

Let us pray.

Heavenly Father,

As we come to study your word may your Holy Spirit come upon us.  
Enable us we pray, to see how we can have a relationship with you  
through the death of your Son Jesus Christ.

In His Name we pray.

Amen.

You know how we're told to exercise more, eat more fruit and veg,  
stay away from the fry up?

Well I came across the following recently,  
which shows how scientists have got it all wrong.

**Question: I've heard that cardiovascular exercise can prolong life.  
Is this true?**

**Answer:** Your heart is only good for so many beats, and that's it.  
Don't waste them on exercise.  
Everything wears out eventually.  
If you want to live longer then take a nap.

**Q: Will sit-ups help prevent me from getting a little soft  
around the middle?**

**A:** Definitely not!  
When you exercise a muscle, it gets bigger.  
You should only be doing sit-ups if you want a bigger  
stomach.

**Q: Should I cut down on meat and eat more fruits and vegetables?**

A: Well a cow eats hay and corn.  
And what are these if not vegetables?  
So a steak is nothing more than an efficient mechanism for delivering vegetables to your body.  
Beef is also a good source of field grass (which is a green leafy vegetable).  
Need grain, then eat chicken.

**Q: So is beer or wine bad for me?**

A: As we all know, scientists divide everything in the world into three categories:

Animal, mineral, and vegetable.

We all know that beer and wine are not animal, and they are not on the periodic table of elements, so that only leaves one thing!

My advice: Have a burger and a beer and enjoy your liquid vegetables.

**Q: Is chocolate bad for me?**

A: Cocoa beans... Another vegetable.  
And it's also the best feel-good food around!

So I hope that has cleared up any misunderstandings about exercise and diet!

So how many of you are convinced by the argument?  
Or how many of you would like to be convinced by the argument?

I'd love to have a burger and a beer and enjoy my liquid vegetables.  
But is it true?

Well unfortunately, it isn't true,  
even if I had a more convincing argument, it still wouldn't be true.

And the same is true about people's ideas on getting into heaven.  
One of these ideas says that if you lead a good life then God will let you  
into heaven.

The surprising thing is – it's actually true!  
The question that needs to be asked however is,  
*"Just how good do I have to be?"*

When I asked someone that question this was the reply I got,  
*"Well you can't be a murderer, or a thief,  
or tell lies although white lies are okay".*

Now wouldn't it be great if that were true?  
Just like getting your vegetables through your burger and your beer,  
unless of course you were a murderer, a thief or a liar!

But unfortunately it isn't true.

You see the problem is this.  
We have to be as good as God.

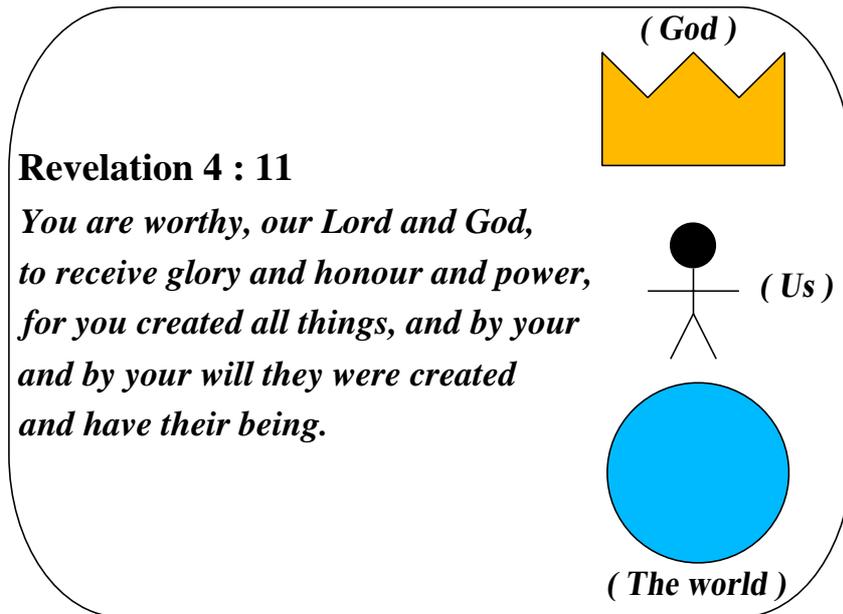
And as the Bible tells us.  
We do not come anywhere near that level of goodness.

The following pictures are part of a short outline of the Gospel, that we're learning in the Evangelism training sessions, called "Two Ways To Live".

This is what the Bible says:

[ REV 4 Picture ]

**JESUS: HIS CRUCIFIXION**

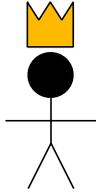


Revelation 4:11 "*You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honour and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being.*"

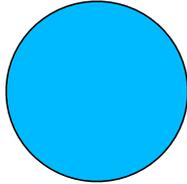
[ ROM 3 Picture ]

**JESUS: HIS CRUCIFIXION**

**Romans 3 : 10 - 12**  
*There is no-one righteous,  
not even one;  
there is no-one who understands,  
no-one who seeks God.  
All have turned away.*



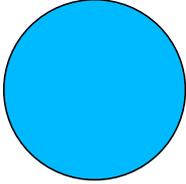
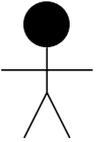
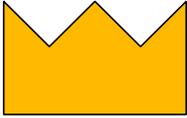
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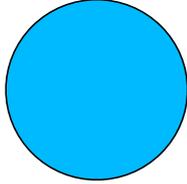
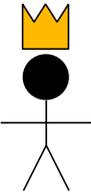
Romans 3:10-12 "*There is no-one righteous, not even one; there is no-one who understands, no-one who seeks God. All have turned away.*"

[ Both Pictures ]

**JESUS: HIS CRUCIFIXION**



**THE BEGINNING**



**TODAY**

These two verses remind us that God is the loving ruler and creator of the world and of us.

That was how it was in the beginning.

But today we reject God's rule.  
Either by openly rebelling against him or by simply ignoring Him in His world.

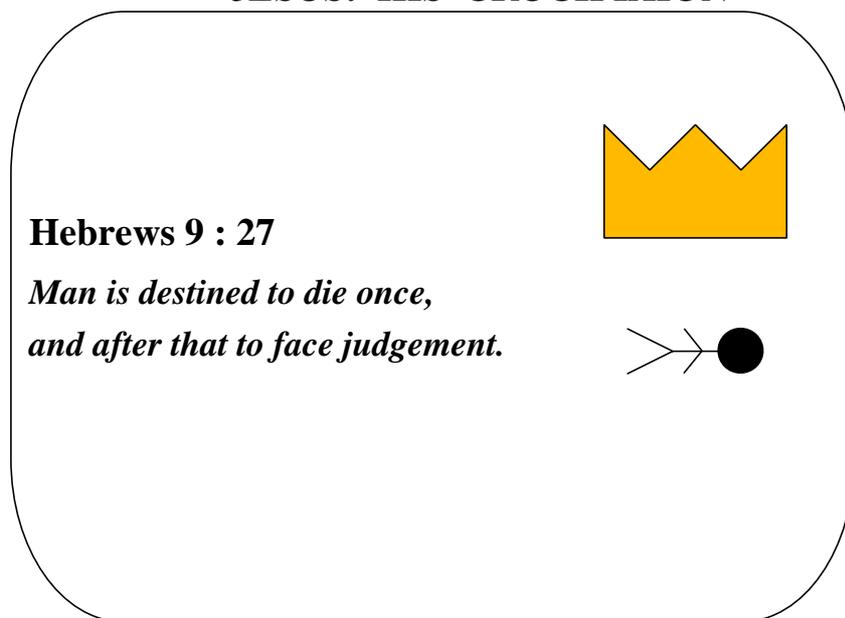
We try to run life our own way without him,  
but we fail to rule ourselves or society or the world.

This is why we can never be good enough.

So what will God do about this rebellion?

[ *HEB 9 Picture* ]

**JESUS: HIS CRUCIFIXION**



Well, Hebrews 9:27 puts it like this,  
*"Man is destined to die once and after that to face judgement."*

God is not going to let us rebel forever,  
and God's punishment for our rebellious nature is death and judgement.

And we saw that in more detail last time.

So since we can never be as good as God,  
and as the last diagram shows God is actually going to punish us,  
do we have any hope of reprieve?  
Is there no way that we can get into heaven?

Fortunately the answer to that is "*Yes we can get into heaven*".  
It all hinges on the death of Jesus.

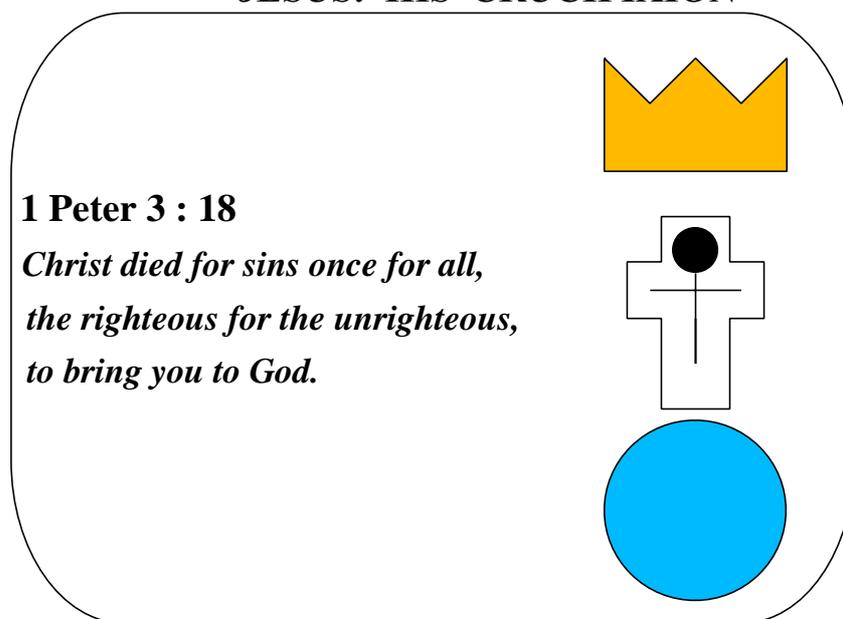
This is the brutal truth:

For God to allow me into his heaven, Jesus has to die.

If you want to get into God's heaven then you need Jesus to die for you.

[ *The Cross Picture* ]

### ***JESUS: HIS CRUCIFIXION***



If you're here tonight thinking about the Christian faith, I wonder,  
what do you make of Jesus death?

[ PAUSE ]

Do you perhaps see it as a waste, a pointless and needless tragedy?  
But is that the truth?

Well, tonight we're going to explore the question,  
"*Why must Jesus die?*"

And we're going to do so by looking at it under 3 headings:

[ *3 Headings Picture* ]

1. Anger
2. Abandonment
3. Acceptance

So if you would have the Bibles open at Mark chapter 15 starting at  
verse 33 which is on page \_\_\_\_\_ and we'll take a look at Jesus' death.

[ *Angry Picture* ]

Firstly, God was angry.

Verse 33 states: "*At the sixth hour darkness came over the whole land  
until the ninth hour.*"

The sixth hour is actually noon.

So at the moment when the midday sun should have been at its brightest  
in the sky,

the land was plunged into darkness which remained there for 3 hours.

3 hours of darkness is clearly not normal.

Something supernatural is going on and the message is that God is  
angry.

Throughout the Bible we see darkness in the daytime as a sign of God's anger and judgement.

For example, one of the ten plagues that God brought on Egypt was a plague of darkness.

Time and again in the Bible,  
light symbolises God's presence and his favour,  
while darkness tells us God is acting in punishment.

So when Jesus dies and darkness comes over the land,  
we know straight away that God is angry.

Now we may not like the idea of God being angry.  
We tend to see anger as something that is unpredictable and wild,  
associated with a quick temper.

But God's anger is different.  
It is his settled, controlled,  
personal hostility to all that is wicked and sinful.

God is a God of holiness, of blazing purity, and he hates what is evil.  
When it comes to evil he doesn't lean back in his chair and pretend  
nothing has happened.

No.

Evil matters to God:

lying matters to God;

selfishness matters to God;

Kosovo and Afghanistan, the World Trade Centre,

six million Jews,

they all matter to God.

Stephen gave a talk on the background to the conflict in the Middle East recently.

In it he spoke about how the Jews had been persecuted for centuries in Europe, long before Hitler came on the scene.

One of the things that angered me was hearing how people had persecuted the Jews and how they had been incited into committing these atrocities.

One of the frustrating things when getting angry about that sort of thing is that I am powerless to do anything about it.  
Although that could be a good thing at times!

But when God gets angry against evil, against our rebellion, he has the power to punish it.

It is actually a good thing that evil matters to God.  
Those terrorists who hijacked the planes on September 11th may have escaped justice in this life,  
but they are not going to escape God's justice.

Hitler may have escaped the war crimes tribunal but he will not escape God.

Would you want to live in a world where evil didn't matter?  
Where people got away with the evil that they do?

We cry out for justice, and we can feel so frustrated when justice is evaded.

As Christians we know that there is one whose justice can not be evaded, not even by dying.

If God didn't get angry at evil,  
he would not be a God that I would want to worship.

So as Jesus dies on the cross darkness comes over the land,  
showing that God is angry.

But that leaves us with a question:

With whom was God angry? Who was he punishing?

Last time we saw that Jesus had come to rescue us from our rebellion  
against God, from his judgement and from Hell.

*"I have not come to call the righteous but sinners"* as Jesus said.

The thing is, Jesus never rebelled against God, but I have.  
So it must surely be me that God should be punishing.

But the staggering answer – is that God was punishing Jesus.

And so we come to our second heading.

Jesus was abandoned.

[ *Abandonment Picture* ]

Verse 34 says: *"And at the ninth hour Jesus cried out in a loud voice,  
"My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?" "*

That cry tells us that Jesus was abandoned.  
On the cross, Jesus was abandoned by God.  
It was Jesus that God was punishing.

Now there is no doubt that on the cross Jesus suffered physical agony, but what is being spoken of here is spiritual agony, of being forsaken by God.

He is saying, "*God, why have you rejected me?*"

*Why have you thrown me away from your presence?"*

Deep in his soul he experienced what it is to be away from the good things of God.

He is separated from him as he dies.

Whenever Jesus spoke of God, he always called him "*Father*" or "*Abba*" which is equivalent to Daddy.

Even when he was agonising at Gethsemane just prior to his arrest, he still calls God "*Abba, Father*".

Mark 14:36, "*Abba, Father,*" he said, "*everything is possible for you.*"

*Take this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will.*"

At the moment I'm trying to get our daughter Rebecca to say "*Daddy*", without much success, although she says "*Mummy*" readily enough.

"*Mummy*" and "*Daddy*" are intimately loaded words.

Out of all the children in the world,

only Rebecca has the right to call me "*Daddy*".

But here as the Son of God is separated from his Father, Jesus uses a detached word, which literally means "*God*".

I guess it would be something like Rebecca calling me "*Mr Coleman*".

Jesus is being forsaken, abandoned by God,  
separated for the first time in all eternity from the Father who loves  
him.

He'd never rebelled against him, he did not deserve this.  
I'm the one who has rebelled, I'm the one who deserves to be punished.

Not Jesus.

So why is he being punished?

He is being punished because my sin has been placed on him.

[ Hold Discs ]

Two floppy discs, one is mine and the other belongs to Jesus.  
And I'm rather glad that you lot can't read my floppy because it contains  
all the bad stuff that I've said, done and thought.

Jesus' floppy on the other hand contains nothing but good stuff.  
Jesus never sinned, he never had a bad thought,  
never said or did anything bad.

He never rebelled against God, he was perfect.  
He always perfectly obeyed the will of God;  
he always pleased his father.

But by comparison, there is much on my disc of which I am rightly  
ashamed.

[ Discs down ]

[ Conan Doyle - Telegram to 12 - Flee - 6 left country ]

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, the creator of Sherlock Holmes,  
sent a telegram to the 12 most respectable people in London as a joke one night.  
The telegram simply read: "Flee - all is revealed."  
Within 24 hours six of them had left the country!

There are dark rooms in all of our lives - things of which we are rightly  
ashamed.

[ Hold My Disc ]

All the times when I have ignored God,  
treated him as if he is not really important at all.

And the times I have used him, as if he is just a servant,  
and blamed him when things have not gone my way.

And it's all on my floppy disc.

[ Disc down ]

This treatment of God, as we've said before in the course,  
is what the Bible calls sin.

And in his world God quite rightly punishes sin.

He does it by ultimately confirming our choice.  
God is a just judge and in the end he will give us what we ask for.

If we say to him "*Leave me alone*".  
Then there will come a day when, with great sadness and a heavy heart,  
God will say, "*OK, I will leave you alone. I'll confirm the decision  
you've made about me and will leave you alone.*"

That is what the Bible calls hell.

Hell is to be without God, and without his gifts,  
one of which is the love and friendship of others.

It is to be utterly alone with no hope and no comfort, reflecting for  
eternity on a life which was 70 years or so of an opportunity missed.

So this is what sin does:

My sin cuts me off from God;  
and I face abandonment.

But let me illustrate what happens on the cross.

[ Hold Both Discs ]

While Jesus was on the cross all the bad stuff,  
all my sin that is on my floppy was downloaded onto his floppy.

So Jesus took the punishment that I deserved.  
He took the anger of God at my rebellion on himself.

He was forsaken so I need never be.

And something else also happens.  
As all my bad stuff is taken from my floppy,  
all of Jesus' good stuff is copied from his floppy and is downloaded  
onto mine.

We have an exchange, my bad stuff for his good stuff,  
my sin for his righteousness.

So on the cross,  
Jesus is treated as if he were me and I am treated as if I were Jesus.

[ Discs Away ]

So to recap:

God was angry;

Jesus was abandoned for me.

And this leads us to the third point:

We can be accepted

[ *Accepted Picture* ]

[ Film - Flash Backs - Highlander - Sword fight ]

At the beginning of the film Highlander there is a sword fight in the car park and after the Highlander has chopped Fazeel's head off we have a couple of flash backs from New York to the Scottish Highlands.

These flashbacks help us to understand what the sword fight was all about.

And Mark is doing something similar here in verses 37 to 39.

Verse 37 takes place at the cross - "*with a loud cry Jesus breathed his last*" and in verse 39 we are back at the cross with the Roman centurion.

But verse 38 doesn't take place at the cross at all.

We flash from one side of the city to the other in order to explain what is happening at the cross.

In verse 38 we are in the huge temple in Jerusalem and we see the most amazing thing.

The 30-foot-high curtain in the temple being torn in two.

This is what Josephus the Jewish historian says about this curtain.

The curtain that separated the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place was 4 inches thick, and if you don't know how long 4 inches is it is the span of my palm. [ Show Span ]

Josephus continues, it was so sturdy that it could not be torn apart by horses tied to it, pulling in opposite directions.

And yet we read that this 30 foot high - 4 inch thick curtain is torn in two from the top to the bottom.

So what is so exciting about this curtain being torn in two, apart from the sheer power required?

To answer that question, we need to realise what the curtain stood for.

The curtain was actually a barrier to the Holy of Holies, the heart of the temple where God had His Holy presence.

This massive barrier between God and his people was there because they had rebelled against him.

Only the High Priest was allowed into the Holy of Holies:

- not any person;
- not even any priest;
- but only the High priest, and
- then only once a year.

The whole system showed that it was not an easy thing to come into the presence of God.

The curtain was like a big "No entry" sign.  
It said loudly and clearly that it is impossible for sinful people like you and me to come into God's presence.

Then, suddenly, as Jesus dies on the cross, this curtain is ripped in two.

This is a supernatural event, being done by God.  
Because not only is it so thick,  
but it is being torn from the top 30 feet up down to the bottom.

God is saying in effect: "*The way is now open for people to approach me. There is no longer any barrier.*"

Why?

Because Jesus has been abandoned.  
Because Jesus has taken God's anger and punishment instead of us.  
So that we are now free to be accepted by God.

Just like the Berlin Wall coming down signifying the end of the Cold War between East and West.  
So when this curtain was torn from top to bottom,  
the Cold War between God and us was ended.

The barriers are down.  
Now there is nothing to prevent us from having a relationship with God.

[ *Question Answered Picture* ]

### ***WHY MUST JESUS DIE ?***

- 1. God is angry** ( Verse 33 )  
**At our rebellion against Him.**
- 2. I face abandonment** ( Verse 34 )  
**But Jesus is punished instead of me.**
- 3. I can now be forgiven** ( Verse 38 )  
**And accepted by God into Heaven.**

So we've now answered our original question, "*Why must Jesus die?*"

He must die so that my sin can be placed on Him, so that he is abandoned by his Father and punished so that I can be forgiven.

But we still have to decide how we respond to the cross.

[ *Responses Picture* ]

### ***HOW DO WE RESPOND TO JESUS' DEATH ?***

- 1. The busy soldiers**
- 2. The religious authorities**
- 3. The Roman Centurion**

We first meet the soldiers in verses 16-20.

Where we find them mocking Jesus and his claim to be king of the Jews,

as well as spitting on him and beating him.

In verse 24 we discover them dividing up Jesus' clothes and casting lots to see what each would get.

For this execution squad the main legacy of the cross is Jesus' clothes.

They are absorbed in doing their job.

They see nothing special about this man.

And as they just did their job,

they missed the most important death in history.

The Son of God being crucified above them.

No doubt they did their job well,

but in doing their duty they missed the true legacy of the cross.

Many go through life today doing their duty,

working hard,

saving for the mortgage,

and yet missing the most significant death that has ever taken place.

In their day to day activities they are too busy to notice the significance of the cross.

[ *Religious Response Picture* ]

Then there's the religious people.

Verses 31 and 32, "*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!*

*Let this Christ, this King of Israel, come down now from the cross, that we may see and believe.'* "

These religious leaders are convinced that they know the way to God, and Jesus Christ is not part of that way.

They had the curtain repaired.

The barrier between man and God would be re-erected by these very religious people.

They had their own means of gaining access to God, and it was not through the cross.

They didn't want to be right with God on God's terms. They wanted to be right with God on their own terms.

Just like people today who think that all you have to do is to be good.

There is, however, another response to the cross.

[ *Centurion Response Picture* ]

And it is that of the Roman Centurion.

It is this response, in verse 39, which is the climax of Mark's Gospel.

*"And when the centurion, who stood there in front of Jesus, heard his cry and saw how he died, he said, 'Surely this man was the Son of God!' "*

Here is a hard-bitten Roman soldier who had doubtless fought in many campaigns and seen many men crucified. But he had never seen a man die like this.

And as he sees Jesus on the cross, he acknowledges him to be the Son of God.

Someone who was part of the execution squad, who had been responsible for nailing Jesus to the cross, sees and understands.

His words "*Surely this man was the Son of God*" echoes the voice of God when he said of Jesus in chapter 1, "*You are my Son.*"

Will we like the centurion realise that Jesus and his death are significant?

Or will we fail to see what his death has achieved for us?

On top of the Old Bailey in London, is the golden statue of the goddess Justitia holding her scales of justice and her sword of wrath.

The message is this.

If we are found to be guilty in the scales of Justice,  
then the sword of wrath must fall.

We learned last time that we are more wicked than we ever realised.

But here on top of the communion table is another golden symbol.

It's a cross.

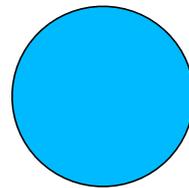
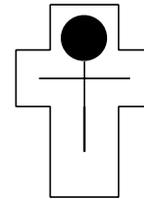
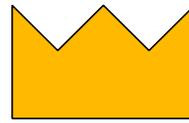
A powerful reminder that the sword of God's wrath did indeed fall.  
It fell on Jesus Christ.

I am more wicked than I ever realised,  
but I'm also more loved than I ever dreamed.

**JESUS: HIS CRUCIFIXION**

**1 Peter 3 : 18**

*Christ died for sins once for all,  
the righteous for the unrighteous,  
to bring you to God.*



So in summary.

We all reject the ruler - God - by trying to run life our own way without him.

But we fail to rule ourselves or society or the world.

God is not going to let us rebel forever.

God's punishment for our rebellion is death and judgement.

But because of his love for us,

God sent his son into the world to die – the man Jesus.

Jesus always lived under God's rule.

Yet by dying in our place he took our punishment and brought forgiveness.

So let me finish by asking you this question:  
What have you done with your sin?  
[ COUNT 3 ]

Have you taken it to the cross and received forgiveness?  
Or are you taking it to the grave and to the judgement?

Let us pray.

[ *Blank Picture* ]

Loving Heavenly Father,

Thank you for the priviledge of hearing your Word tonight.

You sent your Son Jesus to die on the cross so that we could repent and believe in Him.

Help us to do just that,

so that we may receive your forgiveness and have a right relationship with you  
both now and for eternity.

In the Name of Jesus.

Amen.