

Redemption and Rejection - the achievement of the Cross displayed

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[0 : 00] We're going to turn now to our Bible readings, and we're back in Matthew's Gospel and reading this morning in chapter 27. That is page 833. If you have one of the church visitors' Bibles, page 833.

And we're reading Matthew 27, beginning at verse 1 through to the end of verse 26. After the betrayal and the arrest of Jesus, and the sad denials that we read of last week by Peter and the other disciples all deserting Jesus, we come now to the trial of Jesus before the Roman governor.

When morning came, all the chief priests and the elders of the people took counsel against Jesus to put him to death. And they bound him and led him away and delivered him over to Pilate the governor.

Then when Judas, his betrayer, saw that Jesus was condemned, he changed his mind and brought back the 30 pieces of silver to the chief priests and the elders, saying, I've sinned by betraying innocent blood.

They said, what's that to us? See to it yourself. And throwing down the pieces of silver into the temple, he departed and he went and hanged himself.

[1 : 27] But the chief priests, taking the pieces of silver, said, it's not lawful to put them into the treasury since it's blood money. So they took counsel and bought with them the potter's field as a burial place for strangers.

Therefore, that field has been called the field of blood to this day. And then was fulfilled what had been spoken by the prophet Jeremiah, saying, they took 30 pieces of silver, the price of him on whom a price had been set by some of the sons of Israel.

And they gave him for the potter's field as the Lord directed me. Now Jesus stood before the governor and the governor asked him, are you the king of the Jews?

Jesus said, you have said so. But when he was accused by the chief priests and the elders, he gave no answer. And Pilate said to him, do you not hear how many things they testify against you?

But he gave him no answer, not even to a single charge, so that the governor was greatly amazed. Now at the feast, the governor was accustomed to release for the crowd any one prisoner whom they wanted.

[2 : 38] And they had then a notorious prisoner called Barabbas. Mark and Luke tell us he was a terrorist, he was a murderer. So when they gathered, Pilate said to them, whom do you want me to release for you, Barabbas or Jesus, who is called Christ?

For he knew that it was out of envy that they had delivered him up. Besides, when he was sitting on the judgment seat, his wife sent word to him, saying, have nothing to do with that righteous man. For I have suffered much because of him today in a dream.

Now the chief priests and the elders persuaded the crowd to ask for Barabbas and to destroy Jesus.

The governor again said to them, which of these two do you want me to release for you? And they said, Barabbas. Pilate said to them, then what shall I do with Jesus who is called Christ?

They all said, let him be crucified. And he said, why? What evil has he done? But they shouted all the more, let him be crucified. So when Pilate saw that he was gaining nothing, but rather that a riot was beginning, he took water and washed his hands before the crowd, saying, I am innocent of this man's blood.

[3 : 59] See to it yourselves. And all the people answered, his blood be on us and on our children. Then he released for them Barabbas.

And having scourged Jesus, delivered him to be crucified. Amen. May God bless to us his word.

God bless you. May God bless you. But please do turn with me to Matthew chapter 27. It's page 833. If you have one of the church visitors' Bibles.

Now the real Jesus Christ was one of the most divisive figures in human history. And he remains so today because what Jesus himself taught about his own life and death is a message as offensive and repellent to some as it is beautiful and precious to others.

Just before Jesus entered Jerusalem for the last time, he said these words, The Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many.

[5 : 19] That is, he knew that his death, that he must die, was to be a death that brought redemption. In the very specific sense of that word, release, setting free by the payment of a price.

His death, he states so clearly, was a death to bring release from the bondage of sin for those he came to save. And it came by the payment of a price.

The price of his own blood. Jesus speaks all the time of his mission as a rescue, as a redemption. Out of a dying and cursed world and into what he calls the new world.

Literally the regeneration of his glorious kingdom. But the only way to enter that kingdom is through rescue. Out of the bondage of the power of sin, which is a power that is over every human being by nature.

We are utterly helpless to escape from it ourselves. Of course, that's a very offensive message. It's an affront to our dignity, to our decency, to be branded helpless, to be branded in bondage.

[6 : 35] And to be told that we're repugnant to God, that we are wicked. It's offensive, isn't it? It's the kind of language that the tabloids use of the sex fiend. But that is what my death is all about, says Jesus Christ.

That's what my blood is shed for, nothing else. And so you see, the blood of Jesus is an accusing blood. It accuses us of sin and shame and guilt and helplessness before God.

And it humbles us. It shames us. And people hate that, don't they? That's why they resist it. And that's why Jesus' blood divides the world. And Matthew is making absolutely clear to us here in chapter 27 in these verses this morning that that is so.

Having clearly explained the meaning of the cross already as a Passover sacrifice, as a penal substitution for sinners, he's now showing us an extraordinarily graphic demonstration of actually what the cross achieves in terms of redemption, of setting free by his own shed blood.

But of course, also because Matthew is honest, he doesn't hide anything of the truth from us. And he's also showing us the other side of that, which is his rejection of the precious blood of Jesus.

[7 : 54] The innocent blood of the Lord Jesus Christ divides the world forever. Either it's blood that opens the life gate of heaven and leads to eternal redemption, or it's the blood that if it is scorned, if it's rejected, it closes that door forever.

And it leads to rejection by God forever. And that is the eternal achievement of the cross of Jesus Christ. And Matthew here has very deliberately structured his message so as to drive us to the wonderful message right at its very heart.

I'm sure you can see, if you look at it, the symmetry of Matthew's structure. Matthew's very fond of symmetry. Look at the beginning and the end of the passage, first of all. That's the sort of picture frame, if you like.

And it's focused on the fact of Jesus' looming death. So look at verse 1. They're scheming to kill him. Verse 2. They deliver him to Pilate. And now look at verse 26.

At the very end, Jesus is scourged and delivered to be crucified. So that's the frame. Jesus delivered up to death. Fact. Now notice that the main story here could jump immediately from verse 2 to verse 11.

[9 : 11] You see, verse 2, Jesus is delivered to the governor Pilate. And verse 11, here we are. Jesus is stood before the governor. But instead of going from verse 2 to verse 11, Matthew puts in, in verses 3 to 10, something that is unique to his account of the gospel.

Don't get it in Mark and Luke. And that's the tragic end and destiny of Judas. And if you look at the second half of verse 24 and verse 25, you'll see Matthew's kept in symmetry.

Because he's describing there the tragic end and destiny of all the people and the priests who crucified Jesus. And you see, in both of these incidents, the focus is on Jesus' blood, which is confronting them.

Judas, verse 4. I've sinned against innocent blood. And all the people, verse 24. Pilate blames them for his death. I am innocent for this man's blood.

And again, in both of them, you see the exact same challenge over Jesus' blood. Look at verse 4. What do the priests say to Judas?

[10 : 19] See to it yourself. Verse 24 says, Pilate to the people, see to it yourselves. Jesus' blood is your problem. You see, on either side of the center of this account is stark rejection of the blood of Jesus Christ.

And the awful consequences for those who betrayed his innocent blood. We'll come back to that. But first, I want us to see the great centerpiece that Matthew has deliberately put at the heart of his message here.

It's very clear that this framing of his account is meant to turn our focus onto these central verses. Verses 11 to 24. And you'll see that again, there's even more symmetrical framing there to help us.

Verses 11 to 14. Focus, don't they? On Pilate the governor dealing with Jesus in his questioning. As does the first half of verse 24. Pilate's decision about Jesus.

Pilate and Jesus in both of them. And in between these brackets then is the very center of the thing in verses 15 to 23. And what is the focus on there?

[11 : 26] On two individuals. Just two. Barabbas and Jesus. They dominate this whole section, don't they? Mark and Luke mention Barabbas.

But Matthew has deliberately ordered his whole account. His whole description of what happened on that day. To flag up for us how in God's sovereign providence. Even the very trial of Jesus Christ became an acted parable of the message of the cross.

For everyone to see. Can you see it? It's such a vivid achievement. Such a vivid display of the achievement of the cross. It's a picture, isn't it?

Of redemption by the blood of Jesus. So here's Barabbas, a representative man. He's the guilty one. And he stands there facing death as a guilty prisoner.

Quite literally though, he exchanges places with Jesus, the innocent one. See, it's all about release achieved through a great exchange.

[12 : 31] The guilty for the innocent. A release whose price is the blood of Jesus. The innocent blood of an innocent man. That's the redemption that is achieved by the blood of the Passover lamb.

By the blood of the new covenant in Christ. Look at how starkly Matthew paints this exchange for us. Verse 15. It seems to offer Pilate a way out of his dilemma, doesn't it? He doesn't know what to make of this prisoner.

Who's absolutely silent before his accusers. Verse 14 says he was greatly amazed. But he does know what to make of these priests and the elders. Verse 18 tells us he knew that they were envious.

Jesus' popularity with the crowds. So perhaps Pilate thought that a populist gesture to the crowds would get him off the hook. He'll release Jesus. He'll ingratiate himself with the crowds.

While getting one up on the priests and these leaders who he really didn't like at all. We know from secular history, Pilate despised the Jewish leaders. They hated one another. So verse 16 he says, I know.

[13 : 36] I'll offer them Barabbas, this notorious prisoner. Nobody is going to want him released. He's a terrorist. He's a mass murderer. I'll offer them Barabbas or Jesus Christ.

No contest. Pilate knows Jesus is totally innocent. He knows these are trumped up charges. He says it publicly in verse 23. What evil has he done?

His wife too has warned him not to get involved with Jesus. Verse 19 she'd had a premonition. A dream she said have nothing to do with that righteous man. That innocent man. Everyone knew Jesus was innocent.

Even Judas, verse 4, declares it himself. I've betrayed innocent blood. And yet here, verse 20.

The priests and the elders and the crowds, all of them, shout for Barabbas. Give us the terrorist murderer and destroy Jesus.

[14 : 35] So here we have it. A prisoner is to be released. Notice the word. Two men stand side by side. A terrorist murderer, a guilty man, and a righteous man, an innocent man.

Whom do you want released, says Pilate in verse 17? Surely the guilty man must face death. The innocent man must be released and set free. But no, verse 26. Look.

He released for them Barabbas. And having scourged Jesus, delivered him up to be crucified. It could not be more striking. The guilty, vile and helpless rebel in chains was released.

And the price, the ransom price, is the blood of Jesus. Innocent for the guilty. You could hardly have a more graphic picture of the sovereign grace and mercy of God in redeeming guilty sinners, could you?

While we were still weak, says Paul, Christ died for the ungodly. While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. While we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his son.

[15 : 44] By his innocent blood. There's no suggestion here Barabbas deserves anything other than death. And yet, in his case, quite literally, the blood of Jesus bought his release, his redemption.

He was set free from his bondage to death by another man's innocent blood. Imagine him later on standing at the back, watching the events at Golgotha. Those three crosses. And he sees Jesus and thinks to himself, that was my cross.

That was meant for me. And yet, here I am, standing free, a guilty man. And you see, that literal exchange on that day is a picture.

It's a powerful demonstration of the great eternal exchange of the redemption that is in Jesus. Of the release from captivity through the real and lasting forgiveness that Jesus said.

In the upper room, it's for the many, it's for all who drink that cup of forgiveness in his blood. That is what the blood of Jesus achieves. Not just a temporary release from prison and death, as it was for Barabbas.

[16 : 51] But an eternal release from the prison of a world under the curse of death. And into the new world of eternal life in the kingdom of the Father. The apostle Peter captured it, didn't he, later in these.

Christ suffered once for sins. The righteous for the unrighteous. To bring us to God. You were ransomed, he said, with the precious blood of Christ.

Great exchange. And it's evident everywhere in this account of Jesus' trial. In fact, that is why there was a trial. Jesus' enemies didn't need a trial.

They didn't want any publicity. They could have just had Jesus assassinated quietly. But it was God who determined there must be a trial. And a public trial.

And that is because Jesus, his son, is bearing the real sin and guilt that required punishment. That's why Jesus was silent before Caiaphas and Pilate.

[17 : 51] In verse 12, you see, the accusation they had brought against Jesus was blasphemy. We saw that last time in 2665. He claimed to be God, to be the judge.

But what they brought to Pilate, you see, in verse 13, among these many charges, was the charge of treason against the rule of Caesar. That's implicit here because that was what was required for the death penalty.

Luke actually tells us plainly and explicitly. But Jesus was silent, verse 14. He gave no answer, not even to a single charge.

Why? Well, it was because he knew he was the promised servant of the Lord, that the prophet said would come and bear the real sin and guilt of his people, taking it really upon himself.

Isaiah 53 says, He opened not his mouth. As a lamb goes to the slaughter, he was silent. Why? Well, because there was no defense to make.

[18 : 57] He really was bearing their iniquities. The sins of the world against God were upon him. And he was silent because in order to redeem us, he assumed our guilt.

He became sin for us, is how Paul put it. That's why it had to be these two charges as well. Charges of blasphemy and treason. In the beginning, in Eden, that sums up exactly man's sin against God.

You'll be as gods yourself, said the evil one. Blasphemy, they grasped at. And treason, they rebelled utterly against God's perfect and righteous rule. But Jesus, the truly righteous man, he chose to shed his own innocent blood, as Peter says, so that he might bear away our sins in his body on the tree.

That we might die to sin and live to righteousness. Redemption by the blood of Jesus. Not with perishable things like silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ.

That's the good news we preach to you, says Peter. So that the vilest offender who truly believes, that moment from Jesus, a pardon truly does receive.

[20 : 19] Because the precious blood has been shed. Because redemption really has been achieved. And so the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from all sin, says John.

All sin. No one here this morning, no one you know or love, no Barabbas even, is beyond the release and the redemption bought with the precious blood of Jesus Christ.

That is God's sovereign work of grace and mercy on the cross. It achieves eternal redemption for sinners through the blood of Jesus. And that's the heart of Matthew's message right here.

You can't miss it, can you? It's impossible to miss. And that's why it's gospel. That's why it's good news for all who will rejoice in Jesus' blood. Who will receive the reconciliation with God through the redemption in his blood.

God in Christ has done it all. He's opened the life gate wide to all who will go in. But you see, if this wonderful and central message is a wonderful offer of grace and mercy, and it is, then it is also, at the same time, a sovereign command to receive that offer of mercy, not to reject it, not to scorn the precious blood of Jesus Christ shed for the remission of sins.

[21 : 44] And so, as always, the gospel must warn us, too. And we've already noted that on either side of this picture of redemption by the blood of Jesus, we've got to face up, haven't we, to something else.

Matthew is showing us something else, too, something terrible. He's showing us rejection of the precious blood of Jesus. The great exchange of Jesus for Barabbas emphasizes the sheer sovereignty of God's grace in redemption.

In these accounts, either side, they insist that we also take very seriously the other parallel truth of the gospel, and that is man's responsibility to believe and obey the gospel of God.

The blood of Jesus, the precious blood, the innocent blood of God's Son, and it confronts every human being. And friends, it demands a response from every human being.

It forces itself upon the conscience, and it demands to be honored, to be revered, to be received, as the way of salvation that God has given to lost sinners.

[22 : 53] The staggering thing, you see, is that so often the world will not cherish the blood of Jesus, will not accept the message, will not have its forgiving power.

People reject the redemption. People reject the forgiveness. And in doing that, what they are doing is calling down the curse of God upon themselves forever.

A curse demanding that God reject them forever. And that's the awful reality, you see, that Matthew is an honest gospel preacher.

He cannot airbrush that out of his message. So it's here as a warning, a warning to us all, including the hosts inside the professing church. Do not despise and devalue the precious blood of Jesus Christ shed for the forgiveness of sins.

Don't ever do that. Because that is the unpardonable sin. To scorn, to reject the saving blood of Jesus Christ is to deliberately refuse the mercy of God.

[24 : 03] You cannot be forgiven if you will not receive God's forgiveness. And you see, Matthew says to us here that there's more than one way to reject the blood of Jesus Christ.

And that's what these verses placed around the center of this story demonstrate to us. Look at verses 5 to 10. This is one way of rejecting Christ's mercy.

We see it in Judas. Judas rejects Christ's blood in bitter despair. Bitter despair, but it's utterly self-indulgent. What we see in Judas is the tortured conscience of a man who knows that he's guilty.

Verse 4, I've sinned by betraying innocent blood. And Judas discovered, didn't he, the deceitfulness of sin. Having sinned, he then so quickly saw just how loathsome it is.

How paltry, how pathetic was the reward that he thought his sin would bring him. And we all know that, don't we? We know what it is to cherish an illicit thrill, an illicit pleasure.

[25 : 10] Something that leads us to sin. And we know what it's like so quickly. When we discover, having done it, the emptiness, the disgust, the shame.

And that's Judas. And he then discovers that the empty platitudes of this world's religion is absolutely no help to him at all. It's just utterly barren and empty.

Verse 4, do you see? What is that to us? See to it yourself. That's the word of the leaders of Israel's national church. And it's so true, isn't it, of institutionalized religion.

So focused on keeping itself untainted in the world's eyes. But absolutely no help to a tortured sinner who's facing hell. What's that to us?

You work it through yourself. This world is ruthless, isn't it? There is no forgiveness for the fallen. That's tabloid justice, isn't it? Accusing of evil, but no forgiveness possible.

[26 : 15] And that is religion. Religion. Without a real gospel of atonement. A gospel that says real guilt can be really removed.

Condemnation, which is real, can be truly lifted. If it doesn't have that, all that religion can say, well, it's your conscience. Work it through yourself. Now, Judas' problem is he can't see to it himself.

He knows he's brought a curse on himself. Cursed be anyone who takes a bribe to shed innocent blood. Deuteronomy 27, verse 25. Judas knows his Bible.

He's a Jew. He knows all the other commands of God. And yet, you see, in his response, what does he do? But call down yet further curse upon himself.

Quite deliberately. Verse 5, do you see? Remember what we read in Deuteronomy chapter 21. A hanged man is cursed by God.

[27 : 21] Judas knew he was deliberately cursing himself. It's tragic, isn't it, to think that someone would rather curse themselves to hell than turn to the one place where real forgiveness and release can be found.

In Jesus, the Savior. And his blood shed for the forgiveness of sins. In Acts chapter 1, we have the fearful verdict, don't we, of the Apostle Peter on Judas.

He went to his own place. But friends, he did not go to hell for the sin of betraying Jesus.

Every one of the disciples, including Peter, also betrayed Jesus, didn't they? But whereas, you see, the last verse of chapter 26 tells us that after his terrible betrayal, Peter, Peter went out and wept bitterly, broken and penitent.

Here we're just told Judas went out and hanged himself. He saw his sin, and yet still his heart did not break in humble penitence.

[28 : 33] He tried to deal with it himself, didn't he? Reverse the deal, return the money, exonerate himself. But when he couldn't do that, he was filled with bitterness and despair, self-indulgence, self-pity.

And he resigned himself deliberately to hell. There are people like that, friends. I've known some of them. People who came to see the truth about themselves and the truth about Jesus Christ, and yet faced with this responsibility to repent, to humble themselves, to seek forgiveness, only, only at the hand of Jesus Christ.

They refuse. They will not do it. They'd rather face hell head on than face the humiliation of a redemption that can come only through the shed blood of Jesus Christ.

And so Judas said, well, I'm beyond redemption. But no, that kind of bitter despair is sheer perversity. It's self-indulgent pride that resists the precious blood of Jesus shed for sinners because it will not be humble.

It will not embrace that poverty of spirit which alone can inherit the kingdom of God in empty hands. There is power in the blood of Jesus Christ even for the vilest offender.

[29 : 59] But there are others who would say, I'd rather see to it myself. J.C. Ryle says, there is such a thing as sin against the Holy Spirit.

And clear knowledge of truth in the head combined with deliberate love of sin in the heart goes a long way towards that. And that was Judas.

The self-indulgent perversity of bitter despair. But you see these gruesome details that follow in verses 6 to 10 about the blood money and the field of blood.

That's there to emphasize to us that this perversity, even in the religious human heart, it should not be a surprise to anyone who knows the story of the Bible. Matthew is saying it's just more of the same.

People who know God's truth in their heads but whose hearts are hard and perverse. The references here are to two prophets, both Zechariah and Jeremiah. Zechariah was the prophet who was despised and rejected as God's true shepherd because of his offensive message.

[31 : 08] And he was the one paid off with 30 pieces of silver. You can read about it in Zechariah 11. But you see Matthew majors here on Jeremiah because the whole story of Jesus' betrayal reflects in an absolutely uncanny way the story of that great prophet.

Read it yourself later on. Jeremiah 18. Do you remember there's that famous image of God as the potter? And his warning to Israel that he will break in pieces his pot, Israel, and start all over again with his people.

And then in chapter 19, Jeremiah is told to go down to the valley of Hinnom near Jerusalem and to smash the pot there because his people, says the Lord, have filled that place with innocent blood.

And that was to be a sign to them of the coming judgment on their sins. A great warning from God. But did Israel listen? No. The priests and the false prophets wanted to kill Jeremiah, God's servants.

And if you read Jeremiah 26, you'll see astonishing parallels to the trial of Jesus. The official governor back then said, This man does not deserve death. Don't bring innocent blood on yourselves and on this city.

[32 : 23] We're about to bring disaster and curse upon ourselves. Other people then ignored him. It's absolutely staggering. Go home and read it yourself and you'll see.

And you see, Matthew's point in quoting all of this is absolutely clear. Nothing has changed, he says. Luke said, Pilate, verse 24, You're bringing innocent blood upon yourselves.

And what do they say in verse 25? We don't care. Bring it on. And you see, that brings us to the second way to perversely reject the blood of Jesus.

And it's brazen defiance. When faced with the same innocent blood, all the people respond in verse 25 with self-incriminating brazen defiance.

Let his blood be upon us and upon our children. All the people notice. All of them. All God's chosen nation. They curse themselves willingly and knowingly.

[33 : 22] It's knowing because the law of God made blood guilt such a terrible thing to fear. You remember when we read it in Deuteronomy 19.

But they said, let that innocent blood be upon us and upon our children. They're brazen. They know he's innocent. Pilate's hand washing right in front of them just rubs it home.

Makes it unmissable. Utterly graphic. And that too is a reflection of the law of Moses in Deuteronomy 21. Do you remember? It just shows how seriously God takes the shedding of innocent blood.

Do you remember? He said that if a body was found near your community. Murdered. And nobody knows who's killed them. The whole community had to make a sacrifice to purge the guilt of innocent blood.

And you had to wash your hands over the sacrifice. To show your abhorrence of such a slaying. And to purge the guilt and cleanse the land itself. Even though you hadn't been involved.

[34 : 20] Had nothing to do with it. And the irony here is so intense. Because here in the face of manifest injustice that all of them are involved in. And yet they glibly say.

Call us guilty if we like. We don't care. We don't need forgiveness. That's what they're saying. We've got God on our side. God will never judge us. We can destroy the real Jesus Christ.

And then the Lord will be fine with that. We can scorn his blood and his atonement. We can reject his unique authority. We can ignore his demands. And there'll be no real consequences.

None at all. We'll still have our religion. And we'll adapt it to our way of doing things. And God. Well God will be fine with that. He'll not curse us.

He'll keep on blessing us. Brazen defiance. But isn't that exactly the kind of brazen defiance that we see all around us today.

[35 : 17] In our western world. And in the church in the western world. Even in the professing church of Christ. Perhaps especially there. Because you see the human heart will put up with any amount of religion.

As long as it doesn't have to deal with the real truth about human sin. Sin that provokes the wrath. The condemnation of God. Sin that leaves us as enemies of God.

Condemned forever for that sin. We'll have any amount of religion. But we will not have that. We will not have a gospel that humbles us.

That tells us you can't deal with it yourselves. That faces us with the utter humiliation. That only the blood of the son of God shed to save us.

Can save us from the wrath of God. And from the fury of God. At the perversity. At the wickedness. At the evil. That is our human hearts. Get rid of that gospel.

[36 : 25] Get rid of that Jesus. Get rid of any preacher that preaches that Jesus. Destroy that message. And let the consequences be on us and our children. Bring it on. Brazen defiance and rejection of the precious blood of Jesus Christ.

But friends. God will not have the precious blood of his beloved son scorned and rejected that way. When people reject the very heart.

The very heart of God's grace and his mercy that way. What they are doing is calling God to curse them forever. To banish them from his very presence and his life.

And that is what he must do in the end. If they persist in that terrible request.

And here is the truth. This generation who said these words. They did bear that curse that they asked for. Just a few years later as Jesus warned.

[37 : 23] Their land. Their temple. Their lives were utterly destroyed. The Roman devastation of Jerusalem in AD 70. Was appalling. In its ferocity.

And in its universality. And don't you think that we can see today. Many generations of the professing church in the western world.

That they also have borne. The consequences. Of a rejection of the gospel of the cross. Of a defiant rejection. Of the precious blood of Jesus Christ.

Shed for the remission of sins. Liberal Christianity for more than 100 years. Has said we will not have this Jesus. We won't have the blood of sacrifice. And ransom prices. We reject all that.

And will happily bear the consequences. Us and our children. We'll look around. The legacy is there for everyone to see.

[38 : 18] Destroyed churches. Buildings that were once churches. Now used for shops. For flats. For nightclubs. Or anything else. And those few that do remain. They are pitifully empty.

You'll find people only in their 80s. Who are growing. And the mainline denominations in the western world. Are pitifully left.

Managing decline. And ridiculed by society. And largely ignored by the world. Isn't that right? We need to be sober. Don't we? God will not be mocked.

And those who scorn the precious blood of his son. They will bear the consequences. And no amount of privileged heritage can change that. There are some people who seem to think.

That when Jesus said. I will build my church. And the gates of hell will not prevail. They seem to think. That that means our church. Our denomination. The way we want to do things. That is inviolable.

[39 : 16] Friends. Not so. If God will judge and destroy. Even his chosen covenant nation of Israel. For her rejection. Of the blood of Jesus.

His son. Do you think. That God will preserve forever. Christian churches. That do the same. That show the same brazen defiance. Towards his gospel. If you think that.

Go home. And read. Revelation chapters 1 to 3. And the letters. That the risen Lord Jesus sent. To his own churches. Saying. If you do not repent.

I myself. Will destroy you. I will take away your lampstand. From the earth. And in every one of those cases. Those churches.

Were in the end. Destroyed. Scorn. The blood of my son. And you will bear the curse. That you so glibly seem to be asking for.

[40 : 15] And ironically. You'll also bear the scorn. Of the pagan world. That you're just seeking. To be friendly with. And acceptable to. Look at verse 24. Pilate is just full of scorn for them.

And his words to them. Echo exactly. Don't they? Their dismissive words. To Judas. In verse 4. Do you see? See to it yourself. He washes his hands of them. In summary fashion. And that's the irony.

You see. The world just scorns and mocks. The church's attempts today. So pathetically. To embrace the world. To court the world. And try and fit into the world's ways.

To gain favor. We are totally deluded. If we think. If we think. If we think. That the world around. Is going to take more notice. Of the church. If the church. Takes less notice. Of the scandal of the cross.

And of its own gospel. And abandons the true gospel. It's exactly the opposite. It's exactly the opposite. It's exactly the opposite. And yet of course. The world too.

[41 : 12] Is deluded. If it thinks. It can reject. The cleansing blood of Jesus. So do notice. As we close. That Matthew points us. To this third representative. Who also.

Also rejects Jesus' blood. Pilate. In a baleful delusion. That is just utterly self-deceiving. You see. He thinks. Verse 24. That he can just. Wash his hands of Jesus forever.

He can just leave it. To the religious types. He's a man who thinks. Well. Sin and righteousness. Isn't an issue for me. It's got nothing to do with me. It doesn't concern me. I'm innocent. Of this man's blood.

And it's very tempting today. You see. For people to just. Brush off the claims of Jesus. And the cross of Jesus. As being irrelevant to them. Especially in our post-modern world.

That has so little time. For absolute truth. We say. Well that's just your truth. That's. It's nothing to do with me. In some ways. You see. Pilate is the post-modern. Before his time.

[42 : 08] He so famously said. To Jesus. John records it. Doesn't he. What is truth? And you see. Sometimes today. People read the gospels. And they'll say. Yes. I can see.

Jesus was. An innocent man. And they'll say. Yes. I can see. The people were wrong. They were wicked. To kill him. And frankly. Yes. I'm amazed. At what Jesus said. And what Jesus did.

But that's your truth. What's that got to do with me? I wasn't there. I'm innocent of this man's blood. I don't have to get involved. With all this Jesus business.

That's for you. Religious types. Friends. Here is the true truth. If there is anything authentic. About Jesus Christ.

Then you are involved. Because your sin. Is involved in Jesus death. And so his blood. Does involve you. Whether you like it or not.

[43 : 07] And if you wash your hands. Of Jesus blood. Because like Pilate. You'd rather have acceptance. With this world. You'd rather have the praise. Of the people. You'd rather have popularity.

In society. Than the score. Of those people. Who stand with Jesus. Those religious bigots. And fundamentalists. Then you also.

Are rejecting. The precious blood. Of the son of God. To use the Bible's words. You're trampling underfoot. The son of God himself. Pilate's actions.

Are a baleful delusion. They are self. Deception. But do not be deluded. Look at Pilate's question. In verse 22. That is the question. That faces. Every human being.

Who encounters. The claim of Jesus. What shall I do. With Jesus. Who is called Christ. And friends. The only possibilities. Are to receive. The redemption.

[44 : 03] Offered in his blood. Or to reject it. It's redemption. Or it's rejection. It can be rejected. That is.

Matthew's. The plain. Fact. That he will not hide from us. But he exposes. Doesn't he. The sheer perversity. Of that kind of. Self-indulgent despair.

Or of that. Kind of self-incriminating. Defiance. Or of that. Self-deceiving. Delusion. That leads. Different people. In different ways. To reject. The gospel of Christ. And he's shouting.

To us all. This morning. He's saying. Not that way. Look. Gaze on the heart. Of what the cross. Of Jesus. Achieved. So wonderfully displayed.

Even in the trial. That he faced. Before men. The blood of Jesus. Achieves. Redemption. Forever. For every criminal rebel.

[44 : 59] Of this world. Don't reject it. Let that redemption. Be yours. And he will. Set you free. He'll set you free. Today.

He'll set you free. Forever. Into the life. Of his glorious kingdom. For he came. To give his life. As a ransom.

For many. Amen. Let's pray. He released for them. Barabbas.

And having scourged. Jesus. Delivered him. To be crucified. Oh perfect redemption. The purchase of blood. To every believer.

The promise of God. The vilest offender. Who truly believes. That moment from Jesus. A pardon receives. Praise the Lord. And so help us Lord.

[45 : 58] Jesus Christ. Never to reject. But always to rejoice. But always to rejoice. In your precious blood. Shed for us. Amen.