1. Has there ever been a time when you’ve wished you could ‘carry’ someone else’s suffering, sharing the load so they didn’t have to suffer so much?

We have seen how God promised to make the world new by putting his son in charge. In the last study we saw that we cannot make a new and better world for ourselves – because we are part of the problem. But the Christian gospel says that God’s promised son has now come – it is Jesus. He is the one God sent us to make a new world.

The story of how Jesus made the world new is a very strange one...

**BIBLE READING:** Mark’s Gospel chapter 15, verses 1-40

1. Very early in the morning, the chief priests, with the elders, the teachers of the law and the whole Sanhedrin, reached a decision. They bound Jesus, led him away and handed him over to the Roman governor, Pilate.

2. “Are you the king of the Jews?” asked Pilate.

   “You have said so,” Jesus replied.

3. The chief priests accused him of many things.

4. So again Pilate asked him, “Aren’t you going to answer? See how many things they are accusing you of.”

5. But Jesus still made no reply, and Pilate was amazed.

6. Now it was the custom at the Festival to release a prisoner, whoever the people requested. There was a man called Barabbas, a murderer who had been arrested as part of a terrorist group.

The crowd came up and asked Pilate to do for them what he usually did.

2. “Do you want me to release to you the king of the Jews?” asked Pilate. He knew it was out of envy that the chief priests had handed Jesus over to him.

4. But the chief priests stirred up the crowd to Barabbas released instead.

12. “What shall I do, then, with the one you call the king of the Jews?” Pilate asked them.


   But they shouted all the louder, “Crucify him!”

16. Wanting to appease the crowd, Pilate released Barabbas to them. He had Jesus flogged, and handed him over to be crucified.

17. The soldiers led Jesus away into the palace (that is, the Praetorium) and called together the whole company of soldiers.

18. They put a purple robe on Jesus, then twisted together a crown of thorns and set it on him.

19. And they began to call out to him, “Hail, king of the Jews!” Again and again they struck him on the head with a staff and spat on him. Falling on their knees, they pretended to worship him.

20. And when they had mocked him, they took off the purple robe and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him out to crucify him.

21. A certain man from Cyrene, Simon, the father of Alexander and Rufus, was passing by on his way in from the country, and they forced him to carry the cross.

22. They brought Jesus to the place called Golgotha (which means “the place of the skull”). Then they offered him wine mixed with myrrh, but he did not take it.

23. And they crucified him. Dividing up his clothes, they cast lots to see what each would get.

24. It was nine in the morning when they crucified him. The written notice of the charge against him read: THE KING OF
THE JEWS. 27 They crucified two rebels with him, one on his right and one on his left.

29 Those who passed by hurled insults at him, shaking their heads and saying, “So! You who are going to destroy the temple and build it in three days, come down from the cross and save yourself!” In the same way the chief priests and the teachers of the law mocked him among themselves. “He saved others,” they said, “but he can’t save himself! 30 Let this Messiah, this king of Israel, come down now from the cross, so that we may see and believe.” Those crucified with him also heaped abuse on him.

33 At midday, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon.

34 And at three, Jesus cried out in a loud voice, “Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?” (which means “My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?”).

35 When some of those standing near heard this, they said, “Listen, he’s calling Elijah.”

36 Someone ran, 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.

37 With a loud cry, Jesus breathed his last.

38 Inside the city, the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom.

39 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!”

3. “My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?” What signs were there that God really had withdrawn his protection and help from Jesus?

The cross is a mysterious event. Part of the mystery is that when Jesus entered into our human experience of broken relationship with God, that break began to be healed. The way became open for us to come back and be reconciled with God. Far from a defeat, staying on the
cross until death was the secret of Jesus’ success. The cross was his greatest achievement.

There are two sides to that achievement. If Jesus’ death was strange and unexpected, even more so was his resurrection. What did that achieve?


1 On the Sunday, very early in the morning, the women took the spices they had prepared and went to Jesus’ tomb. 2 They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, 3 but when they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. 4 While they were wondering about this, suddenly two men in clothes that gleamed like lightning stood beside them. 5 In their fright the women bowed down with their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, “Why do you look for the living among the dead? 6 He is not here; he has risen! Remember how he told you, while he was still with you in Galilee:

7 ‘The Son of Man must be delivered over to the hands of sinners, be crucified and on the third day be raised again.” 8 Then they remembered his words.

9 When they came back from the tomb, the women told all these things to the Eleven and to all the others…

That evening the disciples met up to talk about this strange news.

10 While they were still talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them. He said, “Peace be with you.”

11 The disciples were shocked, and fear gripped them: they thought they were seeing a ghost. 12 But Jesus said to them, “Why are you troubled, and why do doubts rise in your minds? 13 Look at my hands and my feet. It is me! Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have.”

14 …He said to them, “This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms.”

15 Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. 16 He told them, “This is what is written: The Messiah

must suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, 17 and because of him the news will be announced, calling people to turn back to God and be released from their sins at last. This news must go to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. 18 You are witnesses of these events.

19 I am about to send you the gift my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from heaven.”

20 Jesus led them out of Jerusalem. He lifted up his hands and blessed them. 21 And while he was blessing them, he left them and was taken up into heaven. 22 Then they worshipped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy. 23 They were continually at the temple, praising God…

6. What misunderstanding made the disciples afraid of the risen Jesus?

7. What was the good news that could go out to the world because Jesus was risen from the grave?

8. What were Jesus’ disciples going to receive after Jesus finished rising?
Death defeated; a fresh start with God; release from sin, the power that ruins our world; and a new power from God to take its place. It looked like the cross was Jesus’ defeat. But his resurrection makes it clear that the cross was the path to victory and hope for the world. Jesus shared in our death: now he invites us to share in new life with him. No wonder, as the scene fades out, his followers are celebrating!

**Next week:** What’s it like sharing in God’s new world?

**Further reading:**
To hear more about what Jesus accomplished by dying and rising, see Paul’s letter to the *Ephesians*, chapter 2.