



## #13: *It Is Finished: The Covenant Complete?*

**Bible Readings:** John chapters 18 & 19

**by Revd Andy Murphy**

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### PREPARATION FOR GROUP LEADERS

This session focusses on **The Crucifixion of Jesus** and explores some of its meaning, thinking about what it could mean from a ‘**Covenant**’ perspective. There are many different understandings of the cross of Jesus, and what he achieved by his death. All of these views need to be carefully considered, especially when they are deeply-held beliefs. This session offers some perspectives based on **John’s Gospel (chapters 18-19)**, but there are other layers of meaning which emerge when we study the other gospels. You may notice certain differences (or things missing) when we read only one account. In John, the death of Jesus might appear to come rather suddenly. **Matthew (chapter 27)** and **Mark (chapter 15)** meanwhile give us more drawn-out timelines, focussing on the suffering, humiliation, and the physical darkness mirrored in Jesus’ desolate words on the cross. **Luke (chapter 23)** brings out strongly the theme of forgiveness. And there are several different ‘last words’ of Jesus – some of which are direct quotations from psalms (**Psalm 22:1**, and **Psalm 31:5**), which would be natural for Jesus to take comfort in during this climatic and painful time. It would be worth reading all four ‘passion’ accounts in preparation.

*If you didn’t share in Holy Communion last time, you might want to consider it for this session, ensuring you leave plenty of time and make the proper preparations (see last session, #12).*

### PREPARATION FOR ALL PARTICIPANTS (before the session)

Find or make a **cross** (maybe a palm cross, if you have one). It is the central symbol of the Christian faith. **Hold it and think about what this symbol means to you.** *Have you ever found comfort, forgiveness or help in your prayers by thinking about the cross of Jesus? Does it help that it is an empty cross? Or is it at times more helpful to see the suffering Jesus? What is significant about the death of Jesus? Do you ever think about why he went through with it? How does his ‘sacrifice’ make you feel?*

If you have time, Read **John’s Gospel, chapters 18 and 19.** *What strikes you in these chapters? Is there anything new you haven’t noticed before? Is anything missing?*

### STARTING THE SESSION: A PRAYER

God of all grace, as we gather together, ready to reflect on the death of your Son,  
give us new insight and understanding,  
enlighten for us again this familiar and yet mysterious story – the event on which all history turns.  
As your self-giving love pours from the cross,  
may it fill our hearts with compassion for one another and love for our neighbours.  
And may your Spirit inspire us to be more confident and assured in our faith,  
overflowing with hope for the world you love. In the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

### FINDING OUR ROOTS

In small groups, discuss your reflections on the questions in the ‘**PREPARATION**’ section above.

## READING THE SCRIPTURES – and DIGGING DEEPER

### Read together: **John 18:1-11**

Judas is often described as the one who **'betrayed'** Jesus (**verse 2 and 5**). The same Greek word can also mean 'handed over' or 'delivered'. There will be a lot of 'handing over' in these chapters as we read the passion story, suggesting that Judas is not the only 'betrayed', or perhaps forcing us to think about his motivation for handing Jesus over to the Jewish religious authorities. *What reasons could Judas have had? Could he have imagined that it would result in Jesus' death? Is there grace enough even for Judas?*

**Verse 11** ('Am I not to drink the **cup**...?') takes us back to Jesus' words at the supper (e.g. **Luke 22:17-18**), and also his prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane (**Matt 26:39, Mark 14:36, Luke 22:42**). In Jeremiah's prophecy, there was a cup that represented **God's wrath** on the wayward people of Judah (**Jeremiah 25:15-29**). The people would not drink the cup, and the anger was played out in the time of exile. Jesus, however, seems determined to drink the cup given to him by his Father, when the time is right. There is a sense of vocation – to suffer, or to take on board what God's people failed to do. But is it more intimate? In a Jewish engagement ceremony, the bride-to-be would accept and drink a cup as a sign of her acceptance of the marriage proposal – it was a sign of a **covenant**. At his arrest, Jesus seems determined to go ahead with what is in store. *How does Jesus take a cup of suffering or wrath and transform it into a cup that brings life?*

### Read together: **John 18:12-14**

Caiphas had previously prophesied that it would be better for one man to die for all the people (**John 11:45-53**). He was probably thinking politically at the time. But it can have a deeper meaning: **The Messiah** has a **representative** role; not only representing God to the people, but representing the people before God (and not only the Jewish people, but all humanity). If there is a new covenant to be made, the implication is that what Jesus does, he does on behalf of **all**. *What does it mean for you that Jesus dies 'for the people'?*

### Read together: **John 18:28-38**

There is another 'handing over', this time to **Pilate** – the representative of Rome, and therefore the representative of the rest of the world (the gentiles). Even with all his authority, Pilate cannot make sense of Jesus, nor find any charge against him. The conversation moves on to **kingship and kingdom**. Jesus states that his kingdom is not from this world – not in the mould of this world's authority (and corruption) – but a kingdom built on truth. *How does Jesus today challenge the powers and authorities of this world?*

### Read together: **John 18:39 – 19:16**

Here there is a clear indication that Jesus somehow **takes the place** of the undeserving sinner (Barabbas). *What do you make of this? What does it mean to you? Where do you see yourself in this part of the story?*

### Read together: **John 19:16-27**

With the inscription clearly written for all to read, having been prepared for his 'coronation' by the soldiers with the purple robe and crown of thorns, Jesus' procession leads on to Golgotha. John notes the fulfilment of **Psalms 22:18** – when they divide up his clothing and cast lots for his garment. Finally, Jesus unites his mother with his beloved disciple, and symbolically forges **a new relationship** from the cross. *How can Jesus today forge new relationships, build family, or bring reconciliation? What sort of king is he to you?*

### Read together: **John 19:28-30**

Jesus would surely have been physically thirsty, but this seems to be a deliberate act towards a symbolic ending: he finally 'takes the cup' (of sorts) and drinks the wine. *Could this be the moment when the new covenant is signed? Could this be the moment on which all history would turn?* Jesus' final words do not seem to be about his life ending, but about something being accomplished, **completed**. They are similar to **the ending of Psalm 22**: **'...he has done it!'** Then, with a sense of dignity, Jesus **'gave up his spirit'** – not that his life was taken from him, but rather (like his whole life before) it was offered up fully to God.

## PRAYING TOGETHER

Keep a time of silence, perhaps looking at a cross or an image of the crucifixion. Pray for each other.

**Sing or read:** 'When I survey the wondrous cross' (*Singing the Faith*, 287). And include **The Lord's Prayer**.

# Junior Good Soil, issue #13

## THE DEATH OF JESUS - God's Love Revealed at the Cross

Written by Andy Murphy.

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Junior Good Soil is for children's and young people's groups in churches.  
It can be easily adapted and you can add your own ideas!



### PLANTING THE SEED – what are we thinking about today?

Today, we will be thinking about one of the hardest and saddest parts of the story of Jesus, but also the most important. Jesus had followed **God's way** every day of his life, and he would never stop being the person God wanted him to be: never stop showing **God's love** or the way of **God's Kingdom**. He is God's Son, and **the Messiah**. He represents all of us, and he carries with him all of the good and bad things we do. Sometimes those bad things get in the way of what God wants us to be, but Jesus doesn't let that stop **his love** flowing through. Some people wanted to stop him. They even made a plan to trap him and hand him over to the governor, Pontius Pilate, to have Jesus killed. On **Good Friday** they took him to Pilate and said he was trying to take the place of the Roman Emperor. Jesus had said at the supper with his friends that his blood would start a **new covenant** – a new **relationship** with God. That relationship is now open to all of us. Today we will think about the events of Good Friday, but we know this is not the end of the story.

### QUIET TIME – a prayer (for use at the start of the session)

Dear God, in your love for us, you sent Jesus into the world to be our **Saviour and King**, we thank you for showing us your way for this life, and the way to **heaven**, help us to feel your love as we hear the story of Jesus' death today, help us not to be afraid, but to know that you are with us even through the saddest things. May your **peace** be with us, as we trust in the **new life** Jesus gives us. In his name we pray. **Amen.**

### TELLING THE STORY – reading the Bible... John chapter 19

Read the story from a Bible of your choice, or from the **Good News Bible: John 19:1-30**  
Or for younger children, try the **Usborne Children's Bible**, pages **127-133**.

### WATERING AND GERMINATING – what can we learn? / what does it tell us?

Ask the children first what the story of Jesus' death says to them? What do they learn from it?  
Jesus death on the cross can mean many things to us as Christians: It shows us **how far** God's love would go for us. It helps us to know God's **forgiveness**, as Jesus nails our sins to the cross with him. It shows us that Jesus has **victory over evil**, because even the most evil and hurtful things could not stop him. It shows us that **God is with us** in our **suffering**, and Jesus knows what it's like to go through pain and betrayal. It is the place where God makes a **new covenant** with the world, through Jesus' **self-giving** love and **sacrifice**.

### LETTING IT GROW – ideas for activities and discussion

Make a **giant cross** out of coloured paper or card and decorate it with pictures from the story and some of the important words (found in the **bold green letters** on this page, or other words you can think of) about the meaning of the cross. Find a space in your church to display this over the next few weeks up to Easter.

### PRAISE AND WORSHIP – ideas for hymns and songs (can be used whenever you wish)

**When I think about the cross** (by Mark & Helen Johnson) [www.youtube.com/watch?v=3ThmjNKe5E4](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3ThmjNKe5E4)  
(Singing the Faith – no.288)

**Jesus Christ, I think upon your sacrifice** (by Matt Redman) [www.youtube.com/watch?v=ewlpRdDU9Q8](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ewlpRdDU9Q8)  
(Singing the Faith – no.274)

**The Servant King** (Singing the Faith – no.272) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C4FtZ9XzZag>

**Such love** (both by Graham Kendrick) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dtJaY7EYQ3Q>