

Morti

Good morning everybody. **If you have a bible**, go with me to the gospel of **Mark, chapter 8**. If you've been with us the past couple weeks, you know we've been in a series called *Anomaly*. And the basic premise is that logically and historically speaking, Jesus has had an absolutely *bizarre* impact on human history. **He's an anomaly in that he doesn't fit any of the preexisting notions we have in our minds for things that make a person significant; and yet is undeniably the most significant person to ever live.** Which is a bit of a paradox. So we're spending the few weeks leading up to Easter Sunday attempting to answer the question: *why? Why is Jesus such an anomaly?* What was it about this poor, peasant teacher from a no-name town called Nazareth, that has shaped the very course of history as we know it? That's the question we're interested in answering.

And today, we're going to talk about the significance of Jesus' *death* in that whole conversation. **Last week, Eric** walked us through the significance of Jesus' *life*. And one of the things Eric mentioned was how people today will often say things like, "oh well Jesus was just a really good teacher." In today's world, it's common for people to say "well I don't believe the whole thing about him being God in the flesh—that's kind of crazy. But I *do* believe that he was a really good teacher who was really *kind* and *loving* towards people." But you see, I would argue it's even *crazier* to believe *that* about Jesus, than it is to believe he *was* who he said he was.

Here's **why I say that**. What people tend to forget when they say Jesus was just a really nice, gifted teacher is that he was *executed* by the Roman empire. He was *crucified*: a torturous form of death that the Romans reserved for rebels and people they wanted to make a public example out of. Jesus died by *crucifixion* (and no serious historian disputes that fact). So here's my question: **why would the Romans feel the need to crucify a really nice, interesting guy?** That doesn't exactly seem like much of a threat if you ask me. **The last time you met someone who was really nice and interesting, did you think to yourself, man, this guy's gonna get executed by the state?** And yet, that's exactly what happened to Jesus.

But to me, it's **not even just that Jesus died**. **It's that he spent a lot of time talking about, focusing on, and predicting his death.** Like a *whole* lot. He was almost *fixated* on it. When you read through the gospels, especially the latter half or so of all of them, you find him talking about his *death* with his disciples a good bit. And sometimes, he tends to bring it up in moments where, to be honest, it feels like a real buzzkill. The disciples start understanding something about Jesus' identity, they witness Jesus do

something incredible; and then, seemingly without *any* warning at all, Jesus starts talking about the fact that he's gonna die soon. It's very odd.

The **gospel writers also** seem to *echo* this emphasis on Jesus' death. In all of the gospel accounts, the story moves pretty quickly from scene to scene, sometimes skipping entire months or even *years* of Jesus' life. But when we enter the final *week* of his life, everything in the storyline slows to a snail's pace. **Take the gospel of *Matthew*, for instance, which we've been studying as a church for the past couple years. In *Matthew*, the first twenty chapters of the book cover approximately thirty-two years of Jesus' life. The last eight chapters cover one week around Jesus' death and resurrection.** That's quite the emphasis. **Jesus and the biblical authors seem to make Jesus' death the focal point of the storyline.** Almost like that's what the whole story was *building* to; like that's what it was all *about* from the beginning.

What **makes all of this even more strange** is the fact that Jesus repeatedly **claimed to be** the Messiah (in other words, a *king*). **Now, historically speaking, kings tend to die in one of two ways. They either live a long, full life, and die of natural causes...or they are assassinated by someone else who wants to become king. One of those two things happens. But either way, one thing is clear: when a king dies, their reign is over.** That's the end of the road. The next king is placed into power, for better or worse, and within a few years, people mostly forget about the *old* king. The world spins madly on. As it is often put, "the king is dead; long live the king." **A king's reign is everything that happens before his death.**

But yet again here, **Jesus was strikingly different.** **Jesus went around making this bizarre claim about how his reign, his kingdom was going to be established through his death.** Which is either completely *delusional*, or an indication that Jesus was an entirely different kind of king. So **today, I want us to wade through** a few passages in a few different chapters of the gospel of Mark where Jesus makes precisely that point; passages where Jesus just won't stop *talking* about his death. And I want us to see what we can gather about the significance of his death for his impact on the world. So if you've got your bibles ready, **look with me** at **Mark 8**, starting in v. 27:

27 *Jesus and his disciples went on to the villages around Caesarea Philippi* (now—that's an important detail, given that Caesarea Philippi was a city where people recognized pagan emperors as kings and *worshipped* them as *gods*. There were *temples* built to those emperors throughout the city. Jesus is taking the disciples *there*. And, v. 27...) **on the way he asked them, "Who do people say I am?"** Very high stakes kind of question, given the region they're in. Verse 28...**28** *They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, one of*

the prophets.” In other words, “a lot of people say you’re a *prophet*, Jesus.” **29** “*But what about you?*” he asked. “*Who do you say I am?*” **Peter** answered, “*You are the Messiah* (in other words, the *king*).” **30** *Jesus warned them not to tell anyone about him.*

So it’s **easy to miss here** in *Mark*, but Matthew’s account¹ makes it clear: Peter has just answered *correctly*. “*Bingo*, Peter: that *is* who I am. I *am* the king. I *am* the Messiah. You’ve answered correctly.” **At which the disciples probably start celebrating, right? ‘It’s really him! He’s here! He is who we thought he was. It’s happening!’** But the **celebration is short-lived**—look at v. 31:

31 *He then began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and after three days rise again. 32 He spoke plainly about this...*

Jesus tells his disciples that he is going to suffer and die. I **also love Mark’s note** here, that Jesus “spoke *plainly* about this.” **Here’s why I love that:** if you’ve read much of the gospels, you may have noticed that there are quite a few things Jesus *doesn’t* speak very “plainly” about. In fact, on more than one occasion, the disciples actually *ask* Jesus why he chooses to speak in parable and metaphor, because it’s hard for people (i.e. *them*) to understand.

So Jesus **doesn’t speak plainly** about *everything*, but he evidently spoke very plainly about at least *one* thing: that he was going to be killed. **Jesus directly connects his identity as king to the fact that he is going to suffer and die.** They are *inseparably linked* in his mind. Now, that would have been a very *disorienting* thing for a Jewish person to hear, since their *tradition* taught them that the Messiah was a king who would reign *forever*.² Which helps explain what happens *next*, second half of v. 32...

...and Peter took him (Jesus) aside and began to rebuke him.

Now just a **general rule** to live by: **if you ever find yourself in a situation where you are rebuking Jesus, there’s a pretty good chance you’re wrong.** May want to reconsider your life choices up until that point. But at the same time: let’s not go *too* hard on Peter, since he was simply operating out of the understanding that nearly *all* Jewish people had at the time: that the Messiah was a *king* who would reign *forever*. And in Peter’s *mind*, **that can’t happen if Jesus suffers and dies.** Which, I’ve gotta say, is a

¹ See Matthew 16:13-20, specifically v. 17

² See Psalm 110:4, Isaiah 9:7, Ezekiel 37:25, also John 12:34

pretty *logical* pushback for him to have. I think we would be thinking the same thing. But remember what we said a few minutes ago: **Jesus' reign comes through his death; not by avoiding his death. His death is actually how he becomes king.**

Which is **why this happens**, v. 33:

33 *But when Jesus turned and looked at his disciples, he rebuked Peter. "Get behind me, Satan!" he said. "Satan" has to be up there on the list of things you do not want to be called, especially by Jesus. "You do not have in mind the concerns of God, but merely human concerns."*

Jesus **sees in Peter a misunderstanding** that *must* be corrected. It's a misunderstanding that he will have to correct *again* later when soldiers come to *arrest* him and Peter immediately cuts off one of the soldier's ears to try and *stop* it.³ You see, **Peter thinks for Jesus to be the king, that means Jesus can't die. But what Peter doesn't realize is that Jesus' death isn't in conflict with his reign; it's actually a part of it.** Notice Jesus' language back in v. 31; he says that he "*must*" die. It is a *necessity*, in other words.

Flip over with me to **Mark 9, v. 30**. Not much time passes, and Jesus starts talking about his death yet *again*. Pick it up with me in v. 30:

30 *They left that place and passed through Galilee. Jesus did not want anyone to know where they were, 31 because he was teaching his disciples. He said to them, "The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men. They will kill him, and after three days he will rise." 32 But they did not understand what he meant and were afraid to ask him about it.*

Just out of curiosity, you **ever been there?** Ever *not asked* a question, because you didn't *want* the answer to it? Let's say there is a restaurant here in Knoxville that you really like, but you also have a *hunch* that they probably didn't do so hot on their last health inspection. Sometimes, ignorance is bliss, right? Sweet, delicious, potentially *dangerous*, bliss. I think that's at least a picture of where the disciples are, *mentally*, at this point in the story: they have questions, but they don't ask them, because they're not sure they want the answer to them. **But notice what Jesus is doing in this passage: he is still trying to reframe his reign—his status as king—in his disciples' mind, to show them that it is directly linked to his death. Jesus' reign comes through his death.**

³ John 18:10

Flip over with me **one more chapter** to **Mark 10**. Here Jesus is going to set the reality of his death before them *again*, only for them to not get it *again*. Which, side note: this whole dynamic gives me a lot of hope for all the things it takes *me* a while to get as a follower of Jesus. Apparently that's par for the course with following Jesus. Praise God for that. Look with me at v. 32 of chapter 10:

32 *They were on their way up to Jerusalem (the place where Jesus eventually does die), with Jesus leading the way, and the disciples were astonished, while those who followed were afraid. Again he took the Twelve aside and told them what was going to happen to him. 33 "We are going up to Jerusalem," he said, "and the Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests and the teachers of the law. They will condemn him to death and will hand him over to the Gentiles, 34 who will mock him and spit on him, flog him and kill him. Three days later he will rise."*

So **this time, Jesus gets even more specific** about *how* he will die, and exactly *who* will be responsible for it. Which is an oddly specific thing for *anyone* to know in advance. But Jesus divulges *all* of those bizarre, specific details. What's even *more* bizarre, though, is **the disciples' response** to it all—look at v. 35:

35 *Then James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came to him. "Teacher," they said, "we want you to do for us whatever we ask." Yikes. James and John were evidently not present for Jesus' frequent teachings on humility. 36 "What do you want me to do for you?" he asked. 37 They replied, "Let one of us sit at your right and the other at your left in your glory."*

So notice here that **they are still fixated on Jesus' status as king**, and are completely *missing* everything he's trying to tell them about his *death*: 'Jesus, when you take your place on the throne, we'd love to be on your right hand and your left.' **In other words, we'd like to be your vice president and secretary of state.** 'Jesus, we know *you're* going to be a big deal, and we think it makes a lot of sense for *us* to become a big deal along with you. Your thoughts?' They miss it yet again. Here's Jesus' *response* to them, v. 38:

38 *"You don't know what you are asking," Jesus said. "Can you drink the cup I drink or be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with?"* Which is a figurative way of saying, 'are you ready to *suffer* like I'm going to suffer?' **39** *"We can," they answered.* Decent chance they don't realize what they're signing up for there. But...*Jesus said to them, "You will drink the cup I drink and be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with, 40 but to sit at my right or left is not for me to grant. These places belong to those for whom they have been prepared."*

Jesus **tries again to help them understand** the connection between his suffering and his reign. One leads to the other. **His death isn't a *detour on the way to his reign*. It is how his reign *begins*.** Verse 41:

41 *When the ten heard about this, they became **indignant** with James and John.*

A **catfight** breaks out among the disciples. All the others are so *angry* that James and John would be so *arrogant* as to do...the thing that all of them *also secretly wanted to do*. To ask for the thing that *all* of them actually wanted: to *reign* alongside Jesus when he becomes king.⁴ So Jesus tries to help them understand *yet again*, v. 42...

42 *Jesus called them **together** and **said**, “You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the **Gentiles lord it over them**, and their high officials exercise **authority over them**. **43** Not so with you. (‘That’s *not* how it’s going to work in my kingdom.’) **Instead**, whoever wants to become **great among you must be your servant**, **44** and whoever wants to be **first must be slave of all**. And then, almost as if to drive his point home, Jesus says this... **45** For **even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.**”*

Jesus is saying **‘do you guys not see it?’** Do you not understand the *absurdity* of what you’re asking? **You are fighting over power and position and prominence in a kingdom that will be defined by humility.** And in fact, *more than humility: humiliation*. I’m telling you over and over again that my *reign*, my *rule* is beginning through my brutal death. An execution on a Roman cross. Being mocked, spit on, tortured, killed. If you want prominence, *greatness* in my kingdom, *that* is what it will look like. **Whoever wants to be great, should consider themselves everyone else’s servant. Like I am going to do myself. For even the Son of Man didn’t come to be served, but to serve others; and to give his life as a ransom for many.’**

So *here*, **for the first time** in the gospel of Mark, Jesus tells us not just *that* he will suffer and die, but actually **why he will suffer and die**. The *purpose* for his death. *Why* does Jesus’ reign come *via* his death? The answer is right there at the end of v. 45. Because his *death* is where he will “...give his life as a ransom for many.” That’s *why* Jesus is going to die. That’s why he *has* to die.

Now, it’s here that we have to **do a bit of work** to unravel what Jesus means. Because the word *ransom* is probably not a word that we use a ton today. **Pretty much the only**

⁴ As proof of this, see Mark 9:33-34, Luke 22:24.

time I hear it used anymore is in *movies*, when someone gets kidnapped, and someone else has to pay a *ransom* to get them back. And that's at least *close* to what the bible means by ransom, but also a bit different. **The word *ransom* in Jesus' day referred to the amount of money paid to free a slave.** *Jesus* uses that imagery that most everyone already *understood*, and employs it as a *metaphor* to illustrate the *purpose* of his death. You see, **the point that the Scriptures make repeatedly is that without Jesus, we are all enslaved to sin.** So it's *not* just that we sometimes *do* wrong; it's that we don't know how to *not* do wrong. Such that without Jesus, even the *right* things we do are done for wrong or selfish reasons. Sin, in a sense is *slavery*.

Anyone who has ever **seen a person battle an addiction up close** understands this about sin. When someone is an *alcoholic*, for instance, it doesn't do any good to be like "hey—why don't you just try *not drinking* anymore?" Because when you're addicted to alcohol, you need more than willpower. You're *enslaved* to it; you need something to *break the chain* of addiction. Even *Alcoholics Anonymous*, a secular organization, will tell people they need some type of "higher power" to experience any degree of success. Because they understand that addiction isn't just a matter of a few bad choices, it is a life of *slavery* to the power of alcohol.

But **the Scriptures would go even a step further. They would make the case that it's not just addictions that are a form of slavery; it's all sin.** That on our own, we are *stuck* in sin. We can't just will our way into not sinning anymore. Because we are *enslaved to it*. So just think with me about *anything* that you consistently struggle with. Let's say it's **anger and impatience**. Let's say that you've realized you have a real problem being impatient with your colleagues at work, and you say to yourself, "starting *tomorrow*, I am going to *become* a patient person at work. I am going to become the most calm, soothing, understanding presence that my coworkers have ever seen." That's your goal.

And so you **walk into the office the next morning** feeling really good about your plan. And then, as soon as you get into the office, you run into *Keith*. And *Keith* is being a real *toolbag*. Which to be honest, is kind of his thing. And after all that thought you put into being a different kind of person, a few comments from *Keith* is all it takes for the whole thing to go off the rails. Every bit of the anger and impatience just comes flooding back into your life. Now, we could blame that on *Keith*. And maybe that's *part* of it—*Keith's* toolbaggery definitely doesn't help. But...**we could also admit that what's going on in our hearts with impatience is a little deeper than just insufficient willpower.** It may actually be that we are *enslaved* to impatience and anger. Do you see that?

Okay, so that's **the point the Scriptures make**: that we as human beings are *enslaved* to our sin. And that *because* of that, **we can't just will our way into freedom; we have to be purchased into freedom.** And the language Jesus uses for how God will do that is the language of *ransom*. In *Jesus'* words, a ransom "for" many. Now, that word "for" in the original language means "instead of," "in place of," or, perhaps most literally, "as a substitute for." So if we wanted to use slightly more *descriptive* language, we could language **Mark 10:45** this way:

"...to give his life [as a substitutionary sacrifice for] many."

That is what Jesus' death on the cross was all about, according to Jesus: him becoming a *substitutionary sacrifice* for us. Now, to that you might say **"okay but why** did Jesus have to be a *substitutionary sacrifice*—why did he have to *die*—for God to forgive and accept us? To some of us, that almost makes God sound like one of those primitive, bloodthirsty deities who demanded blood sacrifice before they'd do something for people. "Why," we ask, "can't God just decide to forgive people *without* someone having to die? Why does there have to be a human sacrifice?" That's a question some of us have. **Which is an understandable question.** But when you look a little closer, you realize that *isn't* the dynamic Jesus is describing here at all. In fact, it's quite the opposite. You see, **Jesus didn't have to die so that God could love us. Jesus died because God loved us.** Let me try to help you understand why that distinction matters.⁵

I would argue that **any true demonstration of love** contains *some* amount of *substitutionary sacrifice*. All *true love costs* you something, in other words. If you've ever tried to love anybody with real issues, anyone who is in trouble or in need or is emotionally wounded in some way, you know this. **There is no way to truly love and care for them without taking some sort of hit yourself.** Loving that person is going to require at least *some of your time, your energy, your effort, your money or resources*. In order to *truly love* them, it is going to *require* something of you. *Part* of you will *want* to bail, will *want* to check-out, will *want* to tell that person to figure it out on their own. But *love* is when you refuse to do that. *Love* is when you *stay*.

If you've **ever been on the receiving end** of true love, *you* know well that this is how it works. If you've ever had a need, if you've ever struggled, ever been going *through* it—you know that *love* was when that other person or group of people chose to sacrifice some of *themselves* for *you*. When someone *gave* of their time, energy, effort, money, *for* your benefit. Anybody who has ever done anything that made a difference for us—a *parent, a teacher, a mentor, a close friend*—sacrificed something of *themselves* in some

⁵ Much of the following two pages paragraphs borrows heavily from Tim Keller, *Jesus the King*, p. 154-155.

way in order to do that. They offered a part of *themselves, for you*; which is substitutionary sacrifice. That's what *true love is*: substitutionary sacrifice.

It's **one thing for people to tell you** that they love you when you're hurting. It's **entirely a different thing for them to show it to you**. This is why the bible says things like this:

*Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth.*⁶

Or **inversely**, things like this:

*If anyone has material possessions and sees a brother or sister in need but has no pity on them (in other words, does nothing to help them), how can the love of God be in that person?*⁷ (Answer? It can't. All love involves substitutionary sacrifice.)

I think **we tend to forget this** in a day and age like ours, where "loving" someone often just means being *nice* to them. Often, when we talk about loving people *today*, what we're really talking about is just basic *kindness*. And **kindness is great—we should totally be kind to people. But kindness and love aren't the same thing.** *Kindness*, often, doesn't cost us anything at all. *Love*—at least *true love*—*always* costs something. This is captured well in the most common biblical word for love, the Greek word *agape*. Which means a love of the *will*, a love of *preference*. **Love, in the bible, means actively preferring the other person's well-being to your own** (in some form or fashion). All love, at some level, *is substitutionary sacrifice*. Love gives at least some of *yourself*, for the sake of someone else.

So **with that understanding** of love, I want us to **circle back** to Jesus' words in **Mark 10:45**. We'll put them up on the screen:

For even the Son of Man (Jesus) did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for (or "in the place of") many.

Do you see it? **Jesus' death was not about** satisfying the bloodlust of some angry, ancient deity: it was about *love*. It was God *substituting himself* for us. It was the truest, most profound demonstration of *agape* love the world has ever seen. See, ancient people *understood* the idea of divine *wrath*. They understood the idea of *justice*, the idea of *debt* and necessary *punishment*. **But they had no category for a God who would**

⁶ 1 John 3:18

⁷ 1 John 3:17

come and take all of that on *himself*. Take it *onto* himself. And do it all as a *ransom* for many. **The cross is the self-substitution of God for humanity.** It's the idea that God would see *us* in our *need*, in our desperation—in our separation from him and our inability to do anything about it—and then place *himself* on the hook for all of it. To come be the ransom *himself*, so that *we* could go free. In the words of C.S. Lewis from *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*:

When a willing victim who had committed no treachery was killed in a traitor's stead, the Table would crack and Death itself would start working backward.

That's what happened at the cross. Jesus, a *willing victim*, offered himself *for* us. In our place. As a substitutionary sacrifice. And because he did that, death *itself* can start working in reverse. Everything sad can start to become untrue. And we get to go free. **And this is precisely why Jesus couldn't just be a king who *lived*, but also had to be a king who died.** He couldn't *just* be an example to model our lives after. He couldn't *just* be an ideal for us to *strive* for. **We needed far more than that.** We needed a *ransom*. A *substitutionary sacrifice*. We needed a king who wouldn't just *live* for us, but *die* for us too.

And it was **only through that, that his kingdom** could take shape. You see, there's one more baffling dynamic at play historically that I think we have to do something with. And it's that **Jesus had a far greater impact in all the years following his death than he did in the years before it.** Why is that? Why did the movement of Jesus affect *more* people once he was gone, than while he was alive? Here's what Jesus said it was. This is **John 12**. Jesus is in the final week of his life, and is very aware of his death closing in on him. And it's then that he says this to the crowds:

*Jesus replied, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified" (remember: Jesus' "glorification" is often code for his death. So he's saying, in essence, "I'm about to die"). Very truly I tell you (v. 24), unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds.*⁸

So he's **speaking in metaphor** here, but it's not very difficult to interpret. He's saying essentially, "If all I do is *live*, the impact is limited. But if I *die*, the impact is far greater. Because *that's* how people will be ransomed out of their sin. My *death* is how people will be rescued into my kingdom. My *death* is how my kingdom will take shape." And then look at v. 27 with me, just a couple verses later:

⁸ John 12:23-24

Now my soul is troubled (remember: love comes at a cost), *and what shall I say? 'Father, save me from this hour'? No, it was for this very reason I came to this hour.*

Jesus **came to die**. And it's a good thing he did. Because his *death* is how we *live*. So here's where we'll land this morning. We started off this morning mentioning how many people believe that Jesus was just a really good teacher. And *hopefully*, at least *that much* is true of those of us who *follow Jesus*, too. Hopefully all of *us* find Jesus' teachings helpful, insightful, and useful. I would argue that Jesus was the best teacher to ever live. His teachings are *unbelievably* helpful, *unbelievably* insightful. *Unbelievably dialed* into the human condition.

But it's here that **we also must insist on something** as followers of Jesus. **Trusting in Jesus isn't just about trusting his teachings, insofar as they seem helpful. Trusting Jesus is about trusting in *the thing* that *he* said his life and ministry were all about. What they were all pointing to: and that's his *death*. Trusting Jesus isn't just about trusting that he's *smart*; it's about trusting that he's our *substitute*. You see, for all the teaching on how to live that Jesus left us, *one* instruction is mysteriously *missing*: how to live well enough that you are accepted by God. **And that's because acceptance from God *isn't* something you perform your way into; it's something you have to be given through Jesus.****

You can live your entire *life* based on Jesus' teachings. You can spend your entire *existence* doing the things that he said to do, and still not *know* him, still not be accepted by him.⁹ Because **knowing Jesus is about accepting his *death*. Knowing Jesus is about understanding that Jesus *had* to die. And it's about understanding that that *death* was *for you*. It was *your ransom*. Your substitutionary sacrifice. And it's through understanding that *death* that we learn how to truly *live*.**

So we're going to wrap up this morning by **singing some songs** about the cross and the death of Jesus. And as we do that, I want to encourage you to do something with me. I think often here on Sundays, it's easy to think about the teaching and the music like they're two separate things: we have this part of the Gathering where we *learn*, and this *other* part of the Gathering where we *sing*. But this morning *especially*, I'm gonna ask you to *resist* that tendency. When we sing, we are not doing something *different* or *disconnected* from learning. We are in many ways, responding to and internalizing the things that we learned.

⁹ See Matthew 7:21-23

When we sing songs about the death of Jesus, we are remembering that Jesus' death *itself* was something worth singing *about*. Something worth *celebrating*. Something worth reflecting on and rejoicing in. **We're declaring that Jesus' death wasn't just something that happened in history, but something in history that has direct, ongoing implications for us today.** Something that happened so that we could be *ransomed* out of our sin and into God's kingdom.

So as we sing together this morning, why don't we **ask that God would make that *real*** to us, by his Spirit? Why don't we ask that he would bring all of our being into line with that reality? That he would help the death of Jesus and its implications make its way into all the corners of our lives where it hasn't yet? Let's ask him to help us understand the power and the glory of Jesus' death, in our place for our sin.

As we do that, **the tables will be open** for all of us who know and follow Jesus to come and take communion together. Communion is just one more way that we commemorate and, literally, *internalize* the reality of Jesus' death on the cross. As we take the bread and the cup, we remember that Jesus' death is what was at work *for* us and can be at work *in* us, to become the types of people God made us to be all along. So if you're a follower of Jesus, you're invited to participate in that with us as we sing.

Let's pray together.