sin and judgement.

Justification – Hiding in the righteousness of Christ.

1. How do people think about God?

Mr & Mrs Make Law (Romans 1:18-32)

When we come to **Romans 1** the first thing Paul does is introduce us to some startling truths about Mr & Mrs Make Law.

What Mr & Mrs Make Law know about God:

- God's truth is plain to them (**1:19**)
- They **know** that God is eternal (**1:20**)
- They **know** that God is God (divine) (**1:20**)
- They **know** that God should be glorified (**1:21-22**)
- They **know** that God is their judge (**1:32**)

This may be a surprise to many of our young people, for our culture is so confident in its rejection of God.

We Lie (1:18-20)

When Paul writes **Romans 1** he's probably got **Genesis 1-3** and **Psalms 14:1** in mind. The fool says in his heart, "There is no God." They are corrupt, their deeds are vile, there is no one who does good.

When we put ourselves in the place of God as the rule maker, we are foolish, futile, and it reveals our darkened minds (**1:21**). Deep down we all know that God's our judge and should be glorified (**1:21-22, 32**).

"Man is so made that he cannot but infer from his environment the eternal power and goodness of God. His mind (indeed his whole psychology) is tuned in

to the revelation which surrounds him. He is neither blind nor insensitive. The message actually gets through to him." **Donald Macleod**.

We Suppress (1:18-20)

The second mark of a Mr & Mrs Make Law is they suppress God's truth (1:18). Even though they are hard wired to know Gods truth, they still seek to suppress it. To be a successful rule maker, you have to muzzle your main competitor.

"When the creation points to the goodness of God it is directing us to One mysterious, unmanageable and infinitely threatening, upon whom we are totally dependent and to whom we are unconditionally accountable." **Donald Macleod**.

We Exchange (1:21-23, 25)

For a rule maker to be successful, they must be in control of what they live for and worship. They exchange the creator for the created.

Mr & Mrs Obey Law (Romans 2:17-24)

Mr & Mr Make Law viewed God as an irritant that needed to be replaced, whereas Mr & Mrs Obey Law see Him as someone to impress.

- They are proud of **who** they are (2:17)
- They are proud of the law and their **relationship** with God (2:17)
- They think of themselves as **superior**, for they **know** Gods will (2:18)
- They have God's law; therefore, instruct the blind and foolish. (2:19-20)
- They are convinced that obedience to the law leads them to God. (9:31)

2. On what basis does God judge us?

God's judgment is based upon two things, His character and our own.

Our Character

What we live by, is what we will be judged by.

Mr & Mrs Make Law

When you choose to be law maker, you become captive to your own desires (1:24), lusts (1:26), and thinking (1:2). These three are the basis for your rule making, and the grounds by which you want to be judged. With great sadness God gives people what they want. The standards they live by, is the standard He judges them by.

They are:

- Guilty (1:24, 26, 28)
- Without excuse (1:20)
- Facing God's anger (1:18)

Mr & Mrs Obey Law

Mr & Mrs Obey Law, are convinced they're superior to the likes of Mr & Mrs Make Law (2:17-18). To show them their sin and hypocrisy Paul gives them a short history lesson (2:21-23). Instead of being a light to the nations, they have become a laughing stock (2:24).

In response to Paul's history lesson, Mr & Mrs Obey Law turn to the covenant of circumcision. The answer Paul gives is clear: circumcision without obedience is useless (2:25-27), for the outward sign without inward obedience is worthless (2:28-29).

They are:

- Guilty (2:3, 27)
- Without excuse (2:1, 27)
- Facing God's anger (2:5-9, 27)

God's Character

He's angry with our rebellion

God's verdict towards Mr & Mrs Make Law is they're guilty and without excuse (**1:20**). They have rebelled against his righteous character, and deserve his wrath (**1:18**).

The verdict upon Mr & Mrs Obey Law, is that they've failed to keep God's law, therefore facing his anger (**2:5**).

The anger that's described in **Romans 1** is divine not human.

"Human anger, although there is such a thing as righteous indignation, is mostly very unrighteous. It is an irrational and uncontrollable emotion, containing much vanity, animosity, malice and the desire for revenge. It should go without saying that God's anger is absolutely free of all such poisonous ingredients."

"The wrath of God, then is almost totally different from human anger. It does not mean that God loses his temper, flies into a rage, or is malicious, spiteful or vindictive. The alternative to 'wrath' is not 'love' but 'neutrality' in the moral conflict. And God is not neutral. On the contrary, his wrath is holy hostility to evil, his refusal to condone it or come to terms with it, his just judgement upon it." J.Stott

God's Judgement

His judgement is truthful (2:2)

When God passes judgement, his truth is the standard.

His judgement is inescapable (2:3)

No one will be able to evade or escape.

His judgement is patient (2:4)

The purpose of his patience and kindness is to bring people to repentance.

His judgement is just & fair (2:5-10)

His truth is the gauge; therefore, justice will rule.

His judgement is final (2:16)

Nothing will be hidden from the all-knowing God.

3. What hope for the guilty?

We started by asking, what does the Bible say about God, sin and judgement. We have seen that, *"There is no ray of light, no flicker of hope, no prospect of rescue."* **J.Stott**.

Not Ashamed

The answer God gives to the guilty verdict is found in **Romans 1:16-17**. The two key words are 'righteousness' and 'faith'.

What does it mean for God's righteousness to be revealed?

Twice in the gospels the Father declares "this is my Son and with him I am well pleased", (**Mt 3:17, 17:5**). When Peter describes Jesus life, he says 'He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth' (**1 Pet 1:22**). This is the righteous life a Christian puts their faith (trust) in.

What does it mean to trust in Jesus' righteous life? (**Romans 3:21-23, 8:1**)

To explain the 'good news' of God's righteousness Paul uses the phrase 'but now'. We all stand guilty and condemned (**3:9**), 'but now' a righteousness from God is made available. Which ever person we reflect, Mr & Mrs Make Law or Obey Law, the righteousness of God is open to us. If we seek to get our righteousness from the law (trusting ourselves) then we remain condemned (**3:23**). If we put our trust in the righteous life of Jesus, then we stand before God righteous (**3:21-24**), justified (**3:28**), facing no condemnation (**8:1**).

These two quotes from John Stott help us to understand our standing before God.

"The righteousness of (or from) God is a combination of his righteous character, his saving initiative and his gift of a righteous standing before him. It is his just justification of the unjust, his righteous way of 'righteousing' the unrighteous."

*"To condemn is not merely to punish, but to declare the accused guilty or worthy of punishment; and justification is not merely to remit that punishment, but to declare that punishment cannot be justly inflicted..... Pardon and Justification therefore are essentially distinct. The one is the remission of punishment; the other is a declaration that no ground for the infliction of punishment exists." **J.Stott***

These wonderful truths are liberating, for they declare our complete acceptance by God. When God looks at us, he sees a perfect child of God, not a condemned sinner. We are 'in Christ' therefore everything that's true of Jesus, is now true of us (**Eph 1:3**).

So now – go and boast (3:27-31)

Paul finishes with an encouragement to boast (**3:27**). Once we were guilty and condemned (**3:9, 23**), but now we are perfect in God's sight (**1:16-17**), so boast in God's righteousness.

TALK OUTLINE



INTRODUCTION

Why is justification important?

1. STANDING

Mr & Mrs Make Law stand before God

- Guilty (*1:24, 26, 28*)
- They have no excuse (*1:20*)
- They face God's anger (*1:18*)

Mr & Mrs Obey Law stand before God

- Guilty (*2:3, 27*)
- With no excuse (*2:1, 27*)
- Facing God's anger (*2:5-9, 27*)

God's judgment is:

- Truthful (*2:2*)
- Inescapable (*2:3*)
- Patient (*2:4*)
- Just & fair (*2:5-10, 2:9-11*)
- Final (*2:16*)

2. HIDING

We stand guilty and condemned without hope.

We hide in Christ (*3:21-24*), therefore facing no condemnation (*8:1*).

3. BOASTING

We are commanded by God to boast, not in ourselves, but in the 'righteous' life that saves us.



Small Group Questions

PURPOSE

- To remind the young people of what it means to be justified.
- To encourage them to think about how being justified makes a difference to their life.

1. How does Romans 3:10-18 show us what righteousness is? What is righteousness? Why do we need to be made righteous? (Romans 3:19-20)

2. How are we made righteous? (Romans 3:21-22)

Transition

If we trust in Jesus we have been made righteous in God's sight. We're now going to think about how that might affect us.

DISCUSS

3. How might knowing that you're right in God's sight affect you on:

- a) A good day when you've acted lovingly towards people around you?**
- b) A day you're ashamed of?**

Read example scenarios on **Page 28**. (Please do change your scenarios so that it's something your young people can relate to.)

4. How would you feel after each of those days?

5. How would you pray at the end of those days?

6. How does being justified affect how you might pray after each of the days?

Tips

- After modelling it, ask the young people to describe a day that they've done well and a day about which they might be ashamed.
- Ask them to write down the beginning of the prayer they might pray out of the knowledge of being justified. Invite them to begin all their prayers that way for that week.
- Invite the young people to apply the fact that they are justified to the day they just had.

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SESSION

3

Propitiation



PROPTIATION DEFINED:

God's righteous anger satisfied.

Introduction

Last session we looked at justification, and how it relates to sin, judgement and God.

Sin

When it comes to morality there are only two types of people.

Mr & Mrs Make Law (Romans 1:18-32)

These people choose to reject God by suppressing His truth and exchanging what they know to be true for a lie (**1:18, 23**). Their rejection of God, leads to a DIY morality (**1:32**).

Mr & Mrs Obey Law (Romans 2:1-3:8)

On the surface they look different to Mr & Mrs Make Law, for instead of rejecting God's law they seek to obey it (**2:17-24**).

Paul conclusion is clear, "What shall we conclude then? Do we have any advantage? Not at all! For we have already made the charge that Jews (Mr & Mrs Obey Law) and Gentiles (Mr & Mrs Make Law) alike are all under the power of sin (**3:9**).

Whether you make the rules or try and keep them, you stand condemned.

Judgement

All of God's judgements are based upon his character (**2:2**), inescapable (**2:3**), patient, (**2:4**), just and fair (**2:5-11**), and final (**2:16**).

God

The answer God gives to mankind's rebellion is the righteousness of his Son (**1:16-17**). When we put our trust in Christ's righteousness (**3:21-24**), we are justified (**3:28**), and face no judgement from God (**8:1**).

God's Anger – It's Never Indifferent

Justice is the foundation of God's throne (**Ps 89:14**) and at the heart of all He does. Therefore, how does a God who's truthful (**2:2**), just and fair (**2:5-11**), seemingly write off all our sin? We obviously benefit from receiving the righteousness of Christ, but surely God must punish our rebellion?

The first pages of Genesis reveal that God's not indifferent to our rebellion, as he gives a clear command and promised punishment (**2:16**). When Adam and Eve choose to rebel, the punishment of death and decay descends upon God's perfect world (**3:14-19**). A world marked by death and decay is not the only punishment Adam and Eve receive. A holy God cannot have rebellious sinners in his presence, so he commands them to leave the garden (**3:23**).

God's Anger – It Must Be Satisfied

When you read the Old Testament, we see that God designed Israel's life so that they are constantly reminded of three things

God is holy

1. The punishment for sin is death

2. Sinful people can't approach God

The sacrificial system was designed to be both a reminder of these truths, and the answer to them.

The Sacrifice

- The lamb or goat dies instead of the people (**Lev 4:4, 16:16, 20-21**).
- The anger God feels towards His people's sin is taken by the sacrifice (**Lev 16:15-17**).
- God's anger is satisfied so the people are forgiven (**Lev 6:7, 16:30, 34, 19:22**).
- God's anger is satisfied so the Priest can now approach God (**16:32-33**).

The Saviour

When we come to the New Testament, we see how Jesus fulfils the sacrificial system.

The Lord Jesus is the lamb that represents sinful people. We see this first declared by the prophet John the Baptist (**John 1:29**), and later explained by Philip to the Ethiopian. The Lord Jesus is the silent, slaughtered and shamed saviour, who satisfies God's anger, and brings forgiveness (**Acts 9:26-40**).

The anger God has towards our rebellion, is experienced by Jesus on the cross (**Rom 3:21-26**).

Now we are friends with God, we can freely come into his presence (**Rom 5:1-2, 6-11**).

God's Anger – It Can Be Avoided

But now – God's Salvation (3:27-31)

The death of the Lord Jesus opens up the gospel to all people, whether a Jew (Mr & Mrs Obey Law) or a Gentile (Mr & Mrs Make Law), (**3:22, 29**).

Paul makes clear that our response must be faith (trust) in the sacrifice of Jesus.

- Through faith (trust) in Jesus Christ (**3:22**)
- Received by faith (trust) (**3:25**)
- Those who have faith (trust) in Jesus Christ (**3:26**);
- Justified by faith (trust) (**3:28**)
- Through that same faith (trust) (**3:30**)

"But in the courts of heaven, God sets up the system. He is not only perfectly just, but he is also the offended party. And in the person of his own dear Son he absorbs the penalty on behalf of the people who put their faith in him." D.Carson.

TALK OUTLINE



INTRODUCTION

We all crave justice.

If God is just, how can he give us His Son's righteousness?

1. GOD'S ANGER IS NEVER INDIFFERENT

Gen 1-2 – Life

Gen 2:16 – Clear command, clear punishment promised.

Punishment – Death and expulsion from the garden.

2. GOD'S JUSTICE - IT MUST BE SATISFIED

Lev 16:15 – Lamb dies instead of the people.

Lev 16:30 – Through the lamb's sacrifice the people's sin is forgiven.

Lev 16:32 – The priest can now approach God.

3. GOD'S ANGER - IT CAN BE AVOIDED

Jesus is the sacrificial Lamb.

Who is slaughtered, silent and shamed?



Small Group Questions

UNDERSTAND

1. **How is atonement made? What needs atoning? Why is atonement needed?** (*Leviticus 16:15-19*)

Atonement is needed because God can't tolerate sin.

2. **What's the problem if God justifies us without punishing sin?**
3. **Why is it good news that God punishes sin?**

DISCUSS

4. **When did atonement happen? What does the frequency tell us about the sacrifice?** (*Leviticus 16:34*)

*You might want to say: We know from Hebrews that it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins. (*Hebrews 10:1-4*).*

5. **What is God's final solution to the sin problem?** (*Romans 3:21-26*)
6. **Who is the judge? Who is the justifier? What do you make of that?**
7. **What does God's solution show us about his attitude towards us?**
(*1 John 2:1-2, 4:10*)

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4

Following Jesus

Introduction

So far we have looked at three words that explain the doctrine of the cross. I have tried to sum up each word with a memorable phrase.

- **Redemption:** Brought back to where you belong.
- **Justification:** Hiding in the righteousness of Christ.
- **Propitiation:** God's Anger Satisfied.

Why We Teach Theology

In his teaching Jesus makes clear following him will cost us a great deal (**Mark 8:34-38**).

- **8:34** – Following Jesus means taking up your cross.
- **8:35** – Following Jesus means dying to self.
- **8:36-37** – Followers of Jesus must acknowledge that this world is temporary and the next eternal.
- **8:38** – Following Jesus means being faithful to His words of what the cross means and its implications.

These words of Jesus are tough and uncompromising, which is why our young people need a firm theological foundation. If we are to call our young people to follow Jesus, then it's essential they have a Biblical understanding of the cross and its implications.

"Let us remind ourselves that in the New Testament suffering is viewed as normal experience of a Christian. New converts were warned that the kingdom of God could be entered only 'through many tribulations' (Acts 14:22); and when tribulation came their way, as it regularly did, they could not complain that they had not been prepared for it. But suffering was not only regarded as an inevitable feature of the Christian lot; it was looked upon as a token of true Christianity, as a sign that God counted those who endured it worthy of his kingdom (2 Thes, 1:5). Besides, it had a salutary moral effect on those

who experienced it, for it helped them to cultivate endurance and steadfastness of character, and when these were linked to Christian faith, Christian hope was the more stimulated.” F.F.Bruce

Having looked at the theology, I want us now to apply these truths to the young people’s lives. Our hope must be that they learn to rejoice in the cross like the Ethiopian Ambassador (**Acts 8:39**).

Redemption – Brought back to where you belong

Learning To Rejoice In Christ’s Victory

At the heart of redemption is the victory over evil. This mighty victory brings Christians hope for the present and the future.

The Dominion of Darkness

The picture that’s painted by the Lord Jesus and the apostle Paul is the same. We are by nature owned by the strong man (**Mark 3:27**), and part of his dark dominion (**Col 1:13**). We are unable to change the situation, for we have no spiritual life (**Col 2:13**). The strong man rules us, and by ourselves there is nothing we can do.

This might sound depressing, but it’s Biblical realism. By nature, we are in a helplessness and hopeless situation, *“There is no ray of light, no flicker of hope, no prospect of rescue.” J.Stott.*

These truths collide head on with a culture that teaches our children to pursue their dreams, and anything’s possible. Understanding these truths is actually the very first step to becoming a Christian. A redeemer is only needed because we desperately need rescuing from the strong man’s dominion.

The Kingdom of Christ

Alongside all the negative truths are positive ones. The Lord Jesus is the one who enters the strong man’s house, to rescue us. Having overpowered him, he takes the plunder and brings it into His Kingdom (**Mark 3:27, Col 1:13-14**). The illustration Paul uses is taken straight from the Roman world. When a Roman army defeated their enemy, they would then drag the defeated king through the streets of their capital. As they did, everyone would know that he was disarmed of power and therefore defeated. That, says Paul, is what the cross has done to Satan. On the last day of history all people will know that the cross is triumphant, and that Satan’s defeated (**Col 2:14-15**).

Learn To Rejoice In Christ’s Victory

Rejoicing Because of The Present

The Biblical doctrine of redemption helps our young people see the world differently to their non-Christian friends. However, messed up and marred we might be from the effects of sin, we know that our saviour’s sacrifice redeems us from its effects (**2:14**). The salvation our redeemer brings teaches us to say no to the sin that ruins, and yes to good that changes (**Titus 2:11-14**). The change redemption brings should fill our hearts with hope and praise. As our young people look upon the world that they live in, they need to learn to recognise that no one is beyond redemption. Whether it’s their atheistic friend, or their unconverted family, if Jesus decides to enter the strong man’s house and redeem then he can.

Rejoicing Because of The Future

The doctrine of redemption looks forward to the last day, when the whole of creation will be redeemed and ‘brought back to where it should be’ (**Rom 8:22-25**). One of the greatest things that should mark God’s people, is the deep hope (trust) they have in the new creation.

Justification – Hiding in the righteousness of Christ

Learning To Rejoice In Christ's Righteousness

Reconciled & Righteous

The message our young people take to their friends is one of reconciliation. The rebellion that separated us from God, is covered by the righteousness life of Jesus (**Gal 2:20-21, 2 Cor 5:21**). This truth changes a person's confidence 100%, for instead of looking to your peer group for approval, you now look to Christ. Our deep desire to be loved and accepted does not change, but the central focus as to who we get it from does.

A Boasting Ambassador

The more our young people learn to rejoice in the righteousness of Christ, the bolder they will be to boast of Christ (**1 Cor 1:30-31**). Our role as youth leaders is to train our young people to be ambassadors (**2 Cor 5:20**), who boast in his righteousness (**1 Cor 1:30-31**).

Propitiation – God's Anger Satisfied

We have seen that the cross of Jesus not only changes our eternity, but also radically changes our lives now.

The Cross Redeems

You now have the power to be the person God has made you to be.

The Cross Justifies

You now know you are 100% loved and accepted by God.

The Cross Deals With God's Anger

You now have the motivation to love God and your neighbour.

No Place For Cheap Grace

We started today by looking at **Mark 8:34-38**, and the challenge Jesus gives to all who follow him. It's a challenge to take up your cross, die to self, and to be resolutely faithful to the words of Jesus. What we must not do, in fact resist at all costs, is to water down the challenge Jesus gives, so our young people find it easier to accept. The great German theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer said; *"Cheap grace means grace sold on the marked like 'cheapjacks' wares. Cheap grace is the preaching of forgiveness without requiring repentance. Cheap grace is grace without discipleship, grace without the cross, grace without Jesus Christ, living and incarnate"*.

A Crucified Self

The apostle Paul helpfully puts the challenge and implications of Mark 8:34-38 into one sentence (**Gal 2:20**).

You Have Died

When a young person becomes a Christian everything about them becomes Jesus centred. To use Jesus' words they 'must deny themselves'. In Paul's words 'I no longer live but Christ lives in me'. Our role as youth leaders is to seek to work with the young people so that they can see how the radical challenge of the cross impacts every area of their lives.

THE WORLD SAYS:

"Be true to yourself"

"Don't you ever let a soul in the world tell you that you can't be exactly who you are."

Lady Gaga

"Just be yourself, there is no one better."

Taylor Swift

"Your time is limited so don't spend it living someone else's life"

Steve Jobs

YOLO – You Only Live Once

JESUS/PAUL SAYS:

'Deny yourself'

Jesus

'I no longer live, but Christ lives in me'

Paul

'I no longer live, but Christ lives in me.'

Paul

"For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me and for the gospel will save it."

Jesus

You Motivation Is The Love Of God

Now at first glance the quotes from Jesus and Paul can seem incredibly negative, and the world's philosophy much more engaging and exciting. That's until you consider that a Christian's motivation is "I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me."

The cross like nothing else confirms to us God's love. The foundation and engine that drives Paul forward is the fact that Jesus 'loved me and gave himself for me'. It is the love of Christ that drives him to deny

self, take up his cross, and remain passionately committed to the words of his saviour (**Mark 8:32-34**). *"Must the Christian go around looking for a cross to bear, seeking to suffer?"* No, insisted Bonhoeffer. *"Opportunities for bearing crosses will occur along life's way and all that is required is the willingness to act when the time comes. The needs of the neighbour, especially those of the weak and downtrodden, the victimized and the persecuted, the ill and the lonely, will become abundantly evident."*

TALK OUTLINE



1. REDEMPTION

Redemption is marked by victory

- **Mark 3:23-27**
Satan is the strong man is bound by Jesus. Once bound the plunder is taken.
- **Mark 2:13-14**
God's enemy is disarmed and made a public spectacle.
- **Titus 2:14**
God has the power to change us and redeem anyone, however much they are lost.

2. JUSTIFICATION

What difference does the cross make to a Christian's life?

We are created to love and be loved, therefore we fear rejection.

Romans 5:9-20

- We can now approach God.
- We know we are totally loved and accepted by God.
- We learn to get our primary worth from what God thinks of us and not our peers or family.
- This enables us to love even our enemies.

3. PROPITIATION

Gal 2:20

- We get our motivation from God's love.
- The world's agenda, desires and reason for living is completely different to those who follow Jesus.



Small Group Questions

DISCUSS

Redemption

Through the cross, God has power to redeem anyone (*Col 2:13-15*).

1. Do you live as though God could redeem anyone?
2. What might it look like to know that God can redeem those around you?

Justification

Through the cross, God loves you with the same love he has for Jesus (*Rom 5:1-11*).

3. How does it feel when you fail or are rejected by people? Why?
4. How does it comfort you to know how God views you?

Carrying our Cross

Through the cross, we no longer live but Christ lives in us (*Gal 2:20*).

5. How should the cross affect the way we view our lives/priorities/choices?

CARRY
Your
CROSS

SCENARIO 1

I got up quickly this morning and was immediately alert. I sang hymns in the shower. I had my breakfast and read my Bible for a long time. I prayed for myself, my flatmates, my family, my church and the world and I even sang some more. Before heading out, I noticed that my flatmate didn't do his dishes the previous evening so I washed them up along with my own. I smiled the whole way into work.

At work, I had a compliment for everyone. People smile when they see me. I did my work really well. I even took the pressure off others by taking on some of their responsibilities. At lunch, someone tells me that they went to church on the weekend. They were taken by a friend. It opened up a really interesting discussion and I was able to tell them about the peace that comes from knowing I'm right in God's sight because of Jesus. They seem to take it in.

In the afternoon, I stuck up for someone who was being slandered. It was hard to do but a few people were understanding. They know I did it because I'm a Christian. I went for a run when I got home, cooked dinner for my flatmates and asked them about their day. They had hard days. I didn't tell them how great mine was because I wanted to be sympathetic. I got ready for the next day. Read my book, prayed and went to bed at a very reasonable hour.

SCENARIO 2

I wake up with a knock on my door. I've overslept. In the shower, I get shampoo in my eyes and probably don't wash it all out. I sit down to read my Bible but only stay for 2 minutes because I'm so distracted by all the things I have to do before school. I put orange juice instead of oat milk in my coffee. I leave my dishes for my flatmates. I realise that my bike has a puncture and since I'm running late I decide to give myself a break by taking the tube. It's delayed. I stand sweltering in a cramped carriage noticing every annoying thing about the 10 people in my eye line.

At work, I feel guilty about being late. I blame the tube. I'm particularly aware of others not doing their job properly. I say something passive aggressive to a colleague who seems really upset. They try to talk to me later but out of guilt I don't really respond; making it worse. I'm snappy. My break feels like 5 minutes. In the afternoon someone mentions something really close to their heart. I avoid them so as not to get into a deep chat.

When I get home I spend ages looking at trash on my phone. When my flatmate gets back I move into my room so that I don't have to talk to him. They cook me dinner. I do the washing up and think about how much less of a mess I make when I cook and how I wash up as I go rather than leave a huge pile for others to clean. When I've finished it's already bed time. I go to bed in a huff wondering where the evening went.



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