

The Pallet Cross

Constructed by David Smith – Music Director, St Peters in the City

This structure, this focal point before us this morning, was inspired by a similar cross I saw on the internet some months ago, except unlike the internet version, which had been made from beautifully machined, dressed and refined timber, this cross is made mostly of humble pallet wood and as it turns out, there is a reason for this (other than it being free).



As I worked with this timber I got to experience firsthand some of the parallels between it, and something of the human condition. You see, pallet timber has a certain brokenness about it, not unlike ourselves, and I want to talk metaphorically about some of those similarities.

Pallet timber is notoriously difficult to work with. It's full of knots, where troublesome branches once grew through it, interfering with its growth and creating points of weakness. It has little in the way of structural integrity. You can't rely on it to be strong. It's riddled with imperfections. It's fragile. It's barely good enough for firewood.

You can't ask too much of pallet wood as it's prone to snapping, cracking and splitting. It's usually twisted, bent and bowed, distorted in shape, standing out from conventional timber. It's harsh to handle and my hands are testimony to how easily it splinters. It even smells toxic when cut and makes me wonder where it came from and what it's life was like.

It's difficult to remove from its old framework without breaking it, as if it were being prised away from a problematic world-view that it wants to remain fastened to.



If you look closely you'll find the timber to be battered, knocked about, scarred and abused. This is not privileged timber. This timber's had a hard life, lots of corners have been knocked off, it's been through the mill in more ways than one. Perhaps this sounds a little like, how you feel about yourself at times.

I'm talking about "reject" timber. Some of the pallets I collected had emblazoned on the side of them: "not available for return". Pallets are unwanted items, often used only once and then discarded into alley-ways and service lanes. People want them kept out of sight. They hold little interest for most people.

However, Jesus *is* interested, because He knows all about rejection and unjust treatment. So not unlike the timber on this structure, he invites us to gather around Him so we can, through Him, be

Reclaimed

Recycled

Repurposed

Reconnected (with God)

Regenerated

Re-authored

Re-defined

Fastened to a different framework, a different source of identity.

The truth is, in fact, this timber has a lot of character to it. It's weathered, rustic appearance speaks of stories of suffering, affliction & endurance, and I kind of admire the look of that.

My hope is that maybe you can see something of yourself in this structure, particularly if you get up close, and notice that despite the knots, the battered appearance, the brokenness, all the imperfections, there is a place of significance and acceptance up here for you, as we gather around the significance of the cross.

