

Faith Confirmed 2024

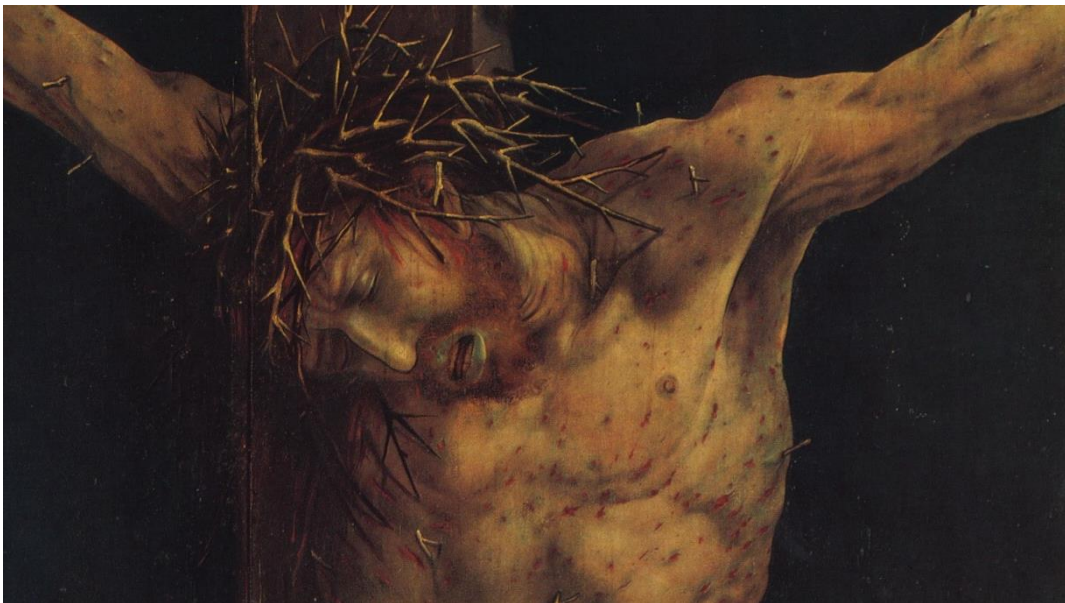
SEESION 4 – JESUS' DEATH & RESURRECTION



WELCOME & INTRODUCTION

- Last week we considered Jesus' life & ministry, how he was described and identified by his disciples (as Messiah/Christ/Son of God/ Son of Man/ Lord ...), and what those titles mean for us today. Jesus lived on earth, and throughout his ministry, he taught people about God's love, his desire to be in relationship with us, and his healing and miraculous power.
- In today's session we considering the earthly end of Jesus' life – his death upon the cross and his resurrection from the grave.
- **Matthias Grünewald's *Isenheim Altarpiece*** => painted for a hospital chapel in France, depicting Christ crucified, covered in ulcers and thorns, bleeding and in pain.

How does this painting make us feel?



The cross is the preeminent symbol of Christianity – a symbol of good news and salvation, of new life and hope. Yet it is also a symbol of cruelty and torture, of tragedy and despair. **Jesus on the cross is both a moment of catastrophe and hope.**

Jesus' Death - ATONEMENT

- Christians believe that, on the cross, Jesus healed the relationship between us and God (dealing with SIN) – making us 'at one' with God – and we call this 'atonement'. But the cross and its means of atonement is understood differently by many different Christians:

- Jesus died as a sacrifice for us/in place of us (Isa. 53.4-10, 'an offering for sin'; Rom. 3.22-25; Heb. 10.12; Mark 10.45): Jesus died as a ransom / passover lamb
- Jesus died in order to defeat Satan / evil / SIN (Rom. 8.2, 'set you free'): Jesus liberates humanity from death and evil, from what has held us in bondage – in being human, Christ entered into human wickedness and sin and redeemed it.
- Jesus's death (and resurrection) is something believers participate in through faith, rescuing us from sin and death (2 Cor 5.4; Rom 6.3-5), 'baptized into his death').

Q.s => Have we encountered these views before? Do some resonate with us more than others? All of these understandings are related, and all find biblical backing – no one view can take in the enormity of what Christ did the cross.

For all Christians, however, what we can be sure of is our common, essential belief that **on the cross, God shows his love for us – 'God so loved the world, that he sent his only son' (John 3.16)** – Christ died on the cross in order that we can know today and always how deeply loved we are by God. Again, this all starts from God's love, and his invitation and his moving towards us.

- So the cross is a tragic symbol, as much as it is also a hopeful symbol – hopeful because of what Christians believe about the atonement, and also, of course, because we also believe in the resurrection of Jesus that was to come – life out of death.

As much as it is right to view the cross in this hopeful redeeming way, we also do need to dwell in the tragedy of it all – to see the cross for what it was on that Good Friday – a moment of despair, of rejection, of pain. If we jump too quickly onto the resurrection, to the 'happy stuff', we can miss the full tragic depth of the cross. Perhaps this is encapsulated best in Holy Saturday – a day of desolation, the space between, not moving on too quickly. Out of that Saturday, the resurrection then is seen to come unexpectedly, powerfully, as if from nowhere.

Quote from Donald Mackinnon: *'It is almost a convention of Christian practice to read them [the Gospels] as if they were orientated towards a happy ending, as if the resurrection-faith which gave them birth was powerful to liberate memory of the sombre events which they describe.'* Believing in the resurrection of Christ does not wash out the tragic events by which Christ died.

Jesus' Resurrection

- This painting is also from the same Isenheim Altarpiece – Grünewald providing an image of Christ glorified and alive, victorious and restored – **yet still carrying his wounds.**

How does this painting make us feel?



- All four Gospels recount Jesus' resurrection slightly differently, but three things are consistent: the tomb was seen to be empty, Jesus appeared to his disciples afterwards (inc. the famous appearance to Thomas), and they felt his presence among them, as Jesus prepared them to receive his Holy Spirit.

Resurrection signals transformation, victory, new life and new hope – as Christians, we believe that is a reality all of can share in with Christ (Rom 6.5, 'we also might walk in newness of life').

- **Ascension:** Jesus returning to heaven (Acts 1), which prepares the moment for the Holy Spirit to come among the believers at Pentecost. The crucified and risen Christ is in heaven (Rev 5), interceding for us, enabling us all to have the intimate relationship with God the Father he desires for every single person.

CLOSING REFLECTIONS & PRAYER

- Jesus' Death & Resurrection TOGETHER: **for God so loved the world, that he gave his only son to die on the cross, so that whoever believes in him will not perish, but have eternal life. For God did not send his son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him (John 3.16-17)**

This is how much God loved the world – to die for it, to come back to life for it – to bring us back to him, and to ensure that we can live with him forever.

- Any final thoughts/comments/questions?

Lord of all life and power, who through the tragic death and mighty resurrection of your Son overcame the old order of sin and death to make all things new: grant the we, being dead to sin and alive to you in Jesus Christ may reign with him in glory; to whom with you and Holy Spirit be all praise and honour, all glory and might, now and in all eternity, Amen.