

# The King is Betrayed

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[ 0 : 01 ] Well, let me welcome everyone to this Lunchtime Bible Talk. Over the next five weeks, we're leading, of course, up to Easter, so we're going to be looking at the King's suffering and glory in the later chapters of Matthew, Matthew 26 to 28.

We're not going to be dealing with all these chapters. They're very long, very rich, but over these weeks, we'll be looking at many of the important incidents. And this afternoon, we're reading Matthew 26, and that's on page 832.

Matthew 26, we're reading verses 36 to 46. Jesus had celebrated the Last Supper, as it's called now, with his disciples.

He had told them that he was going to be betrayed. And then in verse 36, I'm going to read verses 36 to 46.

Then Jesus went with them to a place called Gethsemane, and he said to his disciples, Sit here while I go over there and pray.

[ 1 : 15 ] And taking with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, he began to be very sorrowful and troubled. Then he said to them, My soul is very sorrowful, even to death.

Remain here and watch with me. And going a little further, he fell on his face and prayed, saying, My father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me.

Nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will. He came to the disciples and found them sleeping. And he said to Peter, Could you not watch with me one hour?

Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak. Again, for the second time, he went away and prayed, My father, if this cannot pass unless I drink it, your will be done.

And again he came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were heavy. So leaving them again, he went and prayed for the third time, Saying the same words again.

[ 2 : 24 ] Then he came to the disciples and said to them, Sleep and take your rest later on. See, the hour is at hand, And the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners.

Rise, let us be going. See, my betrayer is at hand. It is the word of the Lord. Let's pray together. Father, as we read this powerful and profound passage, Realize that here are depths which we have no line to plumb.

We ask that your Holy Spirit will help us see something of the wonder, Something of the mystery, Something of the grandeur of what was happening here. Not just as an incident of long ago, But as an incident which led to the salvation of the world.

As an incident where the world was judged, And as an incident by which the world will be redeemed. So open our eyes, Lord, And may we see Jesus as we read and study Scripture together.

We ask this in his name. Amen. On an autumn day, October the 16th, 1665, Two English reformers stood side by side, Awaiting death by burning at the stake.

[ 3 : 53 ] They were both bishops, Bishop Letimer and Bishop Ridley. And Letimer spoke words to Ridley. He said, Be of good comfort, Master Ridley, And play the man.

We shall this day light such a candle, That by God's grace shall never be put out. Stirring, wonderful, courageous, triumphant words.

There are many other examples of this in the history of the church. When I hear something like that, My first thought is tremendous admiration. My second thought is panic.

I couldn't, Plus I don't have that kind of courage. I don't have that kind of stamina that they did. And when you read this story of how the Lord Jesus Christ faced death, It doesn't sound at all like Letimer and Ridley.

Jesus seems to be wanting to avoid death. Jesus shrinks from death. Jesus appears indeed to show less courage than many of his followers.

[ 5 : 01 ] But as we'll see, Since this is a unique death, His response to approaching it is also unique. Now, in John's Gospel, John tells us that Jesus and his disciples often went to Gethsemane, Which is a garden on the western slopes of the Mount of Olives.

Some of you may have visited it if you've been in Jerusalem. It certainly is a very moving place to visit. And here he is in deep grief.

He's overwhelmed with sorrow. Echoing the words of Psalm 42 and 43. The waves, the billows have come over him. And he is totally overwhelmed.

So that's the situation then. Jesus facing death. But he doesn't appear to be facing it like Letimer and Ridley. Or other martyrs throughout history. So, there's two main things I want to say about this passage.

First of all, we have an anguished prayer. Jesus, verse 39, Going a little further, He fell on his face and prayed, Seeing my father, if it be possible, Let this cup pass from me.

[ 6 : 16 ] Luke, in his account, Tells how he was sweating great drops that were like blood. This is an agonized prayer. Now, he says, Let this cup pass from me.

This is not just about facing death. After all, death is the common lot of humanity. In the Old Testament, The cup refers to God's anger.

The anger that he will pour out on the sinful nations. And therefore, What he is facing is the anger of God. The judgment of God.

He's facing the same temptation as he did at the beginning of his ministry. When the devil said to him, All these kingdoms I will give you, If you will bow down and worship me.

The devil is saying, You can have the kingdom without the cross. You can have the glory without the suffering. And this is one of the passages that shows us how real, really human Jesus was.

[ 7 : 19 ] The letters of the Hebrews tell us, He was tempted every way, Just like us, But without sin. Temptation is not a sin, clearly.

It is a succumbing to the temptation that's the sin. He knew temptation, And he knew suffering, And he knew anguish. Now, The next question obviously arises, Would it have been possible?

If it is possible, Let this cup pass from me. Now, in an important sense, of course, Everything is possible with God. As Gabriel says to Mary in Luke chapter 1, Nothing will be impossible with God. Indeed, in Mark's version of this story, In Mark chapter 14, Jesus says, Abba, Father, All things are possible for you. There is a profound sense in which everything is possible with God.

But there's another sense, In which certain things are not possible. It's not what we are told, for example, It is impossible for God to lie.

[ 8 : 31 ] We are told, It's impossible for God to be untrue to himself. And here, If this is the only way in which God can be glorified, If this is the only way that salvation can come, To fallen humanity, And indeed to a fallen universe, Then it's not possible.

That is the point. It's not that God, It's not, You see, We say everything is possible with God. This is not a theoretical question. God cannot simultaneously say something that is true, And something that is false.

If his glory is involved, If salvation is involved, Then the cross has to be there. It's not, You see, I sometimes think, People think that, God created the world, And something went badly wrong, And so he introduced a desperate emergency measure.

Now that is not biblical. Peter tells us in his first letter about the land slain before the foundation of the world. In the, Long before the world was created, Before ever a star shone in the sky, Before any human being ever walked the earth, The cross and God's glory and salvation were planned. The love that drew salvation's plan was conceived in eternity. So, Jesus, As the last Adam here, Is faced with the temptation of power.

[ 10 : 06 ] Remember, That was what the first Adam was faced with. You will be like God. Jesus is faced, Like the first Adam also, The temptation of power.

And by his perfect obedience, He is going to undo the harm, Which the first Adam brought about. Sin and death, Have to be faced, And have to be defeated.

That's why there is no way to salvation, That can, That can pass, Bypass the cross. We can't, We can't run a ring road around Calvary, And still receive salvation.

So, You see, What's happening here, And even more on the cross, Is that Jesus is facing a universe, From which all trace of God, Seems to have been vanished. He looks into the darkness, And he sees and hears, No comforting cry. You see, On that dreadful night, Jesus faces the anger of God, He faces death, Death, And judgment.

[ 11 : 13 ] And C.S. Lewis says, On that dreadful night, He chose to face death, Like one of the weakest of his followers, And not as one of the heroes of his army.

I think that's very profound. Ridley and Latimer were among the heroes of his army, Facing death bravely and triumphantly. Just as many Christians have faced lesser death, Have faced death bravely and triumphantly.

But Jesus Christ goes into the darkness. And you see, That's tremendous comfort to those of us, Who don't feel very brave. Who don't feel, Who don't feel we're the stuff of which martyrs are made. The point is, He goes into the darkness. He takes the anger of God. That is why it's so important to believe that Jesus is our substitute, Not just our representative.

Some people don't like this idea of what's called penal substitution, That Jesus stood between us, And the anger of God. You see, The problem is, If Jesus didn't stand between us, And the anger of God, Then each of us have to face that alone.

[ 12 : 20 ] We have to face the anger of God. And Jesus faced us, That we don't need to. Kill on that cross, As Jesus died, The wrath of God was satisfied.

And that is what's happening here. Not just death, In the sense of dying. Not even death, In the sense of a horrible death, Like crucifixion. Facing the anger of God.

You see, In a very real sense, Jesus Christ went to hell, To face the anger of God, So that we wouldn't need to. That is what, That is what, Lies behind this story.

You see, We have this anguished prayer. Some commentators keep on, Try to tell us, He, He's prayed different things. Well, It's very difficult to reconcile that, With he prayed the third time, Saying the same words again.

He is praying, That the cup be removed, Because he knows, What the cup of anger is. So we have this, Anguished prayer. And the second, Current flowing through this story, Is a crushing loneliness.

[ 13 : 26 ] Now, As you read the gospels, You find that Jesus, Well, He had of course, The other disciples, Other friends, People like Mary and Martha, And others, Who accompanied him, And Mary Magdalene.

Nevertheless, These three people, The sons of Zebedee, Of course that's James and John, Peter, And James and John, Were his particular friends. And he wanted them with him, At this time of crisis.

Verse 30, Taking with him, Verse 37. So he says to the disciples, Verse 36, Take, Sit here, Now go and pray. And then, He takes Peter, James and John, With him, No doubt, So that they can pray with him, So that they can support him, In his agony.

Now, In verse 40, He found them sleeping, Says to Peter, Couldn't you watch with me for one hour? And then again, Verse 43, He found them sleeping, For their eyes were heavy.

Now, I think, Verse 41, Is very important. Jesus says, Watch and pray, That you may not enter, Into temptation.

[ 14 : 38 ] The spirit is willing, But the flesh is weak. Now, Peter, I mean, Peter had said, Back in verse 35, Even if I must die with you, I will not deny you.

Very often, Spiritual fervor, Is accompanied by great weakness, Isn't it? We have great, Spiritual aspirations, And we just can't keep up. We just, We find ourselves unable, To fulfil that.

And we all, We know that, In temptations, Large and small. Very often, These temptations come, Because we are asleep. Not necessarily, Literally asleep.

Quite difficult to be tempted, When you're literally asleep, Unless you have weird dreams. But, Because we are, We become careless, We are, We're not, Our spiritual antennae, Are not very sharp.

I mean, So, The group of disciples, The eleven disciples, Especially the three disciples, Were asleep. They were, They were professing, Great loyalty, But as we know, Tragically, They fled, They ran away, And we must be very glad, That that's not, The end of the story.

[ 15 : 50 ] Think about Peter, In particular, For a moment. In Mark's gospel, There's a beautiful little phrase, When Jesus rose from the day, Says, Go tell my disciples, And Peter.

Not meaning that Peter, Wasn't one of the disciples, But, Jesus wanted Peter, To know, That he was forgiven. Similarly, The wonderful story, In John 21, Simon, Son of John, Do you love me, And feed my sheep, So, Temptation, Is a constant battle, For us.

The other, So, Eleven of them, Let him down, As we so often, Let him down, But one, Betrays him. Notice the repetition, In verse 45, The son of man, Is betrayed, Let us be going, My betrayer, Is at hand.

Now, I know some of the commentators, Want to water this down, And say this word, Means handed over, Which it does literally, I've yet to discover, How handing over a friend, To those who intend, To destroy him, Is different from betrayal, Betrayal captures, Exactly what this is about, Later on, Paul is, Paul is to say, The Lord Jesus, The night, In which he was betrayed, Took bread, That burned itself, Into the consciousness, Of the early church, The night, He was betrayed, Now, Peter did not betray him, The others did not betray him, But Judas did, And that is, That is the sad story, And John tells us, Why John says, Judas, Satan entered into Judas, And Judas went out, And it was night, Now it's very interesting here, He calls himself, The son of man, The son of man, Is betrayed, Once again, That's taking us, That's taking us back, To the beginning of the story, The son of man, Adam, Tempted, By the, Delusions of power, And grandeur, Gives in to Satan, In the, In the garden of Eden, Now the son of man, Is going to follow, The path of God's will, Which is going to, Transform Gethsemane, Once again, Into Eden, And notice the last verse, Rise, Let us be going, The anguished prayer, Is over, The wrestling, With, With, With the temptation, Of power, Is over, He is now, Ready, And determined, To fulfill, God's will, Rise, Let us be going, My betrayer, Is at hand, I'm not particularly going to talk about, The next verses, But just, Just notice, So just, Quickly, Verse 47, While he was still speaking, Judas came, One of the twelve, Of them, A great crowd, With swords, And clubs, Why did they need, A great crowd,

[ 18 : 45 ] Unless they were afraid of him, And there's a fascinating, Little detail, In John's account, Of this event, John's, A, The, Those who come to rest, Jesus say, We look for Jesus of Nazareth, And Jesus says, I am, And they fall flat, On their faces, I am, See what Jesus is saying, Jesus is saying, I'm your God, Not just I am he, As the old version say, But I am, Like the other I am sayings, Throughout the gospel, So, He's going to face, What lies ahead, And by facing, What lies ahead, He is going to, Open the kingdom of heaven, To all those, Who believe in him, He's going to stand with us, When we are tempted, And he is going to bring us, Safely to glory, Amen, Let's pray, Father, We praise you, For this, Wonderful story, A story that happened, Long ago, And yet a story, Whose effects, Is echoing, Down the centuries, And will echo, Into eternity, We know, That we are weak, And tempted, We know, That we are fickle, And so ready, To run away, And that so, And we are so glad, So thankful, That the Lord Jesus Christ, Himself, Stood in for us, And took on him, The anger of God, So that we might, Never have to stand, Before that anger, And so we praise his name, Amen.