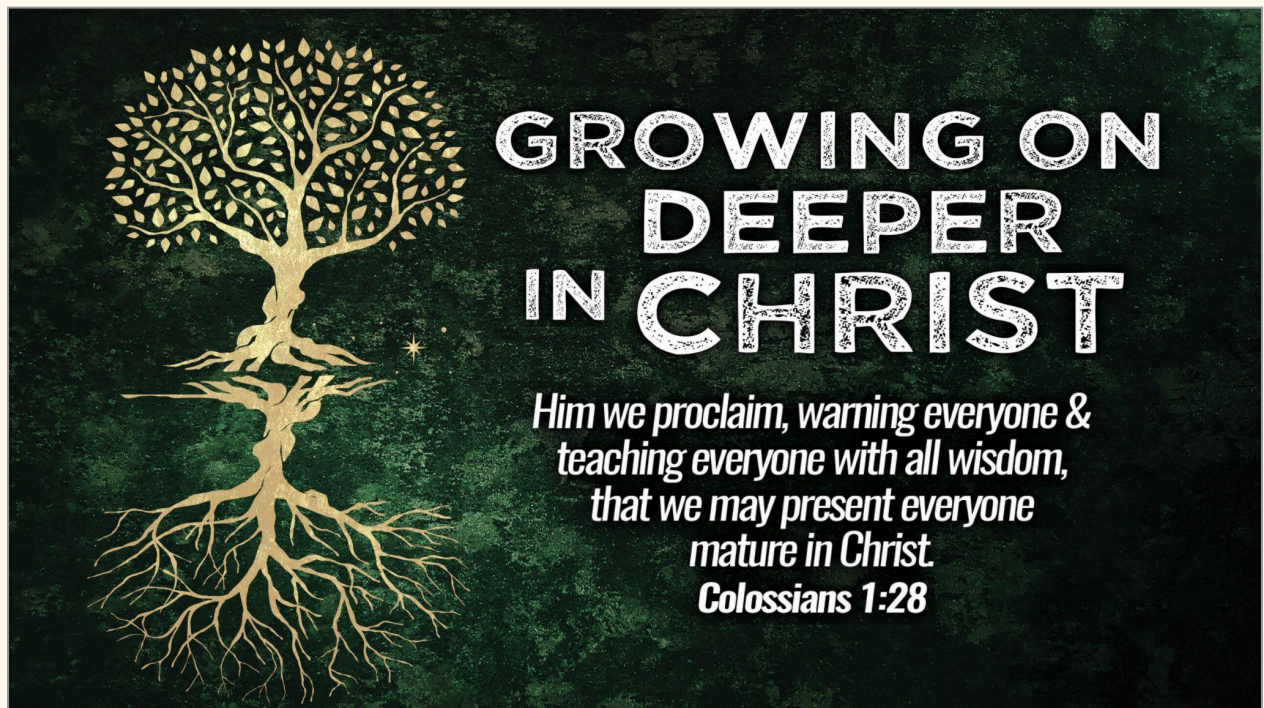

Engage

Dear God, our world is torn with war and violence. We pray for a peace and a hope that is only found in You. We pray for those who are suffering from the results of war and violence. May they experience You through Your people who share Your love and Your Gospel. In Jesus' Name, Amen.





SERMON SUMMARY

Note to Word Facilitator: The sermon notes below is a summary of the sermon. You may choose to further summarize it according to the needs and context of your CG members. The goal is not just to go through it “verbatim” but to prepare well, allowing members to recall and engage the message in the best possible way.

You must be joking!

Founding Senior Pastor Dato’ Dr Daniel Ho

1 Peter 1:3-7

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In His great mercy He has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade. This inheritance is kept in heaven for you, who through faith are shielded by God’s power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time. In all this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that the proven genuineness of your faith — of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may result in praise, glory and honour when Jesus Christ is revealed.

Introduction

You received a call from the bank telling you won a BMW. The good news is so crazy that you begin to doubt and say, “You must be joking.” The gospel of Christ is likewise. When you share it, people also doubt and tell you that you are joking. Despite the news of Jesus Christ being so good, people still have doubts about Him.

Some common objections or prejudices that people have on Christianity are:

1. Been hurt or played out

Pastor greeted people who have been wounded by the faith. People make decisions due to hurt. Just because a doctor hurt you while he was taking your blood makes

him a bad doctor. You will go and see another doctor and not boycott all doctors because of one bad experience. Not everyone is a 'bad apple'.

2. Hypocrisy

A man stopped going to church because he claims the whole church is full of hypocrisy. We write off bad examples. We have run traffic lights and hope no one is around. Instead of finding fault with others, we ought to be authentic and seek forgiveness.

3. Poor/bad examples

Non-Christians are put off when Christians set bad examples. We are the fifth Gospel. People read your life and my life more than the four gospels. There are many good examples out there in many churches around the world.

4. The bible is full of errors/contradictions

Many professors are surprised why educated people like us believe in a book full of fairy tales. We must thank them then remind them that they are making a serious accusation. It is also unfair to make a judgement without reading the Bible about the faith. Professors don't go around judging other professors if they don't read their papers/publications. Challenge them to read the Bible with an open mind. An Indonesian professor read the Bible to disprove the faith but accepted Christ after reading the book of John.

5. Sees Christianity as a Western religion *1 Peter 1:3-4*

Christianity is not a Western religion. It stems from Asia and Africa. The point of a religion is when the question "is it true?" or "what does it offer?" are being asked.

Peter wrote that through Jesus, we are giving a new birth of a living hope with an eternal inheritance which we will possess at the end times.

What Jesus comes to offer:

1. Forgiveness of sins *Romans 3:23; Matthew 26:28*

The wages of sin is death. We are all sinners, Jesus died for the sins of the whole world so that we are forgiven. The blood of Christ washes us clean. There was a man who committed crimes and went to prison, but today, he pastors a church in Johor

Bahru. We can start anew in Christ. No one is too good nor too bad for God.

2. Fear is broken *Hebrews 2:14-15*

People can be held in slavery for all kinds of fear. Jesus came to overcome all fears. Some are *kiasi*, *kiasu* and *kia bo*. Whenever Jesus appeared, he said, 'Fear not!' When He was walking on water, the disciples shouted 'hantu'. Jesus turned to them and said, "*Bukan hantu, tapi Tuhan*". Jesus comes and says, "Peace comes upon you". In Jesus there is peace, hope and security.

3. Eternal and transformed life *John 3:16; John 10:10*

God came to the world and he gave his only son. Whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life. The devil comes to steal, kill and destroy. He steals the peace from us and causes us disease. This is why we have a lot of diseases. He wants to kill our relationship with each other; be it husband and wife, father and children and many other relationships. One member shared that she was forced to testify publicly against her own father publicly. He wants to destroy us and send us to hell. We are constantly in spiritual warfare. Jesus comes to give us depth and quality.

4. Security and significance forever *2 Corinthians 5:17*

Those in Christ are a new creation. We have a new identity in Christ. When you drive a Porsche, half of the time you are worried whether people will scratch your car. You don't own the car anymore but the car owns you.

Find your identity and worth in Christ. In humility, be content and grateful.

5. Hope for the future and joy forever *Romans 15:12-13*

Jesus comes to offer hope and joy forever. Hurt people hurt people. We can be made whole in Jesus. He came to heal us and give us joy. Jesus gives us the ability to forgive and ask for forgiveness. Through a healed heart, we can then experience a life of blessedness.

Conclusion

Don't shortchange yourself. Think of all that Christ offers. The world may think that you are joking when you talk about Christ, but stand firm. Share with them what you know and have experienced when you believed in Him. Our passion for Christ must go stronger and higher as we mature in Christ.



APPLICATION

Note to Word facilitator:

As you prepare for this session, this is a great time to pray that the Holy Spirit will guide you to use the questions efficiently. You can select, modify or entirely create your own questions, according to the needs of your CG, especially if you feel that there are too many questions than required for the allocated time. The questions below are crafted with a certain flow in mind. You could use these towards the end or insert them in between your own sermon reflection and summary.

Suggested Icebreaker Activity/Questions

- What is the strangest English word that you have come across? What English words do you find hard to pronounce?
- Name the kinds of jobs that you may have done in your life, whether part-time, full-time or over-time.



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Suggested Word Introductory Questions

- Since you became a Christian, what is the one thing that stands out for you?
- What is the first thing that comes to mind when you hear the phrase “Jesus offers”?

Suggested Questions linked to the Sermon:

- (a) In relation to the objections and prejudices people have about the Christian faith:
- Besides the 5 objections that were suggested by Pastor Daniel, what other reasons that people may give to reject the Christian faith?
 - Hypocrites may act in ways that are not Christlike. How can you respond to people who say that you are a hypocrite because of your Christian faith?
 - In what way have your friends compared your faith in Christ to their religions? If you converted from a different religion to Christianity, share what is one thing that you would reject strongly about the other religions. How would you convince your friends about it?
 - Previously, you may have read and found certain things in the Bible that are too good to be true. How has your understanding changed as you mature in your faith?
- (b) In relation to what Jesus Christ offers:
- Do you still think that some sins are so big or deep that people who commit them cannot be forgiven? Yet, Christ died for the forgiveness of sins (both big and small). If the latter is the truth, what do you need to do in order to forgive

- the people who have hurt you deeply? How can the CG help you to move on?
- What do you fear the most? Do you know what instigated your fear? Why is it so hard to let go of your fear? What do you think about when Jesus tells you, "Fear not, for I am with you."?
 - What gives you the most security and significance in Jesus Christ?
 - What do you look forward to the most in the near future as well as in eternity?
-



SERMON REFLECTION



Photo by alleksana on Pexels

Jesus has saved my life in two major accidents. Since then, I have seen how God has moved miraculously in my life. I am always reminded today that what Jesus offers is complete. You don't need an extra 'God' or any other security. When it comes to Jesus, you can indeed put all your "eggs of belief" in one basket.

Jesus came to forgive. I used to visit my grandfather when I was in my teens. There is this sofa in the living room. During family gatherings, my grandfather always reminded my relatives and I that I broke the sofa when I used to jump on it as a kid (I

was much smaller then). Initially, I used to be embarrassed and ashamed of what I did and would shy off or defend myself for no reason. Even as he lost his memory due to old age, the sofa story was something he always remembered. Now, I carry it as a badge of honour and remind my nephews and nieces that I broke the sofa. Jesus will not remember your sins and bring it up like a broken record tape (or digital glitch) that keeps on repeating. He gives us new life and we can live a new fresh life in Christ.

We also live a life of no fear. When I was young, there was once someone who told me that mucus from the nose was the main ingredient of laksa. I avoided laksa until I went to university. I can say now that I have overcome my fear of food and can eat a variety of things to the extent that I write reviews for hotel buffets. When was the last time someone instilled a “baseless” fear in you until it haunted your mind for no reason? Jesus has come so that we can live a life without fear.

The devil's temptations are attractive and irresistible. He is indeed the best sales and marketing guru there is. He only highlights the pleasures of sin. The aftermath of the sin makes you spiral down until you have lost control of your life. He steals, kills and destroys everything that makes you a godly human being. I have seen friends killed because they were drunk. I also have seen divorces that destroyed decades of a ‘happy’ looking marriage because of one so called “spur of the moment” affair. Convicts released from prison are only forgiven by Christ but sadly not by the community. They still have the label in their forehead that creates a barrier.

Security, significance, hope and joy for 2 years? 20 years? No, forever. No MLM can beat that. Where do you find hope and joy? We tend to do things that make us happy but it only lasts for a moment. I have failed university. I lost my job during the pandemic. I have met in countless accidents. I have failed in business ventures. During this time, sometimes I surprise myself how I am able to make jokes on social media and not be sad about it. It is because I have the joy of the Lord in me. I am not perfect. I also strive to do clean stand up comedy so that I can share this joy in me to others.

I thank God and my parents for keeping me sane until today. Looking back, I cannot think of any other reason other than Jesus Christ in me.

Contributed by Abbey Thangiah



PRAYER

Note to CGL: You (or someone you assign this portion to), may lead by praying OR reading these prayers together as a CG during worship.

Prayer for Holy Week

Merciful God, as we enter Holy Week, turn our hearts again to Jerusalem, and to the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Stir up within us the gift of faith that we may not only praise Him with our lips, but may follow Him in the way of the Cross.

Father God, we confess today our sins. Specifically, forgetting You, and neglecting to remember and let Jesus' sacrifice resonate with us. We confess that our hearts are in need of cleansing. Have mercy on us. Help us to lay at Your feet all that we have and all that we are, trusting You to forgive what is sinful, to heal what is broken, to welcome our praises, and to receive us as Your own.

Almighty God, thank You that Jesus came humbly, riding on a donkey, proclaiming peace. We pray for the peace of Jerusalem and for peace in our time. Make us instruments of your peace and guide us in the ministry of reconciliation. Our hearts bring loved ones to mind who have yet to acknowledge Jesus' sacrifice on the cross for their own sins. May they find peace in You as we have, in Jesus' name.

Amen.



MISSIONAL

Note to CGL: Inspire and encourage the Cell Group members to participate in the activity suggested below (from our CrossFields, Missions department) together to cultivate a culture of being a missional church.



MISSIONS CANDIDATES' PREPARATION PROGRAMME 1

27 - 28 APRIL 2024
- 2 days 1 night stay-in training -

Register here:
bit.ly/mcpp1_apr2024

MCPPI: A two-day stay-in training, serving as a practical introduction to missions and a prerequisite for joining a short-term mission trip in DUMC.

Join us to discover the biblical basis of God's mission, understand your unique role, and receive training in essential mission activities. This is an opportunity to be equipped, inspired, and connected with a community of missions.

 Sign up here: bit.ly/mcpp1_apr2024