



ELMWOOD
MB CHURCH

April 6, 2025
**“Crucified: Folly, Frustrated or
Finished?”**
1 Corinthians 1:18-25
Pastor Ken Stoesz

We're picking up from last week as we're preparing for Easter in two weeks, giving attention to the topic of the atonement: the subject of the fact that Jesus took our place, that our sins condemn us before a holy God. God could have released us and let that just destroy us, but in his love, Jesus came willingly and took our place, paying for our sin on the cross. And so, we've been considering the topic of Jesus being crucified, and we want to pick that up again this morning.

But before we do that, we're going to watch just a brief trailer for a documentary that came out about 5 years ago. Some of you probably have already seen it. It's called The American Gospel Part Two and what you'll see in this very brief clip—again, it's a trailer, so it's meant to tease your attention—and you can watch this on YouTube and find the whole if you got just over two hours this it's not spring break anymore but if you have over two hours you can watch this and it's a variety of views on the subject of the atonement that Jesus took our place and you'll hear these are people, some of them are pastors, who say this this could never be. Let's watch this this brief clip and then give our attention to the word of the Lord.

So, like I said, if you have a couple hours to watch that it would be well worth your time as these different writers and thinkers wrestle through the topic of the atonement—in particular, that Jesus would pay for our sins. And in this day in age 2025 there are some behind pulpits that deny it, that say that it was folly, and it didn't need to happen. Take a watch of that when you have time. But for this morning, with the Lord's help, I invite you to open your Bibles then as we talk about the subject of the atonement. 1 Corinthians chapter 1 is where we'll go this morning.

So, if you have a Bible, please turn with me to 1 Corinthians chapter 1. I'm going to read from 1 Corinthians chapter 1 starting in verse 18 into chapter 2.

For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. For it is written,

**“I will destroy the wisdom of the wise,
and the discernment of the discerning I will thwart.”**

Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since, in the wisdom of

God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe. For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. For the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.

For consider your calling, brothers: not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, so that no human being might boast in the presence of God. And because of him you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption, so that, as it is written, "Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord."

And I, when I came to you, brothers, did not come proclaiming to you the testimony of God with lofty speech or wisdom. For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. And I was with you in weakness and in fear and much trembling, and my speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, so that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.

It's God's word for us this morning. Let's pray together. Father, we thank you for your holy word. which speaks to us to where we're at today and though it makes us uncomfortable, it brings us comfort. Holy Spirit, would you speak to us even this morning? We're not here to hear the words of just a man, but Lord, we want to hear from you. So, come and do work in our souls this morning, even as we prepare for communion. We pray in Jesus' great name, amen.

Well, I encourage you to have your Bibles open to 1 Corinthians 1; that is primarily where we'll be this morning. As we do that, I asked the question about the cross of Jesus and you know, we saw in the video there were a variety of opinions about why Jesus died or maybe he shouldn't have. If you were to talk to your neighbors or colleagues or close friends that are not followers of Jesus or Christians, it would be an interesting question: "What do you think about Good Friday or why Jesus died? What's your opinion /perspective?" I'm sure you'll get a variety of thoughts. Some, if they've had a religious background, may say, "Well, it reminds me of times when I was a kid in Sunday school and I remember about Jesus but not much more." Others might have just a complete indifference, going, "I don't really know, and I don't really care. It doesn't affect my life one bit." Some people say, "You know,

well, that that might be a good idea for you but definitely not for me.” Others might be just outrightly disagreeing, saying, “We don't like that!” Whatever it is, there are a variety of opinions and thoughts about the cross and why was Jesus crucified.

In first century Israel, the time when Jesus died, the cross was a horrific symbol. It wasn't a fashion symbol. You might ask some people, and they say, “Well, I've got a cross around my neck.” Means nothing other than a fashion symbol. Two thousand years ago, it was a symbol of execution. That's what it was. It was a means to end someone's life in a very slow, gruesome, painful manner. For the Jews, it was a symbol of shame and torture and being outcast. For the Romans, it was just another passing day. The Romans sadly perfected the “art”, if you would call it that, of crucifixion. Of the 500 years the Romans enjoyed pretty much world dominance, they were the ones that perfected it. There's no clear number of how many people were crucified; they estimate somewhere between 150,000 to 200,000 people were crucified by the Romans in their time span. In AD.70 when they conquered Jerusalem, around 200 Jews were crucified every day for months. It was something they did. The Romans did this. If they saw someone crucified outside of a city, that was normal. That was just another sign on the side of the road.

While we're not in ancient Palestine at the day; we are now 2,000 years later, and we're wondering how we make sense of this subject of Jesus Christ and him crucified. Well, this is 1 Corinthians 1, so Paul is writing this letter to the church in the city of Corinth. He spent about a year and a half in that city. You can discover that in Acts 18, where the church is planted. Paul spends a lot of time teaching in that city and if you read 1 Corinthians and 2 Corinthians, a lot of that letter is dealing with inner conflict. There are rivalries and all kinds of problems in this church, and Paul's writing these two very long letters to sort through these things. What he's doing immediately at the very beginning, he's establishing a baseline of what actually unites these two parties in the church that are fighting or, you know, got their heads knocking on this issue: it's Jesus Christ and him crucified! This is the core piece. It is the cornerstone that's going to hold this church together. It was Martin Luther who had said on the subject of atonement: how we view the cross will either demonstrate a church is standing or falling. So, Paul builds his initial attack and approach to the church on this subject of Jesus Christ crucified. Here's what he says in chapter 2:

I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified.

But there's a problem with that. He says it earlier in verse 20 chapter 1, where he says, “We preach Christ crucified.” But that's a stumbling block to the Jews and it's folly, foolishness, and nonsense to the Gentiles, to the Greeks. Folly and frustration: that was

the perspective of Jesus Christ crucified. So, with that, let's look at them in in order. Perhaps that is folks you know and how they approach Jesus Christ crucified: that it is, first of all, folly. It is foolishness, The Gentiles, the Greeks at the time would have heard the message of Jesus Christ, "the king of the Jews." They remember when Jesus was crucified, they nailed the sign above his head—"Jesus, the king of the Jews." Some of the religious leaders protested, "No he's not that! It's just he claimed to be this."

Well, for the Gentiles, they would have looked at this guy and said, "This is a joke! I mean, how can he be a king, how can he have power, how can he have authority, how can he be a savior?" They claimed this when he was on the cross. "He saved others, but he can't save himself—how can he be a savior?" It's a logical question in the human mind. He's dying; how can a dying man save others? It is folly if you don't understand the atonement, if that is out of our minds. So, it's folly for the Gentiles, for those who are out of the wisdom of gods

Now, a professor named Géza Vermesis wrote a book called *the Changing Faces of Jesus* and he asked the question, "Why did Jesus die?" He answers this: had Jesus not been responsible for the turmoil at the temple of Jerusalem at Passover time—that's when Jesus was turning over the tables and exposing the money changers—if Jesus hadn't done that when Jewish tradition was expecting the Messiah to reveal himself, very likely Jesus would have escaped with his life. Doing the wrong thing in the wrong place in the wrong season resulted in the tragic death of Jesus on a Roman cross. To this Christian writer, Jesus' death on a cross was tragic and foolish. It accomplished nothing. It could have been avoided; he didn't need to do that. "If he just would have kept his cool in the marketplace, he would have been okay." And that's not uncommon—other liberal scholars really believe that it wasn't the plan, Jesus' death wasn't the plan. That's what they would teach! They would say, "No, no, no, there was another plan but it just kind of got out of hand... the crowd just really built up a real ruckus and then at the end, Jesus finally resigned himself to the fact that he couldn't get away and would die."

And so, to these folks, it is folly the fact that he died on the cross. It's folly. "You didn't need to do that, Jesus!" It wasn't the plan.

For others, it's not just folly—it's downright appalling. Actually, it's offensive! In 1993, there was a conference in the US entitled "Reimagining God" and one of the speakers, Professor Dolores Williams of Union Theological Seminary, looked at the subject of atonement. Here's her comment. She says, "I don't think we need a theory of atonement at all. I don't think we need folks hanging on crosses and blood and weird stuff." She says, concluding her comment, "Forgiveness does not come through blood sacrifice but through compassion and solidarity." So, to her, Christ crucified was folly, was foolishness. You don't

need that. We need reconciliation in the world, she's not denying that. "There are problems in the world, but we don't need *that*. That's not the answer, that's not going to solve the human problem. We can do this if we just identify with one another and listen."

By all means, there's help in those things, but she's outrightly dismissing the atonement. You'll sometimes hear folks say, and you heard it in the video, "Oh, God would never do that. God would never destroy, would never kill Jesus. Jesus didn't die on the cross because of some eternal plan. That would be 'cosmic child abuse.'"

What we read this last week in Isaiah chapter 53 is a prophecy pointing forward to the suffering of Jesus. Alistair Begg, one of the folks who spoke, he said, "You know, if we just read the Bible, it's really helpful for us." Isaiah 53: **"but God was pleased to crush him."** And then, you go into Acts chapter 2, after Jesus has died and raised from the dead and ascends to heaven. This is what one of the apostles says, **"...this Jesus delivered up according to the definite plan and the foreknowledge of God you crucified, and you killed by the hands of lawless men."**

We read this last week, in the garden of Gethsemane when Jesus is praying, "Is there any other way?" And he says, "Lord, not my will, but your will be done." Multiple times throughout the gospels, Jesus proclaimed, "I'm going to suffer and die at the hands of the Gentiles. They will hand me over. This is going to happen— don't be surprised." At one point, Peter says "No Lord, this will not happen." And Jesus responds to him in kind, "Get behind me, Satan." He is saying, "You do not have the things of God in your mind. You're thinking worldly." The world wants a conquering king, a king who comes and politically dominates everybody. This is Islam going into Mecca, conquering the city: you either submit or die. That is your option.

Next week is Palm Sunday. How did Jesus ride into Jerusalem? On a donkey. A servant. What did he do with his disciples? Washed their feet. He took on the picture of a servant, saying, "You guys are going to do the same thing for each other and you're going to change the world."

What we have in the gospels—and Paul is writing, explaining to us the story, the narrative of the gospel—is a God who does not think like us. Thanks be to God.

He says in 2 Corinthians 5:21, **"For your sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin so that in him we might become the righteousness of God."** We're going to come back to that text, but that is really important passage. A sense of substitution that Jesus would take our place on the cross. He knew no sin. He would become sin so that we might be made righteous. There's a substitution, a change is happening. As we're approaching Easter, this is what we celebrate, one of the dynamics that we celebrate. But for some, this is complete

folly, foolishness: “substitution.” Jesus taking your place. “We don't need that!” some would say. They forget that sin separates us from God, that sin is in the core of the human heart.

Richard Rohr, who is in the video, is quoting a Franciscan monk who he loves what he says and there's a lot of views online on this quote that he says. So, this is his comment. He says, "Jesus did not come to change God's view of us; he came to change our view of God."

First glance, wow, that sounds appealing, something healthy about that, something good. The problem with that—there are a lot of problems with that line—it denies our responsibility. It denies that there's a problem with me. The problem isn't me, the problem's with God, apparently. And my perspective of God has to change.

Now take this quote (I realize this is maybe stretching it a bit) but if you were to go to your doctor this week and let's say your doctor says to you, "I'm sorry, I have some really tough news. You have cancer and it's really advanced, so we're going to have to do surgery and radiation. I've got you lined up— I really just need you to sign the papers and do a few things." And let's say in that room there's the doctor and there's a nurse or another medical person. So the doctor said this about you, he's declared that you are sick, and the nurse says, "Well, hold on, hold on, hold on! There's a bit of a misunderstanding here. That's not the case. You claim you know he says you're sick but actually you just need to change your perspective of the doctor and it'll all be well."

To some degree that's what he's saying. We have to ask from humanity's standpoint, is there a problem with us? If we're sick, could somebody please have the integrity to at least be honest with us? Because if we have cancer, that needs to be treated and addressed and dealt with, otherwise we will die. Not just changing our attitude about the one who's giving us the news. But God, who is gracious, God who's loving, God who's caring and for our sake made him who knew no sin to be sin so that we might be made the righteousness of God so that when he looks at you, he sees the righteousness of Christ upon you. Boy, we need the Holy Spirit to help us understand that, don't we?

Folly. for many people, Jesus crucified is just folly.

For others, it's a frustration. In chapter 1 verse 21, it says the message of the cross is a “stumbling block.” It's an offense. It's a frustration for the Jews, for the religious elite, for those who follow the law and follow the rules; this idea of Jesus dying in their place is a stumbling block. It's a problem. You trip, you get hurt on this and you try to go around it. Back in 2005, I believe, the first rendition of *The Lion the Witch and the Wardrobe* came out in the Chronicles of Narnia series. There were all kinds of reviews about that. (I'm sure some of you have seen it; if you're not familiar with it, I really encourage you to watch it. Or

better than that, read the books! We have them in our library. Or better than that, go buy them for yourself.)

There was a review in 2005 that came out from Paulie Toynbee, who was a very popular columnist at the time in Great Britain. If you're not familiar with the stories, there's a character named Aslan and he's the hero of the story. At the end of it—sorry, spoiler alert—he dies for a boy named Edmund, trades his life and takes Edmund's punishment upon himself. Aslan, who is perfect and excellent, takes the place of the foolish Edmund.

So, this is what this columnist says: “Narnia represents everything that is most hateful about religion. Of all the elements of Christianity, the most repugnant is the notion of the Christ who took our sins upon himself and sacrificed his body in agony to save our souls.” And she adds “Did we ask him to?”

Sorry, I'm not emotional because of what she said; I've read that quote 20 times this week. It's just hitting me now how lost she is. She has no concept of what Jesus did on the cross, like no concept. More than that, she's offended. Offended that Jesus would take our place. We didn't ask him to. Why would he do something so silly? “We don't need a savior, thank you very much. We're actually doing quite fine.” We're self-righteous. We know how to do the right things. “Sin is actually not a thing,” they might claim, or “It's not that bad. You know, we all have good intentions, maybe just a little bit misunderstood.” Whatever the logic might be. And so, she asked the question, “Did we ask him to?” In other words, did we need him? “I don't remember asking him, so why did he come and die for us? Oh no, we're doing fine, thank you very much. We don't need a savior. Our hearts are fine.”

But is that what Jesus spoke about in the sermon on the mount in Matthew chapters 5-7? Jesus gets to the heart of the issue. So, the religious leaders of the time, the Jews, they would have been following hundreds of laws and rules that would have—in their minds—made them at peace with God. You will be right with God if you do these things. The problem is nobody could do these things, and they knew that, but they tried, and they pretended, in some ways.

But Jesus, when he spoke to them in the sermon on the mount, he puts his finger through the curtains of their hearts, and he speaks right to the core of the issue. He says, “You've heard it said (so this is the laws of Moses) anyone who commits murder shall die.” And then Jesus says, “But I say to you (so now Jesus is actually getting to the heart of the message, the point of it) anybody who hates his neighbor has committed murder in his heart.” And then he takes it to the issue of adultery. “You've heard it said, ‘Anyone who sleeps around has committed adultery.’” He says, “But I say to you, anyone who has lust in his heart has committed adultery.” Wow. Like, everyone's guilty. Everybody stands condemned in that

moment, there in the sermon on the mount. It's why it really appeals and speaks to us and reveals where we're at.

In Galatians chapter 3, the Apostle Paul is speaking to this issue about what do about the law. We're told to follow it, but we can't and how does this all work? He says this starting in verse 10 of Galatians chapter 3: **“for all who rely on the works of the law are under a curse, for it is written, ‘Cursed is everyone who does not abide by all the things written in the book of the law and do them.’ Now it's evident that no one is justified by God before God by the law, for the righteous shall live by faith but the law is not faith. Rather, the one who does them shall live by them. Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, ‘Cursed is everyone who's hanged upon a tree.’”**

So, there you have the symbolism, the factual reality of a substitution, of Jesus taking our place. Jesus becomes the curse for us. For others who say this now that's foolishness or it's a frustration and then you turn over to the book of Romans and again we're in Paul's letters lots this morning but he's helping explain this to us so we might make some sense and how this applies to our lives. Romans chapter 3 starting in verse 21, he says this **“But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it— the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.”**

It's absolutely fantastic good news! Here's another big word (Phil read it out of the book of Hebrews): “propitiation.” You can go home today and say, “I learned a new word: propitiation! I can't spell it, can barely pronounce it...it's one of these Bible words.” Well, it's a big word to help make sense of a really big concept, that the wrath of God was absorbed by Jesus. He took it completely upon himself. That idea of Aslan taking the place of Edmund, this is Jesus upon the cross for you and for me. And for some, that's an absolute frustration. But back to Romans 3:24: **“...we are justified (in other words, we're made right) by his grace and it's a gift through the redemption that it is Jesus Christ.”**

But this is a frustration. It's a frustration for those who are confident in themselves, confident in their wealth, confident in their pedigree, confident in their spiritual resumé, confident in their status, whatever it might be. They have confidence in something other than Jesus. But remember what Paul said in Galatians: we're going to boast because of

what Jesus has done for us, being a propitiation for us. So, it's a folly, there's a frustration and lastly, perhaps it's a sign that it is finished.

“It is finished.” Those aren't the words of the Apostle Paul; those are the words of Jesus himself upon the cross. In John 19:30—Jesus has been on the cross now for hours—it says that he said, **“It is finished.’ and he bowed his head and he gave up his spirit.”** Other translations say he gave a loud cry and gave up his spirit. Those were his last known words: “It is finished.”

It is finished. It's not folly, it's not frustration; it's finished.

So, there's a question: do you believe what Jesus did on the cross, that it is finished?” Well, but what is “finished?” What do you mean by that? First of all, atonement has been satisfied, it's been paid, substitution has occurred. 2 Corinthians 5:21 (we've read this now twice, but let's do it again.)

For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

On the cross, that substitution is complete, and it is satisfied. It cannot be added to. You can't add to that, “Well, I volunteered and I helped out and I was I was good for the decade between my 30s and my 40s... the 40s were a little bit questionable, and the 20s—let's not talk about that. Teens, well I was a mess, but I had a good decade in there.” Whatever it might be, however your brain puts your life on a bell curve it...it's finished!

And you didn't say it because you don't have the authority to say it! Jesus said it. “It is finished.” It's paid for, it's over, satisfied. Substitution happened, propitiation. He is not just the propitiator saying, “I will provide.” He is the propitiation. He is the one that provides, he is the substitute in your place. So, payment is covered.

Number two: victory. Victory over darkness. In Colossians chapter 2:

“In this way (so, that's the cross) Jesus disarmed the spiritual rulers and authorities. He shamed them publicly by his victory on the cross.”

Victory upon the cross. So, here's the folly of the Gentiles: “Look, he's dying on the cross. That seems to be foolishness; how is that victory?” But it is victory! He's taken our place. He has actually conquered the sin that destroys us and paid the penalty for us.

Hebrews 2:14b: **“by his death he would destroy him who holds the power of death, that is, the devil.”**

So, it's victory over darkness. And lastly, it's made a way possible for us to know God. That great symbol in the book of Matthew, I believe, is when Jesus dies, the curtain is torn in the

temple. Just torn in half. That curtain symbolized keeping people out of the presence of God. You weren't good enough to go in there and if you went in there, you would be eviscerated. Well, now the curtain is torn. I can only imagine the pandemonium when that curtain tore in half. Someone would have said, "I told you that should have gotten that fixed! I can't believe you didn't do this, you should have invested in that a long time ago, a capital project..."

Something like that would have gone through somebody's mind for sure. Right? Unless something really supernatural was happening, and that's what Matthew's telling us, actually. That Jesus' death has now torn the curtain, has made it possible where it would have been impossible. That's why we say nobody has gone so far or strayed so long to be outside of the gracious merciful hand of God. He made it very possible.

We sing a song once in a while: "In Christ alone." There's a great line that says, "No guilt in life, no fear in death-- this is the power of Christ in me." Where does that comment come from? This is the power of Christ in me. Right from the verse in 1 Corinthians 1:18, where it says, **"For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God."**

So, there are two responses, then, to Christ crucified. Ultimately there are those who are perishing, and they say the cross, Jesus dying on the cross is foolishness. It's folly. Or it's a frustration, it's a pointless thing that you shouldn't have to get around and I can take care of myself.

This comment of 'perishing' is another word for being slowly disintegrated forever. We've had some water damage in the church. If you go by the library area, you'll see there's no drop ceiling tiles. Those things are made of, like, oatmeal, I think. So when water gets in them, they perish. And if you watch it, they demonstrate perishing. They just slowly get destroyed, they just evaporate, turn into mush. Those who look at the cross of Jesus as folly and a frustration are perishing.

Or it is power for those who are being saved. It is the power of God.

Albert Mohler Jr., in his reflections upon this subject of the atonement, (Albert Mohler Jr. is the president of the Southern Baptist Seminary.) says this: "The sum and substance of the gospel is that a holy and righteous God who must demand a full penalty for our sin both demands the penalty and he provides the penalty. His own self-substitution is Jesus Christ the son, whose perfect obedience and perfectly accomplished atonement purchased all that is necessary for our salvation. Jesus Christ met the full demands of the righteousness and justice of God against our sin. We either believe that or we don't."

For those who believe that, as limited as perhaps you can grasp that in your head, it is power for you. It delivers you from perishing. Hence, good news—great news!— that it is finished. On this concept of being justified by Jesus, justified by his work on the cross:

Romans 5:1-2 “Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God.”

He saves us from our past sins, he secures us a hope that is yet to be realized for a future, acquitted, declared right, paid in full, finished.

In a moment we're going to take communion, the bread and the cup, in a statement that it is finished! It is complete! You have been justified; you have peace now with God. You have peace not because of what you've done, but because your sin has been pardoned and you have hope, the glory of God, because the rights of the righteous Jesus have been given to you. So, your hope isn't based on yourself. You look at yourself and you have every reason not to hope, if you're honest with yourself. That's why we boast in Jesus. It's a final verdict that will never be reversed.

Romans 8:30 “And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.”

It's as good as done! For nothing can separate you from the love of God that's in Christ Jesus. About 200 years ago, a pastor while walking to a home where he's going to visit a young mother who was dying, was trying to think of a hymn or a song to sing. He had been playing with these words in his mind a little bit: “my hope is built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness. I dare not trust the sweetest frame but wholly lean on Jesus' name.” His death on the cross is not foolishness, it's not a frustration— it's finished. It's finished.

Hence, we come to communion, the bread and the cup symbolizing his body and his blood and what it paid, what it costs you. If you question whether God loves you, I encourage you to take communion this morning. If you're not a follower of Jesus, I mean, my first question is, “Why not?” You look at the cross and it is foolishness to you. Or maybe just you don't understand it, or it is a frustration. You think you can stand before God and make yourself right before him—you can't! That's the bad news. The good news is he's paid for you. So, when the cup and the bread come around where you're seated, I encourage you to take this. Perhaps it's a moment this morning for you, if you've been a follower of Jesus, to recommit your life to following him. If you're not a Christian, today's the day to do that—to give your life to following him, for he has paid for everything for you and accomplished

everything for you. Why would you wait? What more is to be done? His death has finished everything for you.

I invite those who are serving communion to come forward and as they come, let's take a moment of quiet to think about what we've already heard. We'll come together and pray in a moment. Let's take a moment of quiet as we consider these words:

Lord, before you every human heart lies bare. Not one of us has a cloak of righteousness that covers our sin. You see to the core of who we are and yet you loved us and love us still, that you would send Jesus knowing the weight that he would take, the wrath that he would absorb, so that we would not have to. Father, forgive us for our indifference on this. If we've heard this message countless times, would you reawaken in us a sense of your majestic grace and love and holiness and power and would you change us today to be more like Christ, to faithfully point others to your grace and your power and your mercy. And now, Lord, as we come to the table, as we receive the cup and the bread that sits in our hands and we hear the music and we sing, Holy Spirit, would you do a work in our hearts to see again upon the cross Christ crucified in our place, taking on his righteousness in our place. Lead us in a time of confession, lead us in a time of praise, lead us in a time of sorrow and in a time of rejoicing. We pray in Christ's name. Amen.