

# TALK IT OVER

CROSS TO CROWN

PART 4 | 13 APRIL 2025

## NOTES TO LEADERS

- Good Friday Services: 8am & 9:30am
- Easter Sunday Services: 8am, 9:30am & 6pm

## SCRIPTURES

### MATTHEW 27:45–54 (NIV)

45 From noon until three in the afternoon darkness came over all the land.

46 About three in the afternoon Jesus cried out in a loud voice, “Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?” (which means “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”).

47 When some of those standing there heard this, they said, “He’s calling Elijah.”

48 Immediately one of them ran and got a sponge. He filled it with wine vinegar, put it on a staff, and offered it to Jesus to drink.

49 The rest said, “Now leave him alone. Let’s see if Elijah comes to save him.”

50 And when Jesus had cried out again in a loud voice, he gave up his spirit.

51 At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. The earth shook, the rocks split

52 and the tombs broke open. The bodies of many holy people who had died were raised to life.

53 They came out of the tombs after Jesus’ resurrection and went into the holy city and appeared to many people.

54 When the centurion and those with him who were guarding Jesus saw the earthquake and all that had happened, they were terrified, and exclaimed, “Surely he was the Son of God!”

## START TALKING

- What stood out to you from Sunday’s message? What challenged you or encouraged you?
- What has God been doing in your world - what can we celebrate?

## START THINKING

1. With reference to the verses above: If you were standing there in person watching this all take place, what emotions do you think you would have felt?
2. What is the significance of the temple curtain tearing from top to bottom? What does this mean for us today?
3. Why do you think some responded with mockery and doubt while others, like the centurion, responded in awe and belief?

## START SHARING

- Steve shared an image of Rembrandt’s Return of the Prodigal Son, which shows a son being embraced despite shame and failure. Christ was forsaken so that we might be accepted by the Father. Why do you think we struggle to believe that God fully embraces us despite our failures?
- In these verses, we see that many dead people came back to life. Is there an area of your life (finances, relationships, time, generosity, doubts, etc.) where you are trusting God to bring new life or supernatural change?
- When you reflect on your current season of faith, do you identify more with the “Let’s see” crowd or the “Surely this is the Son of God” response? Have you ever moved from scepticism to faith in an area of your life? What helped you make that shift?

## START PRAYING

Encourage the group to pray for:

- Anyone feeling isolated, ashamed, or spiritually “stuck”
- A deeper sense of God’s nearness and presence
- Clarity for those who are wrestling with doubt or “let’s see” thinking

## START DOING

- Read Psalm 22 slowly this week. Reflect on how it points to Jesus. Write down your thoughts and feelings.
- Invite someone to our Easter services.

# TALK IT OVER

## CROSS TO CROWN

PART 4 | 13 APRIL 2025

### SUMMARY OF SUNDAY'S MESSAGE

Last week, we looked at the suffering of Jesus from Matthew 27. *Now, we come to the moment where Matthew records Jesus' final hours on the cross:*

*45 From noon until three in the afternoon darkness came over all the land. 46 About three in the afternoon Jesus cried out in a loud voice, 'Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?' \* (which means 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?').*

*47 When some of those standing there heard this, they said, 'He's calling Elijah.'*

*48 Immediately one of them ran and got a sponge. He filled it with wine vinegar, put it on a staff, and offered it to Jesus to drink. 49 The rest said, 'Now leave him alone. Let's see if Elijah comes to save him.'*

*50 And when Jesus had cried out again in a loud voice, he gave up his spirit. [He gave up his spirit = His body died.]*

*51 At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. The earth shook, the rocks split 52 and the tombs broke open. The bodies of many holy people who had died were raised to life. 53 They came out of the tombs after Jesus' resurrection and went into the holy city and appeared to many people.*

*54 When the centurion and those with him who were guarding Jesus saw the earthquake and all that had happened, they were terrified, and exclaimed, 'Surely he was the Son of God!'*

*Matthew 27:45-54*

There is incredible power, symbolism and meaning in these verses. Matthew goes to great lengths to show that everything about Jesus' death is steeped in prophetic fulfilment. What we read not only links back to the Old Testament but also points forward to us.

*Immediately one of them ran and got a sponge. He filled it with wine vinegar, **put it on a staff**, and offered it to Jesus to drink. (v48). This scripture fulfils Psalm 69:21: "They gave me vinegar for my thirst."*

The staff used to lift the drink was made of hyssop (John 19:29)—a detail that connects to Exodus 12, where Israelites used hyssop branches to spread the blood of the lamb during Passover. 1,500 years later, the ultimate Passover Lamb is lifted up on a cross—with hyssop again in the picture.

In verse 46, we read that *Jesus cried out in a loud voice, 'Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?'* [which means 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?']

This was not only a deep prayer of anguish – He was quoting Psalm 22:1, written 1,000 years before. In Hebrew tradition, quoting the first line of a Psalm points to the entire psalm. This cry wasn't just emotional—it was a declaration: Jesus is fulfilling every line of that Messianic psalm. Jesus was letting us know that He fulfilled that Psalm and the Old Testament – He was the forsaken One.

Then comes the temple curtain. Verse 51 says: *"The curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom."* [The temple was half a mile away.]

This curtain separated humanity from the very presence of God — the Holy of Holies. Since the time of Moses (1,500 years before), only the high priest could enter that space, and only once a year. When Christ died, divine hands tore that barrier from top to bottom—a symbol that the way into God's presence was now open.

He was forsaken so we might be accepted (come near to the Father).

The Father looked away from the perfect Son covered in sin so that He could look upon us — sinful sons and daughters — covered in Christ's perfection.

In Hebrews 13:5, God makes this promise: *"Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you."* No matter how isolated, forsaken or shame-filled we feel, He will never leave or forsake us – what a promise!

#### 1. The Supernatural Power of God

*The **earth shook**, the **rocks split** 52 and the **tombs broke open**. The bodies of many holy people who had died were **raised to life**. Matthew 27:51,52*

Often overlooked, verses 51 & 52 describe a spiritual explosion on earth:

- The earth shook
- Rocks split
- Tombs broke open
- Dead people were raised to life

This wasn't symbolic. It literally happened.

#### Why did this happen?

It's as if all of creation convulsed with the magnitude of Jesus' death. But it's more than historical — it's **personal**. The same power that tore the curtain and shook the ground wants to:

- Shake the settled ground of our souls
- Split the hard rocks of resistance in our hearts
- Open the tombs of deadness in our spiritual lives
- Breathe new life into us

Jesus didn't just die to save us from something; He died to raise us into something. Alive. Renewed. Transformed.

### 1. The Responses of Those Who Were There

47 *When some of those standing there heard this, they said, 'He's calling Elijah.'*... 49 *The rest said, 'Now leave him alone. Let's see if Elijah comes to save him.'* (v47,49)

54 *When the centurion and those with him who were guarding Jesus saw the earthquake and all that had happened, they were terrified, and exclaimed, 'Surely he was the Son of God!'* (v54)

This passage records two radically different responses to Jesus:

#### Group 1: "Let's see"

*Let's see if Elijah comes to save him...* (v49)

This was the response of the sceptics — people who perhaps knew the Scriptures but had closed hearts. It's arms-crossed, cynical faith. You can hear echoes of that same spirit today:

- "If God is love, why does He allow suffering?"
- "Christians are all hypocrites—why should I believe?"

#### Group 2: "Surely"

*"Surely He was the Son of God!"* (v54)

The Roman centurion — likely a pagan who had just helped crucify Jesus — witnessed the darkness, the earthquake, and the cry from the cross and had a moment of staggering clarity. This is no ordinary man. Surely.

And this moment matters. Philippians 2 tells us: *"At the name of Jesus every knee will bow ... and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord."* The real question is not if you'll declare Jesus is Lord. It's when. If we wait until it's too late, we miss the embrace. If we respond now, we're welcomed home. Every human being will ultimately come to this realisation — either at the throne (too late) or at the cross.

### The Embrace of the Father

Rembrandt's *Return of the Prodigal Son* captures a profound spiritual reality. In Luke 15, the father throws his arms around his broken, ashamed, but returning son. That's the posture of our heavenly Father toward us — arms open wide. Even when we approach with arms crossed, distant, full of questions or shame — His arms stay open.

And like Steve illustrated by hugging his own son during the sermon — **this is what the Father wants to do with every one of us.**



Jesus was forsaken so we could be accepted. His death tore the curtain, shook the ground, and opened the grave—so we can live with full access to the Father's embrace.