**Sermon 1**

Good morning. It's an honor to be with you as we celebrate Christ together. Um, that song, I'm reminded of a book written called Hinds feet and high places where it talks about the spiritual journey of the Pilgrim, right? The, the Christ follower as one going from the Valley of fear to the kingdom of love.

It's something worth celebrating. We are, as you'll notice, we have fire this morning. Um, we are heading towards Easter here at fellowship, and we, um, are going to the Easter season. Easter is the number one day in the Christian calendar, the most significant day in the Christian calendar, one where without which the apostle Paul says that Christ followers should be pitied.

Because what they're celebrating has no power, but the demonstration of life over death, the demonstration of holiness over sin, the demonstration of love, perfect love that drowns out fear is lived out and celebrated on Easter resurrection Sunday. It's the reason we gather on Sundays to celebrate that, and we uniquely head towards Easter in this season.

And we are as a series going to be leading up to that time by looking at the last seven sayings of Christ on the cross. Now, Easter is an incredible moment of celebration. It is a recognition of the ascent that Christ made, the victory, but it also is a season in which we recognize his decent. And what will we doing as we extinguish these candles one by one, over the next weeks, we'll be remembering how his life was slowly taken from him on our behalf.

And in this way, we do some walking in darkness as well as towards his light. Uh, I wanted to tell you a story as we begin because, um, many of you know Bruce McDonald. I've been praying for Bruce and Bev, and they recently retired from ministry. They're involved with Amy WWII. Bruce was the chaplain of the 70 Sixers, which was really cool because he got to tell them all about Jesus, but it was also really cool because sometimes he couldn't make it to do the chapel for the Philadelphia 70 Sixers and my dad, who I'm sure got asked to speak many places, always seem to have some availability.

To meet with the Philadelphia 70 Sixers. And so what would happen is he would get two passes. So every time we heard, Hey, dad's got chapel, we would be on our most chaplain behavior like that day to see if we would be one of the ones selected to go. And one of the times I got to go to chapel, you get to wear this.

Pass thing where like it's like you're very important person kind of thing. Or maybe I just felt like that's what it said. Um, and I remember like I walked right by Allen Iverson, like I'm pretty sure he remembers that moment too, right? This is, this is something happening. Well. One of the times, this is when I was in late high school in the year 2000, right.

Or, or right after high school. And, um, this is the year that the Sixers went to the NBA finals. They won in overtime, the first NBA finals game, and then lost to the Lakers because the Lakers were way better, but the Sixers had an incredible run that year. Allen Iverson. The smaller guy on there was the MVP of the league led.

The team, led the league in points scoring. The other guy on there Dikembe Mutombo. Was a legend that came maybe Tombo wa was a big time shop locker and put up the picture of the, he would do this as the finger wag. So much so now that when people now in the MBA block a shock if they do the finger wag is and saying, no, you're not going to score on me.

He, they're doing the this man, that finger, by the way, is roughly the size of my right leg. Okay. And this guy, he's an incredible guy. He, he speaks English, Spanish, French, Portuguese, Lingala and Lubac. OSI. He is the first and only global ambassador of the NBA, and he got to sit right by me in chapel that one day.

I remember sitting there and I'm sitting down and he walks in. All of him walks in and it's just everyone is huge when you're at a basketball game, but there was something about the Kim Bay Mutombo trying to shove his seven foot two body into a folding chair. That was just something remarkable. I remember sitting there and it's like, Oh my goodness, I'm here.

Don't act like a fan boy. Totally a fan boy, and he's sitting down and another player from the Toronto Raptors, I don't remember who it was. Came, pull this chair behind Mutombo and so he's behind Mocambo talking to tumbles here. This guy like a wimpy six, 10 nothing to write home about. And he's getting angry at Mutombo and he's saying something like, how could you say about this in the papers?

Those who don't know papers are at some of the existed back in 2000 but like saying, how could you say this quote about me and dah, dah, dah, and he's talking intimate tumbles ear and he's angry at him and I'm sitting there one like, I might die in whatever has about to go down here, but to what a way to go, you know what I mean?

So I'm trying not listen while listening, clearly trying to figure out what's going on when you can't believe this happening and you sitting there like one giant statue. And then he turns to this guy, I will never forget what he said, and he said, we know, talk about this now. And then he said these words, now we pray to God.

I haven't stopped praying since that moment, but it was like, yes, when we pretty good. Because in the tumble, if you've heard it has this deep gravelly voice that's gotta pass through the giant form of him and come out. But his words mattered. He didn't say much. I don't remember what the guy behind him, any of the freezes that guy use, but I remember the words of because they were spoken with such intention in scripture.

We believe that all of it is God breathed. Each word, as we say, is, is eligible for teaching and for understanding, encouragement, rebuke. There is something special about these final statements that we're going to look at. Something other. These seven statements have been celebrated throughout Christian history this season of leading to Holy week.

Good Friday, and Easter has been something taken very seriously, very from the very earliest part of the church on Thursday of Holy week. When Jesus does his last supper, he even says, do this. Have a special ceremony to remember this. What's happening here is special, and we get the chance over these weeks.

To sit with to be with our Christ. As we look at these seven statements and this morning, we're going to do an introduction of the statements and then we will move and focus on the first of these, if you will, pray with me this morning.

Jesus, we're so thankful that you came. Father, we're so thankful that you sent. Spirit. We are so thankful for how you have enabled us to listen and learn. God, three in one. We look back on a moment where you were ripped apart. And as we learn from these words of Christ, teach us, we thank you so much for what you've said, what you've done and how it's changed everything.

In Jesus' name. Amen. A few things as we re listen over these next weeks to these seven statements want to draw out. The first is listen to how relational these statements are. Much of teeth Jesus is teaching, is given to the group of disciples throughout the new tests or the gospels or to large crowds of people possible.

Paul would become the primary teacher after Christ. Most of his teaching is written to church or group churches or groups of people telling them how to know and understand Christ and as well as how to interact. With one another. Jesus in revelation writes a letter to seven groups of people, churches in revelations.

Much of the scripture is written to groups, which is a beautiful thing at the cross. So many of these statements are not directed towards a group of people, but to individuals, they're, they're incredibly. Relationally oriented statements. One, four, and seven are to his father. Saving two is to the thief who hung next to him.

Statement three is to his mom and the disciple and Jesus who is in this whole scene as we see publicly, completely displayed and in front of people and talking people and on trial before people. And yet in these final statements, he shows how he cares about all by the way he treated these individual people in these precious moments.

What's happening on the cross is cosmos defining, and yet he speaks to individuals. He's not coming with broad teaching in these statements, not coming as I came, I saw I conquered. Not coming with a last second defense or one act of defiance. He's coming to speak and social show demonstrates his care for individual.

Second, be present with him as you listen. Easter has everything for in the, in the Christian walk, right? Like we said, if without this, everything else crumbles. At the, it's Jesus conquering death is demonstration of, of him winning over death and hatred and fear and prejudice and disease, and that there's, there's this, this act of the resurrection is the act of power that seals and completes the gospel message.

There are so many good things about Easter, but the greatest thing, the greatest thing about Easter is that Jesus is not dead. Now that Jesus and the coming with the resurrection, yes. Ratified and completed and all those things. But the reality of what a Christ follower is is one who walks with Christ is someone who is with the living Christ, and these are not seven statements by that great guy, or even great God who died.

There's seven statements with the Christ who is here. Amongst us and as we go about these in the upcoming weeks, and we ponder them as individuals and March through as a church, we don't do it in memory of, but in concert with That he is here with us. Three identify with him as he identifies with you in suffering.

Part of the song we sang a couple songs ago, it was mostly based on John three 16 also had a lot of Hebrews four within it, and Hebrews four is this, this great passage where it says how Jesus came and can identify us with our, with our weakness. He came and was tempted in every way he understood. He came down, he came from heaven to descend in order.

He might be able to relate, connect, and ultimately receive that which was human. But, but there's also, and so when we look at suffering and we go through the seasons of difficulty and loss and pain and confusion and doubt and fear, as we enter into these extremely scary and difficult realities, we do understand that he.

Identifies with us, but also during this Easter season, we have a chance of using those to also identify with him. I, um, was with a group of people and we were praying through some scripture and, uh, was sharing, just was feeling really lonely and just feeling really misunderstood and not known and all those things which are just human, right?

We go through different seasons and it was a dark season, confusing season, anxious season for me and us. We're playing scripture and I was sharing about this and I had a woman come up to me, don't know her name. Uh, I don't know if I've ever seen her since this. Um, and she came up to me and said, I just feel like I should share this with you.

She said, what's been helpful for her in some real dark seasons of her soul is again, to not just say, how does Christ identify with me, but how can this moment, this season helped me understand him. As in you're experiencing that feeling of loneliness or rejection in that pit, in the stomach, and that awful feeling.

It's like, gosh, that's exactly what Jesus must've been feeling on Thursday night. Or some of you are in the throws of chronic pain or illness and it just doesn't seem to go away and you cannot, Christ can identify with that, but there's also the sense in the midst of this pain that's agonizing and you can't really think straight because it's keeps coming.

To then identify with him and understand his journey better. So yes, he comes to us, but we also identify with him. Paul puts it this way. I want to know Christ rights, which is the whole thing. I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of his sufferings being conformed to his death.

And so somehow to attain the resurrection of the dead. Number four as we approach these statements, simply remember that there is no WWJD. Without J D jug EUW J D is what would Jesus do? And it's a great statement and lots of good motivation and thinking behind it. And it's basically the, the statement that says, in my circumstance, in my shoes, in my family, my workplace, and my like situations, what would Jesus do if he were here?

And so then I will try to do as best I can, what Jesus would do. When we are looking at these statements on the cross, we are going to see Jesus do unbelievable acts of compassion and forgiveness. But there's, there's something that can happen when we are so motivated by thinking what would Jesus do? And then how can I do it?

Is that we can Rob Jesus's. Very power at, for instance, we'll look in a moment about the way Jesus offers forgiveness in this primal moment on the cross in a way that's so. Instinctual in a way that it's so open and free and immediate, and we can take that and say, well, just as Jesus did on the cross and you so quick to forgive, I'm going to forgive and what's wrong with me and why can't I let go of this problem or this person or this thing?

I should be able to WWJD and here's what I would say. The whole Christian message is, is not what would Jesus do. So we should do it. Whole Christian messages, Jesus keeps doing. So the in the situations that we run in, it's not how can I grit it through and forgive? It's Jesus. You who died on the cross with free, open forgiveness changed me, changed my heart.

Come from you. Let your forgiveness and compassion come through me to other people. It's entirely unrealistic to fully do and be how Jesus would be without Jesus. There's no WWJD without Jesus doing it possible. Paul writes, we proclaim him admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so we might present everyone complete in Christ.

To this end, I labor striving here this with all of his energy working powerfully in me as pastor Ralph, who retired little while ago, said, the Christian life is not hard. It's impossible. Only Christ can live out the Christian life in and through us. Okay. So we look at these things as we getting ready for it, and just a few words to say what happened in leading up to these statements that Christ gave on the cross.

The first thing to see is that Christ going to the cross entered six different trials before getting there. Once Jesus. Before he gets to these trials. He speaks a whole lot in scripture. On Thursday a week, he see a ton of scripture written. John has like four or five chapters dedicated. If you have a red letter Bible, you open the middle of John.

You see a whole bunch of red letters. Why? Because Jesus is doing a lot. Teaching as he's in the last supper with his disciples. We also see in other gospels that after the teaching, he also was doing serving, and he wrapped a cloth around his waist and he washed his disciples feet, and then he's doing conversing.

He's having conversations with all of the disciples. Peter in particular with Judas in particular, he's having conversation. Then we go in the high priestly prayer and going to get Semini where the disciples fell asleep and Jesus cried out to his father in John 17 and John 17 is given to this. The longest prayer we have of Christ.

Christ speaks much on Thursday. He taught conversed and prayed. There is red ink all over the page. Then the crowd comes in, Judas betrayed Jesus with the kiss, and then there's these six trials where Jesus is asked to give account for his teaching and asked who he is. First trial was anise, who is the father in law of Caiaphas, and he went to Anna's for examination and passed him off to Kaia FIS for a more technical trial to all four gospels include this trial before Caiaphas, the great high priest, and with Kiah fist.

There was many people giving different testimony and he's going back and forth with Jesus and eventually tears. His robes says, I find this man guilty. He is sentenced to be, he's or he's then sent to be beat and mocked, beat with the head with sticks saying, saying who beat us? And all these things, prophecy.

He's being the beginning of the mockery has come on through the night and to the next morning, presumably at Dawn, he, Jesus appears before the Sanhedrin. So a group of people, the Jewish people are in exile under Roman rule. But they have a Sanhedrin, a local governing body that helped with the affairs of the Jewish people and the Sanhedrin gathered to decide, along with Kaia FIS what should be done with this Christ.

They came before Christ and many false accusers came and said many things. Jesus said very little. They went and they took it to pilot the Roman prefect of the Judea, Judea pilot questions. Jesus. Jesus does not respond much. Pilot feels really kind of confused what to do. Sends him to Herod. Herod goed the marching over to Herod.

Herod wants a miracle from Jesus wants some evidence, is looking for Jesus to do or say something to, to, to make, to legitimize. Who he was. Jesus does not play his game. Herod the text says, wraps him in a fancy robe, sends him back to pilot while mocking him that he did not perform as he thought he should if he were God.

And then back to pilot and pilot eventually passively says, I think this man is innocent. I'm washing my hands, but I'm giving into the will of the people. And sent Jesus to be flogged 39 times and then eventually led away to be crucified. This is throughout this time. Um, we hear much of what people are saying about Christ and through these six trials, he's given opportunity to respond, but there's very little that he says.

He now has public audience in the chapters in Luke. You'll see it's talking about great multitudes. So you have all these different people, important people, religious leaders, political leaders, Roman rulers. You have lots of audience happening within a 12 hour time period, and Jesus falls mostly silent.

And we pick up in chapter chapter 23 of Luke. And in verse 32 says this to others who were criminals were led away to be put to death with him when they came to the place that is called the skull there, they crucified him and the criminals, one on his right and one on his left. Jesus said, father, forgive them for they know not what they do, and they cast lots to divide his garments.

The people stood by watching. The rulers scoffed at him saying he saved others. Let him save himself. If he is the Christ of God has chosen one. The soldiers also mocked him coming up and offering him sour wine, saying, if you're the King of the Jews, save yourself. There was also an inscription over him.

This is the King of the Jews. One of the criminals who was hanged rallied, railed at him saying, are you not the Christ? Save yourself and us.

This. Uh, as you look back in verse 34, there's a short statement it's from the word Lego. It's, it's sort of a word that's unnecessary for the script of what's going on. Or you probably have a translated scripture. Then Jesus said. There is a clear delineation that Luke is giving that all of a sudden now Jesus speaks, the crucifixion has now happened.

Presumably the nails are already driven in the cross already erected and now and now Jesus speaks, his public ministry opens in prayer and here it closes. The same, and he cries out to his father, father, forgive them. They know not what they do. A few things about this passage. One is, well, what did Jesus know says they know not what they do.

So what did Jesus know that they didn't? What did he know? One, the scripture makes it really clear in the gospels that Jesus was fully aware of what was going on. He knew what was happening. This whole scene Thursday into Friday, Christ is incredibly aware. He know Judas is going to betray him. Even when Judas said, surely not I when Judas comes and people were like, why is Judas here?

He says, do quickly. What you have gone to do. Jesus is aware when Peter says, man, I don't know what you're talking about, Jesus, all this people are going to blah, blah, blah, leave you. I will never leave you to my death. I will fight and I will show it with my own soar, which he did in the garden. He says, I will never deny, and Jesus fully knows and says, actually, Peter, what's going to happen?

You're going to deny me three times, and even in the midst of Jesus being beaten and convicted. He makes eye contact with Peter before Peter realizes, Oh, what I have done. Christ already knew. He knew he'd be betrayed. He was in the garden praying to the father, fully aware when he asked the father, father, please take this cup from me.

If there's any other way, please do it. But he knew also, not my will, but yours be done. He knew he would not come down living off that cross. He knew the father had poured out the cup of RAF for him. He knew the prophecy beforehand. Jesus is fully aware of who he is and what is going on. He's fully aware of what they are doing is abject evil.

He knows the cowardice of pilot. The arrogance of the religious people, the weakness and doubt of his best friends, the bloodthirstiness of this execution by the Roman people, the indifference of people just kind of sitting around staring and watching as a part of the crowd, and he knows what they chanted.

As it says in 1915. When they people chanted, we have no King but Caesar. He knows their idolatry and their sin and he knows they need forgiveness right in the statement. Forgive them. It's the recognition that father, these people need to be forgiven. So what did they know? Not if he said father, forgive them for they know not what they do.

What? What are they lacking in awareness? What? What? The people at the scene, the, the, the religious leaders, the Romans, the thief, the crowd. What is their lack of awareness? What do they not understand? Well, we look at verses 35 36 and 39 and each one of them in derision or in mockery is saying, if you are the Christ, then do this.

Which is another way of saying, ha ha, you're not the Christ and this proves it and you have it by you see this you from Herod originally, earlier in the passage than we read. Then you also see this Romans. Then you see it from the religious leaders and you also see it from the thief on the cross when it says they know not what they are doing.

What they did not realize they were killing God. That was, they did not, that was not factoring into their brain. It was a lack of awareness. As Paul says this in first Corinthians two eight talking about the wisdom that comes. From the crucifixion of Christ. He says this, none of the rulers of this age understood this for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.

Recognizing that these people did not know that he was the Messiah. Secondly, they didn't know how the Messiah would behave. They thought a Messiah would act a lot different. Right? You see this in the statement 35 the religious rulers sneered he saved others. Let him save himself. If he was the Messiah who could save, that's how a Messiah would behave.

The soldiers use an interesting word coming from a military background. They used the word King. They said, if you are King, save yourself because a King, the way a King operates, a King does not let this mortification happen. One of the things that's, I don't, I don't, it's hard for me about the cross and it's probably because it's, it's not familiar with a lot of what I've understood is that Christ was naked on the cross and he Rose.

Even saying that feels like we can't say that. The humiliation of what happened and the amount of mockery of the strip naked King of glory. It's obscene. It's too much. It's over. Whelming and as the people looked on in celebration, they said, no way. A God acts like this. No way. A Messiah does this kind of thing.

For the religious rulers, they thought the Messiah would conquer in victory, not lose in humiliation. From the Roman soldiers perspective, no way. He could be a King. A King would never submit himself. And then the thief on the cross who's mocking the one mocking thief, says not. There's no way this person has the power to rescue and would not use it.

They thought he would act differently in this position and right. We can Monday morning quarterback this and be like, Oh, we would give anything. To be able to console Christ in any possible way through the night on Thursday night, or to stop one of the beatings or to stop sub something or just to let him know we, we know what he's doing.

Right. To let him know we, we appreciate and we thank him for what he's doing, what we wouldn't give to be there to be able to, to somehow be covering this shame or, or, or. Or thanking and praising him for what's happening. To somehow take away the brutality and grotesqueness of this seemingly so human moment.

What we wouldn't give, but what in reality, this is their struggle, is our struggle. I really think one of their struggles, they had a really hard time believing that God could use suffering to do something good. Suffering seems like it could never be a part of a God story. That's hard for us to believe.

Now when we're in the throws of what feels just like human suffering, and I think what they did is, what I know I deal with a lot is they underestimated the breadth and depth and length. And height of God's love and compassion. They were, uh, Mark 10. Jesus says this to the religious leaders. He says, let me get the actual words of this.

He says, I can't find it, but it's in Mark 10. He says, release there. You know, so little about love. And even though these people knew a loving Messiah would come. They couldn't see a love that reached this far. I believe this is so human and something that I struggle with very much. So, finally, well, what does this statement reveal about Christ who, what is this Christ according to this statement, not what did people assume or ne wrongly assumed, but what do we actually learn about him from these words?

First. He died as he lived in complete commitment and resolve. The old him says, there is no shadow of turning. With the a few days or a few, a little while earlier, he's, he reveals himself in the transfiguration. Basically. He shows his Godness to some of his disciples a few days before this and they're like, Whoa, that's unbelievable.

And they're so excited. A few days from now after the cross. And resurrect and he'll be kicking rocks walking down the road to amass with some people in the, so happen later in the book of Luke and he will explain to them what the scriptures was all about. Jesus. And it says, and their eyes were opened.

He's doing this. Two days later, he could open their eyes, he could cover his shame. He could somehow make this story less.

Abjectly humiliating them. Yes, but he lived this. He died in complete resolve and commitment to become our sin and shame. Secondly, he does not turn or deny his father after he's experienced all of this. His first words on the cross is a recognition of God's authority. Father, I still snow. You're the one who forgives sins.

That's why I'm appealing to you. There's still this familial call from son to father. It says in first Peter two when he was reviled, speaking of Christ, he did not revile in return. When he suffered, he did not threaten but catch this, but continued in trusting himself to him who judges justly. Even now.

At this moment from the very first words, after all of this accusation in pain, we see a posture of complete trust. Third, we see, he longs to forgive like this is, it's just incredible that this is his response. Um, something I've noticed about being a person is that like. When something goes wrong, we want to understand it.

We want to figure it out, drives us crazy. Whether that's our sports team is losing. We don't think they should. Whether that's because our, our work environments, not what we think it should be, or our country or political whatever is now we think we, we recognize that we live in a world where things are not what we always want them to be in our relationships, our environments at cetera.

And when things go wrong, which happens. All the time, every day for all of us. It's very natural to have an instinctual response and here's the response that that comes up in. Any type of something going wrong or any type of interpersonal conflict, it's first is whose fault is this? Let's isolate the problem, right?

If my team lost, there's no way it's because that team was actually good. It's because my player wasn't playing well, right? Where's the problem? Who's to blame? What's, what's this happening? If I have a clunky relationship with the friend, but what is it about them that makes them so what is it? What's the problem?

Whose fault is it isolated? And then secondly, how do we deal with that problem? How we fixed that problem. Part of that's really good, right? We find problems and fix them, but so often our nature when coming up against something so difficult is, is to ask the question of whose fault and how do we make them pay or make sure they never do it again.

Christ is here and Eugene Peterson says this. He says, I have to be honest, when I say this is one of the most difficult prayers in scripture to understand, and one of the most difficult prayers in our mouth's to pray. Jesus did not get up and say, father repay them for their sins. That will be justice. He also didn't get up and say, well, they, cause he's recognizing, they don't know.

He didn't get up and say, well, father, at least let them know what they're doing. That would be some type of emotional justice or not even father, please stop these people from ever doing it to anyone again, that would be some benevolent care for their next potential victim. No, his. Primal response. His father, my great concern is that they would be forgiven of their sin to live this way.

We can't without Christ. Eugene Peterson goes on to say, we live in a world seeding and sin and a wash in violence. There are certainly will be matters of justice for society to deal with as we deal with these things, and it may be important for us to participate in that justice. There are judges and prosecuting attorney, police and juries, many of us who pursue an uphold these causes, but basically in society says this.

Who else is there to say, father, forgive them, but Christians who know how to prayer that prayer with Jesus. However important justice is, and it is important. It is not as important as forgiveness. The Christian, um, is not first an impersonal agent of justice, but a personal conveyor of forgiveness and a witness to the resurrection.

Such forgiveness is not soft sentimentality. It is hard edged gospel. Such forgiveness is not a moral shrug of the shoulders. It is a white hot flame of resurrection love forged in the furnace of the cross.

I believe this is one of the ways that we understand internally, uh, our own responses to the gospel and our own growth in Christ is that it becomes more instinctual. To have a response that's less about me. But that is a response. That's not also, I don't even see anything anyone does bad. Right? But a response that is instinctually compassionate.

Ephesians four 32 says, be kind and compassionate to one another. Forgiving each other just as Christ forgave you. And lastly. We see in this statement, Christ's varies. Despite his very disposition, his love talking with Jerry costs low. One of the pastors here at fellowship, uh, he was doing some reading and he wasn't positive where he got this from, but we were having a conversation, you know, about what is love, right?

And that is, um, we, that's a song right. Look, there's nothing you meant stop there. But he, I don't even know what we're talking about right now. Oh yeah. So we're talking about love. And one of the things that people say is love is a verb. Love is not what you feel. Love is what you do. And you know, that's good.

That's a lot. Your love is a ver love is doing things. The actions of love these, this is actually to love someone, is not to just passively do it, but to love someone is to do something. That is true. But, but we also recognize that love is not just doing something. There is something inner about love.

There is this affection, this compassion, this positive regard. This for you, NIS that exists, that even if we're doing nice actions, that it's more whole than that. So his love of feeling his love and action, and I think this is the best description of love I've heard love is a disposition. It's a state of being.

As Ken Hughes comments on this part of the crucifixion. He says, the shock of crucifix fiction had rendered him paralyzed and quivering physical disbelief screen from severed nerves and even great spiritual horror closed in. He would soon become sin. What you have from Christ on the cross. Is not just a response of gritted teeth.

I'm going to ask for their forgiveness. It's not something just a passing feeling that he's going through. It's a reaction because of his very being. First John four says this, God is love. This is I believe, something that we grow into as we follow Christ. The first understanding is, is number one, we believe that God can love, right?

And that's a beautiful reality, that there is a God and God can love, and that's a wonderful place to come. And then. What's really clunky for a lot of us is then to say, I know God can love, but what does God actually love me? And I can't seem to like me, so why would God love me? And so there's this clunkiness of maybe I stop his love somehow and I'm so tough in my own things that I keep him away and that I know he can love, but it's another layer deeper to say, actually, this says so much about God and God loves me.

But even a step further than that is this, that God is love. That it's not just that God has the ability to give this love. Not that I have the ability to be within it. But that it is the very nature of God. I'm not floating down a stream. I'm lost in an ocean. That his very nature is love and yes, there are other aspects of God, but there are no aspects of law God that are not completely of love, and God acts this way.

God does these things. God feels these things all are in scripture, but God is, God is. Love it is the very nature of himself and the primal, guttural stripped naked Christ. When betrayed, when misunderstood one-on-one wanted, when suffering, disorienting torture returns to where he never leaves, he returns to the fact that he is, that he was, that he is.

And that he always will be love. And he says these words, father, forgive them. They know not what they do.

Thanks for coming. We are dismissed.