

SERVICE TRANSCRIPT
Communion Service
11th October 2020

Leader: Steve Lineham

Preacher: Mark Reid

Some notices and reminders

We have the special church meeting on the 20th October at 7:30 pm in person at the church
Zoom meeting on 13th October at 19:30 at which we can discuss any questions or clarifications you need.

And a reminder about the Friday prayer update

Psalm 34

I will extol the LORD at all times;

his praise will always be on my lips.

I will glory in the LORD;

let the afflicted hear and rejoice.

Glorify the LORD with me;

let us exalt his name together.

SOF 2065 The splendour of the king 4:22

Verses from Psalm 18 Message translation

I love you, GOD — you make me strong.

GOD is bedrock under my feet,

the castle in which I live, my rescuing knight.

My God—the high crag where I run for dear life,

hiding behind the boulders, safe in the granite hideout.

I sing to GOD, the Praise-Lofty,

and find myself safe and saved.

That's why I'm thanking you, GOD, all over the world.

That's why I'm singing songs that rhyme your name.

SOF 1507 - Rock of ages cleft for me – 4:31

Confession

SOF 475 PURIFY MY HEART, 4:09

Verses from 1 John 1

If we say we have no sin,

we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

If we confess our sins,

he who is faithful and just will forgive us our sins

and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

My hope is built on nothing less 3:27

Sermon: The Small Things

Small things are often important. Small things can have big, even unseen consequences. So it was for one man in our reading this morning Rhiannon is going to read about him in

Mark 15:16-32 Video

TITLE PAGE

There he was, a foreigner, just in the city for the festival, wondering what the commotion was.

Then he was grabbed by two burly Roman soldiers and told he must carry the cross of a bloodied prisoner who was struggling with carrying it.

The man, Simon must have been furious with himself, that he had been knobbed before he could slip away in the crowd. When the soldiers came looking for a sucker to pressgang, men scarpered fast!

It was a case of wrong place, wrong time. Or was it?

It didn't take much time for Simon's ordeal to end as he followed the prisoner and the soldiers to Golgotha, had the cross taken from him and being able to fall back into the crowd. Who was this Jesus? *His* ordeal hadn't ended, as he was nailed to the cross and then left to die.

SIMON CARRYING THE CROSS

Simon of Cyrene, unwillingly and unwittingly served Jesus in the simplest of ways and witnessed His death on the Cross. We don't know when he started following Jesus; whether it was that day or at Pentecost when many of his fellow countrymen from Cyrene in Libya in North Africa are recorded as hearing Peter's sermon and followed Jesus.

WHO WAS SIMON OF CYRENE?

So who was Simon of Cyrene? We know so little about him, yet he was important enough for all the synoptic Gospel writers to have commented on this bit part player. Why?

To work that one out, we need to think on where he came from: Cyrene a bustling city in what is now Libya where there was a significant Jewish population who frequently went back and forth to Jerusalem for festivals. Unlike Judeans and Galileans who were Aramaic speakers, who spoke a some Greek; Cyrenians were fluent Greek speakers with only a little Aramaic, if at all, with the scriptures in their language and a Jewish way of life distinctive from Judeans. They even had their own synagogue in Jerusalem. They were seen by many Judeans as "second class" Jews because they were Greek speakers.

It was no surprise to find a Cyrenian in Jerusalem for the Passover on that fateful Friday. Yet in this one simple act of being able to help Jesus at a time of need, Greek speaking Jews who later became Christians, saw that God's purposes included them. They were significant to Him. At least a Greek-speaking Cyrenian was there to help Jesus when His disciples had forsaken Him and fled.

Even though we know next to nothing about Simon, his ten minutes of fame may well have energised the early churches that developed amongst the Diaspora (Jews who had moved away from the Holy Land in previous generations, either willingly or unwillingly). In Simon was the example that the more maligned Greek speaking Jews were part of God's purposes in redemption through Christ as much as the Aramaic speakers in the "inner circle" of Apostles.

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

One piece of evidence for this is here in Mark's Gospel. Simon's sons, Alexander and Rufus were better known than he was! Again we know little about them, but the readers of Mark's Gospel obviously knew them and that they were important figures in the early church: Alexander and Rufus were Jews, but with Gentile names, one Greek, one Latin.

You may think it strange but remember that Christians often gave themselves non-Jewish names e.g Paul, Barnabas, Mark. It helped them identify with the Gentiles they lived amongst and tried to reach with the Good News.

CHOSEN IN THE LORD

Alexander was a common name in Greek-speaking towns like Cyrene, Rufus was common in Roman society – and where does the name Rufus appear elsewhere in the NT? In the heart of the Roman world, Rome itself. In Paul's letter to the Romans he says this of Rufus

Romans 16: 13 *Greet Rufus, chosen in the Lord, and his mother, who has been a mother to me, too.* Was Simon this Rufus' dad? Possibly, and if he was, Simon was clearly dead by that point, but Rufus was well enough known for Paul to address him personally as one chosen of God. It peeks the curiosity if this was Simon's Rufus because it meant that Simon's act although small, brought him to faith in Christ, it gave him a testimony which inspired others including a son who was a leading light in the Church of Rome, long before Paul ever got there.

DARING DIASPORANS

The second piece of evidence of Simon's fame may also be in Acts – remember that it was written by Luke, who also mentions Simon in his Gospel. Whilst the Apostles – Galileans and Judeans - were struggling with the whole idea of Gentiles becoming Christians without becoming Jewish proselytes first (Acts 10), Cyrenians and Cypriots were already doing what came natural to them, communicating their faith in their native language to people they worked with and traded with: Greek-speaking Gentiles.

Acts 11:19-21 Now those who had been scattered by the persecution that broke out when Stephen was killed travelled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus and Antioch, spreading the word only among Jews. Some of them, however, men from Cyprus and Cyrene, went to Antioch and began to speak to Greeks also, telling them the good news about the Lord Jesus. The Lord's hand was with them, and a great number of people believed and turned to the Lord.

They spawned a Greek-speaking Gentile church at Antioch before the Apostles in Jerusalem had got off the blocks !

What gave them the right to do that? Apart from the fact that they were called and equipped by the Holy Spirit, they were people who could point at Simon of Cyrene and affirm that the people of the Greek-speaking Diaspora were a part God's purposes in Christ. And they got on with doing God's will. And the Apostles in Jerusalem had to do catch up by sending Barnabas to sus things out – along with his friend Saul, that's Paul to you and me – both Jews of the Diaspora, one Cypriot and the other Cilician.

Great oaks from little acorns grow. From a small act of a confused Cyrenian, the inspiration to take Jesus to the far ends of the then known world had been encouraged.

TITLE

Never think your service for God is unimportant, never think that that small act of kindness is irrelevant, never think that your have to do big things for God for them to count. He calls us to obey and follow Jesus. Sometimes it's in huge ways that demands oodles of faith, but so often it's something small that can make the most enormous difference and change in another's life. Is there something small God is showing you that you need to do today that will make a difference to somebody.

As we come around the table this morning, we come to a place of acceptance. Jesus has died for all, and those of us who have put their faith and trust in Jesus, became such by a simple, small act of

faith and trust in Him. Great things for God starts with one small step of following Jesus for yourself.

As we do this simple, small act of eating bread and drinking wine this morning, let's remember it is in the death of this one man on the cross that all men and women, boys and girls can find forgiveness, peace with God, purpose in life, an eternal hope and all the rest that God pours out on all those who follow Jesus. That's why we have this simple ceremony; to remember what Jesus did for us and that it was simple, but also unspeakably profound that "hands that flung stars into space to cruel nails surrendered" as Graham Kendrick puts it.

On that morning 2000 years ago Luke records that Simon followed Jesus up the hill, as He dragged His cross to Golgotha (Luke 23:26). These are strange times, and in an uncertain world, all we can do is follow and simply trust Jesus. Are we doing that? Will we do that? Let's pray.

Lord Jesus

Thank you that we can come to this, your meal of bread and wine today. As we participate in this simple act, please remind us of the huge consequences that Your death on the cross had not just us, but for countless people down the ages and for those yet to come after us. Then there's all the consequences for creation, for heaven and earth now that you are raised and exalted, and we proclaim You as King of Kings and Lord of Lords. May your Spirit encourage and challenges us today, that we may understand that the small acts of obedience to you are as important as the huge works of faith, as you work out Your purposes through us, and Your Church.

We ask this in Your name.

Amen.

We come as guests invited

For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said,
"This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me."
In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying,
"This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me." For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

The bread and wine

Father of all, we give you thanks and praise, that when we were afar off, you met us in your Son and brought us home.

Dying and living, he declared your love, gave us grace, and opened the gate of glory.

*May we who share Christ's body live his risen life
We who drink his cup, bring life to others,
We whom the Spirit lights, give light to the world.*

Keep us firm in the hope you have set before us, so that we and all your children might be free, and the whole Earth live to praise your name, through Christ our Lord. Amen.

FELLOWSHIP PRAYERS

We are going to conclude our Communion Service this morning by praying for our church fellowship here at Maidstone Road so let's pray.

Father,

We lift up the needs of this Fellowship before you as we are around Your table this morning. We lift those we know before You who are concerned for their health with Covid still present in our land and spreading again. Help all of us make the right decisions that will keep us safe.

We pray for those who are struggling with illness or disability at the moment. May your Spirit move in their lives right now. Touch their lives we pray. For those suffering bereavement, either recently or a while back, may they know your peace and direction .

We pray for the forthcoming Special Church Meeting where we need to make decisions relating to charitable status. May we as a church have wisdom to use this change of status in a positive way to reflect Your love and to use the resources You have given us most wisely. As we think of the forthcoming Deacons' Election, please raise up, by Your Spirit, the men and women you want for this leadership role.

Let's take a few moments as music plays quietly to bring individuals we know need a touch from the Lord.

Quiet Music

We lift these people and your Church before You. May Jesus have the glory.

In His name

Amen.

The act of one Man on one day, changed history for millions for all time. Let's celebrate this as we close with this song of triumph.

The greatest day in history.

20 Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, 21 to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.

That's it again for another week. As we close, here are some important notices, particularly the ones about Charity registration and the Election of Deacons – please read an act accordingly.

Goodbye, God bless and stay safe.

For Reflection and Discussion

1. Have you ever had a situation where something small you did, made a huge difference in someone else's life. Or has a huge difference been made in your life by the small act of service someone has given you?
2. Read Mark 15:16-32 again and consider the points made in the sermon: was Simon in the wrong place at the wrong time?
3. Look at Acts 11:19-30. Why did the establishment of the church at Antioch by Cypriots and Cyrenians represent a watershed for the Christian faith?
4. What do we learn from the passages we have looked at today about the obeying God in the small things?

Mark 15:16-32

The soldiers led Jesus away into the palace (that is, the Praetorium) and called together the whole company of soldiers. They put a purple robe on him, then twisted together a crown of thorns and set it on him. And they began to call out to him, 'Hail, king of the Jews!' Again and again they struck him on the head with a staff and spat on him. Falling on their knees, they paid homage to him. And when they had mocked him, they took off the purple robe and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him out to crucify him.

A certain man from Cyrene, Simon, the father of Alexander and Rufus, was passing by on his way in from the country, and they forced him to carry the cross. They brought Jesus to the place called Golgotha (which means 'the place of the skull'). Then they offered him wine mixed with myrrh, but he did not take it. And they crucified him. Dividing up his clothes, they cast lots to see what each would get.

It was nine in the morning when they crucified him. The written notice of the charge against him read: the King of the Jews.

They crucified two rebels with him, one on his right and one on his left. Those who passed by hurled insults at him, shaking their heads and saying, 'So! You who are going to destroy the temple and build it in three days, come down from the cross and save yourself!' In the same way the chief priests and the teachers of the law mocked him among themselves. 'He saved others,' they said, 'but he can't save himself! Let this Messiah, this king of Israel, come down now from the cross, that we may see and believe.' Those crucified with him also heaped insults on him.