



No Greater Love-Part 8 Condemned In Our Place Pastor Mike Fabarez

Don't know how often you've read the Bible and noticed that many of the characters in the Scripture end up in prison. Have you ever noticed that? I mean Joseph gets thrown into a jail in Egypt. Sampson is incarcerated by the Philistines. Daniel is, of course, thrown in jail by the Medo-Persians. In the New Testament you got John the Baptist who is incarcerated by Herod Antipas. You've got Peter thrown in jail by Herod's nephew, Herod Agrippa the First. And then, of course, Paul was in several prisons. He spent a night in a Philippian jail with Barnabas and was incarcerated in Rome as well in Caesarea. I could name others but, it's interesting in a list like that of very prominent biblical characters who end up in jail, how many of those you realize, matter of fact all of those, you realize that I just listed, are all incarcerated unjustly. They were innocent. They were not guilty. They were wrongly accused.

Now I know if you stroll through the corridors of today's prisons and jails they'll try to convince you that it's full of innocent people today, I realize. But you know in a modern American 21st century jurisprudence, that's not often the case. Then when it is the case and someone is exonerated, it makes the front pages of the papers because someone has been wrongly imprisoned.

Well, the Bible speaks of a kind of prison, a jailhouse of sorts, that we are all subject to. There is an incarceration that the Bible speaks of in a spiritual sense that's true of every last person and no one is wrongly accused. Everyone is guilty. No one is unjustly incarcerated in this proverbial jailhouse. Particularly talking about wrongly accused people, we are studying right now through Luke, Luke Chapter 23, where Jesus is being wrongly accused of all kinds of things that he didn't do and he's in shackles and he's there before first Annas and then Caiaphas the high priests and then on to a Pilate and then he got kicked, the last time we were together, off to Herod and now Herod has sent him back to Pilate in our passage, as we pick it up in Luke 23:13.

But we encounter a kind of a juxtaposition, a comparison and a contrast with another prisoner and this prisoner is guilty. And the strange thing about this prisoner is he gets set free. Barabbas is his name. We have Barabbas and Jesus standing in stark contrast with one another, which is more than just a historical narrative for us. It is a historical narrative and it's true that here we have Barabbas who's guilty and you have Jesus who's innocent. One of them who's innocent gets not only incarcerated but he goes onto his own execution. You have the other one who's guilty who gets freed. And while we can speak of that in historical terms, there's something I think we should stop and learn theologically about all of that. It is a great and fantastic illustration of the Gospel.

The Gospel of the fact that we are all in a jailhouse, so to speak, of sin. We have a conviction and a bondage to that sin that ultimately is going to lead to a prison of eternal judgment. In a sense, we are in a jail and we then will be delivered after the Great White Throne to a permanent place of incarceration. But when it comes to this jail, the whole point of the Gospel is, you can have guilty people who are rightly condemned in that jail set free. That's the concept of redemption. That's the ancient word for it. The idea of being set free.

And then their full exoneration will come into crystal clear clarity when they step across the threshold of this life into the freedom that they'll experience in the New Jerusalem. That is a great picture that I think is worth underscoring in a passage that kind of prolongs and protracts this terrible feeling that Christ is here incarcerated, being beaten, being whipped and about to go to his



own execution, as we stand back and meet this interesting character named Barabbas.

So take your Bibles, if you haven't already, and turn with me to Luke Chapter 23. We're going to deal with verses 13 through 25, which is a rather large section for us this morning, to try and deal with this picture that I hope that we can go away this morning and say, I am seeing that now perhaps a little differently than I have before. I'm understanding some implications that go beyond just the statements of a trial 2,000 years ago, that really speaks to something theological, something that's relevant for us right now in this place.

So follow along as I read for you verses 13 through 25 of Luke Chapter 23. I'll read from the English Standard Version. Here it goes. "Pilate then called together the chief priests and the rulers of the people, and he said to them, 'You brought me this man as one who was misleading the people. And after examining him before you, behold, I did not find this man guilty of any of your charges against him. Neither did Herod, for he sent him back to us. Look, nothing deserving death has been done by him.'" I hope you're starting to see the double entendre here. I understand we're dealing with a sliding scale of human jurisprudence as he stands before Pilate. But nothing could be a truer statement in all of Scripture than that right there. "Nothing deserving death has been done by him." If you stop thinking of a sliding scale and a curve and start thinking about an absolute scale and you understand that the wages of sin is death, you're starting to see that is a statement that's doubly true in the most profound way. "I will therefore punish and release him," which may make you scratch your head, if he's innocent why are you punishing him? More on that later. Nevertheless, he wants to let him go.

Unless you think there's a typo in your Bible you can see in the English Standard Version, here we go from verse 16 to verse 18 and you're going, "Where did verse 17 go?" And the real question you should ask is why was verse 17 ever there? Well here's the reason verse 17 was there. Verse 17, which your Bible should note in the margin, or maybe you have some other translations that put it in brackets, or maybe some put it in italics, but it should read somewhere that there was a verse that was there that made its way from the column into the text of a lot of the ancient copies that showed up throughout church history that read, "He was obliged to release one man at the festival."

That's injected there from both Matthew and Mark as an explanation of what's going to happen. But really the reliable and ancient text that we have, though there are notes and stars in some manuscripts in the margin, the idea of that explanation, which comes from Matthew and from Mark, was really not a part of what Luke had initially written. Now you can debate that with me and I'm happy to debate that with you afterwards, but suffice it to say at this particular junction, lest you take a translation from the 15th or 17th century, as so often is done in English translations from the 17th centuries and say, "That's the gold standard, that's the benchmark. If you take anything out of that you've done something that equates to something we see in the end of the book of Revelation."

Well, note that we're not only concerned about taking things out of the Scripture, I'm certainly concerned about putting things into the Scripture and if there's some kind of notation in a column that makes its way into the text throughout the copying process, late in the process of making the transmission of the text to get to where we are today, I'm just as interested to make sure you don't add anything to the text, versus taking anything out of it. It's equally important. So, the question isn't really where did it go. It's the question, if you research this, why was it there?

If you want more on that, we can talk in the lobby, we can talk in my office. I'm not inviting all of you over to my office necessarily, but if it's really bothering you, ask your small group leader, ask

the people here in pastoral leadership or anybody here, even our small group leaders, will help you work through that. And you can edit all that out. Back to where we are. We're reading the text missing verse 17, no need to miss it, just know that the explanation as to why there's a whole issue about releasing someone is that was the expectation at the Festival of the Passover and that's where we're at right here on Friday morning.

But, I guess when you go back to read verse 16 again, "I will therefore punish him and release him. But they all cried in response to that statement." You can see even those how those quickly go together there. Wow, let me stop talking about the textual emendation. Here we go, verse 16. "I will therefore punish and release him. But they all cried together, 'Away with this man, and release to us Barabbas.' a man," who was that guy, "a man who has been thrown into prison for an insurrection," he's a rebel, "started in the city and for murder." He's got a bad rap sheet here. "Pilate addressed them once more, desiring to release Jesus," which is interesting, we already saw a little bit of that, he kicks the can down the road to send Jesus to Herod. We've already injected into this, at least the scene in our minds, of Pilate's wife, who has this dream, this guy is innocent, don't mess with him. Pilate wants to let Jesus off. He doesn't want to send a guy who he thinks is innocent to an execution.

"But they kept shouting, 'Crucify, crucify him.'" That's what they wanted done. "A third time," verse 22, "he said of them, 'Why, what evil has he done? I found in him no guilt deserving death. I will therefore punish and release him.' But they were urgent, demanding with loud cries that he should be crucified. And their voices prevailed. So Pilate," the wimp, "decided that their demand should be granted. He released the man who had been thrown into prison for insurrection and murder, for whom they asked, but he delivered Jesus over to their will." So he reluctantly gives a thumbs down to Christ to have him go off to his crucifixion, all the while releasing someone who is a notorious, as Matthew puts it, a notorious sinner, I mean, a notorious criminal in their midst and you can see why.

If you didn't catch that notice this. We piece this together from all four Gospels, Pilate did not want to crucify Jesus as our text says, and so he, in this tradition of releasing a prisoner, decides to pick a prisoner who is so notoriously bad that, if I said you, "I've got a guy who you're envious of, you're jealous of, you think he's a problem, but I'm going to pick, I don't know, you know, John Wayne Gacy or I'm going to pick Charles Manson, and I'm going to say, "OK, which one should I release?" I mean, he's thinking for sure, you're not going to let Manson go because you're jealous of Christ who's kind of taking the applause and the spotlight off of you. And yet they didn't buy it. They were so heinous in their hatred for Christ that they said, "We want Barabbas."

Now, I noted for you here in verse 15 as he says, "I examined him. I didn't find anything that he's done that's guilty. There are no charges that I think that are going to stick. Herod didn't find anything either. The two of us, now we're friends, we're fist-pumping in verse 12. You know, we don't like this guy. Look, there's nothing," and here's the apex of it, "nothing," verse 15, "deserving death has been done by him." I want you to see that double entendre there. Theologically, we couldn't say it any more succinctly or better. It would be good for us to stop and pause in our service and just say, "Let's take note of that."

If you're taking notes, jot it down. Number one, we need to "Ponder the Perfection of Christ," because when it comes to what's unfolding in our passage, which is the redemption that we need, the salvation that Christ secured by his whipping and his beating and his death and his torture that day, I know this: what I need is for him to be perfect. And that's exactly what he is. He is perfect.

"There is nothing deserving death." Not just a criminal execution in Israel, I'm talking about he doesn't deserve to die because of the wages of sin is death. And this is the only one who has not sinned.

Please note how clear that is in Scripture from the very beginning in the prophecies that spoke of a suffering servant in Isaiah 53. Let me quote for you a couple of verses. Verse 9. When it speaks of the coming one who would be crucified and be "with the rich in his death," which was Joseph of Arimathea's tomb, it says in that passage "he had done no violence," which I know you may think of him, you know, beating on someone. That's not what we're talking about, although that certainly applies. Violence means he didn't violate any of the standards of God. That Jesus had no deviation from God's perfect standard.

And if that's not clear enough for you, here's the next line which we can all identify with, and it says, "and there was no deceit in his mouth." Think about that. You may say, "Well, I'm not a violent person," although I think I could look at that word and say I think you have violated the standards of God. But if I said to you, "Raise your hand if you haven't sinned in terms of your deceit in your mouth," to put it succinctly, how many of you haven't lied, only the hands of liars would go up. Right? Because I've got you either way. You've lied. That's the problem. We are liars from the time we were stealing cookies from the cookie jar and mom said, "Did you have one?" You have been a liar, a deceiver as a selfish person.

Think about the fact that it says of Jesus that he never lied. That is the critical statement. Jot these two references down real quick from John Chapter 8. Just jot them down, look them up later if you want to see the context. John Chapter 8 verse 46. He stands before his enemies, and I want you to think about standing before your enemies for a second, people who don't like you, who are not just passing strangers, they are in your everyday life. I mean they are the kinds of people who have heard you teach, they've seen you, they've watched you. You've been living your life out in the open, you not running to your own home. You don't even have a home. These people are our audience. He says this, "Which one of you convicts me of sin?" Can you imagine giving people an open door to say, tell me anything I've ever done that's wrong that deviates from God's glorious standard, tell me that. I mean I don't want to ask my friends that question let alone my enemies. They're going to find something.

Earlier in the passage, which I said two references, John Chapter 8 verse 46, he asked the question, "Which one of you convicts me of sin?" And he had just said this in verse 29, John 8:29, "I always do the things that are pleasing to the Father." Oh, I want you to think about that for a second. I mean, you may, I don't know, fancy yourself a godly person. But to say I ALWAYS do... I mean, you might say, "Well, yesterday from 2:00 to 2:30 I did what was pleasing to the Father. Right? Or I was 80% firing on my spiritual cylinders last week. But you're not going to stand up and say, "I always do what's pleasing to the Father," unless, of course, you're a liar. So that doesn't work. This is an insane thing to stand up to say to the crowds of friends and enemies, "I always do what the Father wants." And then, "By the way, any of you convict me of sin?" This is not a guy who lived in private. This is an incredible claim. And certainly it is true. And even his own family comes to bow their knee, many of them at least that we know of in Scripture, the half-brother of Christ. Right? It is an amazing thing that people who know him best say, no problem, holy. Matter of fact, that's the biblical word for it, holy.

That word "holy" both in Hebrew in the Old Testament, "qadash," in the New Testament, "hagios," both these words in Greek and in Hebrew both give us a sense that the root of the word of



"separation," something that separate. That's helpful, helpful in the sense that we recognize that there's something about the separateness, the distinctness, the transcendence of God, that makes him different and special than everything else. He is special in a lot of ways that we would call noncommunicable ways. In other words, the attributes of God that nothing else and no one else can share, from Michael the archangel to anyone in this room. And that's true. He's separate in that sense.

But he's also separate in the communicable attributes. In other words, let's put it this way, when it comes to God being a unique and special individual, let's just put it that way, he is someone who always does things well. He always does right, or as the psalmist would say, all his ways are perfect. Now that's a God, when it comes to who he is, becomes the benchmark and standard for all the, what we would call, the communicable or shared attributes of God. In other words, if God should be faithful, he's faithful. If God should be honest, he's honest. If God should be indignant, he's indignant. If God should be kind, he's kind. If he should be generous, he's generous.

He's all of those things and then those become the things that are the standard for us. Right? "I am holy, you be holy also in all of your behavior." So the word holy, not only has a sense of being set apart, which physically, that's why inanimate objects can be called holy. You can have things in the tabernacle, instruments or tables or the anointing oil, to say that's holy oil, that's a holy piece of shewbread, or that's a holy candelabra. It's a holy room or a holy of holies, the interior holy room within the holy place, and it has no ethical quality. Just like you drinking a bottle of water and setting it on the counter at your house. If I walk in, I assume that's holy. That doesn't mean it's ethically moral, it just means I'm not going to drink after you and it's yours. You've set it apart for yourself.

But the ethical quality is that God is separate and different from us and all of his behavior becomes the benchmark for my behavior. If God is faithful in this situation, I should be faithful in this situation, if God is honest, I should be honest, if God is going to be patient, then I should be patient, if God should reach out in kindness in that situation, then I should reach out in kindness. I am to reflect that moral and ethical standard. And, of course, the Bible says all of us have sinned. All of us have fallen short. I mean, the first verses I hope you learned from Romans as a kid were, "We've all sinned and fallen short of the glory of God." We don't live up to that. But Christ comes on the scene and he says, "Check my life. See what I've done." Why? Because I quoted for you Isaiah 53 verse 9. Let me quote verse 10. Here's why. Because the one who's done no violence, violated nothing of God's standard and there's no deceit or lying in his mouth, which is the easiest sin for us to commit, the next verse says because, "The Lord is going to take his soul, crush him, and offer him as a guilt offering."

Now that resonated with people who grew up in Old Testament worship. They knew this. If I'm going to go to the worship center, I bring from my flock, not the one I can't sell at the cattle auction. I bring something from my flocks that is perfect, it is the best, it's the quintessential lamb that I bring. There's no disease, it's young, it's strong, it's perfect, its coat is pretty, it's the best that I have, and I bring that to the worship center. Leviticus Chapter 1 Verse 4, "I put my hand on his head and I allow that throat to be cut and that body, that carcass, to be laid on that altar and we burn that." And that is an example, as it says in Leviticus 1, of me as a guilty person seeing some kind of transference of guilt by that symbolic hand on the head of the animal, now suffering, the innocent suffers so that the guilty can go home from that worship service and say, "God has forgiven me. God's grace has been evident in my life. I get to live another day, another week, while that animal dies in my place."

Of course, that means nothing in terms of the reality of our sin. The Bible says that, "There's no blood of bulls and goats that can ever forgive or atone for our sins," but it was a picture. It was a picture that came to crystal sharp focus when John the Baptist sees Jesus coming, the one he says, "I'm not worthy to even untie his sandal." And he says, "there's the lamb of God that takes away the sins of the world." He is going to be the one who's going to take my place. And the key was you got to have a spotless blemishless lamb, you've got to have a perfect animal. And why is that? Because I've got a deficiency, I've got a problem. I'm not righteous, I'm not holy, I fall short of that standard. And the Bible says, Christ comes on the scene, here's how it's put in Hebrews Chapter 1 verse 3, that, "He is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his nature."

So all the perfection of God who does everything perfectly, all his ways are perfect, now Christ comes as the embodiment in him all the fullness of deity dwells in bodily form. God incarnate. He comes and solves the problem for us in this: that I'm not righteous, I need righteousness to ever be acceptable to God. And he comes and lives as a human being, even though he's fully God, to be perfect in my place. That's the picture. We quote it all the time, but it's a great passage in Second Corinthians 5:21, "God made him who knew no sin to be sin for us. So that in him we might become the righteousness of God." I need that righteousness. I've got to have human righteousness fulfilled by the substitution of Christ in my place. Ponder the perfection of Christ.

None of us can say that we are without sin, but there was one who was without sin. If there ever was a true statement it was this: nothing that Jesus did was deserving of death. Nothing. And I don't mean in a courtroom, although that's true, and he's about to be convicted in a courtroom. But I mean, he's never done anything that should lead to the sentence that was given to Adam and Eve in Genesis 3, that we've all been suffering ever since the beginning of time. Ponder the perfection of Christ. I need righteousness. Christ has it.

There was a passage, before we leave this thought, I'd like you to look at with me. Hebrews Chapter 7. And I don't want to inject too many sub-points to this idea but I do think it's helpful to come with an Old Testament understanding of what it is to have a high priest who represents you. Now, we don't have priests, we don't have high priests, the priest of the priests, we don't have that. I'm baptistic, just like you are in that sense. I believe in what we call the priesthood of the believer. We all have direct access to the Father through the mediation of Christ, because Christ becomes that priest for us, the high priest.

Well, the Old Testament, I think it was kind of helpful for you to recognize that we're not just all on equal footing here even among us. There was something about that hierarchy of having priests and a high priest, the priest of the priests. Now we may have structures in our organizations but it does not mean what it meant in the Old Testament. When you had this symbolic picture of God's holiness in a place called the Tabernacle and later in the Temple and you had this class of people who had access and privileges that you could never have. And then among them, there was this high priest who had access and privilege that they didn't have, and that that high priest would go and stand in as an advocate, like a lawyer between you and God.

That mediation was helpful because they recognize this: they were sinful, we need someone to go talk to God for us, all the way back to Moses this was going on. This mediatorial connection between God. Now, that's gone because Christ takes that position. Take a look at this statement about that and the distinction that's made, although the similarity that helps us understand the need for a mediator. Verse 26 Hebrews Chapter 7. "For it was indeed fitting," which is the whole point of

this first point. I'm trying to say it is appropriate and fitting and right and necessary that Jesus be holy. "That we should have such a high priest," and, of course, the one in view here, as you glance back up, we're talking about Jesus. "He is holy, innocent, unstained," and here's the base root of the idea of holy, "separated." Not just in the terms of his qualities, his ontological qualities, but his attributes, his difference between us and him, he's "separated from sinners."

And how far above us is he? Well he's "exalted above the heavens." Here is someone who has no connection, really, when it comes to us as it relates to ethics and morals and righteousness. He is so in a whole class by himself. Well, he is in a class by himself, he's in the God-class. He is God. And that picture here of a "holy, innocent, unstained, separate from sinners, exalted above the heavens high priest," is exactly what we need. And now he compares it to the Old Testament system. Though that framework is helpful in understanding our need for mediation, it's nothing like the mediation we have now.

Verse 27. "For he," Christ, "has no need like those high priests," the Old Testament high priest, "to offer daily sacrifices, first for his own sins..." Right? He's got to deal with that because though he may be the best among the best, he's the holiest, at least he's supposed to be, he still has a sin, every day he has sin, he's not perfect so he's got to deal with his own sins and he's bringing in symbolic pictures of the need for atonement for his own life, "and then those for the people, since he did," Christ that is, "once for all when he offered himself up." He gave that sacrifice but he didn't need a sacrifice for his own sin because he was the sinless one. "Behold, look," John said, "the Lamb of God. He's going to solve the problem. He has no sin."

That's so helpful. Look at that listing again in verse 26, "holy, innocent, unstained, separated from sinners, exalted above the heavens." That's why you can't be a Jehovah Witness, you cannot be a Muslim, you cannot be a Hindu, a Buddhist and say, "Yeah, we think Jesus is an enlightened guy, he's a prophet, you know, he's above us in terms of being Michael the Archangel or whatever." You can't have those views and think you're going to have any benefit from Christ being any kind of mediator. Well, of course, they don't believe he's a mediator. But we know he's the mediator.

He's the one who makes us right before God because he takes his human righteousness, which is divine, it's divinely energized, and by that I mean everything that he ever did in his humanity is affected by the divinity that he has in his perfection. To say here is righteousness at age 3, here is righteousness at age 10, here is righteousness at age 23. All of that now is now imputed, it's credited to me so that God says, "Oh, Mike Fabarez, he's not holy but Jesus was." And so BAM, all the human holiness that is needed for me to be the kind of person that God's going to say, "I'm going to send my 'Holy Spirit' into you." Talk about the odd couple, why would the Holy Spirit ever want to have any residence or connection relationally with me? Because he's at home here. Why? Because the imputation, the crediting of God's perfect righteousness lived out, fleshed out in humanity and every human decision, all now seen by the Father in me because Christ accomplished it for me.

"Holy, innocent, unstained, separated from sinners, exalted above the heavens." That's the only mediator who we could ever possibly necessitate or have or earn our salvation. We've got to have it. We need righteousness and we have none. We fall short. And as Paul said this is not adding to it. You got 62%? Well, he's going to take up the rest. This is, as Paul clearly put in Philippians when he talked about his own life, "I might have some temptation to have confidence in my behavior more than you guys who I'm writing to, but I have to count all of it lost. I take all my righteousness and I realize it's not worthy, set it aside, completely new résumé laid on top of my life, all because of the perfection of Christ.

Now again, I admittedly and unapologetically derive a theological observation from this very human intention of Pilate to say, "I don't think he should be executed," and I'm saying, "he shouldn't even die." I get that. We need that. We need that in a passage that gives us one of the greatest illustrations of substitutionary atonement. And so we continue against that backdrop of a perfect one who does not deserve to die in any way, verse 16 says, "I will therefore punish and release him."

"But they cried out together, 'Away with this man,'" back to Luke 23 verse 18, "'release to us Barabbas.'" Who is Barabbas? "A man who had been thrown into prison for insurrection started in the city and for murder. Pilate addressed them once more desiring to release Jesus, but they kept shouting, 'Crucify, crucify him.'" Now that's an amazing thought. It's an amazing thought that when you have the option between Charles Manson and a guy I'm just jealous and envious of, or I hate for all the wrong reasons, I'm going to really go with letting Manson go and letting you crucify this guy who in my heart, I know, went around doing good, healing people, feeding 5,000, all the rest. He's claiming to be someone, I get that, and maybe even some believed he was a blasphemer. But the idea of how in the world can I have the worst of the worst be set free while I'm having Jesus now sent to a cross to be executed.

These people are nasty people, they have a bad heart. What vitriol, what sin in their lives. Well that's true, and I think in some ways we can identify with them. We can also identify with Pilate who I called a wimp as I read the text. I didn't mean to inject words into the Scripture myself but there, anyway, I can't help but think, wow, you folded under the pressure of these people. You know he's innocent, you've been warned he's innocent.

But the person I'd like you to identify with is not so much the high priest, as we've done before, or the rulers of the people, or Judas, or the crowd, or even Pilate. But I'd like you to identify with Barabbas. "Well, I'm going to have a hard time doing that, Pastor Mike." You shouldn't. What we should do when looking at a passage like this is to be able to say, you know what, really the issue here in the illustration of substitution, the idea is Christ is substituting, really, in his death for this criminal. And that criminal, it's a great picture of us being substituted by Christ on a cross. He suffers, I go free. This guy was a bad sinner and, you know what, I guess I need to agree that I am a sinner in kind. Maybe not to the same degree but categorically, I'm a lot like Barabbas.

That would be the challenge for a preacher right now in the middle of this sermon to get you to think that way. So let me do it first by having you write down this phrase. Number two, you need to "See Your Own Sinfulness." And the sinfulness I'd like you to see would go beyond the concentric circles of the crowd, of the Pharisees, of the chief priests, of Herod, of Pilate, and go right to the place of Barabbas. "Well, you've got two big words there, insurrectionist and murder, and I'm not sure I qualify for either."

Well let me help you with that. Go with me to Matthew Chapter 5 real quick. "Oh, I know where you're going, Pastor Mike." Good. It's great. But let's go there and read it afresh as though you've never read it before. In Matthew Chapter 5, Jesus talks a little bit about murder. He starts by quoting the command from Exodus Chapter 20, the Ten Commandments. Look at Matthew Chapter 5 verse 21. I'm trying to say we're all categorically in the same box. We may not be the same place on the spectrum. You may not be as bad as Barabbas in terms of shoving a knife through someone's torso and watching them bleed out. I'm not saying that you've done that. I mean, I hope not too many of you have done that. It would be great if no one in the room has done that. But I am saying you are

in the same place in terms of category. Different on the spectrum, you may not be as bad as Barabbas, but you're as bad off as Barabbas, and here's why.

On the authority of Christ, let me read you this verse, verse 21. "You've heard that it was said to those of old," quoting Old Testament now, 'You shall not murder and whoever murders will be liable to the judgment.'" We all pound our fists in our open palm and say, "Yes, away with the murderer, someone with malice and aforethought goes and murders someone, they ought to be punished. It should be terrible for them." Verse 22. "But I say to you..." I'm going to show you now, there is a category and you belong in the category. You may not be on the same place in the spectrum, but you are in the category. "I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother," which, by the way, is the reason people with malice aforethought kill people. Am I right? That's the point. They're angry with their brother. "If you're angry with your brother you will be liable to judgment." Same phrase, look up again in verse 21, "murderers liable to judgment." Here it is, verse 22. Angry people, liable to judgement.

I'm not talking about righteous indignation, although everything about your personal hatred for your brother, you like to throw it into the category of righteous indignation. But let's get real, because the same people who you claim to be righteously indignant about are the same kinds of infractions you so readily forgive in other people who you think are your friends and other people who you like, people in your family, and as you look in the mirror, you exonerate yourself. I'm just saying this: isn't it just that you just are angry with them? This is anger that holds in your heart this kind of vitriol, this kind of acrimony, this kind of animosity toward people.

Well it goes further. Sometimes that anger bubbles out of my mouth, middle of verse 22. "Whoever insults his brother..." and who hasn't done that? Right? I mean, of course, we all have insulted our brother. "You'll be liable to the council." Underline that word council. Remember where we are in Luke 23, Jesus has stood just recently before the council. The 70 priests and the one high priest who presides over it, in this semi-circle there in Jerusalem, standing there as an accused person with the secretary tables next to him and he stands there with these rows, four or five rows, like in a gymnasium, with these 70 judges of Israel. It's as though you should stand there just for insulting your brother. The whole nation should come down on you. Wow, that seems a little extreme.

Oh, it gets worse. Bottom of verse 22. "And whoever says, 'You fool!'" and fill in your favorite word for disparaging your brother, whatever you like to call people when you're angry at them, "will be liable to the hell of fire." Yeehaw. Well, that's rough. Why is that? Because we need to understand the grave nature of falling short of the glory of God. The God of the universe is ontologically, by the essence of who he is, completely intolerant of anything less than the moral perfection that he exudes and exists and demonstrates by his own attributes. And here we are as people who have violated that and fallen short. You may not have plunged a knife into someone like I'm assuming Barabbas did in the insurrection, but I bet you've had these verbal swords come out of your mouth and the Bible says, you know what, that's not what God can ever tolerate. He's never going to let his Spirit into the life of someone who has that on their record. It's not going to happen unless somehow we can expunge that from their record. Somehow we got to deal with that. That sinfulness has to be dealt with. "All right. Well, I guess by Jesus' standards I'm a murderer. Maybe not the same place on the spectrum but categorically, I guess I'm in the same ballpark." Great. I don't know if I got half of you on that but maybe, yes. I look in the mirror, I say the same of me. We're all guilty.

One more passage, Psalm 2. Let's talk about that insurrectionist part. Murderer and insurrectionist.

Barabbas is an insurrectionist. You know what an insurrectionist is, right? There was a rebellion and it might have been for reasons that they thought were reasonable. Right? "I don't like the taxation in Rome, whatever, I want to overthrow this government." Nevertheless, it's a rebellion against authority, a rebellion against authority. Which, by the way, think of it for a second, everyone there in that crowd saying, "Crucify, crucify him," were rebelling against authority. Who was the authority? Well, you had God in human form there. You had the Messiah, you had the one who was the king of Kings and Lord of Lords. So you are chanting death to the ultimate authority of the universe, which is exactly what Psalm 2 is all about. Look at Psalm 2, we'll get some of that at least.

First one. "Why did the nations rage?" They seem just like frothing at the mouth. Why are they so angry? "Why did the peoples plot in vain?" They're plotting about something, that's the opening phrase, this is the theme for the rest of the psalm. Now, details. First two. "The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord." Capital O-R-D, Yahweh. Right? "And against his Anointed." The anointed, the "Mashiah," the Messiah, the "Christos," the Christ.

Now, I hope somehow you see the messianic nature of this psalm. I mean, you got the kings of the Earth, at least represented by Pilate, certainly represented by Herod, you have the rulers like Antipas and Caiaphas, you've got the chief priests of the city. They're all taking counsel together. As I said, you even got Herod and Pilate becoming friends that day, and they're all taking their stand and they're counseling together against the Lord and against his Christ. And what are they saying? Underlying it all is this: now they would never say this out loud, and you and I never say it out loud, and we didn't as non-Christians and we don't even say it out loud as Christians, and yet I bet everyone in the room is felt it and that is this, "I don't want your rules."

"Let us burst their bonds apart and cast away their chords." They don't like the strictures of all the morality and the prohibitions and I don't like always doing your thing and all the communicable attributes. There are times when you want me to be generous, I don't want to be. There are times you want me to serve, I don't want to serve. There are times you want me to be selfless, I want to be selfish, and we just don't like it. And some of you said it openly as non-Christians. You probably told people that tried to share the Gospel with you, "I don't want any of that. I don't want God ruling my life. I certainly don't want God to take over my life. I want to be the captain of my own fate. I want to be the master of my own soul." All of us have felt that.

But I'm saying that is the essence of insurrection, that's rebellion against authority. And what does that deserve? Well, verse 4, "The one who sits in the heavens," he's going to say, how silly is this. "He laughed. The Lord holds them in derision," like some kind of giant looking at a little kid trying to take swings at his kneecaps. It's just a laughable situation. "Then," here's the speaking of the hell of fire from Matthew 5:22, "Then he will speak to them in his," there it is again, "his wrath," his anger, he will, "terrify them in his fury saying," what? Well, I set my King up, here he was. "As for me, I've set my King on Zion, on my holy hill," which represents often the heavenly throne room, but also it's a physical hill in Jerusalem not far from where this thing is going down as we read about it in Luke 23.

He says here's my King, and you're rejecting him. Here's my King and you're condemning him. Here's my King, Judas, and you're selling them out for 30 pieces of silver. Here's my King and you are so selfish you don't want the strictures of his leadership. You don't want him to be Lord. "Well, if he's got goodies to pass out, I'll let you be my grandpa. Give me some lollipops. But I don't want you telling me what to do with my sex life or my thought life or my words." Stop with all of that.

That's ultimate insurrection.

I want to see myself in this passage but I want to go much further than anyone we've met so far in our narrative in Luke 23 and say, when I see the name Barabbas I want to see myself there. I am a murderer. I am an insurrectionist. Barabbas represents the totality of our sinfulness. How selfish are we as a culture right now.

I hate to even quote these stats. And they vary on the polls. But I think about destroying the innocent, I think about here are people chanting for an innocent person to die. 46% in these surveys, somewhere near 50% in others, sometimes as low as 33%, would say, "You know, a dog that brings me joy as my pet, if I had to make a choice between saving my dog in a fire or a sinking ship or whatever, or a person, my neighbor I just don't happen to know, I don't know him personally, I would save my pet." 46%. And the best stats are this, that I've read at least, 33%, roughly, say I would say my dog, 33% say I would say my neighbor and 33%, who I don't want to live next door to say, I don't know what I would do. I'm thinking they need to decide ahead of time that I'm going to save my neighbor. Right?

And in our day you realize that just based on what brings me pleasure and joy, I'm much more likely in our culture, it seems increasingly so, to say, "Well, you know, it doesn't matter that someone's made in the image of God, if they're an inconvenience for me or if they are not the kind of, you know, joy-producing fountain of happiness to me or comfort even, I'm not interested in that. Like the abortion epidemic. Almost half of all unplanned pregnancies, without couples saying I want to have a baby right now, end in abortion and you know that. "Oh, it's about the health of the mother." It's not about the health of the mother. It's not about the health of the child. I mean that's down into single, low single digits. Think of the climate of selfishness in our culture right now. And we recognize that the Bible's trying to get us to see this. "If I don't like things, I want to overthrow it, if I don't like people, I want to dispose of them, if I can get something better out of it, I will sell it out for this money." It's all throughout this passage, even down to the envy and jealousy that the Gospel of John says and Matthew says, this is what's driving all of this. "I'd rather have the spotlight and you have it. Get out of the way, I want to be there."

The murdering insurrection of Barabbas is a painted picture of who we are. And what takes place in this text as you go back to it in Luke Chapter 23 verse 22, as Pilate, one last time says, "Listen, why should I crucify him? There's no evil I can see here. I haven't found anything of guilt in him deserving death. I'm going to just punish him and release him." Why would you do that? Well, maybe just for the hassle. Right? Maybe a warning, a deterrent. I don't know. But he certainly doesn't think he deserves execution. "But they were urgent, demanding with loud cries," verse 23, "that he should be crucified. And their voices prevailed. So Pilate," the wimp, "decided that their demands should be granted, and released the man who had been thrown into prison for insurrection and murder," that's Barabbas, "for whom they had asked, and he delivered Jesus over to their will."

Now, if you've tried to put yourself in the sandals of Barabbas at this point, I just want you to recognize what that must have been like if you were Barabbas. I mean you're in chains and I don't know if you heard your name being mentioned first, as Pilate tries to figure out the worst person among them. Or even if it were someone else who came up with that, but you're the worst they got and you need to be crucified that afternoon. And there's already a crucifixion planned and you're going to be crucified. And all of a sudden you're dragged out in front of the people and maybe Pilate has someone bring you out just so that you can face the crowd and they can remember what a terrible person you are and that you need to be executed. They end up chanting that the innocent

guy get crucified and that you go free.

I just wonder at that point when he says, "he delivered Jesus over to their will," he released the man, verse 25, that would be an amazing exchange of your life for Christ. And I just wonder what happened that afternoon? Did Barabbas stick around to see it? I mean, he caused an insurrection in the city. Right? He was part of that. I just wonder if this being his city, he didn't just hit the roads and head to Jericho or somewhere else. Did he stick around? What was it like for you to see Jesus dragging this beam down the street of Jerusalem, with people jeering at him and spitting on him, or seeing him get whipped when you knew you were scheduled to get whipped, or to watch him be hoisted up behind that hill that looks like a skull, they called it Golgotha, and see that pillar, that post, be dropped into the ground as he hung there?

And you go, "Wait a minute, those two guys I was just in prison with and there is the guy that they had crucified and I'm sitting here without shackles on my wrists." I mean what an amazing day. Or maybe he split town. I mean, maybe he thought, well whatever, I'm going to head out, this is my hometown, but I am going to leave town, maybe they're going to reverse this. Even as you're going, are you thinking about the fact that this afternoon I should be crucified, but instead I'm going to find some place of safety and solace somewhere else. What was it like for you to think that that guy that you'd heard about, this Nazarene who did miracles, this claim of a rabbel-rouser and a nuisance among the people, that he is now taking your spot being crucified on your crossbeam, having the Roman soldiers whip his back instead of yours. What must have that felt like? What an amazing thought.

Reformers like to speak in these terms, a revival of an old phrase, just talked about the crucifixion of Christ and the salvation that we have, the redemption that we get of being freed from an incarceration of our own sin, to have the freedom of being someone who is fully accepted as though we were Christ, is what they called The Great Exchange. The great exchange of my life for his. And more specifically, his holiness for my sin. He gets punished for my sin. I get rewarded and favored and accepted because of his righteousness. I mean that's the Gospel.

The Gospel is not the Gospel unless you first recognize Jesus is uniquely holy and, secondly, that you are uniquely sinful. I mean, to a place that you only know with the specificity that you know and you can look in the mirror and say I am a sinner. And then you're ready to enjoy the grace of Jesus Christ.

And I'll just put it this way on your outline, number three. You need to "Cling to the Great Exchange." You need to say that is my only hope. Christ is not some kind of anecdote, he's not some kind of knee brace, he's not going to make up for my lack in some way. He is my solution. I exchange my life for his life. I am now in Christ and that makes me acceptable before God because all of my sin has been appended to his cross.

Listen to these words, Romans Chapter 8 verse 3, "God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh...", the law is great, it's a standard of God's attributes and particularly his communicable attributes codified in a rule set. Here it is, the rule set that says act like this, but "weakened by the flesh in that we couldn't do it," he fixed the problem "by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh," he wasn't sinful but he sure did look like a sinner, just like us, just a human being, "and for sin," he sent him for sin to solve the sin problem, "he condemned sin in the flesh." There's the first half of the Great Exchange.

Here comes the second half, verse 4, "In order that the righteous requirement of the law might be met in us." Mike Fabarez doesn't measure up. I don't meet the standard. But I'm going to die, and when I die, I'm going to step across the threshold and God is going to embrace me into a place of his complete favor, and he's going to say, "Come on in." I hope to hear a few more words of "well done," we'll shoot for that, but I know he's going to say, "You're in, you're in," 100%, no condemnation for me. Why? Because the righteous requirement of the law was fulfilled in me. The righteous requirement, which is not only I need righteousness but it is righteous that the guilty should be punished. And you know what? He took care of that on the cross.

Galatians 3:13. If you're taking notes, that would be a good one to jot down, Galatians 3:13 and 14. "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law." What's the curse of the law? Sinners should be punished. "By becoming a curse for us," he became the curse, "for as it's written," it quotes the Old Testament, "cursed is anyone who is hanged on a tree." And he was certainly hung on the product of a tree outside the city gates of Jerusalem. Why? Here's the good part. "So that," I, now in Christ, "can receive the blessing of Abraham, and it might come, even to," me, "the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promised Spirit by faith." What spirit? The Holy Spirit. How can the Holy Spirit have anything to do with me? Because of Christ, the righteous requirement met in Christ. Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us. "'Cursed is anyone who hangs on the tree' -- so that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come even to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promised Spirit through faith."

It goes on to say in that same chapter, "For in Christ you were all sons of God, through faith." I am now in Christ and therefore I am like a son of God, like Jesus. I love this next line, "For as many of you who as were," placed, "into Christ," 'baptizo,' "as many of you as were baptized into Christ," he says, "have put on Christ," you have him.

There are things that are not in keeping with our human nature, physically, in terms of physics. You put me in a fire, I'm going to burn up. I mean, there's a hostility and animosity between my human flesh and the fire and the temperature of flames. Just like my life should not be accepted by a holy God, I should be consumed by a holy God. But as we read in our Daily Bible Reading this week in Lamentations again, it's because of his mercy that we're not consumed. To put in the words of the psalmist, he said, "God's salvation is our shield." It's like someone putting on one of those, have you seen those things that looked like they're wearing tinfoil suits, these fire-resistant suits they give them, these guys can go on YouTube and walk through fire, you know, they can sit there and in a bonfire and they can survive because that suit shields them from all that. You're in Christ. The thing that should consume you doesn't consume you because you're encased in that. You're in Christ, you've been placed into Christ.

It's why here at the church we like to illustrate the Gospel, not as a bridge, where, "Hey, good times over here, bad times over there. Come on over here," but the umbrella. There's something coming everywhere. The judgment of God is coming. But the good news is there is a place where God's wrath has already been spent and expended. It has absorbed it, even the umbrella doesn't adequately illustrate it, it's not like it just rolls off, it's absorbed and it's fully felt and it's fully experienced. And yet underneath that, by faith, if you just step by repentance and faith into that place when the judgment of God comes, it's like I'm wearing a fire suit. I'm now accepted in Christ.

To cling to the Great Exchange, and I'd be remiss to talk about the Great Exchange and not at least have you turned to one passage in Romans. So turn to Romans 3. Let me just wrap it up with this, Romans 3:21-26. Please follow along as I read this to you. What a great section of Scripture to

remind us that Barabbas is free and Jesus is condemned, which means that everything that I needed has been supplied in Christ. Back to the fundamentals this morning at Compass Bible Church. This is the Gospel. Listen, verse 21, "But now the righteousness of God has been manifested..." Let's just start with that, "the righteous of God."

The book started this way with the theme of salvation, as he's about to get into sin, he starts with this, "That the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness," quoting Chapter 1. Think about that now. God here, picture it this way, with his left hand is bringing judgment upon the world, just like we were sitting there in Genesis 6 and the promise of the coming flood. There is judgment coming because we deserve it, he's righteous, we're sinful. We should be excluded into outer darkness where there's weeping, wailing and gnashing of teeth. That should happen to us.

But as the wrath of God leaves the station, so to speak, and it's coming our way, what God's delivering with his left hand, he's going to come out here and provide the solution with his right hand. "The righteousness of God now has been manifest," now look at this, not by you trying to meet all the demands of the law. You couldn't. We couldn't. It was weakened by the flesh. We couldn't live up. So "apart from the law, it has been made manifest."

Now, he tries to make a quick clarification, which is kind of, you know, a great connection here, because the law, we find that the inscripturated rules of God's communicable attributes there in the law, but it says, you know when we get all that, we also see prophecies in the law and the prophets, which were sections of the Old Testament, it bears witness to this advancement of God's solution, this thing called righteousness coming from heaven. And he explains it, "The righteousness of God," and it was predicted in the Old Testament, "it's coming by faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe," both Jew and Gentile. "For there is no distinction," because, number one, "we've all sinned and fall short of the glory of God." We always learn this verse about sin, although the context is about salvation, which is, yeah, we're all on equal footing. "We've all sinned and fallen short of the glory of God." Different places on the spectrum, but categorically, in a bad, bad position.

But, being sinners, the good news is, all of us, if we are justified, we're all justified the same way, by his grace. We didn't earn it. We don't get it by our performance. It's all something God gives to us, "as a gift through the redemption," the freeing, the purchase. I should be condemned, I should be in the jailhouse of sin, but I get freed. That's what redemption means, I get freed. "The redemption that is in Christ Jesus." Now how did that happen? Picture the two hands of God now. "Whom God put forward as a propitiation." So God's bringing his justice on a sinful world, but he also reaches out at the same time and brings the righteousness that we need and he absorbs the wrath for those people who he's going to grant his righteousness to, by bringing this propitiation, a word you didn't use this week in normal conversation with non-Christians. But maybe we should.

Propitiation, the satisfaction of God saying I am a holy God with demands of justice, the penal code, if you will, of Heaven, that says this should happen to these people. I'm going to bring all of that to bear on Christ, by his death, "by his blood." And all of that propitiation, all that satisfaction, all that redemption that comes from it, it's all just to be received by what? By faith. But it's not just by faith saying, "If God's got a goody bag, I want something from it." No, you've got to realize the holiness of Christ, you've got to understand the sinfulness of yourself, and then you're ready to embrace the Great Exchange, justified by grace as a gift through the redemption that is in Christ, "Whom God," in Christ, "put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to receive by faith.

This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance," he's put up with a lot of

stuff, patience, "he passed over former sin. He's been very patient and long-suffering with this world. But now in the New Testament, "It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just." Right? He's going to bring that wrath with his left hand, if you will, but he's also going to be "the justifier," reach out with his right hand and provide the righteousness and the propitiation that's needed for us, "to the one who has faith in Christ."

If you start with this, you'll get people saying, "I guess that there's a goody bag and you've got to have faith. Sure, I guess I believe it all happened." The only way you can describe this kind of faith, I tried to in the outline, is by the word clinging. I cling to it. Why? Because Christ is holy and that's what I needed to be. And I'm a sinner and I see no other way out of my problem, but to have God somehow take his life for my life and exchange them. In the words of Peter, in the words of God, "The just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God." The just for the unjust.

What a great text. What a great Gospel. And you don't get it by sitting here this morning and saying, "Well, if Christ can make up for some of my lacks, and I guess I've said a few lies and I've had a few boo-boos in my life..." Man, I know this is an unpleasant sermon in some respects because we're dealing with our own sinfulness. But please, recognize that any kind of cheap address of Christianity in our day that doesn't get us to grapple with the problem of our own sin or the blinding glory of God's holiness, is not a Gospel at all.

"When I survey the wondrous cross," Isaac Watts wrote back in 1707. I know you know some of those lines but here's a familiar one. "Forbid it, Lord, that I should boast," certainly not in myself, "Save in the death of Christ, my God! All the vain things that charmed me most, I sacrifice them to his blood." You know that verse. Here's the verse we don't often see in hymn books. "His dying crimson, like a robe, Spreads o'er his body on a tree." Here's the blood of Christ. "Then I am dead to all the globe, And all the globe dead to me." This is everything. The next verse that we know, "Were the whole realm of nature mine, That were present far too small; Love so amazing, so divine, Demands my soul, my life, and my all."

I hope you can boast in the Great Exchange as your only hope. Because it's an adequate hope, and I want you to cling tightly to it as we celebrate the Lord's Supper. I'm going to ask the ushers to come down with our elements for the Lord's Supper. If you've never done this with us, please understand what this is, it's a time for Christians, who know that they are Christians, they know what it is to trust in Christ, they know something of the Great Exchange that we've talked about this morning. And these elements are elements that remind us in a very tactile way, in a very tangible way. They don't turn mystically into anything other than the fact that it's a very profound picture of what you and I celebrate. And so they're going to pass these elements and I'd like for you to spend some time in prayer.

And then I'll get back up in about 4 minutes and we'll take these elements at the same time. But I need you to think about where you stand with Christ. If you're a Christian, I hope even discussions about murder and insurrection will help you see, "Yeah, I've had some anger, some insults, called some people some fools, I've had a kind of rebellion against God's rules, even secretly, where I said, "God I wish the rules weren't what they were." Whatever it might be for you that you'd spend some time being real quick to confess those sins with God. It only takes a second for you and God to make this account and this relationship what it needs to be. If you agree with the Spirit, now's the time to make this clear with God.

If you're non-Christian, it would be a good time for you to embrace or cling to the Great Exchange.

Christianity is not what most people think it is. Jump into this with both feet this morning, put your trust in Christ. Christ was condemned in our place. You are Barabbas. I am Barabbas. Jesus suffered in our place and I hope you can imagine, even in your mind's eye, as Paul said to the Galatian churches, you can see Christ portrayed as crucified in your own mind, as you hold that piece of bread and you hold that little plastic cup that represents his blood, that you would sit there and say, "I can envision this. I'm Barabbas. I deserve God's punishment. But he suffered for me." You talk to God. We'll come back together in about 4 minutes and take these elements together.

As we looked at Hebrews Chapter 7, thinking about Christ our great high priest who was "holy, innocent, unstained, separate from sinners and exalted above the heavens," it's easy to have a temptation to think about Christ being so perfect that, even in a redeemed state, I don't know how I could possibly identify with that high priest. It's hard for us to draw near to him in a time like this, confess sins, think of how in the world could he deal with a buffoon like me who does what I've done, and I get all that.

But earlier in the book in Chapter 4, the writer of Hebrews has tried to make clear, yeah he's perfect, but you've got to understand that when God takes on humanity and becomes the Incarnate Christ, he learns, at least in terms of the human experience, something that we can identify with, in that we see him go through all of the struggles of the frailties of humanity. He puts it this way, he's been tempted in every way as we are, yet without sin. And he says, but this high priest, don't think we have a high priest who can't sympathize with our weakness. He knows what temptations are about. I mean, he probably knows temptation, not probably, he knows temptation far better than we do. At some point in temptation we give up. Right? We give in. He went all the way to the end. Right? Satan unleashed everything on him.

And so that passage ends in Hebrews 4 with us having confidence to draw near to the throne of grace, to receive help that we need and grace in our time of need. That should help us in times like this. If you're doing what we've directed in this service and that is to think about sin and then to sit here and think about confession, that I need forgiveness, and God, please, let's rectify our relationship this week, this morning, last night, I just want you to know, we have a high priest, not to mention God, who has said in Psalm 103, I understand like a father has compassion on his children. So God has compassion on those who fear him.

That you know his holiness and recognize your sinfulness, I trust is an expression of your fear of God in the right and holy sense. And now it is for us to recognize too that he bids us to come, he understands our frailty, he is quick to forgive, he's like a father. God gave us the experience I think of parenting just for this purpose. So many of these human institutions we think are just illustrations that help us understand God, they were given to us as illustrations and templates. How good it is for us to know that our heavenly Father is willing to forgive us. And he's paid the penalty.

So as you've confessed your sin, I want you to leave here with a confidence that's he's faithful and he's just to forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. And with that kind of thanksgiving let's eat this bread and drink this cup.

God, as we taste and experience something which many of us have done for many, many years in our Christian life that's been going on in the church for 2,000 years now, a remembrance of the death of Christ by ingesting these elements, reminded of how much we need an alliance with what took place on that cross. We need Christ in us and we need to be in Christ. We need this connection, this intimate alliance which only you can accomplish, what you've purposed to accomplish. And



which in us we sit here by faith and step into and God we're so thankful for the Gospel. The Great Exchange of his life for ours. It's a sad thing to look at, that our sin necessitated such a high payment. But how good it is to stand as Barabbas in the shadow of the cross looking at someone between two fellow incarcerated inmates saying, he took my place. Remind us of that afresh today, not just so we can be filled with the sorrow of our own sin but that we can have the release of redemption and that freedom that we have of joy in being thankful at forgiveness. What a great gift we have to be forgiven. I thank you that there's no condemnation for us in Christ because Jesus paid it all.

Amen.