

Pastor Tom Mortenson

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Now my Spirit is Troubled

John 15:21-31

Prayer: *Father, I just, again, I note that suffering is a theme that we are speaking of this morning, and suffering is certainly part of what we're going to be talking about in the cross of Christ this morning, and so Father, I pray that you would give us grace, give us wisdom, give us insight as we open up your book and try to make meaning of that suffering, particularly the suffering you underwent for us. Give us your grace, give us the presence of your Holy Spirit, we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.*

Well, it is the first Sunday of the month, and again this is the Sunday that we remember Jesus Christ and his cross. And Jesus on the night before he died, he met with his disciples and there for the last time he celebrated the Passover supper. Matthew 26 describes it, it says this: *Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, "Take, eat; this is my body." And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, "Drink of it, all of you, for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured*

out for many for the forgiveness of sins. I tell you I will not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom." Jesus took bread and he took wine and he offered them up as symbols of his blood and of his flesh, and then he asked his disciples to eat the bread and drink the cup to symbolically eat his flesh and drink his blood. He asked them to repeat that remembrance on a regular basis and that's what we do, that's what we're doing right now, that is called the Lord's supper. And we do that by meditating on what it is the Lord Jesus Christ did for us on the cross, by examining ourselves, asking God's Holy Spirit to point out areas where he's convicting us of sin, by confessing our sins and then by participating in the elements. Jesus said in *John 6*: "*Truly, Truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you.*"

Now we've been following the life of Jesus, and so far we've worked our way up to the 13th chapter of the gospel of John and last month we started that chapter, and we were looking at Jesus washing the feet of his disciples. *John 13:1* says this: *Now before the Feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart out of this world to the Father, having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end.* See, only Jesus and his Father knew at this time that 24 hours from this supper, Jesus

would be hanging on a cross. Just imagine if you will, the pressure of knowing that the unthinkable is about to unfold in your life. And last time we talked about fifty cent words, and we had a fifty cent word to describe the disciples. It was the word "recalcitrant." I pointed out that recalcitrant is a fancy word that is used to describe people who resist authority, people who are hard to deal with. I said the disciples were a highly recalcitrant bunch. Jesus to the very end was still instructing and teaching his disciples about servanthood, and to the very end, they were resisting his teaching. And we spoke about how Jesus undertook the most menial of tasks when he decided to wash his disciples' feet and how he did it knowing that this was his last day on earth. And the disciples, on that same very last day, they were embroiled in a battle as to which of them was the greatest. I mentioned that many commentators think that the dispute arose over who was going to sit where at literally Jesus's last supper. And yet instead of throwing up his hands at the disciples, Jesus leads by example. He demonstrates to these folks who are so concerned about respect, he demonstrates to them what true greatness is.

Luke 22 says this: A dispute also arose among them, as to which of them was to be regarded as the greatest. And he said to them, "The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them, and those in authority over them are called benefactors. But not so with you. Rather, let the greatest among you become as the youngest, and the

leader as one who serves. For who is the greater, one who reclines at table or one who serves? Is it not the one who reclines at table? But I am among you as the one who serves."

There was no one in the entire universe more worthy to be served than the very King, Creator and Sustainer of the universe, the Lord Jesus Christ, and yet here he is stripped to the waist, engaged in a task that is only set aside for the lowest of the low. Here's what happened. You know, Jesus didn't just take off his garment. He took off his garments. That means that Jesus stripped to his underwear. I mean in that culture, that was an incredibly demeaning thing to do, I mean, even in our culture it's considered the thing of nightmares to be seen in your underwear. But Jesus voluntarily put himself in a position of the lowest of the low in servanthood at a time when there was no precedent whatsoever for that type of behavior. I mean, this is the King. This is the Creator and the Sustainer of the universe, the one to whom all worship is due, and he's dining for the very last time with this recalcitrant bunch, and instead of lashing out at them for their thoughtless ambition, he once again humbles himself to teach. See on this last day on earth, Jesus was determined to love his disciples to the very end.

But something else was going on at this dinner, something far more

sinister than simply the disciples' ambition and jockeying for position. *John 13:21* says this: *After saying these things, Jesus was troubled in his spirit.* Well, there's a number of things we can deduce from that passage and the obvious one is that Jesus was troubled, but that statement alone can present us with a problem, the problem is based on something that Jesus himself said. At the beginning of the very next chapter in *John 14*, Jesus says to his disciples: *"Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me."* This wasn't a suggestion from Jesus, this was a command. And here we have the scripture clearly stating that Jesus himself is troubled. Some would say, well, isn't it Jesus saying do as I say, not as I do, or was there a genuine excuse for Jesus's troubled spirit? Well, there's no doubt that Jesus was troubled but his response and the disciples' response were completely different. You see, Jesus could command his disciples to let not their hearts be troubled, because God was always with them. God would always accompany them even up to and including their own martyrdom, but Jesus couldn't make that claim for himself. I mean, within a matter of hours, Jesus was about to enter into this no man's land where every single shred of human support would be abandoned. He would find himself alone. *John 16:32* says: *"Behold, the hour is coming, indeed it has come, when you will be scattered,"* Jesus says, *"each to his own home, and will leave me alone. Yet I am not alone, for the Father is with me."*

But you know, Jesus knew that even that comfort was going to evaporate and that he would be left completely alone to face the wrath of God and a whole host of demons who wanted nothing but his destruction.

Well, Jesus was troubled indeed. And the trouble he's experiencing begins with the betrayal of Judas. This is *John 13:21*. It says: *After saying these things, Jesus was troubled in his spirit, and testified, "Truly, truly, I say to you, one of you will betray me." The disciples looked at one another, uncertain of whom he spoke. One of his disciples, whom Jesus loved, was reclining at table at Jesus' side, so Simon Peter motioned to him to ask Jesus of whom he was speaking.* Well you know, one thing we can deduce from this testimony, one thing we know for certain is that Jesus knew exactly who was going to betray him and how. But Jesus's statement takes the disciples by surprise and it appears that only a few of them actually even heard what Jesus was saying. And Peter's one of the few and so he motions to one of the disciples to ask Jesus for the specifics. Verse 25 says: *So that disciple, leaning back against Jesus, said to him, "Lord, who is it?" Jesus answered, "It is he to whom I will give this morsel of bread when I have dipped it." So when he had dipped the morsel, he gave it to Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot.* You know, passing the morsel is more than just giving somebody a piece of bread. It was a symbolic act back then,

and it was designed to pass honor to the one that you were passing the bread to. This was Jesus's final attempt to reach out to Judas. Judas accepted the bread but he did not accept the warning and the attempt to reach out to him. In fact, one commentator traces the road that Judas took from this original suggestion to betray Jesus that Satan had put in his heart to the actual time when Satan himself entered into his heart. And it starts in verse 2. This is *John 13:2*. It says: *During supper, when the devil had already put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him.* See what the text is saying is at one point this was only a suggestion, something that the devil had placed into his heart as a suggestion, but it was a suggestion that Judas welcomed. It was a suggestion that he nursed in his heart and the more he nursed it, the less unthinkable it became. The more he entertained the thought, the less he was able to see how painfully obvious Jesus was making it known that this betrayal was no surprise at all to him. You know, Jesus announces ahead of time that his betrayer is sitting at the table. Judas doesn't respond. Judas doesn't respond but the other disciples are stunned and they're all asking each other, "Who could this be?" And of course led by Peter, they're asking themselves a question that was literally unthinkable just a day before. But all the while Judas's heart is growing harder and harder and more and more like stone. Some of the disciples are even asking Jesus, "Is it me?" One of those

disciples was Judas. He asked Jesus the same question. But he had already deafened his ears to the answer. He hears the most solemn pronouncement on the soul of the betrayer from the mouth of Jesus himself and it falls on deaf ears. *Matthew 26:21* says this: *And as they were eating, he -- that's Jesus -- said, "Truly, I say to you, one of you will betray me." And they were very sorrowful and began to say him to one after another, "Is it I, Lord?" He answered, "He who has dipped his hand in the dish with me will betray me. 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." Judas, who would betray him, answered, "Is it I, Rabbi?" He said to him, "You have said so."*

You have to marvel at Judas's willful ignorance. I mean, three separate times Jesus shouts out warnings to Judas. You know, the first one is a general warning that a betrayer is sitting amongst them. Judas just ignores that warning. The second one is given after Jesus has shared a morsel with Judas and it was that the betrayer would share the same dish with Jesus. Judas ignores that warning as well. But you know, the third warning drops all pretense of subtlety and simply says to the inquiring Judas, you are the one, *"You have said so."* And Judas chose to ignore a warning from God himself. And the warning was that to proceed as

he was about to would make him a man who would have been better off never having been born. And yet that warning fell on deaf ears.

We think to ourself how could a warning so obvious be so easily ignored? But it begs the question for us. Have you and I ever ignored a warning from God? Now, I've said this many, many times, but rejecting God's truth not only denies you that truth but it also diminishes your capacity to perceive truth itself, any truth. *Mark 4:25* says this: *"For to the one who has, more will be given, and from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away."* You see, Judas wouldn't hear the truth until he couldn't hear the truth. By then it was too late. And having resisted all of the warnings, Judas literally threw out the welcome mat to his soul and invited Satan right in. And Satan was only too happy to accommodate. Verse 27 says: *Then after he had taken the morsel, Satan entered into him. Jesus said to him, "What you are going to do, do quickly."* Now no one at the table knew why he said this to him. Some thought that, because Judas had the moneybag, Jesus was telling him, "Buy what we need for the feast," or that he should give something to the poor. So, after receiving the morsel of bread, he immediately went out. And it was night. When he had gone out, Jesus said, *"Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in him."* You see, in the confusion that follows, Judas is allowed to follow the course that was designed by God to end up

at the cross. Jesus is making a number of statements here. He's acknowledging that Judas's betrayal is all part of God's sovereign plan. And once again, God takes what is arguably the lowest act a human being could ever, ever commit, God himself sold for 30 pieces of silver. You know God takes that act and he turns that horror into something that he gains glory from. Satan thought that he had gained a major victory but God was superintending everything. Satan didn't realize that Judas was merely a pawn and he was being placed there by God and that Satan himself was a pawn acting out what God had for him by taking possession of Judas.

Now I've been asked on more than one occasion if a Christian can be possessed by the devil. He cannot. He can be attacked, he can be harassed, he can be hounded by the devil but he cannot be possessed by the devil by definition. The definition of a Christian is someone who has the Holy Spirit of Christ living within him. And by definition, the Spirit of Christ has complete and absolute authority over any and all other spirit entities. The scriptural basis for that is 1 John 4:2 which says: *Every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you heard was coming and now is in the world already. Little children, you are from God and have overcome them, for he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.* Now if you ever want to be greatly encouraged about the power of Christ

within you as a believer, there's a simple exercise that we're going to do. Just go through the scriptures and watch and observe all of the different interactions that Jesus has with the devil and demons, and you'll see that in every single case their reaction to us is bluster, it's bravado, their reaction to Jesus is fear and panic. Take for example Jesus's interaction with a demon possessed man. This is *Luke 8:26*, it says: *Then they sailed to the country of the Garasenes, which is opposite Galilee. When Jesus had stepped out on land, there met him a man from the city who had demons. For a long time he had worn no clothes, and he had not lived in a house but among the tombs. This is not a guy you want to run into in a dark alley. This is a guy who comes storming down the mountain and he's naked and he's enraged and he's screaming at Jesus and the disciples and then he comes to a very sudden stop. Luke 8:28 says: When he saw Jesus, he cried out and fell down before him and said with a loud voice, "What have you to do with me, Jesus, son of the most high God? I beg you, do not torment me." For he had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man. (For many a time it had seized him. He was kept under guard and bound with chains and shackles, but he would break the bonds and be driven by the demon into the desert.)* Did I mention the fact that this guy was strong enough to break chains and shackles? And he comes screaming down the mountain and Jesus is what, he's absolutely nonplussed. Jesus doesn't budge. In fact he doesn't

even speak to the man, he speaks directly to the demons inside him. He's speaking to these terrifying creatures that had invaded and overtaken him, but what follows gives us an insight into how these demons view the Lord Jesus Christ. You know, it's immediately obvious though that they had complete control over this demon-possessed man, they knew they were no match for the King of creation. And so the very first contact that they have with Jesus has them saying: *"What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg you do not torment me."* Jesus then asked him, *"What is your name?"* And he said, *"Legion,"* for many demons had entered him. And they begged him not to command them to depart into the abyss. Understand, demons know their place. They're literally begging God for mercy. You know, Matthew's account points out how they know and they understand full well that their appointed day of reckoning has not yet come. *Matthew 8:29*, it says: *And behold, they cried out, "What have you to do with us, O son of God? Have you come here to torment us before the time?"* Well, apparently there's an agreed to timetable known only to them and to God and there's no question that they know that their fate is sealed. And Jesus addresses their plea. In *Luke 8:32* it says: *Now a large herd of pigs was feeding there on the hillside, and they begged him to let them enter these. So he gave them permission. Then the demons came out of the man and entered the pigs, and the herd rushed down the steep bank into the lake and*

drowned.

We have two different instances in this situation where we find demons literally begging God for mercy. They beg him first not to send them into the abyss and then they beg him to allow them to enter into the pigs. Their bravado has evaporated. We look at some of the other instances, we have *Matthew 17*, Jesus is confronted with a young boy suffering from convulsions who has a demon who throws him into a fire. In *Matthew 17:18* it says: *Jesus rebuked the demon, and it came out of him, and the boy was healed instantly.* In Mark's gospel we have an account of Jesus exercising his authority over demons who were nowhere near him. It's the account of the Syro-Phoenician woman. This is the woman who approaches Jesus begging for help because she has a daughter who was demon possessed. And Jesus first challenges her faith. She's an outsider. She's not a Jew. And Jesus is telling her that he was sent first to Israel. This is what Jesus says in *Mark 7:27*. It says: *And he said to her, "Let the children be fed first, for it is not right to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs." But she answered him, "Yes, Lord; yet even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs." And he said to her, "For this statement you may go your way; the demon has left your daughter." And she went home and found the child lying in bed and the demon gone.* Jesus didn't even have to be near him. He said,

"Get lost" and they're gone.

One of my favorite accounts is this one in Luke. It gives an account of Jesus casting out demons and as he's casting them out, they're acknowledging that he is the Christ and he says to them shut up. This is *Luke 4*, it says: *Now when the sun was setting, all those who had any who were sick with various diseases brought them to him, and he laid his hands on every one of them and healed them. And demons also came out of many, crying, "You are the Son of God!" But he rebuked them and would not allow them to speak, because they knew that he was the Christ.* Do you sense the absolute mastery that Jesus has over these demons? He's the boss. And you know why? Because he was their creator. *Colossians 1:16* says: *For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him.* See demons are revolted and revolting in every way angels, angels who disobeyed, angels who rebelled. So coming down from that mountain this man, this demoniac with this devil inside him, well the devil in there looks very bold and very terrifying in the absence of Christ, but before Christ, he is a whimpering knock-kneed coward. Never, never forget that. See, the devil is clearly a vicious animal but he is an animal on a chain and Jesus is the one who yanks the chain whenever he decides.

As the elders begin distributing the bread, I'd like us to just take a moment to consider this morning what an incredible Savior we have. See, the devil entered into Judas's heart and he thought he was having his way, but he was only doing his part to ensure that the sacrifice that Jesus himself was orchestrating would take place as planned. This is verse 27, it says: *Then after had he taken the morsel, Satan entered into him. Jesus said to him, "What you are going to do, do quickly." So, after receiving the morsel of bread, he immediately went out. And it was night. When he had gone out, Jesus said, "Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in him."*

As the elements are being distributed, we need to also consider the warning that God gives at this time. This is from *1 Corinthians 11:28-32*. God says: *But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. For this reason many are weak and sick among you, and many sleep. For if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened by the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world.* I repeat this each month and I say how communion is an incredibly serious undertaking, and to receive it in an unworthy manner is to literally court disaster. What I'm saying is this, if you are not

a child of God, if you are not absolutely certain that you belong to him or if you have some other unfinished business that you need to take care of ahead of time, then don't take the elements, just pass them on. Nobody's going to look at you like you're weird or that you're different. As I've often said, they may well just think that you're wise. But I also point out each month that there's a mistake you can make on the other side. You see, being a child of the King doesn't mean that you never sin and that you never fail. All it means is that we recognize this, that salvation is a gift that no one is capable of earning by being good. I repeat each month those words that Dane Ortlund said, he says this: "In the kingdom of God, the one thing that qualifies you is knowing that you don't qualify, and the one thing that disqualifies you is thinking that you do." This also means that when we do fail, we are aware of the fact that we've sinned because God's Spirit is within us and God's Spirit is there convicting us. And so we grieve as children who know that we have a Father who longs to forgive and cleanse us. God says this in *1 John 1:9*, he says: *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.* Now being a child of the King doesn't mean that you are without sin. It means that when we do sin, we know we have an advocate with the Father, someone who speaks on our behalf. *1 John 2:1: My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have*

an advocate with the Father -- Jesus Christ, the Righteous One.

And so because we have Jesus's own righteousness, it belongs to us and it's not our own. Because we have his righteousness, we are free to eat from his table. And so if you love your Lord, don't deny yourself the privilege that Jesus purchased for you. We say it all the time, he lived the life we were supposed to live and then he died the death we all deserved to die so that we could be made worthy of heaven. Just take a moment and meditate on the power of the Lord Jesus Christ over the devil, over his minions, over his fallen angels, over the demons.

1 Corinthians, the 11th chapter, 23rd verse says this: *For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, "This is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me."* So take and eat.

As the elders begin distributing the cup, I'd like to take another look at Judas's betrayal from a slightly different angle. I want to look at it from the angle of the pain that it caused the Lord Jesus Christ. You know our passage is talking about the state of Jesus's mind. *John 13:21* says: *After saying these things, Jesus was troubled in his spirit.* He was troubled because he knew precisely what was going to happen. In fact the first day that he

met Judas he knew exactly that this day was coming. And if we go back to the incident as it's laid out, we see that Jesus was not surprised at all. This is *John 13* once again, 1-4, it says: *Now before the Feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart out of this world to the Father, having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end. During supper, when the devil had already put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him, Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going back to God, rose from supper. He laid aside his outer garments, and taking a towel, tied it around his waist.*

See, God's actually giving us a peek into the mind of the Lord Jesus Christ in this passage and we see all that is going on as Jesus is preparing to wash his disciples' feet and we see precisely why John would quote in this saying, "Jesus was troubled in his Spirit." See all twelve of Jesus's disciples were chosen, but not all twelve were blessed. Judas was chosen but he was chosen in the worst way possible. And you know, for thousands of years people have argued about whether or not Judas freely chose the evil that he committed or was he just a victim of God's sovereign ordained plans. Well, my answer to that quandary is that God doesn't force anyone, doesn't force any decision whatsoever to commit evil and he

doesn't force it because he doesn't have to. I mean, all he has to do is remove his grace to which no one is entitled in the first place, all he has to do is remove his grace and every one of us becomes Judas. All of you could become Judas. I could become Judas, all God has to do is remove all of his grace. He removes that grace and into that vacuum, guess who comes: Satan. And when you think about it, all God had to do for me is remove all of his grace and I would have been clamoring to sell Jesus for thirty pieces of silver just like Judas. You see, it's no wonder that Jesus was troubled in his Spirit because he knows that at heart all of us are capable of being Judas. If you think that's too much, you're going too far, I mean just consider what difference is there between Peter and Judas. You know, Peter three times denied Jesus that very night. And we all know the difference between Judas and Peter is Peter sought forgiveness and Judas did not. But here's the greatest mystery of all. The greatest mystery in all of this is that knowing what Jesus knew, he still decided to die for us. You know Jesus merely identified Judas ahead of time so that we would not be taken by surprise or the disciples would not be taken by surprise, that they would not see him as some victim of his own naivete, but that didn't make it any less painful. Jesus knew from day one that the Judas he befriended would become his betrayer. *John 13:18* says this, this is Jesus speaking to his disciples, he says: *"I am not speaking to of all of you; I know whom I have*

chosen. But the scripture will be fulfilled, 'He who ate my bread has lifted his heel against me.' I am telling you this now, before it takes place, that when it does take place you may believe that I am he." So Jesus speaks to his disciples and he says, look, I'm not a victim here, I understand, I know. And he quotes to them what was going to take place but he quotes to them from a Psalm of David and it's a Psalm of David that was written to describe his bewilderment at the pain inflicted by people who he once thought of as friends. This is *Psalm 41:5-9*, David says: *My enemies say of me in malice, "When will he die, and his name perish?" And when one comes to see me, he utters empty words, while his heart gathers iniquity; when he goes out, he tells it abroad. All who hate me whisper together about me; they imagine the worst for me. They say, "A deadly thing is poured out on him; he will not rise again from where he lies."* Even my close friend in whom I trusted, who ate my bread, has lifted his heel against me. Judas was that friend. This Psalm is part of God's answer to those who cannot believe in a God who allows pain and suffering to take place in this world. It's a question every one of us wrestles with all the time. Part of God's answer to the question of why does God allow suffering is another question, that is why did God suffer? Many who claim to be atheists today make that claim because they cannot reconcile the pain and suffering of this world with a good and a gracious God. And there's some comfort in that, there's some

comfort in an atheist saying, you know, accept pain and suffering because it's part of this lot in life and be done with it. That's how an atheist deals with it. Well, the religionist says no, no, work harder and you will be blessed, follow the rules and you'll minimize your chances of suffering. Christianity says suffering is normative. Suffering is what you will encounter in this sin-cursed existence, but God himself is not watching this from a distance as some people say. God is fully entered into our suffering on every single level there is including the betrayal of a dear friend. I mean, if you've ever suffered the betrayal of somebody who was close to you, you have in Jesus a high priest who knows precisely and exactly what that feels like. *Hebrews 4:15* says: *For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.*

We need to meditate and think about the implications of that scripture for a moment, because what it's saying is this, it says if there's anyone who has ever been born, who has experienced greater physical, spiritual or psychological pain than Jesus did, then he or she would have every right to come up to God and say, "You have no idea what I went through." They would have that right. You see, unless Jesus experienced the deepest hurt, the greatest torment and the most profound existential loss a human can

experience, well then he's not really qualified to say that he's been tempted in every respect as we have yet without sin. The fact is he was. The fact is Jesus according to the prophet Isaiah "...was despised and rejected by men. A Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And we hid, as it were, our faces from Him. He was despised, and we did not esteem Him. Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed Him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His strips we are healed.

See, in this scripture Isaiah tells us specifically why we are gathered here this day and what it is we're doing. Isaiah said in verse 6: *All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned -- everyone -- to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.* You know we've dialed in this morning to but one sin of but one person and that is the betrayal of Judas. Multiply that sin. Multiply that betrayal by every single time you and I have betrayed our Savior and you get a hint of what Jesus went through at the cross. I say that not to pound us down but to give us cause to look up, to look up to a Savior who loved us enough to pursue us at such a cost. *Hebrews 12:2* says: *Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and*

has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. See, Jesus was able to look through the pain, the torment, the abandonment, and the shame of the cross to the joy that he would have at glorifying his Father by ransoming and rescuing his sheep. For that he endured the cross. Take a moment and try to fathom if you can the height, the width, the depth, and breadth of the love of God in Christ Jesus.

2 Corinthians 11:25 says: In the same manner he also took the cup after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." Take and drink.

This is the part they call heads, heart and feet. We talk about a practical application of what it means to remember the Lord Jesus Christ. And I'm struck as I mentioned at the very beginning as to how much the theme of suffering has become part of today and I'm struck today by the suffering that we have here in our church locally. I mean, Jen is going to have to head out to the midwest because she's experienced the sudden death in her family, that is suffering. Janan's got her foot, Gigi, Donna, myself, we've all got some kind of physical ailment going on and I know a lot of that is just the fact that we're all getting old, most of us. And I said we sit around and we talk like cars that have 200,000 miles on

them, some of us the tranny's going, some of them the exhaust is shot, some of them you will have all kinds of problems with the computer brain, it's not working right, and so that's the issue that all of us are going to face eventually. I went to the doctor on Wednesday just to get a prescription because I wanted to go to a physical therapist because this was just taking too much time. And so the doc took an x-ray and he came out and he said, "Well, what do you prefer, a walker or a crutch?" I was like, I preferred a prescription to a physical therapist. And so basically what he was saying is that, you know, I'm going backwards. And he suggested that there's some serious things that could be happening there and so he said that I need to take all of the weight off of my foot. You see, others suffer, I suffer for not suffering. I don't feel anything in my feet and so there's danger there. You know, Jan came home from the hospital and she was in agony, and she said, "What did you take when you came home from the hospital?" I said, "I think I took an aspirin but I don't even remember 'cause it didn't hurt." That's part of the issues that we are facing. And so one of the things that we have to deal with as we are facing these kind of problems is, okay, we ask God what do you do. First of all, I say, I tell God I'm incredibly grateful that this is a foot, it's not a lung or a pancreas or a brain or something like that; secondly, I'm going to be anointed by the rest of the elders this afternoon. If you have an issue and you need that, I suggest

that you do that. That's simple obedience to what James 5 tells us to do. And then we pray. And what I -- when I pray to God, I pray hey, I want my foot to be fixed, but if it's not fixed, I want the grace that you give when you don't heal, the kind of grace that you gave to Paul when you said -- when he asked three times for the thorn to be removed and you said, "My grace is sufficient," I want to know that that grace is sufficient.

And I want to share a story with you today that I just -- I read just two days ago. You know, I'm guilty of -- I'm a big NFL fan. I'm a big football fan. That's my -- I tell my wife my one vice. She says whining about the weather is the other one, but that's -- those are my two big vices. So I follow football and I'm always interested in hearing some things about football players. And I came across an article by Garrett Gilkey. Now Garrett Gilkey is the offensive guard for the Tampa Bay Buccaneers. He's their starting guard. And he wrote this article. And let me just describe, he describes what happened. This happened last week to him, and this is the article that he wrote subsequent to it.

He says this, he says: "Last night I bolted onto the football field to face the Miami Dolphins. I was eager, surging with life, energy, and strength. It was the last preseason game of my third season in the NFL. The ball snapped, and with a snap of his

fingers, God mercifully showed me how small and weak I am compared to his grand and glorious sovereignty over all creation. As I was hit from the side in my knee, I felt a pop, fell to the ground in excruciating pain, and knew that my year was over before it had even begun. In the NFL, it's easy to publicly thank God when we win, when we are the victors, when we feel like gods. I want to take the opportunity to thank God when I am afraid -- I want to thank him for three things: Number one, his promise to care for me in the midst of threatening pain; number two, his meaning, which he spins out of the thread of suffering; and number three, his joy, which resonates most beautifully when superficial pleasures fade. A few wrong angles, and I was hit, falling to the ground in pain. All of a sudden, five people ran out to me. My flesh and Satan would have me believe a thousand stories in that moment. "You're done." "You're worthless." "You're going to lose everything." "You can't keep up." "You're pathetic." But the more real story echoed through my heart. As I lay on the field, God's Spirit through the word whispered in my ear, "We know that for those who love God all things work together for good" (Romans 8:28). That verse was a promise to me. God works all things together for good. It was like the Holy Spirit was preparing it in my heart, over and over again, with each surge of pain through my knee. "For those who love me, I work all things together for good." God cares for his people. We can't bank on prosperity gospel promises. They

can't stand the test of God's curse over the world. But God promises to care for us better than any worldly shepherd. In that moment of pain, I had a strange "peace of God that passes all understanding" moment. I had heartfelt assurance that everything was going to be okay. But I was assured of something more important: This season of suffering, this injury, is a gift. Not only was I reminded of Romans 8:28, that all things work together for good, but that what happened was a gift in so many ways. Suffering is always another opportunity for God to be glorified and for his satisfying gospel to be made known. King David holds the two in clear tension: 'The Lord upholds all who are falling and raises up all who are bowed down. You open your hand; you satisfy the desire of every living thing' (Psalm 145). David isn't saying that God will never let us suffer. He is saying that God fulfills the longing which our suffering brings to the surface. God makes meaning out of our suffering, because he is sufficient in it. Through suffering, I see in my own heart these desires given to the throne. That's God's biggest gift in suffering: to have something taken away from you, and still find joy. A family member. A job. An idol. God satisfies us, not in spite of our unwanted circumstances, but in and through them. How does God satisfy us in suffering? Through joy. If God's existence has ever been affirmed to me it, has been affirmed in suffering. Like we said above, when God gives us peace, it is peace that transcends understanding. But

when God gives us joy, it is 'that I may know the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of his sufferings, being conformed to his death, in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead' (Philippians 3:10). The suffering that we experience with Christ is not the searing pain of a physical experience. It's the emotional pain of suffocating our parasitic idols -- the labor pains of joy. Our natural inclination is to experience fear. Our hearts by instinct respond to suffering with fear, frustration, and questioning God's sovereignty. That's what God is already showing me in this and through this. He is not only showing me peace, but delight and joy. It's a gift, and it shows me the joy of an intimate loving and compassionate God."

And he concludes with this best of advice, he says this: "Behold, we consider those blessed who remained steadfast. You have heard of the steadfastness of Job, and you have seen the purpose of the Lord, how the Lord is compassionate and merciful" (James 5:11). He says: "Sufferers, wait for God. More than that, wait with me for him. Let's see what the Lord's purpose is for us, the one who is compassionate and merciful to his sheep whom he will not forget." Let's pray.

Father God, I do thank you that there is nobody who ever walked this earth who suffered like you suffered. Physically, mentally,

psychologically, spiritually you've gone through it all, you are our great high priest. We praise you, we thank you. Lord, we pray for the opportunities to share with others what a great high priest you are and what you've done to bring salvation to us, the price that you are willing to pay. Give us the opportunity, Lord, give us the wisdom and give us the courage, we pray in Jesus' name.

Amen.