

Puffed Up or Cross-Shaped?

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[0 : 0 0] Hello. Good morning. Let me just say Happy Mother's Day to everyone as well. It's an amazing day to be with you here. I'm just so excited about what God is doing and just even hearing from the young lives and just the way God is working in and through the church. I think she just really encourages us with what God's up to.

We're coming to a passage today which, if I think about it, I actually find this really difficult, if I'm honest. It's not difficult because I don't quite get what Paul is talking about in this passage. I find this passage really difficult because the way that when I go out of the door and into the culture around me, it tells me everything that is counter to what this passage tells me. And my fear is that even as we seek to talk about it over the next 30 minutes, is that I and we will kind of write off what Paul is saying because it is just so anti-everything that we hear 24-7 throughout our weeks, in our offices, in our workplaces, wherever we are. But the reason we're looking at these kind of passages, the reason we're looking at the book of Corinthians is, those of you who have been with us all this time, we have looked through the story of God, the story of the Bible which showed us God's purposes, His call, His plan for His people. And we got to the stage of Acts where

God had really just begun to build His church. And then what you come to is Corinthians where actually the calling of God's church becomes face to face with the cold, hard reality of life, of what it really is to live in this world. This is not dreamland any longer. This is actually facing the realities of life. And the city that this letter, Corinth, is written into is uncannily like Hong Kong, as Tobin mentioned. It's a business-minded entrepreneurial city. Trade was what got you money. And it was a place where everyone was vying to be top dog. You wanted to be in the top schools. You want to have the most money. You wanted to have status and career and power and influence. It was competitive. Everyone was fighting against everybody else.

It was dog, eat dog. And everyone wanted to be the Rottweiler and no one wanted to be the Chihuahua. Because this was a place where it was a city of schmoozers. I like that word. You know, schmoozers.

It was people who you had to network to get ahead. You had to rub shoulders with the movers and shakers because that would just move you up the pecking order. And you'd drag your opponents down in the mud so that you would look so much better than everybody else.

[3 : 1 3] It was a city that showed you the kind of heroes, the kind of people that you would want to imitate and be like, the kind of leaders that you should follow, the kind of people that you should look up to and admire and be kept one day you could be like them.

And the thing was, this church, which had come out of this city, had unwittingly taken on all the values of the culture. They just looked exactly like the culture looked.

And they didn't even know it. They didn't even realize how much the culture was influencing them. Now, I don't know who your heroes are. When I was 14, I started playing the guitar.

And very quickly, I came across a guy called Eddie Van Halen. Some of you know who I'm talking about. Some of you think it's like a taxi company.

But Eddie Van Halen was this amazing guitarist. And I remember one day watching one of his videos. And there was Mr. Halen. He was there doing his thing with his guitar.

[4 : 26] And I was like, wow. And he was doing this thing. And then suddenly, the music stopped. He stopped right in the middle of his solo. He looked at the camera and just gave you the look like. And then he carried on playing like this.

And I just thought, wow, that is so cool. I want to be like you. And, you know, from that point, I would fantasize.

And to be honest, I still do occasionally. I would... You've got to be real. I would fantasize that I was just like him in our youth group playing this amazing solo.

All the girls in front of me. And there, at one point, I would stop. And I'd do the look. And then I'd keep going again.

And everyone would fall down and worship me at that point, thinking, isn't Chris great? I'm sure none of you are like that.

[5 : 29] But I wanted to be like him because I thought some of his cool factor could kind of rub off on me. And I could be great like Mr. Van Halen.

Because everyone else would then think, wow, isn't Chris good? And Paul is kind of talking into a situation a little bit like this with the church.

He's talking about what's the difference between being puffed up with your own importance or being cross-centered.

Being the way of pride, which is all about you, or the way of the cross, which is all about laying down you. Denying you. So that's what we're going to look at.

The way of pride and the way of the cross. So let's kind of go on this journey and get into the passage a little bit. Verse 1 to 3. Paul starts off. This is how one should regard us as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God.

[6 : 35] Moreover, it's required of stewards that they be found trustworthy. But with me, it is a very small thing that I should be judged by you. Now this is really interesting.

Let's stop there. What's going on in this church is that the church has been blessed with many, many things. It's a happening church. If you looked on your Google search, it would come right at the top of the hit list.

They had their own YouTube channel. This was the place that you wanted to be. Every Sunday, they would have like TED Talks, inspiring sermons from these amazingly gifted teachers and speakers.

They just didn't have the communicators. They also had the personalities. They had assertive, dynamic, charismatic, strong leaders who everyone looked at and thought, wow, these guys, you are great.

And as they looked at it, it wasn't just the teaching was amazing and the doctrine was amazing. It was also the fact that they had so many gifts and supernatural gifts.

[7 : 38] This was a lively, happening place. There were supernatural miracles. And if it wasn't just the teaching you wanted, you could go and have the miracles. You could have all the stuff, the tongues. You could have all these gifts.

And they looked at themselves and they saw that all the other people around them, they would love to be in this church if it was here in Hong Kong. Because it was a lively, happening place.

This wasn't a village church with two old ladies and an organist. This was a rocking place. And the Corinthians looked at how successful they were.

And some of the people were very rich. People were converting and coming into the church who had places in society. Some had become successful.

And those who weren't successful, and many of them weren't, they looked up to the people who seemed to be successful and they hung on their words. And visiting preachers would come in who were also very charismatic.

[8 : 38] And they would be put up at the best hotels and everyone would want to listen to them. Because these guys, they were the bee's knees. They were the guys who really were the movers and shakers.

And the Corinthians thought that they were spiritually mature because they had all this stuff. All these amazing things going on in their church. And to be honest, it looked good.

And to be in this church, the values really were you've got to look good. You've got to talk good. You've got to achieve good. And then we'll listen to you.

If you didn't have any of those kind of things, well, sorry, we just kind of, we won't listen to you. If you don't have a seminary degree, sorry.

If you don't have the gifts, sorry. We're not interested in you because we've got the guys, the real people, the real deal here. And it's really interesting because do you know who the Corinthians had actually written off as they judged the different people around them?

[9 : 50] They'd actually written off Paul. They'd said, the one who had preached the gospel to them originally, Paul himself.

They'd said, I'm sorry. You're not quite what we're looking for. That's why he says, it's a small thing if I'm judged by you.

Now, I don't know if you, if you've been a Christian a while, you have an impression of what Paul is like. I have this impression of Paul as being kind of like the Arnold Schwarzenegger of Christians. You know, he kind of, he goes into one town there and he's blasting away like with the gospel, you know, blasting everything to smithereens, you know.

And then he does this, he's such an intelligent, intellectual guy. He debates everyone, grinds them into powder. They're there on their knees and he starts walking away from the village and just says, you know, if you repent, I'll be back, you know.

And this is, this is my image of this kind of strong, dynamic Paul. But the Corinthians who have spent 18 months with Paul don't think that at all.

[11 : 08] Really interesting. Here's what the Corinthians say about him. 2 Corinthians 10, they say, his letters are weighty and forceful, but in person he's unimpressive and his speaking amounts to nothing.

Wow. Is that your image of Paul? They thought he's a terrible public speaker. He's just so boring. You know, one guy fell asleep and fell out of a window when listening to Paul.

I mean, that's, that's not great for your street cred. He, he doesn't seem to be the assertive, dynamic character that all these other people around are.

He even says in 1 Corinthians 2, I came with weakness and fear and trembling. And the Corinthians looked at him and said, well, you may have been good to start with, but you've got nothing to offer us now.

We've kind of moved on to better guys. You know, if Paul was at a networking event in Corinth, not many people would have wanted his business card. They'd take one look at it and say, oh, that's interesting, and then walk away.

[12 : 18] And it's fascinating how even as Christians, we tend to elevate Paul into this kind of untouchable superhero kind of Christian, when actually the people who actually knew him and spent time with him never had that impression at all.

Wow. Wow. Because the Corinthians, I think if they'd had a job description for their new pastor, it would have looked something like this.

Pastor wanted for thriving cosmopolitan congregation, must be dynamic personality, eloquent preacher with theological degree, highly spiritually gifted, a strong visionary leader, attractive remuneration offered.

That's what the Corinthians thought a great leader should be. I wonder, how do we fare on that?

If Tobin was to leave to go and plant a church somewhere else, and we were looking for a new pastor, what criteria would you judge somebody suitable for being pastor?

[13 : 22] Who would you write off if you didn't have certain criteria? What are the qualities which make a Christian leader someone who is worth following, someone who is worth imitating?

Paul says this. He says, I don't care if you're judging by all these outward appearances. He says, listen, I don't even judge myself because I'm not the one who has to answer to you guys.

I am answering to God for my life. He will judge me, not based on my outward appearance, but he will judge me based on my heart and how I've been faithful with what he's given me.

And Paul diagnoses, like a doctor, he kind of diagnoses the Corinthians like a patient, you know, the patient who thinks they're well and just going for a normal checkup.

And they feel healthy, and then the doctor says to you, actually, you may look healthy, you may feel healthy, but actually inside you have a cancer growing in you. And that cancer is pride.

[14 : 31] You are puffed up, he says. You're judging one leader against another leader by outward appearances. And really, it's actually ultimately all about you anyway.

Think about it. Pride is basically making the world about me, elevating me, making me look great. If I was to say to you, you know, I was with the CEO of Prada yesterday, and he said to me, Chris, I just need your advice on this.

You know, you're the only man who can help us on this thing. And I go and tell you all, what does that do to my credibility now? Do you now think, hmm, he knows some interesting people?

Because if I hang around some kind of impressive people, if I'm associated with them in some way, even though I feel ordinary, maybe some of their little stardust can kind of rub off on me.

And I can just move a little bit higher in the pecking order in everybody else's eyes. Because, you know, I feel ordinary, but actually I'd all like to be just a little bit extraordinary.

[15 : 46] Just a little bit great. Not too great, just a little bit. And I think it's interesting. You look out in the business world, in law firms or companies, and how many partners or associates would grab lunch with office clerks or secretaries?

Does that happen very often? Why? I mean, why would you? They've got nothing to offer you. Because it doesn't really give you any higher standing, does it?

Why would you do that? They're not impressive enough to move you up in your kudos or to give you something that you want. But the world works that way. And I'm afraid I often work that way.

We all want to be a little bit of a hero, a little bit more impressive, a little bit more great. And I don't think it's just the business culture that does that. I think actually in the church we can do this.

There's one pastor called Don Carson. Speaking of the Western church, he puts it like this. He says, Why is it that we constantly parade Christian athletes, media personalities, and pop singers?

[16 : 58] Why should we think their opinions or their experience of grace is any more significant than those of any other believer? When we tell outsiders about the people who are in our church, do we instantly think of the despised and lowly who have become Christians?

Or do we love to impress people with the importance of men and women who have become Christians? The modern Western church is deeply infected with the virus of triumphalism and the resulting illness destroys humility, minimizes grace, and offers far too much homage to money and influence and wisdom of our day.

Ouch. Wow. And I was just thinking about this. I think it's not just the Western church. I think here, every Sunday, I don't know if you know, there's three or four people who meet to pray every Sunday faithfully for our church, for you guys, for what's going on, for this city.

But what if I said, I don't know, Jeremy Lin, Manny Pacquiao, Sammy Cheng, Tim Keller, and I put fill in the blank, was going to lead the prayer meeting next Sunday.

How many people would turn up at the prayer meeting then? Because actually, I would be interested in turning up at the prayer meeting if it was like that.

[18 : 26] Honestly, I would. And I think to myself, well, why would I want to do that? Is it because I'm so passionate about praying? Well, I probably would have been at the prayer meeting before if that was the case.

Or is it more that actually, I want to be around people who are impressive, people who are well known, people who are famous. I don't find that very comfortable.

But actually, I think if I'm honest, that's probably real. And I heard a local pastor, I spoke to him the other day, and he said to me, in Hong Kong, you know, one of the things that cripples the church in Hong Kong, and these were his words, he said, we go from conference to conference to listen to amazing speaker after amazing speaker, but often not really getting fully engaged in our local congregation with the ordinary everyday people around us.

And we think we're getting more mature, but actually, we're staying immature. Because the reason at Watermark we don't have a lot of conferences or a lot of these things is because we believe maturity comes as you serve ordinary people around you in your local congregation.

And the people we do have, like John Brandon coming next week, we bring those in because we believe they're going to help us not take away from what we're doing as a church, but to help equip us to go back into loving people, getting alongside people in the normal everyday things of life.

[20 : 07] But if you're like me, I'm infected with a culture which judges people on the outward appearance, and often I fail to see how God judges from the heart.

So if you think about it, I dream about being like Eddie Van Halen. Who do you dream, daydream of being like? Why?

Because actually, who you daydream of being like probably tells you something about how much you understand the gospel. And so Paul is going to say, and let's move on to the second thing we want to say, is the mark of a true Christian leader, of someone who's worth imitating, of someone who's worth following, is not the way of pride, is not the way of kind of making you elevate yourself anymore, but it's the way of the cross.

So let's look at the next part of the passage. And Paul does, did you know sarcasm is in the Bible? Did you know that? I'm British, so I love it.

But Paul here is incredibly sarcastic. He says, verse eight, already you have all you want. Already you've become rich. Without us, you have become kings.

[21 : 20] And would that you did reign so that we might share the rule with you. For I think that God has exhibited us apostles as last of all, like men sentenced to death because we've become a spectacle to the world, to angels and to men.

We are fools for Christ, but you are wise in Christ. We are weak, but you are strong. You are held in honor, but we're in disrepute. To the present hour, we hunger and thirst.

We're poorly dressed and buffeted and homeless. And we labor, working with our own hands. When reviled, we bless. When persecuted, we endure. When slandered, we entreat. We have become and are still like the scum of the world, the refuse of all things.

Whoo! Paul is drawing on some images there. He's drawing on images of the, either in the gladiators arena or in the Roman processions.

When the Romans came back from victories, what they used to do, they used to process through the streets with the great heroes, the generals, right out front, dressed in their elegant uniforms, whatever they wear.

[22 : 30] And in the back would be the prisoners of war, shackled, held down, like this. And everyone else would be insulting them, jeering at them, throwing things at them.

And Paul is saying, you guys are like the generals out in front, and we're like the prisoners of war at the back. You're the winners. We're the losers. You're the great ones. We are just like this.

And we're suffering for the sake of the gospel, but actually we're more like homeless beggars. You know, we're hungry, we're thirsty, we don't wear nice clothes, we get kicked on the ground by others, we don't have a home to live in.

And as you guys walk past us wearing your nice brands, you don't even notice us on the floor. That's what Paul's saying to the Corinthians. And he's saying, if you think you're already spiritually mature without the pain and struggle, Corinthians, of the sacrifice of following the way of the cross, well, I'm afraid you've forgotten who you're actually following.

You've forgotten who you're following. And if you look down in verse 16, he says something which is very strange. He says, I urge you.

[23 : 51] He doesn't say, well, this would be nice. How about trying this one day? He doesn't say that. He says, I, with everything in me, urge you, be imitators of me.

Have you thought how weird that is? First of all, if I come and say to you, okay, guys, if you want to live life, just look at this. That, that, we would say, is arrogant.

But not just that. Think about it. It's even weirder because what has Paul just said? He's just said, we are the scum of the world, the refuse of all things.

That word, scum, it means scrapings off. It's like, you know when you go to the park and you're walking along and you put your foot down and you hear this squelch. And suddenly you look down to see what you stepped in and it's not a pleasant sight.

And you lift up your foot and you think, oh no. And you scrape off the beautiful material that is on the bottom of your shoe and you throw it away.

[25 : 03] And Paul is saying, that is what we are like. We are like the scrapings in your eyes, in the eyes of society around us.

And when Paul is saying, I want you to be imitators of me, he's not saying, I want you to be really impressive. He's saying, I want you to be like some dog crap. If I can say that.

You see, that is not a great marketing campaign. You know, that's not going to get the online booking office jammed with people lining up to say, I want some of that, Paul.

But Paul is saying, this is what Christian leadership looks like. This is what, if you want to see someone who's worth following, this is what it looks like.

This is the way of the cross. Christian maturity is cross-shaped. It's not puffed up shaped. He says, if you want to be spiritual, then your life has got to look like my life.

[26 : 07] Now I'm sorry if some of you came to Christianity on the card of, I follow Jesus, get some nice feelings, get someone just to be with me who I can pray, sort out all the nasty things in my life, and life will be so much better.

And, I'm sorry if that's the card you came on because, I'm afraid someone lied to you. Well, maybe they didn't lie.

Maybe there is truth in that. But maybe they didn't tell you the small print. Well, actually, it's not small print. It's actually very big print because it's, it's through pretty much every single book of the Bible, the book of the New Testament.

You know, there's wonderful, but I've got some favorite verses. You know, you know those verses like, we are more than conquerors through Christ who loves us. Do you know, I like that verse.

Do you know what the previous two verses are? Here we go. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? It's good so far. Shall tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, danger, sword, as it's written, for your sake, we're being killed all the day long.

[27 : 16] We're regarded as sheep to be slaughtered in all these things. We are more than conquerors. Ooh. Here's another one. Philippians.

Paul says, I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection. I like that. You know, a bit of resurrection power. Yeah. Come on. And, but the next bit says, that I may share his sufferings becoming like him in his death.

And I'm thinking, no, Paul, why did you have to put that sentence in? It was looking so nice to that point. Because I struggle with this.

It's not sexy. It's not comfortable. It doesn't get you many Facebook likes. But he says, be imitators of me. And he says it again in chapter 11.

He says, be imitators of me as I imitate Christ. in Hong Kong, many of us wear crosses, sometimes diamond crosses.

[28 : 23] I don't have a problem with diamond crosses, but I think, do you realize how weird it would be for a first century person to see a load of people wearing crosses?

Because the cross was the most humiliating form of torture and death reserved for the worst criminals, the serial rapists, the murderers, the pedophiles, the people you think are the worst in society.

That's what the cross represented. It's a bit like if you've got, I don't know, you have an electric chair hanging around your neck. Or if you're a Jew, you have a gas chamber.

Or you have a noose around your neck. That is what it means. Any first century person would be shocked and think you're an idiot to have one of those.

And Jesus in the Bible, it tells us Isaiah 53. It says, He had no form of majesty. This is the one we worship, by the way. He had no form of majesty that we should look at Him, no beauty that we should desire Him.

[29 : 30] He was despised and rejected by men. He was as one from whom men hide their faces. He was despised and we esteemed Him not. That's the foolishness of the cross.

But Jesus made Himself nothing so that we could get glory. Jesus died that we might have life. He chose not to grasp onto equality with God.

He didn't choose to make Himself great, but He lowered Himself so that we might be forgiven, so that we might experience that joy.

He did it for you. He did it for me. And if that's what the King is like, well, His followers will also look like Him. That's why Christians are called Christian.

They're kind of like little Christs. They look like Him. Now, this is, I find this quite heavy because, you know, it says we follow Christ crucified and follow means follow and crucified means to death, to service, to sacrifice, to self-denial, to suffering, to not me being great, but to me being laid less.

[30 : 52] And I just wonder sometimes why does Jesus seem to make it so heavy? Because Jesus says it. I mean, He says, if anyone's not willing to deny himself, take up his cross, he's not worthy of being my disciple. And I say, Jesus, that sounds pretty hard. But I think another reason I struggle with this is because it seems a little bit detached from my everyday life, you know.

I'm not going to be crucified on a cross probably tomorrow at work. You know, my life is not in danger generally in Hong Kong.

And so sometimes that idea of me dying doesn't really kind of compute. But I think Paul is not saying, okay, it's just a physical death. I think he's saying it's a death to me being the one who's the center of my life, the one who's got to be great in my situations.

He's saying it's an attitude of service. It's an attitude of not self-promoting but laying myself down. And that takes place a thousand times every day in just very little ordinary things.

Very ordinary things where we choose to die to ourselves. It's your response when you hear somebody talking behind your back at work.

[32 : 09] And you can follow the way of pride which is, I don't deserve it. I'm going to get my own back. I'm going to ignore them. Or you can say, I will choose to forgive them and I will bless.

That's the way of the cross. It's when you're suffering from cancer and the pain of that and you have that temptation to be bitter and yet you say, I will trust you God.

It's the way of the cross. It's if you're single and you're desperate to get married and yet you choose to say, I will follow you Christ. I will trust you in this time even though it's hard.

It's when you go home and you just crash on the sofa after a day's work and you want to do nothing but just watch TV and your spouse or friend just wants to talk to you and tell them about your issues and it's the last thing you want to do.

But the way of the cross, the way of the cross. I don't find this easy. I'm not just saying that.

[33 : 15] I really don't. But if there's one thing that's crystal clear in the Bible it's this. There are no mature Christians. There are no mature Christians who have not walked the way of the cross, who have not suffered in some way whether it's through health, whether it's through just choosing to be ethical when everyone else wants to be unethical.

Maturity comes that way. I know so many people who think maturity, they think they're mature just because they've been to seminary and they've got an extra lot of doctrine. That's not maturity.

Maturity is people who just in the ordinary everyday things of life choose the way of the cross. at this point I just want to I want to commend to you some of our leaders in this church.

Whether it's the staff or whether it's the community group leaders or whether it's the people who are leading just some of the amazing things like the young life and young life stuff that's going on. Some of these are great examples of just in the ordinary everyday of how they serve, of how they sacrifice, of how they love you and you may not even have noticed but these guys, this is what Christian leadership is about.

These people are worth imitating. That's why we want them. We don't choose leaders just because you've had a great business success or you've led groups before. We choose people who just, we see that sense of wanting to walk the way of the cross.

[34 : 50] They'll admit they're not perfect. None of us are. We're broken. It's step by step but they're seeking to walk that way.

I want to tell you about one of my Christian heroes. Not Van Halen. Who I've seen just living the way of the cross in their life.

It's my mom. You see, my mom, you'll never see her on TV. You'll never see her on Facebook. She doesn't tweet. She thinks YouTube is probably something you find under the kitchen sink.

She, she doesn't want to be the center of attention at all. She grew up with a domineering father. She got married to someone who was too low on the social scale for her dad's approval.

She had three children, one miscarriage. She brought three of us up constantly, often on her own because my dad struggled with illness and depression and stress. At the age of 40, she was diagnosed with arthritis in her hips.

[35 : 54] She had one operation. It was a complete disaster. It took two more operations to fix that one. After praying, they chose not to sue the surgeon because he was retiring. In total, she's had at least eight hip operations, been under general anesthetic at least 16 times.

And in all of that, she's had a quiet, joyful confidence in God. She spent long periods of time looking after us, sometimes barely able to walk in agony, and yet she never complained.

When we would complain about the food that she'd just cooked, spent two hours cooking, she wouldn't get angry, but she'd just patiently remind us that God provides. And through everything that was going on in her life, she would be always looking out for other people.

In our middle class church, we would always have people around for dinner on Sundays and things, but she would invite the people that most other people wouldn't invite.

We had ex-drug addicts, we had refugees, we had manic depressive, we had the lot coming in and out of our house. And she cared for them all. She listened to them, she prayed for them, she fed them, she shared the gospel with them, she sometimes shouted at them.

[37 : 10] She loved God's word, but she's not particularly intellectual. She'd be left behind in any discussion, but she was okay with that. She's not perfect.

Many times she would just, the people that she was trying to engage with would just drive her completely nuts. She'd lose her temper. Sometimes she'd say inappropriate things at inappropriate times.

But people knew that she loved them. In many ways, she's just ordinary. She would clean people's flats for them, babysit their kids, visit people in hospital, just the normal things in the normal course of life.

Ordinary woman, plenty of faults, but someone who was looking to walk the way of the cross. She knew God's forgiveness on her life. God changed her.

She looked to share Jesus with people. She was willing to serve. She wasn't looking to make herself great. And it's not just because it's Mother's Day that I say this or because I'm her son, but many other people would come up to me and say, you know, your mom has been an amazing blessing to us.

[38 : 28] Because she's a Christian hero to me. She's someone I think is worth imitating in life. And the thing is, every one of us in this room has people who are imitating us.

Whether you like it or not, people are noticing you. People notice how you act. They notice your priorities. Your kids notice what you do. And you know what?

People will judge you by your appearance. They'll write you off if you don't look the way they want you to look. They will. That's the way the world works. But the question I would ask each one of us is, is your life worth imitating?

Is your life worth imitating? Is the way that you do business, is the way that you work, is the way you love your family, is the way you care for people in your community group, is the way that you do these things, does it show an example to people that if they followed you in just a little way, they would look just a little bit more like Jesus?

The way of the cross is not a glorious thing where I'm going to look great. It's just today, there's going to be mundane things, everyday little things, everyday there's a chance to walk the way of the cross.

[40 : 01] In my pride, I want to be noticed for my greatness and for my gifts and for all those other things and praise God for the gifts that God gives. I mean, praise Him.

But what is it that the cross is going to look like for you? We have next week, we have this love offering. What does the way of the cross look like as it's sacrificial, as it's serving, as it's self-denying, as you give?

What does the way of the cross look like as you go into your office place? The people you say hi to, the people that you'll notice, the people you'll smile at.

The culture that we live in, like in Corinth, tells us to look at the outward and to try and be like them. And Paul, he says, be imitators of me because I imitate Christ.

Can you say, and I find this a challenge, but this is one that we continually put before us. It's not a guilt trip. It's something to continually think and check my life.

[41 : 11] Can I say to somebody, be an imitator of me as I imitate Christ? That's Christian leadership.

That's Christian maturity. Let's pray. Father, when you call us to follow you, you call us into something that is beautiful.

because to be a hero is not often what we think it is. Lord, even in culture, we know that some of the greatest heroes are those who are willing to lay down their life for other people.

And in our good moments, we recognize that. Even on Mother's Day, we recognize the way that our mothers have been in many ways, Lord, those people who do walk that way of the cross.

Please would you show us, just today, show us one thing. As we go out of here, what it looks like for me to say, I'm not going to walk in just trying to impress and make myself look good, but I'm going to look for the people around to love and serve.

[42 : 39] And even if other people look down on that, then that's okay because you're the one who judges me, Father. And I know your judgment is good and is loving and is kind.

help us to be a church which is not just consumed with being outwardly impressive, but really sees the cross as just something so beautiful because it is.

Thank you that you're our Savior. Thank you that we're forgiven where we walk the way of pride. Help us now renew us afresh to remember that grace, that joy of what it means to walk in you.

Thank you. In your name. Amen.