

Jesus' Journey to the Cross

Preached by: Matthew S. Black

Text: Mark 14:12-52¹

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Series: The Passion of the Christ

Introduction: Open your Bible this morning to **Mark 14**. We are looking at the

History. More than a thousand years before Jesus came to earth; there was a dramatic shadow of His coming in the country of Egypt. The Jews were slaves there, and God promised to set them free. Ten plagues were sent to the hard hearted Pharaoh. The final plague was a mini Judgment Day. God would let divine justice fall on every family living in Egypt. For both Jews and Egyptians alike, someone would die, specifically the first born male in every home.

I. Eat the Feast [Mk. 14:12-26].

Escape. The only way for your family to escape was to put your faith in God's sacrificial provision. You had to kill a lamb and place it's blood the door posts of your home. In every home there would either be a dead lamb or a dead child. If your family took shelter under the lamb, then death "passed over" you, and you were saved! That's why it is called the "Passover". This is how God delivered His people and led them to freedom. Every year they were to celebrate this EXODUS through a celebration called the Passover. They were to eat a lamb and bread and drink wine. They were delivered from God's justice.

Transition: We come to this very event in the life of Jesus. It is the last time He will celebrate the Passover. As we come to this passage, we must ask—why would a little four legged wooly white creature exempt the Jews from God's divine justice? The answer is found in our text this morning. Let's begin reading in **Mark 14:12**.

A. The Passover Celebration [Mk. 14:12-16; Exo. 6:6-7].

Mark 14:12-16, "And on the first day of Unleavened Bread, when they sacrificed the Passover lamb, his disciples said to him, "Where will you have us go and prepare for you to eat the Passover?" 13And he sent two of his disciples and said to them, "Go into the city, and a man carrying a jar of water will meet you. Follow him, 14 and wherever he enters, say to the master of the house, 'The Teacher says, Where is my guest room, where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?' 15 And he will show you a large upper room furnished and ready; there prepare for us." 16 And the disciples set out and went to the city and found it just as he had told them, and they prepared the Passover.'

The Passover meal had to be prepared in a certain way. Before Jesus would have been four cups of wine representing the four promises God gave to Israel in **Exodus 6:6-7**.² The

¹ Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture is from the *English Standard Version* of the Bible.

² **Exodus 6:6-7**, "Say therefore to the people of Israel, 'I am the LORD, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will deliver you from slavery to them, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great acts of judgment. 7 I will take you to be my people, and I will be your God, and you shall know that I am the LORD your God, who has brought you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians.'

promises represented by the cups were:

- (1) Rescue from Egypt (world)
- (2) Freedom from slavery (sin)
- (3) Redemption by God's power (Jesus), and
- (4) A Renewed relationship with God (reconciliation)

➤ After the *first cup* they would have all washed their hands. Jesus would have washed their feet as well (*according to John 13:1-20*).

B. The Bitter Herbs [Mk. 14:17-21; Exo. 6:6-7].

Before the *second cup*, Jesus would have dipped bitter herbs—today Jews use some type of green vegetable—into the dish of salt water, then the bread would be dipped. The salt water and the vegetables represented the bitter tears the people endured as slaves in Egypt.

But there is someone among the disciples who is still in slavery to this world. He's a thief—he's so close to Jesus—able to touch Him—eating with Him. But he is eating bread and bitter herbs. He is still in slavery.

Jesus begins the meal in a very somber way. One who is eating with him will betray him.

Mark 14:17-21, “And when it was evening, he came with the twelve. 18 And as they were reclining at table and eating, Jesus said, "Truly, I say to you, one of you will betray me, one who is eating with me." **19** They began to be sorrowful and to say to him one after another, "Is it I?" **20** He said to them, "It is one of the twelve, one who is dipping bread into the dish with me. **21** For the Son of Man goes as it is written of him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been better for that man if he had not been born."

How sad it is that like Judas, there are many who are so close to Jesus but will never reach out to Him for salvation. It's just like those in Egypt who would not put their faith in the sacrificial lamb. They went to sleep thinking all was well, but they woke up to divine wrath when the first born of their home was taken.

So it is for many who have their own salvation and redemption so close, but choose a little bit of silver in this life over the joy of having their sins covered by the Lamb.

Speaking of the lamb, it is interesting that no lamb is mentioned at all in this meal. The *third cup* would have been offered and then there was the main course. There is bread present, but no lamb. Look at verse 22.

C. The Main Course—No Lamb but Jesus [vs. 22].

Verses 22, “And as they were eating, he took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to them, and said, "Take; this is my body."

Imagine the astonishment of the disciples. Jesus is departing from the script of the Passover Seder. Normally, the head of the meal would read from Deuteronomy 26 and say, “*This is the bread of our affliction*”. Jesus was saying in essence: “This is the bread of My affliction”.

He says, “Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me” (**1 Cor. 11:24**, NKJV).

- At all Passover meals there was a Lamb. This meal departs from the script. Jesus is fulfilling the symbolism of the ancient Passover Feast. But the disciples must be puzzled for another reason.
- When Jesus stands up to bless the food, he holds up the bread. All Passover meals have bread. He blesses the wine. All Passover meals have wine. But not one of the Gospels mentions the **main course**. There is no mention of the lamb.

“There was no lamb on the table because the Lamb of God was at the table.”³ - Tim Keller

Jesus was the main course. Jesus was changing the script, because He was the fulfillment of the True Lamb of God that Isaiah spoke about in Isaiah 53:

Isaiah 53:4-6, “Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. 5 But he was wounded for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his stripes we are healed. 6 All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.”

Jesus’ body was stricken, smitten by God and afflicted! His body was wounded for my transgressions.

- Jesus says, “Take; this is my body” (**Mark 14:22b**). Take it! During the Passover, the ancient Jews were to eat the lamb entirely—nothing was to be left.
- Now the fourth and final cup is taken. Most scholars believe this is where verses 23-25 are spoken.

D. The Fourth Cup—“This is My Affliction...” [vs. 23-25].

Remember the Passover meal had to be prepared in a certain way. Four cups were before Jesus. Each represented the promises God gave to Israel in **Exodus 6:6-7**.⁴ The fourth cup now was taken up by Jesus. It was the promise of a renewed relationship with God.

Mark 14:23-25, “And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, and they all drank of it. 24 And he said to them, "This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many. 25 Truly, I say to you, I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine

³ Timothy Keller. *King’s Cross* (New York: Dutton, 2011), 167.

⁴ **Exodus 6:6-7**, “Say therefore to the people of Israel, ‘I am the LORD, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will deliver you from slavery to them, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great acts of judgment. 7 I will take you to be my people, and I will be your God, and you shall know that I am the LORD your God, who has brought you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians.’”

until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God.”

On the Cross, Jesus got what we deserved. It wasn't the Passover celebration that was important. Getting out of Egypt might have saved their lives, but the Lamb of God would die for us that God might pass over our sins eternally. It's exactly what the prophet Isaiah had predicted.

Isaiah 53:4-6, “All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all. 7 He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he opened not his mouth... 11he shall bear their iniquities. 12 ... he poured out his soul to death and was numbered with the transgressors; yet he bore the sin of many.”

So Jesus says, “This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many” (**Mk. 14:24**).

Applications:

- (1) **Feed on Jesus.** When Jesus says we are to take the bread and drink in the cup, He's not telling us to eat healthy. He's saying “Feed on Me in your hearts by faith”. You can have a meal piled in front of you, everything you like cooked to perfection, yet you can still starve to death. To be nourished by a meal, you have to **eat** it.
- (2) **Dine with Jesus.** Jesus calls us to a personal meal with Him. He calls us to come and dine with Him. What is it that you are to eat? You and I are to take in Christ's unconditional commitment to us. Jesus calls you into personal relationship with Him. That's what the meal is all about. You don't dine with strangers. If you are to have the benefits of His perfect substitutionary sacrifice for you, then you need to accept His invitation.
- (3) **Follow Jesus.** Jesus says in **verse 25**, “Truly, I say to you, I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God”. Like Moses, Jesus is leading us out of the land of bondage. Imagine you were in Egypt just after that first Passover. If you stopped the Israelites in those days and said, “Who are you, and what is happening here?” they would say, “I was a slave, under a sentence of death, but I took shelter under the blood of the lamb and escaped bondage. Now God lives in our midst and He is leading us to the Promised Land.”

That's exactly what Christians say today.

E. The Upper Room Discourse [John 14-17].⁵

⁵ It is not mentioned in Mark, but after the meal, Jesus gives His Upper Room Discourse.

- He tells us He's the way to life with God. It is here that Jesus says, “I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life, no one comes to the Father except by Me” (**Jn. 14:6**).
- He tells us that He will send **the Spirit** to empower our new life. It is here that Jesus promises the coming of the Holy Spirit to empower them (**Jn. 14:16-31**).
- He tells us He Himself will be the Source of our new life. He encourages us with the words, “I am the vine, you are the branches” and He tells us that we will bear fruit if we abide in Him! (**Jn. 15**).

Of course, after the Passover Seder, the Lord gave the Upper Room Discourse. We find it in **John 14-17**. He told them "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life; I am the Vine; Abide in Me; I am sending a Comforter"; and then He prayed His high priestly prayer of **John 17**.

Transition: Jesus has explained the symbolic cup of affliction, but He must now drink the true cup. It is the cup of the grapes of the wrath of God. He must drink the full cup of God's wrath for us.

- We read in **Mark 14:26**, "And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives". He was going to the Garden of Gethsemane at Mount Olivet. He was about to peer into the depth of God's full wrath for our sin.

II. Consider the Cup [Mk. 14:27-42].

There is a cup that Jesus must drink. The Lord's Table cup was only symbolic. There is a cup of God's wrath that is being served up for Him.

The Greeks and Romans have left us many stories of leaders and heroes who faced death, and almost without exception these people were calm and dispassionate in their final hours. It is not like this with Jesus.

Mark gives us a portrayal of Jesus' final hours as He faced death. And it is very lonely.

A. The Loneliness of the Cup [vs. 25-34].

There is no one that can drink this cup but Christ. All will fall away, and Christ will face death alone.

Mark 14:27-31, "And Jesus said to them, "You will all fall away, for it is written, 'I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered.' 28 But after I am raised up, I will go before you to Galilee." 29 Peter said to him, "Even though they all fall away, I will not." **30** And Jesus said to him, "Truly, I tell you, this very night, before the rooster crows twice, you will deny me three times." **31** But he said emphatically, "If I must die with you, I will not deny you." And they all said the same".

They said it, but none of them was ready for what was about to happen. Peter indeed would deny Jesus three times. In fact all the disciples were on such an earthly level. Like all of us, they thought they were far more spiritually advanced than they were. The truth is that night they would all desert Christ and be scattered.

Christ is ready to go to the Cross alone. Christ has prepared for this all His life. He warned of it over and over. Now all His disciples would be scattered. **Jesus would partake of the cup of God's wrath alone.**

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- He explains that **He will go away** (**Jn. 16**), but that He will also return.
 - And then He we hear His **high priestly prayer** before He leaving for the Garden of Gethsemane (**Jn. 17**).

The Cup of Wrath Foretold by the Prophets

It was a cup of horror foretold by the prophets.

- Asaph said in **Psalm 75:8**, “For in the hand of the LORD there is a cup with foaming wine, well mixed, and he pours out from it, and all the wicked of the earth shall drain it down to the dregs.”
- Job says of the wicked in **Job 21:20**, “Let their own eyes see their destruction, and let them drink of the wrath of the Almighty.”
- We read in **Nahum 1:3**, “The LORD is slow to anger and great in power, and the LORD will by no means acquit the guilty” (NKJV).
- In order for Jesus to free the guilty, He must drink the cup of God’s wrath for us.

B. The Horror of the Cup [vs. 32-36].

This cup of horror foretold by the prophets is seen in full view by Jesus. Mark records it in **Mark 14:32-36**, “And they went to a place called Gethsemane. And he said to his disciples, "Sit here while I pray." **33** And he took with him Peter and James and John, and began to be **greatly distressed and troubled**. **34** And he said to them, "**My soul is very sorrowful, even to death.** Remain here and watch. **32** And going a little farther, he fell on the ground and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him. **36** And he said, "Abba, Father, all things are possible for you. Remove this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will."

No Other Way But Substitutionary Atonement

What was Jesus saying? He was saying, “Father, if there is any other way, let me go that way!” But there is no other way. Substitutionary atonement is the only way. There is no other way that mankind can be reconciled to God. The suffering that Christ sees ahead of Him is unimaginable. Unlike the entire whole of humanity, Jesus submits to the Father’s will in this overwhelming struggle.

1. **Jesus’ struggle is beyond comprehension.** Consider some of the descriptions from the text.

- ***He is said to be astonished.*** Here Jesus, just before His crucifixion lays bear His heart to God and to us about His agony. The word “greatly distressed” (vs. 33) also has the idea of “**greatly astonished**”. Jesus during His whole ministry has been completely unflappable. But here, something He sees, something He realizes stuns the eternal Son of God.
- ***He is said to be overcome with horror.*** Jesus, according to the text is also “troubled” (vs. 33).⁶ The Greek term here means “**to be overcome with horror**”.⁷

⁶ The Greek verb here is defined by Zodiates as follows: “to be depressed and almost overwhelmed with sorrow or burden of mind”.

⁷ Keller, 174.

- **Illustration:** Once in High School on a choir tour, we stopped at an awful accident scene. Our Choir Director, Dave Shaleen, jumped off the bus and opened the crumpled car door to find a woman, alive, but her face was totally mutilated. Dave came back white as a ghost. He was horrified and nauseated and concerned.
- ***He is said to be in such intense emotional anguish, He feels close to death.*** The emotion Jesus felt at this time almost killed Him. He said to His disciples, ““My soul is very sorrowful, even to death” (**vs. 34**).

2. **Jesus' struggle is unique.**

Many Christians have faced death, and almost without exception these people face death bravely and even gladly.

Polycarp and Other Christian Martyrs Faced Death with Bravery

Illustration from Tim Keller: “We have many true accounts of Christian men and women being killed for their faith—thrown to wild animals, cut to pieces, burned at the stake. It appears that many of them faced their deaths more calmly than Jesus did. Take Polycarp, bishop of Smyrna, an early Christian leader. Near the end of his life, he was taken before a magistrate, and told he would be burned at the stake. The magistrate said, in effect, “I will give you one more chance: You can reject Christianity, you can recant, and avoid execution.”⁸

Some witnesses wrote down Polycarp’s reply:

“The fire you threaten burns but an hour and is quenched after a little... You do not know the fire of the coming judgment... But why do you delay? Come, do what you will.”⁹

- Polycarp, disciple of John and first century pastor of Smyrna

Why is it that many of Jesus’ followers seemed to look at death more calmly than Jesus? Of course, the reason is, every follower of Jesus avoids what Jesus with joy chose to endure.

Jesus’ Suffering Was Beyond What Any Human Being Has Suffered

Something happened in that garden—Jesus saw, felt, sensed something--and it shocked the unshakable Son of God. What was it? It was something beyond physical torment—beyond the most excruciating pain. All human suffering combined is simply a flea bite compared to what Jesus saw in the Garden. Indeed, He began to enter into it. It was the everlasting wrath of the Father.

Luke’s account gives us a frightening detail. Luke 22:43-44, “And there appeared to him an angel from heaven, strengthening him. 44 And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly; and his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the

⁸ Keller, 175.

⁹ Polycarp in Cyril C. Richardson. Early Christian Fathers (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 2006), 153.

ground.”

Here was the Son of God, facing the everlasting justice of God for my sin. What He saw shocked the unshockable Son of God. Have you ever been in such great pain or in such a great sorrow or trial or temptation that you couldn’t think straight? That’s where Jesus was. When we are in that state of mind, we often lose it. We make shockingly self destructive statements, and we at times undermine the people and the values we love most. We all fall short when faced with God’s will in horrifying situations.

But at the most supreme moment of personal pain in the history of the world, Jesus doesn’t do fall short. He says, “Yet not what I will, but what you will” (vs. 36). He’s not stoically resigned to God. He’s saying, “I trust you no matter what I’m feeling right now”. He desires to do the will of the Father. Jesus doesn’t deny His emotions. He is the pure, holy Son of God.

Jonathan Edwards Thoughts on Gethsemane

Jonathan Edwards described what Jesus must have experienced in Gethsemane:

“[In the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus] had then a near view of that furnace of wrath, into which he was to be cast; he was brought to the mouth of the furnace that He might look into it, and stand and view its raging flames, and see the glowings of its heat, that he might know where he was going and what he was about to suffer”.¹⁰

He goes on to say, “There are two things that render Christ’s love wonderful: 1. That he should be willing to endure sufferings that were so great; and 2. That he should be willing to endure them to make atonement for wickedness that was so great.”¹¹

So why did Christ have to begin to see the sufferings of the Cross at Gethsemane? It was necessary that He would see them and enter into them and of His own will choose to bear the sins of you and me.

Application: Consider the Cup of wrath that Christ drank out of pure love for you. His love was so great that it could dissolve the mountain of rightful wrath for you. Nothing can satisfy you like the cup of Christ’s love. Drink of that cup of love. No family love, no romantic love, no matter how strong, no love for a child or a mother or father, no love on earth can compare with the love of Christ. He drank my cup of wrath that I might drink His cup of love.

Drink it! Eat the Feast with Christ. He calls you to personal relationship. Drink the Cup of His love—He calls you to embrace what He’s done for you.

Transition: Of course **verses 37-42** tell of the disciples’ sloth. They are do not “watch and pray” even for one hour. Notice, Christ does not ask them to pray for Himself, but for themselves that they would “not enter into temptation” (vs. 38). They are all miserable failures, but that’s just the people Christ desires to save. So we read in **verse 41**, “...he came the third time and said to

¹⁰ Jonathan Edwards. *Works* (London: John Childs & Son, 1839), 867.

¹¹ Ibid.

them, "Are you still sleeping and taking your rest? It is enough; the hour has come. The Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. 42 Rise, let us be going; see, my betrayer is at hand."

Eat the feast, Consider the cup, and now...

III. Behold the Betrayal [vs. 43-52].

A. The Kiss of an Enemy [vs. 43-49].

Mark 14:43-46, “And immediately, while he was still speaking, Judas came, one of the twelve, and with him a crowd with swords and clubs, from the chief priests and the scribes and the elders. 44 Now the betrayer had given them a sign, saying, "The one I will kiss is the man. Seize him and lead him away under guard." 45 And when he came, he went up to him at once and said, "Rabbi!" And he kissed him. 46 And they laid hands on him and seized him.”

Judas expected that Jesus would be ready to destroy him. Judas comes with subterfuge and guile. The word for “kissed” has the idea that he kissed and kept on kissing Christ. It was the kiss of death for Christ.

- Judas had come with a mob with clubs and swords. He was expecting resistance. Do you see how he misunderstood the “Kingdom of God”. Jesus said, “My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would have been fighting, that I might not be delivered over to the Jews” (**John 18:36**).
- John tells us that apparently we find out that Peter did not get the memo. He takes his sword out for violence (**John 18:10**). His motive is love. But his result is violence. It’s what happens when sinners try to save themselves. So we see...

B. The Love of a Friend [vs. 47-49].

Peter loves Jesus, but it is a very misguided love. He wants to protect Jesus. He hasn’t got a clue that Jesus doesn’t need his help. Jesus doesn’t need saving! Jesus does not need Peter’s help. Poor misguided Peter.

- We read in **Mark 14:47**, “But one of those who stood by drew his sword and struck the servant of the high priest and cut off his ear.”
- Luke tells us what happened next. “But Jesus said, "No more of this!" And he touched his ear and healed him” (**Luke 22:52**).
- **John 18:11**, “So Jesus said to Peter, "Put your sword into its sheath; shall I not drink the cup that the Father has given me?"”

Peter wanted to spare Jesus from the suffering He was about to endure. But Jesus is intent on drinking the full cup of God’s justice for us. Peter doesn’t get it. Jesus doesn’t need Peter’s help.

- Indeed the Lord says to Peter in **Matthew 26:52-54**, “Put your sword back into its place. For all who take the sword will perish by the sword. 53 **Do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father, and he will at once send me more than twelve legions of angels? [72,000 angels since a legion is 6000]** 54 But how then should the Scriptures be fulfilled, that it must be so?”

Mark 14:48-49, “And Jesus said to them, "Have you come out as against a **robber**, with swords and clubs to capture me? 49 Day after day I was with you in the temple teaching, and you did not seize me. **But let the Scriptures be fulfilled.**"

The word “robber” has the idea of one who is “leading a rebellion” or a “revolutionary”.

Judas thought Jesus would retaliate with swords (and Peter thought that would be a good idea)—so this is why Judas and those with him came with a mob. They expected Jesus to retaliate. Neither the lost Judas nor the saved Peter get it. Jesus does not want to retaliate.

C. The Failure of All [vs. 50-52].

Mark 14: 50-52, “And they all left him and fled. 51 And a young man followed him, with nothing but a linen cloth about his body. And they seized him, 52 but he left the linen cloth and ran away naked.”

Peter and all the disciples run away and hide! Jesus is utterly alone. Peter and the other disciples, who had spent years by His side, desert Him at the first real test of their fortitude. Remember all the disciples had earlier pledged to follow Christ to their deaths? (**Mark 14:31**).

John Mark’s Disgrace

A young man is mentioned as fleeing from the scene. Many Bible scholars believe that this is John Mark. It’s likely him since it would probably have been his home where the Passover Seder was hosted. He could have snuck out with Jesus and the disciples and followed them to the Garden of Gethsemane out of curiosity.

So if we are right, then John Mark is so intent on saving his skin that when Judas’s crowd grabs hold of his garment, he is willing to shed it and run away naked down the street. In the Bible nakedness is a sign of disgrace, and it is appropriate that John Mark should share this detail in his account. He’s essentially saying, “I was there and I was as bad as everyone else!” Everyone had failed Jesus.

D. The Perfect Righteousness of Jesus.

So everyone is failing the test. They are either waving swords, hiding, or running away naked from the scene. Just like in the Garden of Eden, all have failed. That is, all have failed except one!

Conclusion: While everyone is fighting and fleeing, Jesus is standing firm, obeying the Father’s will. While everyone is failing the test, Jesus is standing there in the Garden in perfect righteousness. Jesus is facing something infinitely worse than this world’s sword. He is facing the sword of God’s divine justice.

Remember that when Adam and Eve were expelled from the garden, they turned around and saw the flaming sword of justice, keeping them from ever going back? Their sin separated them from God. There's no way back into the presence of God unless someone goes under the sword of divine justice. Jesus was in the garden facing the ultimate sword of divine justice and He stood firm, for Adam and Eve, for Peter and the disciples, for YOU and for ME!!

You see the kingdom of God is upside down. On the Cross, Jesus gets what we deserve so we can get what He alone deserves. He gets our shame, we get His righteousness. That's what the **Passover Feast** is all about. That's why Jesus drank the cup of God's wrath. Judas and even Peter didn't understand it. We don't have to work for it. We don't have to fight for it. We cannot obtain it on our own. It's ours for free. Jesus gives it to us. He invites us to dine with Him. He invites us to drink in the cup, not of divine *wrath*, but of divine *love*.

Jesus made His journey to the Cross.

Have you made your journey to Him?