



**Prayer of Thanksgiving:** as Christians, God has called us to Himself – an enormous privilege! **“But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.” (1Pe 2:9 ESV)**

Please do not forget to pray for all the shut-ins and isolated brothers and sisters in our congregations Mrs. Jack and Clem Campbell (Fredericton) and John Steffes (Caribou, Me), Mr. Ross Bathurst, Phil Ward (Saint John) and others.

**Open Hand Food Bank – Moncton** - is in need of grocery plastic bags to give out food to those in need. If you are interested in donating your unused grocery bags, you can bring them to church and someone will collect them and bring them over. Those who want to bring food to give to the **Open Food Bank** may do so by bringing to church and giving it to **Michael M.** of the Moncton congregation.

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**ACTIVITIES FOR THE MONTH OF May 2018**

Times of worship services: **Moncton** – 10:30 AM every Sunday.

**In Saint John** , worship services will be May 13 and 27 at 2:30 PM

**Communion**- on the second and fourth Sunday of the month.

**Address: Moncton**—70 King St. —Sage building;

**Saint John**—50 Newport Cres., Portland United church.

**Discipleship group Moncton**— May 23 in the home of Mr. and Mrs. Vautour. **Topics: Galatians 5 –**

**Event today:** May 6 – potluck at the Vautours – after services;

**Potluck** in Saint John after services May 27

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**Prayer update for Gideon Mann K. and his family.** This is a pastor from Africa who is associated with GCI. He lives in Northwestern New Brunswick. He has some undiagnosed health problem related to his heart. They are the parents of four children. His wife is also incapacitated with her back problems and is presently unable to work. He will be to receive results of his testing this coming Monday. Please pray for their healing and for God’s continued provision for them.

**Prayer update regarding Josephine and James**, a pastor and his wife from Kenya with whom we have been associated for many years is continuing to face challenges feeding the orphans that they look after. Email dated May 4<sup>th</sup>: **“Greetings in Jesus Name, The floods has affected us greatly for it has flooded on the gardens which we had planted already and has affected food plants and some their houses have already been swept away”.In Christ Sister Josephine.**

**Please pray also for all those affected by the recent and on-going flooding** in parts New Brunswick as well as in part of the British Columbia. We also need to pray for our brothers and sisters touched by very inclement weather in such places as part of the USA, part of Africa, including Kenya and other adjacent countries, etc..

**Pray that we will see the good works that God has prepared for us in advance** so that we can enthusiastically participate in the on-going work He is doing now on this earth in bringing people in relationship with him in Jesus by the Holy Spirit.

**Please pray, as per Jesus instructions, the disciples prayer, “Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.**

**<sup>10</sup> Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven” (Matt 6:9-10)** as our world is suffering so much and in need of complete restoration by the King of kings, Jesus. As we are his royal priesthood, let us proclaim the excellencies of him who called us out of darkness into his marvelous light, as we are instructed in 1 Peter 2.

**Pray for the world and for all people:** we live in a world that does not know the way to peace. Important to pray as we are instructed by the apostle Paul — **“1 ¶ First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, 2 for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way. 3 This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior,” (1Ti 2:1–3 ESV)**

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## COMMEMORATING THE CRUCIFIXION

(from <https://www.gci.org/disc/08-commemorating>)

Almost 2,000 years ago, a Jewish carpenter was condemned as a dangerous religious and political rebel. He was executed in one of the most painful and shameful punishments ever known: flogging and crucifixion. This form of death was a scandal to both Jews and Gentiles.



Nevertheless, Jesus' followers made a point of remembering his death—not just the fact that he died, but also that he died in such a shameful way. In their written stories about Jesus, they devoted lengthy sections to his horrible death. They set aside one day each year as the anniversary of his death.

Why is Jesus' death so important to Christians—and so central to the Christian faith?

### Of greatest importance

Jesus' death is listed as of "first importance" in Paul's summary of the gospel message: "What I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that he appeared..." ([1 Corinthians 15:3-5](#)). Paul even characterized his own preaching as "the message of the cross" ([1 Corinthians 1:18](#)). "We preach Christ crucified," he said (verse 23).

Jesus' death was predicted in Scripture, and was necessary ([Luke 24:25-26](#); [Acts 3:18](#); [17:3](#)). It was necessary not just for the Messiah to *die*, but to *suffer*, and to be crucified for our salvation. It was an essential part of Jesus' ministry, and an essential part of the gospel. Jesus had predicted his own suffering and death, even his death on a cross ([Mark 8:31-32](#); [9:31](#); [10:33-34](#); [Matthew 20:19](#); [26:2](#); [John 12:32-33](#)). He was sure it had to happen the way it did ([Matthew 26:54](#))—it was his purpose, his mission ([John 12:27](#)). He had to fulfill the prophecy of Isaiah 53 ([Luke 22:37](#)). Jesus said that his death would be a ransom to save other people ([Mark 10:45](#)). At his Last Supper, he said that he gave his body on behalf of other people, and he gave his blood to form a new covenant, the basis of a new relationship between God and humanity, based on forgiveness ([Luke 22:19-20](#); [Matthew 26:28](#)). He was, as Isaiah 53 had predicted, an innocent person who suffered and died to ransom the guilty. God laid our sins on Jesus, and he was killed for *our* transgressions to buy *our* freedom.

Jesus not only predicted his death, he also explained its significance for us—and this is why it is good news. He gave his body for us—for our benefit. He allowed his blood to be shed so we would be forgiven. Jesus was the mediator between God and humans. His death enables us to have a covenant with God—a relationship of promise and loyalty. The death of Christ is the *only* way for our salvation. That is why Jesus, even though he knew what pain awaited him, "resolutely set out for Jerusalem" ([Luke 9:51](#)). It was the reason he had come.

### Publicizing a scandal

The resurrection of Jesus was wonderful news. It was a hope-filled message. Because of that, it would have been easy for the apostles to emphasize Jesus' resurrection and skip over his shameful death. Indeed, we read in Acts that they preached the resurrection—but they also boldly reminded people of the shameful punishment Jesus had received ([Acts 2:22-24](#); [3:13-15](#); [4:10](#); [5:30-31](#); [7:51-53](#); [10:37-40](#); [13:27-30](#)).

Not only did they admit the cross, they also called it a *tree*—a word that would remind Jews of [Deuteronomy 21:22-23](#), which says that anyone who is hung on a tree is under God's curse. By using the word *tree*, the apostles drew extra attention to the shameful way Jesus had died. Why did they emphasize this? Because it was important. The Scriptures had predicted it, Jesus had predicted it, and it was necessary for our salvation.

The cross involves shame as well as pain ([Hebrews 12:2](#)). It involves a "curse" ([Galatians 3:13-14](#)). Paul did his best not to offend people, but he emphasized the crucifixion even though he knew it was offensive ([Galatians 5:11](#); [3:1](#); [6:14](#)). The cross was the center of his gospel ([1 Corinthians 1:23](#); [2:2](#); [Philippians 3:18](#)). Paul gives the spiritual significance of the cross: Jesus redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us. He was made sin for us ([2 Corinthians 5:21](#)). He was a sacrifice so that we might be justified, or declared right, so that we might escape the punishment our sins deserve ([Romans 3:24-26](#)). He carried our sins on his cross ([1 Peter 2:24](#)). "Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God" ([1 Peter 3:18](#)).

Through the cross, we can be given the blessing promised to Abraham ([Galatians 3:14](#)). Through the cross, we are reconciled to God ([Ephesians 2:16](#)). Through the cross, God forgives our sins, taking away the written note of debt that was against us ([Colossians 2:13-14](#)). Our salvation depends on the cross of Christ.

Since we fail to keep the law perfectly, we fall under its curse ([Galatians 3:10](#)). We all deserve death ([Romans 3:23](#); [6:23](#)). Jesus, being sinless, did not need to die, but he willingly died for us. The righteous died for the unrighteous. He received death so that we might receive life.

John Stott writes that the crucifixion shows three truths:

**First**, our sin must be extremely horrible. Nothing reveals the gravity of sin like the cross.... If there was no way by which the righteous God could righteously forgive our unrighteousness, except that he should bear it himself in Christ, it must be serious indeed....

**Secondly**, God's love must be wonderful beyond comprehension.... He pursued us even to the desolate anguish of the cross, where he bore our sin, guilt, judgment and death. It takes a hard and stony heart to remain unmoved by love like that.... **Thirdly**, Christ's salvation must be a free gift. He "purchased" it for us at the high price of his own life-blood. So what is there left for us to pay? Nothing! (*The Cross of Christ*, page 83)

### **A memorial of death**

The cross was the focus of Jesus' mission as a human. His job was not done until he was crucified. Jesus did not tell his disciples to remember his miracles—they were to remember his *death*. Jesus eliminated many rituals, but he commanded a new one: the bread and wine of the Lord's Supper. He told us to participate in these reminders of his death because his death, and our participation in his death, is vital for our salvation.

We remember Jesus' death not just as something that happened to Jesus—it is relevant for us today. The Lord's Supper looks to the past—Jesus willing gave his life for us—and to the present—his union with us now, and the future—his promise to return. Spiritually, are we crucified with Christ ([Galatians 2:20](#)), and on a daily basis, we are to crucify our sinful passions and desires ([Galatians 5:24](#); [Romans 8:13](#)). To follow Jesus, we must take up our cross each day ([Luke 9:23](#)), willing to deny wrong desires. The Lord's Supper reminds us of what our life is about.

Jesus' death is our pattern for daily living—it is a picture of complete submission to God, a picture of willingness to reject sin and choose righteousness. Jesus died for us, Paul says, so that we should no longer live for ourselves, but instead live to serve Jesus ([2 Corinthians 5:15](#)). Since our old self was crucified with Christ, "we should no longer be slaves to sin" ([Romans 6:6](#)). Instead, we offer ourselves to God as living sacrifices, willing to serve him ([Romans 6:13](#); [12:1](#)). Because he died for us, we "die to sins and live for righteousness" ([1 Peter 2:24](#)).

Jesus' death is evidence that God loves us—it shows us that God cares about us so much that he did something to solve our problem, to rescue us from the pain and death our sinfulness brought upon us ([Romans 5:8-10](#)). Since God did not spare his own Son, we can be confident that he will give us everything we need for salvation ([Romans 8:32](#)). His love for us becomes an example for how much we should love one another ([Ephesians 5:1-2](#)).

The death of Jesus gives us some important freedoms:

We are no longer prisoners of the law ([Galatians 3:23](#); [Romans 7:6](#)).

We are no longer slaves of sin and passions ([John 8:34-36](#); [Romans 6:6-7](#), [16](#); [Titus 3:3](#)).

We are no longer enslaved by death or fear ([Romans 8:2](#); [Hebrews 2:14-15](#)).

We have overcome the world and the evil one ([1 John 5:4-5](#); [1 John 2:13-14](#); [Revelation 12:11](#)).

With this freedom, we are to be slaves of righteousness, slaves of Jesus Christ ([Romans 6:18](#)). He died for us so we may live for him ([2 Corinthians 5:14-15](#)). This is how we should respond to the love of God shown to us in the cross of Christ. The cross is also an example for us when we suffer. Peter reminds us that when we suffer unjustly, we should remember the example of Jesus, who suffered unjustly for us, setting an example for us ([1 Peter 2:19-23](#)). In Hebrews we are told to remember Jesus when we grow weary of our troubles, for he endured great opposition for us ([Hebrews 12:2-4](#)).

Unjust suffering is part of the Christian calling, and part of the example Jesus set for us. "A servant is not greater than his master" ([John 15:20](#)). The Lord's Supper reminds us of what Jesus' life was about, and that we are called to follow him. When we suffer, we are also encouraged by knowing that a crown of glory awaits us, just as it did for Jesus. When we identify with him in his cross, we will also share in his glory ([Romans 8:17-18](#); [2 Corinthians 4:17](#)).

Many people think that the cross is foolishness, but it shows us the wisdom of God ([1 Corinthians 1:17-25](#)). It was a stroke of genius, a brilliant maneuver. It simultaneously shows us how ugly sin is, and how beautiful God's love is, and the extent of his commitment to ensure our salvation. It punishes sin and brings forgiveness. It shows both justice and grace. It breaks the power of sin and death, and gives us power to overcome. The cross gives us visible evidence that our sins have been dealt with once and for all, that our struggles are not in vain, and that a crown of glory awaits us through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. It is certainly worth remembering.

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## Christ Is The Key

Have you ever wondered how many laws there are in the Old Testament? The most generally agreed-upon number is the one enumerated by the Mitzvot, the most broadly accepted codification of the Law of Moses: 613. Yes, six hundred and thirteen laws.

They range from comprehensive laws like the Ten Commandments, to smaller ones like which insects are okay to eat. You might ask: "Was all of that really necessary?" And while I agree that wearing a garment that mixes linen and cotton probably isn't a salvation issue, there truly was a divine purpose at work in these commandments. Let's see what the Apostle Paul said about this in his letter to the Galatians: "Scripture has locked up everything under the control of sin, so that what was promised, being given through faith in Jesus Christ, might be given to those who believe. Before the coming of this faith, we were held in custody under the law, locked up until the faith that was to come would be revealed" (Galatians 3:22-23 NIV).

What Paul is emphasizing here is the necessity of the Law as a forerunner to what came next: the grace offered through salvation in Christ. Remember that as a Pharisee, Paul had devoted his life to the Law: learning it, debating it, and following it to the letter. He approached the law this way because he had come to regard it as setting out the conditions to merit or earn God's faithfulness, forgiveness and love. So he knew by painful experience just how "locked up" one could truly become by trying to earn God's salvation through conformity to the demands of the Law. In short he was obeying the law not out of faith in the nature and character and purposes of God, but out of unbelief and distrust in God's covenant heart and promises.

Part of Paul's conversion involved coming to see that the particulars of the laws given to Israel was meant to help God's people understand how in particular they were to live out of trust or faith in the covenant faithfulness of God. They described for them in detail how to obey out of trust in God's particular promises to them and through them to all people. But their resistance and disobedience to these laws, graciously given to Israel, would also expose their hard and distrustful hearts. It would reveal the true depth of their sinful nature and prepare them to see their profound need for the redeeming work of Christ—a work that would need to somehow give them new hearts and renewed spirits. The laws given to Israel were never meant to provide a contractual way for Israel to earn God's blessing. God is a blessing God. But even through the misuse of the Law out of unbelief, God would still use it to powerfully draw his people to trust in the fulfillment of his promises to bring about their salvation in Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ is the accomplished for us. As our great high priest he obeyed by faith even to the point of death in order to give us a share in his transformed human nature, in his renewed spirit. "For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin" (Hebrews 4:15 NIV).

By living a sinless accomplished for us now allows us, by the Spirit, to live by grace, through faith in his redemptive work on the cross. Our obedience to the Word of God now can come out of trust in the fulfillment of his covenant promises. In the infinite wisdom of our Triune God, Christ's work was the key that unlocked all of humanity, freeing us to live eternally out of the obedience of faith!

I'm Greg Williams, Speaking of LIFE.

**GCI principle** website and Moncton Websites—[www.gci.org](http://www.gci.org), [www.worshipim.ca](http://www.worshipim.ca), [www.facebook.com/GCIMoncton](https://www.facebook.com/GCIMoncton); <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCgKazyWhmKMDZy69vJcFfPg>. For a wealth of helpful articles about God, grace and his plan for salvation, who we are, etc., please see the GCI.org website. *Contact Information: Pastor's contact information: email—[evautour47@outlook.com](mailto:evautour47@outlook.com)*