

The Great Exchange

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[0 : 0 0] Good morning. Today's passage continues the story of Good Friday, leading up to the crucifixion of Jesus. It comes from the Gospel of Matthew, chapter 27, verses 1 to 26.

Starting in verse 1, we read. 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 have sinned by betraying innocent blood.

They said, what is 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.

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

[1 : 1 4] Therefore, that field has been called the field of blood to this day. Then was fulfilled what had been spoken by the prophet Jeremiah, saying, and they took the 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 them 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 elders, he gave no answer. Then 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.

And they had then a notorious prisoner called Barabbas. So when they had gathered, Pilate said to them, whom do you want me to release for you, Barabbas or Jesus, who is called the Christ?

[2 : 2 7] For he knew that it was out of envy that they had delivered him up. Besides, while he was sitting on the judgment seat, his wife sent word to him, 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 destroy Jesus. The governor again said to them, which of the 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 the 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.

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.

[3 : 41] This is the word of God. Let's see. Okay, great. Thank you, Karen and Pui, for reading. Let's pray together as we come and look at this passage.

Heavenly Father, Lord Jesus Christ, Holy Spirit, we come to your word this morning. As we build up towards Easter, we want to find out again.

We want to be freshly reminded of the wonder of the story of the cross. God, as we think about Easter this coming week, we want to know and see you, Jesus, on Calvary again.

So, Lord, we pray as we look at this. Won't you open the eyes of our hearts, God? Won't you speak to us, Holy Spirit? Won't you be in our midst and come and help us to see Jesus and to see what you've done for us?

We pray this in your great and gracious name. Amen. Amen. In 1908, 115 years ago, the London Times wrote to a number of prominent authors and moral philosophers of their day, and they asked them to each contribute an article, to a series of articles, answering the question, what's wrong with the world?

[4 : 58] What's wrong with the world? It's an amazing question to think and ponder. What's wrong with our world? I'm sure that if we took some time to talk about that today, we could come with a whole plethora of answers to that question.

Certainly, we could come up with answers such as corporate greed, morally bankrupt governments, myopic education systems. Maybe these days, we think one of the main problems is the prevalence of fake news and misinformation that's spread on the internet, and AI might help that or might not help that.

Celebrity culture, the breakdown of the family unit, morals in society, all sorts of things that are wrong with our world. And in some ways, trying to answer that question, what's wrong with our world, is like peering into a deep abyss.

It's just this endless answers that you could come up with to that question. Sometimes it feels like, where's the floor? Where's the foundation? Could you ever find the root cause?

Well, Jesus Christ and Christianity actually come up with a fundamental answer to that question. A question that's kind of an answer that's below all the other answers that we might be tempted to give.

[6 : 21] Jesus comes up with an answer that he says spans across cultures and generations, ethnicities, language barriers. An answer to the question of what's wrong with the world, no matter whether you're in 21st century Hong Kong, 20th century London, or 2,000 years ago, 1st century Jerusalem.

Christianity tells us that what's wrong with the world is not simply the government or the education system or big business or social media. It's actually the innate self-centeredness of the human heart.

It's the fact that as human beings we are bent, fixated on living for our own world and our own agenda. It's this self-orientation of our hearts that causes so much of our behavior, so much of our decisions, and causes so much pain and heartache in the world in which we live.

And one of the obvious ways that this self-centeredness plays itself out is in the way that people jostle and climb over one another to get ahead of others in the world. I'm sure we've all seen this in our workplaces, in our colleagues, neighbors, taking the credit for work that they haven't done, throwing other people under the bus, trying to climb on top of one another to promote their careers in advance and get ahead of others.

We all see this, I'm sure, in multiple ways. But a far less obvious way that we see this kind of self-centeredness in the human heart is not just in the way that people claim praise for things gone well, but actually in the way that people dodge responsibility when things go wrong.

[8 : 03] How many of us have seen that in the marketplace, that when things go well, when a project progresses, everybody's clamoring for praise and to get the recognition? But when things go wrong, there are a myriad of excuses.

Blame shifting. People trying to find reasons why they're not responsible for what's gone wrong. Avoiding responsibility. We live in a world in which it's endemic to make excuses for mistakes, blame others for our actions, or see ourselves as victims of a system when things don't go right.

Anybody? Does that sound familiar to anybody? Okay, one or two nodded heads. In the passage that we're going to look at today, we see this exact thing play out.

The passage that Karen and Priya read to us, there's a ton of activity, hustle and bustle and all sorts of things going on. And yet behind all the activity is negotiating, bargaining, ducking and diving, avoiding of responsibility.

A whole bunch of people trying to work out a way to exonerate themselves, shift the blame, and find a reason why they're not responsible for the things that have gone wrong.

[9 : 22] We're in Matthew 27, and we're witnessing the final hours of Jesus' life before he's crucified on Calvary. And I hope you join us this Friday and this Sunday as we consider the Easter weekend.

But the scene just before this, Neil shared it last week, Jesus is arrested at night in the Garden of Gethsemane. He's held to this kind of sham trial, this mock trial throughout the night.

And he's found guilty by the religious leaders, the chief priests, the Pharisees, the scribes. And they want to sentence him to death because Jesus is a sword in their side, a thorn in their flesh.

But the problem is, the Roman law said that the Jews couldn't put anyone to death. Only Romans could put somebody to death. And so the Jews have found him guilty, but now they need the Roman governor to sentence him to death.

And so they make their way over to Pilate. And we pick it up in verse 1. Read with me verse 1. It says, Now, before we find out what happened with Jesus before Pilate, Matthew interrupts his report to give us another scene.

[10 : 44] Judas Iscariot has been hanging around the scenes, around the fringes of what's happening here. He's been watching the trial, and he sees what happens. And Judas, his decision to betray Jesus, his guilt weighs heavy on his heart.

Verse 3. Then when Judas, his betrayer, saw that Jesus was condemned, he changed his mind. And he brought back the 30 pieces of silver to the chief priests and the elders, saying, I have sinned. I've betrayed innocent blood.

So Judas realizes his mistake, and he wants to put things right. He says, oh, there was a bad mistake. Let me undo what I did. Kind of like, do you know Gmail is one of their greatest inventions, right?

Do you know that unsend button? How many of us have used that? You send an email and think, oh, no, no, no. Unsend, right? Undo, undo. Judas wants to undo what he's done.

But the problem is, the cat is out the bag, right? He wants to go back to the people that he's cut a deal with and reversed the deal, and they want nothing to do with it.

[11 : 55] And so they reject him. Verse 4. They say to him, what is that to us? See to it yourself. Too late, Judas. Don't involve us in your problems.

Don't make your problems our problems. See to it yourself. Deal with it yourself. Friends, have you ever experienced remorse or regret?

Maybe you said something to somebody, and you wish you could take those words back, but it's out your mouth. Or you made a decision, and you realize it's the wrong decision.

Maybe you acted selfishly. You thought about yourself, or you went behind somebody's back, and for everything you have, you wish you could go back. Friends, how do you deal with your guilt?

Well, look at what Judas does here. Verse 5. Throwing down the pieces of silver into the temple. Judas wouldn't have been allowed into the temple. He wasn't a priest. So he stands at the door, and he throws the money bag in, and he departs, and he goes, and he hangs himself.

[13 : 00] Such a sad story, right? Judas makes a terrible mistake. A mistake that, if we're honest, probably all of us could have made. I mean, none of us really are beyond Judas here. And the problem is, he sees no way to put it right.

He sees no mechanism to clear his guilt. No way to redeem himself and to go back on his foolish decisions, his mistake. No means for restoration.

No hope for redemption. And so he puts himself at the mercy of those that he's cut this deal with, but he finds that they are devoid of any mercy.

And so he, what is he to do? They say to him, what is your problem to us? Go, sort out your own problems. Fix it yourself. And the tragic irony is that the whole point of the priesthood is that they are there to mediate on behalf of broken, sinful people for God.

They are to stand before God and the people and to offer sacrifices for sinners to help them atone for their guilt and their shame. I wonder if Judas that night thought, I've made a tragic mistake.

[14 : 11] I've done something wrong. But thank God Almighty, at least the people that I've been dealing with are the priests. They know something about guilt. They will offer a sacrifice to me.

They will help me atone for my guilt. And yet the priests are too busy thinking about their own agenda to care about Judas and his guilt.

What is that to us? Go deal with your own problems. Don't make your problems our problems. Friends, what about you? How do you deal with your guilt and your shame?

Where do you go to to find solace, to find comfort, to find mercy? Well, the religious leaders, they have a problem on their hands because they know it's morally problematic to receive this money that they instituted to sell somebody down the river to kill innocent blood to now receive that money back into the treasury and to use it for worship, right?

And that just doesn't work. And so they've got a problem on their hands. And so they come up with a plan. And the plan that they come up with is to buy a field on the outskirts of Jerusalem that they can use as a burial ground for foreigners and Jews that don't live in Jerusalem.

[15 : 32] And it sounds like a great idea because foreigners and Jews from other lands like Samaritans, maybe half Jews, they weren't allowed to be buried with the other faithful Jews in Jerusalem.

And so they kind of like are marginalized, they're outskirts. And so they come up with this plan that seems like a very good social justice plan. We will take care of those poor foreigners that cannot take care of themselves.

And so they come up with this plan. And you can imagine the PR campaign. Special love offering, right? Join us in this love offering as we take care of those who cannot take care of themselves.

Some poor foreigners have died in our midst. They've got no one to look after them. We will take care of them. And a special donor, a very generous donor, has already donated the first 30 coins to this offering.

Won't you join us as we buy this piece of land? Except what's really going on here? They're covering up their guilt, aren't they? In one of the first records of money laundering, these Jewish leaders are coming up with a plan to whitewash this blood money that they have used.

[16 : 46] And so they are laundering their complicity to murder and washing their names white as snow. Friends, maybe we haven't engaged in any money laundering activities.

I hope not. But how many of us are proficient at laundering our reputations, laundering our names, in order to save face, to save our reputations, to save our names?

And as Matthew reminds us here, that as he quotes Zechariah, this is not beyond the Lord's hand. The Lord knows about it.

He quotes Zechariah to say, the Lord knew about this from antiquity. Now you may wonder, if God spoke about this through the prophets, does that mean that, you know, Judas is just a pawn in the hands of the sovereign God?

There's nothing he could do about it. We can't hold Judas guilty? Well, actually, no. The Bible says that while God is sovereign over all things, clearly it's Judas' own duplicity.

[17 : 45] It's Judas' own wicked heart that leads him to do this. God foreknows the wicked decisions that Judas is going to make. And what about Jesus before Pilate?

Well, for a second time, in a matter of a few hours, Jesus stands on trial, and he remains silent. Look at verse 11 with me. It says, Jesus stood before the governor, and the governor asks him, are you the king of the Jews?

Jesus answers him, you have said so, which is a way of saying, as you said so, as is. But when he is accused by the chief priests and the elders, he gave no answer.

Pilate said to him, do you not hear how many things they testify against you? But he gave no answer, not even to a single charge. So what's Pilate to do here?

Pilate knows that the charges against Jesus are trumped up charges. Verse 18, he knew that it was out of envy that they had delivered him. Pilate knows that these are fake charges.

[18 : 49] He knows Jesus is innocent. Look at what he says later on. He says, what evil has he done? Why should I condemn him? Pilate's got a problem here because he knows that Jesus is an innocent man.

His wife even comes and warns him. She's had a dream that night in Matthew's gospel. Dreams are always the way that God speaks to people. She's had a dream and she warns him.

Pilate knows exactly what's going on here. But there's a problem because Pilate's own career is at stake. In fact, we know that Pilate had made many bad decisions in the previous 10 years of his reign and he was on very thin ice with Rome.

Whenever he made a mistake, the Jews would complain to Rome and he's already been chastised by Caesar a couple of times. And so Pilate's career is on pretty thin ice at the moment and he knows if he upsets the Jews who want Jesus crucified, they're going to complain to Caesar again and now he definitely will be a terminated cutoff.

And so Pilate's got a problem. What should he do? Should he do what's right or should he advance his own career? Pilate knows that either his career or Jesus must be sacrificed, but they can't both survive this incident.

[20 : 11] You remember in John's gospel, the crowds shout out, if you let this man go, you are no friend of Caesar. And Pilate suddenly gets very worried, right?

Now we read in verse 15, there's a custom that the governor around the time of the Passover would release one prisoner. Roman law allowed him to do this.

And so Pilate offers the crowd this choice. Jesus or Barabbas. Now Barabbas was a terrorist, an insurrectionist, a murderer.

He was part of a group of people that were trying to overthrow the Roman government, which is pretty ironic, right? Because if he releases Barabbas, he certainly is no friend of Caesar, but yet that's not going to please the crowds.

And so he's got this choice. And so he says to the crowds, who do you want me to release? Barabbas, the murderer, the terrorist, or Jesus, the innocent one? And of course the crowds, they want Barabbas.

[21 : 16] Not only do the Pharisees want Jesus dead, the crowds like Barabbas because he's one of them. He's trying to overthrow the Romans. And so Pilate gives in to their request.

And yet what's so intriguing about this event is not just Pilate's decision to annihilate Jesus in order to please the crowds. I mean, we know that the crucifixion is one of the most excruciating means of human torture in the history of the world.

And Pilate gladly allows Jesus to go through that for the sake of his own career. But what's so intriguing about this is not just the decision, but how Pilate justifies himself.

Look at verse 24 with me. Verse 24. When Pilate saw that he was gaining nothing, but rather that a riot was beginning, he takes a bowl of water, washes his hands before the crowds, and says, I am innocent of this man's blood.

See to it yourselves. Friends, where have we seen that line before? Verse 4, right? Remember? Verse 4.

[22 : 25] Judas brought back the 30 piece of silver, the chief priests and elders, saying, I've sinned by betraying an innocent man. And they say, what is that to us? See to it yourselves.

Here's Pilate. Pilate is as guilty as anything. And yet, what does he say? I'm innocent of this man's blood. See to it yourselves. How very convenient, Pilate.

Blaming the crowds to ease your guilty conscience and to excuse yourself of any wrongdoing, and yet that doesn't absolve you of your selfishness and the evil in your heart.

Friends, you see what's going on here in this passage? Here in this passage, all around Jesus, we have a myriad of people who are at fault.

We have Judas who betrayed Jesus for some money, handed him over, denied him, handed him over, sold him to the religious leaders in order to have him killed. We have the religious leaders who are meant to absolve guilt and offer sacrifices.

[23 : 27] They want nothing to do with it. Their plan is in motion. They want Jesus killed, and they're going to do nothing about it. And they whitewash their decision. They launder not only the money, but their own reputations.

We have Pilate who's only interested in advancing his career. Even though he knows Jesus is innocent, he's willing to have him crucified and killed to protect himself. We have the crowds who say, let his blood fall on our heads.

We have a whole myriad of people who are at fault and guilty, and yet they are all trying to justify themselves, exonerate themselves, shift the blame, pass it on to somebody else, excuse themselves.

Judas is probably the best of the lot because he at least admits his guilt, and yet how does he do it? He's trying to undo the past and reverse things and put things back how they were. And he goes to try and sort out the plan and fix things, but he can't.

It's too late. We have the religious leaders. Their consciences are hard. They're concerned about what people might think of them and their own reputations. They want nothing to do with Judas and his guilt.

[24 : 34] We have Pontius Pilate, the weakest of the lot. He knows Jesus is innocent, and yet he declares, my hands are tied. There's nothing I can do. I'm at the mercy of the crowds.

I'm so sorry, Jesus. The crowds made me do it. You know, when I was in South Africa, we, sorry, just brief tangent. When I was growing up, there was a famous cricketer, Hansi Kronier, the captain of the South African team, and he took a whole lot of bribery money, millions of dollars, to throw cricket matches.

And when eventually they found him, his famous line, the devil made me do it. The devil made me do it. That's what Pilate's saying, right? The crowds made me do it. I'm so sorry.

I wish I could set you free. But my hands are tied, Jesus. The crowds made me do it. Friends, on the 14th of March, 2008, Martine Vic Magnussen, a Swedish student, was studying in London at a university there, and she was brutally murdered.

She was found dead, half-naked, under a pile of rubble in the basement of an apartment block in central London. The night before, she'd been out partying with a bunch of friends from university, and she was last seen leaving the club with a university friend of hers called Farouk Abdullah.

[25 : 59] And they went back to Farouk's apartment. Farouk was a Yemeni student, the son of a wealthy billionaire, who his dad owned the apartment block.

And that morning, or a few days later, sorry, she was found dead in the apartment block of this building. And as they searched for Farouk, he was found to have fled London on the first flight out of London that he could to Cairo on the morning that she was killed.

So she is killed, and he suddenly disappears out of England to Cairo, and then catches the next plane to Yemen. And for 15 years, he's been living in Yemen, avoiding extradition, never coming back to London to face the charges.

Well, a few years ago, a BBC journalist tracked him down in Yemen and started a correspondence with him. And amazingly, he somewhat admitted his involvement in her death.

And yet, what struck me as I read the article was the way that he described what happened. Listen to some of these sentences. He says to this journalist, I did something when I was younger that was a terrible mistake.

[27 : 10] The journalist asks him to elaborate on a message he had sent speaking about his regret, and he says, I deeply regret the unfortunate accident that happened in my apartment.

And the journalist concludes the article saying this, During the thousands of text messages and hundreds of voice notes that he sent to me over five months, not once did he use Martine's name or refer to her death, preferring the terms incident or accident.

Friends, in answer to the London Times question, what's wrong with the world? We could answer that a myriad of ways, but one of the answers surely is the endemic propensity human beings have to avoid responsibility and to shift the blame and to minimize our faults.

When a young lady that is raped and murdered and abused, when that incident is referred to as a unfortunate accident and mistake a terrible incident, there's something wrong with human nature.

And we have a problem and a propensity to downplay our mistakes and to shift the blame onto somebody else. And this passage is full of people that are hustling to justify themselves, to excuse themselves, to save themselves, to redeem themselves.

[28 : 33] And in the midst of all the hustle and the bustle and the activity, where is Jesus? He stands alone, almost silent, oblivious, or almost unnoticed in the scene and the hustle and the bustle.

Jesus Christ, the only innocent man in this whole story, the only one who legitimately could save himself, who legitimately could get himself off the hook, stands silent.

Verse 11, the governor asked him, are you the king of the Jews? He says, it's as you said. But when accused by the chief priests and the elders, he gave no answer. And Pilate said to him, do you not hear all the things they say against you?

But he gave them no answer, not even to a single charge. Friends, you know why Jesus stands silent? Why is it that Jesus doesn't say anything?

I mean, remember Matthew 26, he's arrested in Gethsemane, Peter brings out a sword to save him and Jesus says, put away your sword. Do you not know that I could ask my father in heaven to send 10,000 legions of angels to rescue me?

[29 : 43] Jesus could have saved himself. Jesus could have given an answer. Why does he stay silent? You remember Isaiah 53, speaking of this incident, he was oppressed, he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, like sheep before its shearers silent, so he opened not his mouth.

Friends, Jesus stays silent because he's moving the drama along, because he knows that the plan that he and his father and the Holy Spirit had put in place before the creation of the world depended upon him going to the cross.

That Jesus Christ, the son of God, the only innocent one, would go to the cross and die for the sins of the world so that the guilty, like Judas, like Pilate, like the religious leaders, like you and I, can be set free.

And so Jesus stays silent so that he will go to the cross. Friends, you see what's happening here? There's this marvelous exchange that is taking place.

Jesus, the innocent, is condemned and dies so that we, the guilty, get pardoned and receive resurrection life. John Stott wrote about this in his book, The Cross of Christ.

[31 : 01] I want to read this to you. He says, the essence of sin is man substituting himself for God, while the essence of salvation is God substituting himself for man.

Man asserts himself against God and puts himself where only God deserves to be, while God sacrifices himself and puts himself where only man deserves to be. Man claims prerogatives that belong to God alone.

God claims penalties that belong to man alone. Christ was condemned for our sins in which he had no share that we might be justified by his righteousness in which we have no share.

Friends, the great exchange, Jesus died in our place. And nowhere do we see this more clearly than in the episode with Barabbas. Do you know what the name Barabbas means?

Barabbas, it means son of the father. Bar Abba, son of the father. Well, in the story, we have two sons of the father, Barabbas and Jesus, the son of God.

[32 : 10] And historians tell us, although it's difficult to prove, the church father, Origen of Alexandria, he writes about this and there's some ancient manuscripts that attest to it, but it's difficult to prove that Barabbas' first name was actually Jesus.

Nobody would have had the name Barabbas. It was a nickname, like James and John are called sons of thunder, right? Barabbas, the son of the father was his nickname, but he had a first name. An ancient manuscript suggests his name was Jesus.

Jesus was a very common name in first century, Yeshua. There were lots of people called Jesus and yet the scribes didn't want to write his name was Jesus Barabbas because that, you know, that wouldn't have looked good out of reverence for Jesus Christ.

But either way, whether his name was Jesus or not, what we meant to see here, Jesus takes Barabbas' place. Barabbas, the murderer, the terrorist, the insurrectionist, walks out free, guilty though he is because Jesus, the innocent, is condemned in his place.

Friends, scholars tell us that it would have taken a while to prepare the cross upon which criminals are crucified and yet Jesus is condemned and dies a few hours later. Whose cross does Jesus go to?

[33 : 26] There were three crosses that were already prepared that day. Jesus dies on Barabbas' cross, the cross that was prepared for him and Barabbas goes free.

Verse 26, then he released for them Barabbas and having scourged Jesus, delivered him to be crucified. Friends, we sang it earlier, because the sinless Savior died, my sinful soul is counted free.

For God the just is satisfied to look on him and pardon me. Friends, this is the gospel. This is Christianity.

This is what Easter and the Bible are all about. That Jesus, the innocent, is condemned and dies so that we, the guilty, can be pardoned and receive life. But here's the other thing in this passage.

It's not only is this exceedingly good news, but you see how this changes the way that we live our lives. In particular, the way that we handle our faults and our mistakes, our failures and our sins.

[34 : 30] Because no longer do we need to duck and dive, find excuses and exonerate ourselves, avoiding responsibility, trying to redeem or justify ourselves, declaring ourselves innocent, because there is one in heaven who died and rose again.

The one who's, the only opinion who really counts, who now looks at us and says, if you are in Christ because I died in your place, you are free. Friends, if you are in Christ, he declares you innocent though you are not.

Jesus died to take our place and now we no longer need to launder our names or hold up our reputations or defend ourselves or justify ourselves or excuse ourselves, there is one who has done it and we can rest secure in him.

I have this friend called Alan Frau. He was recently at a friend's church in Singapore and I heard him tell this story. Alan is a friend from South Africa but he now lives in America and Alan tells the story.

He said, when he moved to America, he decided to learn an American sport, right? Us South Africans know nothing about American sport and so he picks up softball which is not really a sport but anyway and so he picks up softball and he joins this team and he says, every time somebody makes a mistake, the person making mistakes is, my bad and the team shouts back, you're good and after a while he said, this really confused him because this guy makes a mistake and he goes, my bad and the team says, you're good and he says, but you're not good, right?

[36 : 19] You're bad. Why are they saying you're good? And so he goes to the captain and he says, what on earth is going on here? And the captain says to him, when somebody makes a mistake and they say, my bad, it's a way of saying, I'm not blaming anybody else.

I'm not making excuses. It's not the weather or the ball or the referee or the empire. I'm taking responsibility. I made a mistake and when somebody takes responsibility and says, hey guys, I'm sorry, it's my bad, the team says, don't worry, it's all good.

We're not going to hold this against you. You're clear. We're not going to hold it against you and Alan says, that is the gospel. That when I say, Jesus, my bad, it's not my parents' fault or my wife's fault or the environment's fault or the government's fault or Nielsen's fault.

No, God, my bad. Jesus says, you're good because I went to the cross for you and I took your shame upon myself. Friends, you see in all the flurry of activity here and all the hustling and abusing of people trying to justify themselves and exonerate themselves, Jesus Christ is almost forgotten.

He's hidden out of view and that's exactly the way that our lives work. When we're so busy trying to justify and defend ourselves and shift the blame and launder our own names, we forget about Jesus completely.

[37 : 46] And when Jesus Christ in the gospel is no longer at the forefront of our minds and no longer clear to us, when we've forgotten who Jesus is, do you know what we end up doing? We end up trying to justify ourselves, excuse ourselves, shift the blame onto everyone else.

But don't you see how Jesus doesn't just model a different way, he empowers us to live a different way. He empowers us to own our sin because he's dealt with it. Friends, Jesus' sacrificial death on the cross means we no longer need to make excuses.

We can say, my bad. And he says, you're good. In 1908, the London Times asked several notable authors and leading moral philosophers, what's wrong with our world?

G.K. Chesterton, the famous British writer and moral philosopher, writes back to them and he says, dear sirs, regarding your article, what's wrong with the world?

I am. Yours sincerely, Gilbert Keith Chesterton. Friends, what's wrong with the world? What's wrong with my world? I am.

[38 : 57] How refreshingly honest, how wonderfully candid, how utterly gospel-centered. Here is a man who not only knows what's wrong with the world, but knows how to admit it.

And the reason, because he knows where his redemption lies. 1 John 1 verse 8 says this, if we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.

But if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. Friends, Jesus died on the cross not only so that we can be freed of our guilt and our shame, Jesus died so that we can be honest about our sin and our need for redemption and our need for grace.

And this passage is so much more than just about people doing stupid things. It's about how we handle our stupid things. What do we do when we expose the sinners? What do we do when conflict occurs?

What do we do when we make mistakes or we are full of regret? Where do we go like Judas to undo our wrong? If only Judas had come to Jesus. If only Judas had come to Jesus.

[40 : 05] Friends, maybe you carry some deep, dark secret that nobody knows about and you've sworn in your life that you will never let anybody know about it until the day you die. Friends, are you like the leaders in verse 6 still trying to whitewash your reputation, your track record, trying to keep up pretenses?

Friends, maybe you're in the middle of some conflict and you feel the need to always point out the other person's fault because they're never going to point it out and always minimize your sin because everyone else points out your sin.

But maybe can you just own your sin? Own your, take responsibility for your role? Friends, are you tired of needing to keep up pretenses? Are you tired of justifying yourselves, finding reasons why it's always everybody else's fault?

Friends, are you tired of playing the victim? The cross of the Lord Jesus Christ hoisted up on Mount Calvary declares there's a better way and there's hope for those of us that feel hopeless and there is a way to redemption and freedom.

For God made him who knew no sin to become sin for us that in him we might become the righteousness of God. Dear sir, dear ma'am, you want to know what's wrong with the world?

[41 : 15] I am. But thank God almighty Jesus died on the cross to take my guilt, to take my shame and to change my life and to give me a different way to live.

Jesus the innocent died in our place so that we the guilty can come to him, be honest with our sin and find true grace. Let's pray together. Lord Jesus, we are so grateful for the cross we're so grateful for Mount Calvary and what you did.

Jesus, we're so grateful that 2,000 years ago in the face of trumped up charges and false accusations, Christ, you remain silent. You could have, God, defended yourself and you remained silent.

You went to the cross. You took our sin and shame that we, God, can be forgiven but not only that, that we, God, can be honest, real about our faults, that we don't need to pretend that, God, we can come and admit it and find grace.

Jesus, in a world that is endemic with people trying to justify themselves, shift the blame, find a hundred reasons why they're not responsible, play the victim.

[42 : 28] God, this morning, your word to us gives us a better way. Your gospel gives us a better way and that is to come before your throne of grace to admit our guilt and to find the mercy that we need.

And so, Jesus, I pray, won't you by your spirit come and help us to do that, Lord? Come and help us to do that, God. Would you show us, God, how we can do that?

God, give us the courage and the boldness, I pray. God, we pray this in your name. Amen.