

Maundy Thursday Service

Mark 14:32-42

4/1/2021

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Good evening friends. I'm glad that you can join us tonight. I'm glad that you're able to join us, those who are with us on the livestream. Let us pray together as we prepare to hear from God's word.

Lord Jesus, as we join you on your journey to Calvary this week, we remember and we desire that you would give us eyes to perceive you in the shadows of our circumstances, faith to believe your perfect plan, and grace to receive mercies anew. Lord, carry us through the darkness of these difficult days to the life and light to come. Amen.

This series from last Sunday to Easter Sunday, our desire has been to take one passage, this passage from Mark of Jesus's prayer and time in the garden of Gethsemane and to see it from different perspectives. And so PD led us on Sunday in understanding the passage from the perspective of being pressed, how Jesus was being pressured and felt the tension of the moment, the cries of the crowds, the doubts of His followers and disciples, knowing what was before Him and how He would be challenged. Tonight, we come again to this passage, not just to see Jesus from the perspective of being pressed but being the one who is betrayed.

So as we do so tonight, I want us to focus on specifically Jesus's betrayal and what it teaches us about us, and more importantly, what it teaches us about God in the face of Jesus. Because God is being betrayed again. What PD was referencing on Sunday, I want to expand on a little bit more tonight. God being betrayed in a garden is not a new scene for the scriptures. If you're familiar with the Bible, at the very least, you would've heard something about the Garden of Eden and how Adam and Eve failed to obey God.

Tonight, for just a moment before we look any further, I just want to hold in your mind's eye for you to consider the garden, the home of our creation in our first parents of Adam and Eve. There, what we learn is that Satan, who would tempt Adam and Eve together, the three of them would betray God for the hope of something else. Yes, that hope was a lie in the mouth of Satan, but nonetheless it was their hope. And so they acted and followed the words of Satan to betray God. As a result of their betrayal, Adam and Eve were removed from intimate fellowship with God the Father, and they were removed from the garden. Those who betrayed were judged.

Now, as we come to this place, this garden, I want us to hold in tension what I just said about the first garden, the first betrayal. And I want you to see how we worship a God tonight who is not a God of revenge. In a garden again, this garden is an olive grove garden of olive trees called Gethsemane, which PD taught us on Sunday literally means "pressed" or "squeezed." In this garden, Jesus would be pressed and squeezed between the murderous rage of the religious leaders and the will of His Father. The difference in this garden scene, however, is that unlike Eden where the betrayers were removed from the garden, removed from intimate fellowship with God, it is the one who is betrayed. Jesus, God made flesh, He would be the one who would be removed forcibly from the garden to face the wrath of God, although He was innocent. And our sin, our betrayal would fall on Him. In the first garden, humans were removed. But to restore fellowship with God would require God to be betrayed again, and this time it is God who would be removed.

Into that scene where we see Jesus tested and pressed and squeezed, we also are meant to hold in our mind's eye how Adam and Eve were tested. They were squeezed, but they failed. Jesus, who Paul calls the second Adam, He was tested, pressed, and squeezed. But He is obedient. He is faithful in every way that we are not.

So to enter this scene, let's press into the human details that the passage gives us in Mark. This scene provides for us something which is very everyday, but it is meant for us to hold in our imagination

just how much Judas was bent on betraying Jesus. So let's look at the betrayer first, Judas. Judas is seizing the moment to leverage his position between the agenda of the religious leaders, who were angry and infuriated, so much so that they wanted to take Jesus's life sooner but were afraid of what the crowds' response would be. Judas knew this. So just a few days before this night, Judas would use his unique position situated between the agenda of the religious leaders and the growing influence of Jesus who he has now followed for nearly three years.

What would he ask, what would he seek to profit from this unique position? Now, the Mark description doesn't fill in the gaps for us, but Matthew does. In Matthew 26 in just a few short verses, we hear these words. "Then one of the twelve, whose name was Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests and said, 'What will you give me if I deliver him over to you?' And they paid him thirty pieces of silver. And from that moment he sought an opportunity to betray him." I wish I had a money pouch. Judas was the treasurer.

If we're just quiet for a minute, do you remember what it was like to have change in your pocket? Their pockets weren't sown in like ours. It would've been in a money pouch. And he's walking. He's walking away from an opportunity to leverage profit for himself. And yet, he is so passive, so ready to betray the Son of God who he's seen and witnessed perform miracles and healing and who is going to wash his feet. What must have been in the mind of Judas as Jesus knelt to wash his feet knowing that clanging in his pouch were just a mere 30 piece of silver? Which according to Exodus would maybe have purchased you a slave, but by the time of Jesus, it might have bought you a small field. He didn't even have the ability to name his price. He lets the agenda of the religious leaders decide it for him. And they name it, and he takes it.

That is a pretty low bar, if you ask me. But it says something about us as humans, how fickle our love is, how quickly we can be bought off, but we see it in the face of Judas. But most importantly, to see the betrayer, we're meant to see the betrayed.

I want to ask you, what do you know about God? What is your opinion of God? We must look here at this passage at this moment to see the face of Jesus who the scriptures tell us revealed to us the face of God. So if, as Paul says, and as Jesus says, "If you have seen me, you have seen the Father," what then in the face of Jesus is revealed about God? What do you and I know about Him? And here I'm not talking about intellectual furniture. I'm not talking about theological dogma. All of that is right, and that is fine. But what do we know about God? But another question that must travel with it is what do we know about ourselves?

And so as we begin to look at the face of Jesus in this passage, I want to ask you this question. How are you? How are you doing? How am I doing? Are you tired and exhausted? Are you weary? Are you in despair? Do you have hope, doubts? Has this been for you, the past year, dark and difficult, lonely, discombobulating to say the least? Then I think there is no better night for us than a night like this for us to bring all that we have and all that we know about ourselves before the face of Jesus as He is presented to us here in Mark.

Here's what I mean. Listen to the words again. "My soul is very sorrowful, even to death. Remain here and watch." Our God, our Savior, Jesus, prays. And He prays, and He prays again. We learn a little bit about the content of these prayers, perhaps in the gospel of John. But what we know is these prayers were with great anguish and sorrow. That sorrow is not a sorrow of condemnation. It's not a sorrow of God wagging His finger at us. It is our God praying for the world and for His disciples, sorrowful over what He has to go through so that we might be redeemed, sorrowful over the brokenness that would now have to be carried on His shoulders. That meal that they just enjoyed of roasted lamb and herbs, that cup is a cup that He offered them, but He would not drink of Himself. The traditional cup of fellowship after Passover meal, He offers to His disciples, but He says, "You cannot drink of the cup that I must drink." So I would suggest to you that not only do the symbols of this table point to what He was about to do, it is also a picture of Jesus's decent into sorrow and anguish and what He knew was ahead of Him. Jesus is

already descending into His humiliation.

But that's not the only word. He says, "Father, all these things are possible for you. Remove this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will." In these few short words, though simple in their content, are so full of divinity and humanity together in the person of Jesus, that our Savior, were we to try to embrace what the perfect God-man is saying in those words, "Not my will but your will be done," in those simple words, the fullness of God and His deity is being expressed and revealed to us in His self-giving love, His willingness to give Himself to embrace the fullness of God's judgment by taking on your brokenness and mine.

You see, in this place as He is praying, as He is sorrowful, as He's just wanting His disciples to pray for Him and with Him, it is here, as one writer says,

"His intention was for us to see just what our God would do, that the gospel story is the story of God who doesn't stay above the pain and the sorrow of His world. His intention from all eternity is to come and live in his own world and his human creatures was gloriously and shockingly fulfilled when he came to the place of pain and sorrow, of justice denied, power corrupted, truth sneered at, and love trampled on. Our place."

That Jesus in this moment, in this garden, was willing to come to our place and to have the justice and righteousness and glory which is due to His name, to have it trampled upon that we might be redeemed.

In Gethsemane, Jesus is already beginning, as I said, His descent into humiliation. Being betrayed by someone who has been with you for nearly three years and then facing the prospect of crucifixion barely 24 hours later for the sake of these? Knowing that those with whom He just shared a meal, one would betray Him, the rest would desert Him? How could it be that the scriptures would still tell us, "For the joy set before him, he would endure the cross, putting aside its shame." What this demonstrates is that if Jesus is willing to come to this place, the crucible of His humiliation in the face of human betrayal and the reality of human sin, this tells us that our God is here for us in our pain. It is precisely here. What this demonstrates is that no matter what you or I have thought and said or done, no matter how broken we may feel, how hopeless our situation may currently appear, it's never too great for the love of Jesus. Never.

If we look at the face of Jesus praying, suffering for our sake, then we should be able to stop and see in the face of Jesus how in this prayer, in this garden, in this place where He is betrayed, we see this. We see Jesus walking in trust versus cynicism. We see Jesus walking in faith versus doubt. We see Jesus leaning on the hope of the promises of His Father versus the despair. We see Jesus surrendering to the will of the Father versus taking a sword and fighting His way out of it. We see Jesus in His humility versus pride. And we see the love of Jesus instead of indifference.

You see, I use these comparisons on purpose because between His entrance into Jerusalem and leading up to His being placed on the cross, we see the full measure of the human heart: the cynicism of Pilot, the doubt of His disciples; the despair of those who would leave Him at the cross; Peter wanting to just say, "No way," and wanting to remove the ear of a guard; the pride of the disciples arguing, who's most important to Jesus? And we see the indifference and the sneers and the accusations, "Take yourself down from that cross." In the face of all of that, the face of God revealed to us in the face of Jesus is a God who is worthy, is a God who invites us, is a God who was willing to be excluded from the garden that we might be fully embraced as far as the curse is found. And as the gospel itself unearths the curse that is found in us, in all of its display of human emotions and actions and words and thoughts and motivations, all of it is made clean by a God who doesn't judge us but rather places His Son in our place.

This is the response of a God who was betrayed. Look at our God. When we meditate then on the person of Jesus and we see His betrayal, and we see that His betrayal would lead to our reception into the heart of God, we can learn then, I think if we're willing to stay here on this week of Calvary, what it must

be like to be Horatio Spafford, that great hymn writer who wrote, "It Is Well." After the death of his four daughters on a transatlantic voyage as he himself crossed from America to England to comfort his grieving wife, he would write,

"Whatever my lot, thou has taught me to say, it is well with my soul. Though Satan should buffet, though trials should come, let this blessed assurance control, that Christ hath regarded my helpless estate and hath shed his own blood for my soul. And Lord, haste the day when the faith shall be sight, the clouds be rolled back as a scroll. The trump shall resound, and the Lord shall descend. Even so, it is well with my soul."

This is our song only because Jesus was betrayed for us.

Then what, friend, would we ever want to withhold from Him who has entered into our world, entered into our place of pain and suffering that we might be saved? Look at our God. Let's pray.

Almighty God, Lord Jesus, we thank you for your word. We ask you now, O Lord, to take your word, bury it deep into our hearts through the power of your Spirit that we might come to you bearing all before you because Jesus has born our sin for our redemption. Your love and grace are more than sufficient. You fill our cup to overflowing, and we can come to you. And we know, because of what Jesus has revealed about you, that we can be received through the work of Jesus alone. Thank you, Lord Jesus, for revealing the Father to us. Thank you, Lord Jesus, for giving us your Spirit. Now, by your Spirit, make us holy. Give us peace. Give us grace. It is in the holy and matchless name of Jesus we pray. Amen.