



# He opened a new and living way

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Good Friday (Hebrews 9:26b-28; 10:1-14)

## PPT 1

Here we are on Good Friday 2022. What a time we have been through these past few years. They have been strange times. Every one of us has a story.

During the long months of COVID-19, many in our communities have struggled in their mental health. Gambling has increased. Lots of people have relied on alcohol more. We can understand the pressure. We can understand the loneliness people have felt at times. The uncertainty about the future.

In such times, every one of us wants to be healthy. We want peace. We want happiness. We want hope.

And we may feel that at least part of the secret to that is to be really connected to God. With God.

In such uncertain times we would love to regularly come into the presence of God. We would love to sit easily with him, and know him, and feel loved. It would be good to live there, to settle there, to make our home there. And have his life in us. And know him. And feel we are in the best space.

In the Bible there is the letter written to the Hebrews. Part of it was written for people who wanted to come into the presence of God and live in the company of God. At home, safe, comfortable.

## PPT 2

The author had a message for them. He said: There is a way. There is a way into the presence of God. There is in fact a new and living way.

We can think of a new path that leads to a desired destination. Or we can think of a new bridge which opens a new way. Maybe across a river. Or across a harbour.

It used to take hours to get across; now there is a new bridge, and access is easy. A new and living way.

The writer to the Hebrews said: On the first Good Friday, Jesus Christ opened a new and living way to God. Let's listen to the Bible.

### The old shadow

This letter was written to Jewish people. Hebrew people. Not just those living in Palestine, but to the many who lived in other places. Hebrews. Like Jesus. Like the apostle Paul. Like Ruth and David.

The Hebrew people had a long history with God. It went right back past Moses to Abraham.

Way back, God had given them a way to connect with him. To be near to him. To know his presence. To be acceptable to him. That was the old way.

Let me tell you how it worked.

## PPT 3

God gave them first a tent-tabernacle, and later a temple. Every morning and every evening, their priests would stand in the temple to offer sacrifices to God. On behalf of the people. For their sins.

The priest would bring a one-year-old lamb. Or they would bring an offering of flour and oil. And they might burn it as an offering to God. This was a costly offering, of course. It was expensive.

Why did they do that?

Those offerings were an attempt to pay for the people's failures. They were an attempt to make amends for forgetting God. Rejecting God. Messing up his world. They were an attempt to get themselves clean again. Complete again.

The priests would make those offerings on behalf of the people.

God did a wonderful thing for them. In the middle of the temple, there was a small room called the holy of holies. In his grace, God's presence would come there. And so, the people knew that right in the middle of their temple, at the heart of their nation, God would come with his presence.

Ordinary people could not go into that holy space. Only the nation's high priest could go in there. And he could enter only on one day each year to make a special offering.

This is what he would do. He would make himself ritually clean. Then he would approach the long, heavy ornate curtain which was the front wall of the room. He would draw back the curtain, and enter.

And he would make the offering on behalf of the people. So that was the system God had given to the Jewish people. It was full of meaning and symbolism.

### **After Jesus**

Now, here this writer is addressing the Hebrew Christians. And he said the system was good. It was fine. But it was only a shadow of the real thing.

## **PPT 4**

He wrote, "The law is only a shadow of the good things that are coming" (Hebrews 10:1, NIV). An artist will make a preliminary outline before they begin to paint with colours. It's just a sketch. A shadow.

The old system was only partially effective. Like the COVID vaccines – they are life-saving, but they are not the silver bullet. The system had limitations.

## **PPT 5**

You had to repeat it day after day. Like they needed boosters every day. The author said: "The sacrifices under that system were repeated again and again, year after year" (Hebrews 10:1).

And it still wasn't very effective. Far less effective than the COVID vaccines.

"(The sacrifices) were never able to provide perfect cleansing for those who came to worship. If they could have provided perfect cleansing, the sacrifices would have stopped, for the worshippers would have been purified once for all time, and their feelings of guilt would have disappeared" (Hebrews 10:1b-2).

That was their old way.

### **Our situation**

Now, you and I are not Jewish people in the first century. We live in 21st century Australia. But we too have ways to get past failures. We have things we do to find peace, to find happiness, to find hope, to find God. To get us right. To make us OK, clean, whole, complete. To be good with God. We have things we do.

Here is a person. They run to stay fit. They go to the gym. They eat healthy foods. Every morning they meditate. They practice mindfulness. They listen to uplifting podcasts. All good things. And yet those behaviours do not open a way into the company of God, into his arms, into his life. They are shadows of that at best.

Here is another person. They belong to a church. They find community there. They feel good. They love the worship music. They agree with the beliefs. All good. Good things. And yet on their own they do not open a way into the presence of God, into his close friendship. So that his life flows into you. And you are forgiven and made whole.

They are like shadows of the best thing God has to give.

## **PPT 6**

### **The Son of God has appeared**

Around 2000 years ago, God gave the best thing he could give. The writer wrote: "Christ ... has appeared at the end of the ages to remove sin by his own death as a sacrifice" (Hebrews 9:26).

Christ has appeared. Think of Christmas. Christ has appeared. Think of Jesus healing a blind man. Christ has appeared. The Son of God has come. He has come to show us a path to hope. A path to a new way.

He has come 'to remove sin.' To haul it away. Cancel it. Clean us. Make us right. Completely.

How? "By his own death as a sacrifice." He didn't offer a lamb. He offered himself.

See him. Picture him now. Can you see him?

See him rejected by his people, who shout, "Crucify him!"

See him on trial before Pilate, falsely accused. Slapped. Mocked.

See him carrying his cross through the streets. He stumbles.

See him nailed to the cross, hoisted up, struggling to breathe, thirsty, dying a slow, shameful death.

Hear him call out, "My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?" (Matthew 27:46).

Hear him call out: "It is finished!" (John 19:30). Hebrews says, "Christ was offered once for all" (Hebrews 9:28).

### Christ's finished work

*"Under the old (system), the priest stands and ministers before the altar day after day, offering the same sacrifices again and again, which can never take away sins. But our High Priest offered himself to God as a single sacrifice for sins, good for all time. Then he sat down in the place of honour at God's right hand ... For by that one offering he forever made perfect those who are being made holy" (Hebrews 10:11-12, 14).*

The priests stood in the temple day after day making those offerings. Month after month, year after year they stood there trying to make things better. Never finished. Back again the next day.

Maybe there are things in your life which you try over and over. Never ending. Or maybe like you feel you have to fix yourself up before you come to God. And it is never ending.

## PPT 7

The writer said: "But our High Priest (that is, Jesus Christ) offered himself to God as a single sacrifice for sins, good for all time. Then he sat down in the place of honour at God's right hand" (Hebrews 10:12). He sat down! The priests never sat down because their work was never completed. But Christ sat down. His work is completed. "It is finished."

The sacrifices in the old system could never actually take away sins. They could not really make people clean before God.

But Hebrews 10:14 says: "By that one offering (Jesus Christ) forever made perfect those who are being made holy." He can make you perfect before God. Clean. Compatible. Accepted. At home. Friends.

### Krister Sairsingh illustration

Let me tell you about Krister Sairsingh. He grew up in the West Indies and came from a highly educated family.

His family were devout members of one of the world's major religions. They had a room in their house set aside for practising their religion. It had images and an altar and they would bring offerings to the altar.

During his final year at high school Krister became best friends with a guy from his religion who had become a Christian. This shocked him. His friend suggested that Krister consider Jesus. So he began to read the Gospels about Jesus.

He says:

*What astounded me the most was Jesus' claim to have power to forgive sins. In my religion there is no such thing as forgiveness for anyone's wrongs. The law of Karma – that whatever wrong we do we will have to pay for in some other life – rules out the very idea of forgiveness. Naturally we had our ceremonies like ritual baths which we hope might lighten the load. But I was well aware of the endless cycles of trying to escape from my wrongs.*

Sounds like Hebrews, doesn't it?

Krister began to pray to Jesus along with his other 'gods'. Then one day he prayed to Jesus asking him to forgive his sins. He discovered that God did forgive him. God did make him whole. God did change him. God did bring him home. Krister did begin to know the presence of God.

He didn't need to offer any more sacrifices. He didn't need to bring offerings. He didn't need to pay out of karma. Jesus had done it all. On that hill outside Jerusalem, as he suffered and died, Jesus had done it for all time. And for all people. It is finished.

## A new and living way

Now Hebrews says:

*“And so, dear brothers and sisters, we can boldly enter Heaven’s Most Holy Place because of the blood of Jesus. By his death, Jesus opened a new and life-giving way through the curtain into the Most Holy Place. And since we have a great High Priest who rules over God’s house, let us go right into the presence of God with sincere hearts fully trusting him” (Hebrews 10:19-22).*

The Bible says, “We can boldly enter Heaven’s Most Holy Place.” Boldly. Confidently. At ease. Comfortable.

Because we are a good person? Because we have paid? Earned it? No. “Because of the blood of Jesus.” That is, his death on the cross for the world. His death is a path to hope for a new way of life and connection with God.

The writer said: “By his death, Jesus opened a new and life-giving way through the curtain into the Most Holy Place.”

This is symbolic language. Picture language. The ‘Most Holy Place’ is another term for the holy of holies. That room in the temple symbolised being near to God, at home with God, in his company, in his presence. Knowing him.

When Jesus breathed his final breath, that curtain which walled off the holy room ripped from top to bottom. Matthew says in his Gospel: “At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom” (Matthew 27:51, NIV).

It is symbolic. It carries meaning. It says Jesus Christ opened a way for you. A way to go right to God, clean. OK. You don’t have to fix up your life first. You don’t have to sort things out first. Jesus has opened a way for you to come as you are. He has torn the curtain. He has opened a way. He has shown a new path to him.

### Go confidently

Hebrews 10:22 says: “Let us go right into the presence of God with sincere hearts fully trusting him.” Go right in.

Enter. Other translations say, “Let’s go, confident that we are presentable inside and out, with hearts full of faith in him.”

Come. Today. Confidently come. Don’t hold back. Don’t allow your failures to hold you back. Don’t think because you have tried lots of ways before, he won’t accept you today. Go trusting, confident in Jesus.

### Old Harry illustration

There is a little book about the early days of The Salvation Army in the English town of Folkstone. It tells about a man known as Old Harry.

He wasn’t actually that old, but he looked old. His face was blotched from years of drinking.

Harry lived in an incredibly old little house. He dressed in rags. He was often drunk, going around town laughing and trying to make other people laugh. One time he fell and broke a leg and was brought home by two Salvation Army young people. That really surprised him so he began to go to the Army meetings.

One Sunday night, with his grimy face lit up with smiles, he made his way forward to the mercy seat. Coming via the new and living way, trusting in Jesus and his death for the world.

A young visiting officer was in charge of the meeting that day. He saw Harry coming forward and said loudly, “This is not a laughing matter, my brother!”

Harry laughed, and he said, “What! Do you mean to tell me a man can’t laugh when he’s getting his sins forgiven?” And he laughed like he never laughed before.

Go to God confident in Jesus.

Good Friday is the perfect day for all of us to go confidently into the presence of God. How? Via the new and living way Christ opened on the cross.



## Good Friday – Song Suggestions

Living Hope (CCLI 7106807)

Man of Sorrows (CCLI 6476063)

Jesus Strong and Kind (CCLI 7139992)

King of Kings (CCLI 7127647)

O Praise The Name (CCLI 7037787)

How Deep The Father's Love (SB32)

Behold the Lamb of God (SB160)

Blessed Lamb of Calvary (SB162)

The Servant King (SB165)

Jesus, Keep Me Near the Cross (SB178)

Lest I Forget Gethsemane (SB179)

Let the Weak Say I Am Strong (SB181) Lord,  
Make Calvary Real to Me (SB182)

The Old Rugged Cross (SB191) jOn  
the Cross of Calvary (SB194)

Such Love (SB199)

Worthy Is the Lamb (SB201)

There Is a Green Hill Far Away (SB203)

There Is a Redeemer (SB204)

Were You There When They Crucified My Lord (SB206)

When I Survey the Wondrous Cross (SB208)

When Jesus Looked O'er Galilee (SB209)

And Can It Be That I Should Gain (SB241)