

Reeks: Goeie Vrydag
Titel: *God's Logo*
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Good morning, friends, it's very special to be with you on this Good Friday for this service and for the second service a little bit later. I don't know about you but as I've been sharing in the worship so far I've been quite overwhelmed just with the, I guess, the emotion of today and of everything that Christ has done for us, especially on the cross.

As you entered the auditorium, you received a brochure and just inside that brochure there is a leaflet and on that leaflet there is the reading that I would like to share with you today. It's just a very simple reading that describes the events of that first Good Friday and later I will use one or two other readings from scripture.

So let me read from Mark's Gospel, Mark Chapter 15 verses 33 to 39. At noon darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon. And at three in the afternoon Jesus cried out in a loud voice, [speaks in Hebrew], which means My God, My God, why have You forsaken me? And when some of those standing near heard this, they said, listen, He's calling Elijah, and someone ran and filled a sponge with wine vinegar, put it on a staff and offered it to Jesus to drink. Now leave Him alone, let's see if Elijah comes to take Him down, he said. With a loud cry, Jesus breathed his last. The curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom and when the centurion who stood there in front of Jesus saw how he died he said, surely this man was the Son of God. We thank God for that witness to the death of Christ. Amen.

We, I am sure you would agree with me, we live today in the day and age of the logo. I'm sure you've noticed that. A large corporate may be the corporate you work for invests huge amounts of money, huge amounts of money, for people to come up with the right company logo, to come up with a logo that will communicate what the company has to offer in a compelling and memorable way. And so we are surrounded today by logos. You may want to look at some. I'm sure you recognise them. Here is one. The swoosh. I think it comes from the Greek word for victory and I have a guess it's there to communicate the sense of victory and success and being ahead of the pack. Recognise this one? It takes me to the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve eating the apple and I guess it's intended to communicate the availability of a technology that can... that can give us access to knowledge of all kinds; knowledge that previous generations have never had. I don't know if you recognise this one. We notice this one a lot in Benoni. And this is communicates, I guess, all those good things that you gave up for Lent.

Friends, what I want to do very simply this morning is I want to explore with you God's logo. It's a logo that has been around for over 2000 years. It's a logo that will outlast every other logo. It's a logo that you see everywhere. You see it tattooed into bodies, on necklaces, on mountain tops, in valleys, in cathedrals, churches, buildings. You see it everywhere. It's a very, very powerful logo. It's known to literally billions of people around planet earth. It's the logo of a cross with a human being on it. That is God's logo. It's a scandalous logo. It's grotesque. It's crucifixion. It's torture. And yet it is a logo that God has used to speak God's message into the hearts of people wherever they are and all I want to do this morning, very simply, is just for a few moments to look at this logo. And as we look at this logo and as we explore this logo, I pray that God is going to speak a word into your heart and my heart today that will set our lives on a new journey today.

Friends, this logo, and this is the first that I want to say this morning, this logo, this logo reminds us of who we are. It reminds us that we are God's beloved. Look with me at this verse quickly, it's one of the most powerful verses in scripture, John Chapter 3 verse 16. For God so loved the world that He gave... that He gave His one and only Son that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life. When our lives are touched by the reality behind that verse, our lives are changed forever. That's a powerful verse.

I love the story, it's a true story, it happened, I think, about 20 years ago in Harare when the general-secretary of the Bible Society went on to the streets of Harare and handed out a little booklet that had the full gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. And he was just handing them out freely to people on the street and there was one young man, when the general-secretary, I think his name was Kamburi [?], came across to him and said, here... here are the gospels and this young man said, I don't want them. I don't read that stuff. Kamburi said, come on, just take... take it, just take this. He said, if you give me that, I will use the paper to make cigarettes. Kamburi said, come on, man, take this booklet. 18 months later and he gave the booklet to that young man, 18 months later Kamburi was preaching in the township just outside Harare and there was this young man whom he had met on the streets of Harare seated there, and he was surprised. He went to across and said to him, what you doing here? And this

young man said to him, man, you gave me that booklet. I smoked my way through Matthew. I smoked my way through Mark. I smoked my way through Luke. But when I came to John Chapter 3 verse 16, I stopped smoking and in that moment, you see, God's love seized him, and it's through that logo of the cross that God whispers His message into my heart. Look at that piece of art behind me. He puts his arms around us and He says, you are My beloved. This is how much I love you, there is nothing that you can ever do that can make you... that can make me stop loving you. There is nothing that you can ever do that can make Me love you more and that there is nothing that you can ever do that make Me love you less. You are My beloved and the proof of that love is my logo.

I don't know about you but almost every day I think we go through experiences that tell us that we are not loved. Experiences of rejection, of failure, of abuse, of being put down. It's almost like every day, can I give you an East Rand picture? It's like the devil gets an aerosol can and he sprays graffiti over the walls of our heart and says, you're no good, you're worthless. You don't amount to much. You're a failure. And on this Good Friday, the spirit of God comes and sprays new graffiti over our life; you are God's beloved. You are God's beloved. Look at the logo. There's the proof.

When I look at this logo, let me push it even more, when I look at this logo it shows me how God has made us His friends even though we have failed and sinned and done evil. Look at these incredible words that Paul writes in Romans Chapter 8. They are dense. They are complicated. Look at them carefully. He says, therefore there is no condemnation, there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. What the law was powerless to do because it was weakened by the flesh, follow me, God did, by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, to be a sin offering, and so God condemned sin in the flesh. Now it's going to stay there and I want you to notice two things. Notice that when Paul says there is no condemnation for those of us who are in Christ Jesus, notice, notice that Paul does not say that God is not into condemning. God condemns sin. Let's make no mistake about that. When people use each other and abuse each other and deceive and are faithless and hurt each other, when a maths tutor gets killed in Fitzburg because he's leading a march for the... for water, God condemns it and if God did not condemn it, God would not be loving and God would not be good.

But the reason there is no condemnation for us is because, look at that verse, it's because God has come to us in Jesus Christ and in Jesus Christ He absorbs our sin and evil into Himself and in the flesh of Jesus Christ, the crucified flesh, God condemns our sin and our evil so that we can be friends. God picks up the tab for you, for me, a simple illustration. I think it was about six years ago, Mark, my son and I, Valentine's Night, we were alone at home, can you believe it? My daughter Joanie had a date somewhere. Debbie, the woman I'm married to, was at a... she tells me a parent's evening at school. I hope she was there that night. Mark and I sitting at home, Valentine's Night. We're looking at each other. He says, dad, let's go grab a meal in the centre of Benoni. So we go down to the little Italian restaurant. They're having a Valentine's evening supper. There are adoring couples looking into each other's eyes over candlelight as Mark and I walk in. I can almost see everyone looking at us and feeling sorry for us. We sat down in a little table and looked into each other's eyes over candlelight as we ate Abribiata Fettuccini followed by ice cream and hot chocolate sauce. Wonderful meal. And when we were finished the waitress came across to us and she said to us, someone has paid the bill. I was free. We could walk out. Mark says to me as we walk out, you see, dad, what happens to us when you go out with me? Christ has paid the bill so that we can be friends with God even though we have sinned. And I pray that you will receive that gift today.

I want to say one more thing quickly. God's logo tells us that we are God's beloved. God's logo tells us that the bill has been paid. Look at that picture that we can be friends but the logo tells us one other thing. It shows us the way that we need to go in order to experience the new life that God wants to give us. Just look at these amazing words that Jesus speaks when He says to His disciples, whoever wants to be My disciple must deny themselves, take up their cross, and follow Me for whoever wants to save their life will lose it but whoever loses their life for Me will find it.

Jesus experiences resurrection because He dies. We experience resurrection, new life, when with Him, we die. Can I make a confession today before you? It's an honest confession. I want to confess that my name is Trevor and I'm an addict. I am addicted to a self-centred, self-interested way of life. A way of life that shrivels up my soul, that sabotages human relationships, that spoils teams, that contributes to the pain of my community. I'm addicted to a way of life that blinds me to the suffering of human beings all around me. I'm addicted to a disease that gets me to want more and more and more when there are people who have nothing. I am addicted to a disease that's going to kill me and this world for generations to come but thank God I can say, I'm a recovering addict, that when I was 17 years of age, a young man called Philip, told me the story about the cross and I was encountered by Christ and from that moment onwards I began to die. I began to die on a daily basis because it's a radical disease. I began to die to my self-interest, self-centredness, my self-absorption, and I slowly came alive and am coming alive to a new life with God, in love with God, with others, open to others. Resurrection.

Are there any other addicts here today who need to die in order to be brought alive by Christ into a new life? I want to invite you, friends, today to make God's logo your logo. We do this together as we celebrate communion. We remember that on the night in which Jesus was betrayed, He took bread and He gave thanks and He broke it and He gave it to His disciples and He said, this is My body, which is broken for you. He took a cup of wine and He gave thanks and He said, this is My blood which is shed for you. My blood which is shed for you. Drink this in remembrance of Me because whenever you eat the bread and whenever you drink the wine, you share in My death, My self-giving love.

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And so you're going to be served communion and I invite you as you take communion just to take it at your own pace, in your own way, in your own time. And as you do this, will you allow God to speak to you, to His logo?

God, you came into this world in Jesus Christ to rescue us, to save us and to save your world that you love so much. Help us to know, each one of us, help us to know in a way that we've never known before, that we're your beloved. Help us to know in a way that we've never known before, the profound mystery of You coming to us in Christ. Dying in our place, that we may be reconciled to you. Help us, Lord, in a new way to follow You and to give up our tiny self-interested, self-centred, self-absorbed world. Help us to die to them, that we might enter the life that You have for us, the life beyond bondage, life beyond enslavement, life beyond addiction, a life of glorious freedom and wild, wild joy. May today be a day, Lord, of deep decision making, of making new choices for our own lives and for our future and for You. Speak to us, God. Speak to us. This is our prayer and we offer it to You with all the love and longing of our hearts. In the name of Christ, our Lord, and we say together as God's people, Amen.

May the wild, wild joy of the crucified Christ who lives beyond crucifixion, may His joy be with you. Have a great day, friends. God bless.

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