



The new sermon series for Lent is titled, 'Living through the Cross'. The cross is the great jewel of our faith: it is like a stunningly glorious cut diamond with many facets: each one an entry point into a different truth about the wonder and the mystery of the cross. We will be looking at our jewel from different angles, taking time to ponder all that the death of Jesus has accomplished for us. The word for today is 'REDEMPTION'. **Read Psalm 49: 7-15 & 1 Peter 1: 18-22.**

1. What does Redemption mean? Mark 10:5.

- Talking of Himself, Jesus says the "..... the 'Son of Man' came to give His life as a ransom for many."
- In 1st century Palestine the ransom (*Gk: Lutron*) was the price paid to free a slave, or to free a prisoner of war.
- Redeeming someone meant releasing them from bondage by paying a great price.
- Jesus is implying that humanity is in bondage and that His death will pay the price for our release. The idea that we humans are 'slaves' who need rescue is using very strong language and is quite offensive imagery.

2. What does Redemption save us from?

- From spiritual slavery. The Bible teaches us that all humankind is enslaved to sin:
 - On the one hand we **choose** selfishness, pride and rebellion against God.
 - On the other hand, like slaves, there is a sense of powerlessness. Sin is in our genes, sin governs us.
- If you are not sure this is true of you, try going an hour without sinning some way – in thought, word or deed!
- St Paul certainly felt enslaved by the power of sin in his life. **Read Romans 7: 14-24.**
- Moreover, the consequences, or 'wages' of sin is death: **Romans 6: 23.** Sin is leading us all to spiritual death. **BUT** the good news for all who put their trust in Christ Jesus: **You have been redeemed. 1 Pet 1: 18**
- The word redemption is used because it means 'deliverance on payment of a price.' Rescuing us from the power of sin was hugely costly - to God. The price He paid was the life of His Son, His body broken and His life poured out for us – that is the price paid by our redeemer, that is what we remember when we celebrate communion. Redemption tells us the price tag on each of our heads: everyone is worth everything to God.

3. What does Redemption save us for? Galatians 5: 1.

- Redemption sets a slave free. Redemption saves us for spiritual freedom, and that should make a difference to how we live. Peter urges his readers to demonstrate the new freedom they have in their lives by:
 - Being self-controlled, not running back into sinful ways and by being Holy, like Jesus. **1 Peter 1: 13-15.**
 - Ridding ourselves of malice, deceit, hypocrisy, envy and slander – grow up spiritually. **1 Peter 2: 1-3.**
- The new testament is full of encouragements and instructions for holy living in response to God – about our attitudes, our thinking, speaking, work, finances, relationships, how we use or misuse our bodies. **1 Cor. 6:19f.**
- Slavery is characterised by powerlessness, freedom is characterised by empowerment. God not only redeems us, in setting us free he also gives us His Holy Spirit who empowers us to live as 'new creations'. It's a lifelong process, but gradually we align ourselves with His will and become more like Jesus.

Thoughts for discussion:

1. Ruth told us the story of Raja – a baby from SE India who was born into slavery in a rice factory. He grew up in the factory and from the age of 5 worked 14 hours a day in forced and unpaid labour in the most squalid and violent circumstances imaginable. The International Justice Mission found out about the factory slaves, including Raja and his mother, and after many years of painstaking and dangerous work fighting the forces of illegal slavery, human trafficking, corrupt law enforcement and a corrupt judiciary the IJM managed to get the factory closed and the slaves freed, including Raja. IJM has rescued 34,000 slaves since 1997 and Raja is now a lawyer working with the IJM!!

2. How can we be sure to live and witness in the reality of the freedom won for us by Christ's costly self-sacrifice?

[3. There is a story, probably fictional, that illustrates redemption rather nicely: a young boy made a beautiful model boat and sailed it on the pond. One day a big gust of wind took the boat away into deep water and on to the river, the boy was heart-broken. Sometime later he saw his boat in the window of a toy/model shop and went and asked for it back. He was told he's have to pay for it and so he went home determined to earn the money needed. When he had enough money, he went back and paid for his boat. On the way home, as he hugged it gently to himself, he said to his boat, "I made you and I bought you ". Thanks be to Jesus who made us and then bought us with His own blood.]