

# Surrender and Scorn - the way of the Cross confron

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[ 0 : 00 ] Right, we're going to turn now to our Bibles and to our reading for this morning, which is in Matthew's Gospel, as we've been studying together recently. Matthew's Gospel, chapter 26, and reading this morning from verse 46.

Immediately after the Last Supper and the agonizing discourse and events in the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus says, Rise, let us be going. See, my betrayer is at hand.

While he was still speaking, Judas came, one of the twelve, and with him a great crowd with swords and clubs from the chief priests and the elders of the people.

Now the betrayer had given them a sign, saying, The one I will kiss is the man, seize him. And he came up to Jesus at once and said, Greetings, Rabbi, and he kissed him.

Jesus said to him, Friend, do what you came to do. And they came up and laid hands on Jesus and seized him. And behold, one of those who were with Jesus stretched out his hand and drew his sword and struck the servant of the high priest and cut off his ear.

[ 1 : 16 ] Then Jesus said to him, Put your sword back into its place, for all who take the sword will perish by the sword. Do you not think I cannot appeal to my Father?

And he will at once send me more than twelve legions, seventy-two thousand angels. But how then should the scriptures be fulfilled that it must be so? That hour Jesus said to the crowds, Have you come out as against a robber with swords and clubs to capture me?

Day after day I sat in the temple teaching, and you did not seize me? But all this has taken place that the scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled.

Then all the disciples left him and fled. Then those who had seized Jesus led him to Caiaphas, the high priest, where the scribes and the elders had gathered.

And Peter was following him at a distance, as far as the courtyard of the high priest. And going inside, he sat with the guards to see the end. Now the chief priests and the whole council were seeking false testimony against Jesus, that they might put him to death.

[ 2 : 30 ] But they found none, though many false witnesses came forward. At last, two came forward and said, This man said, I am able to destroy the temple of God and to rebuild it in three days.

The high priest stood up and said, Have you no answer to make? What is it that these men testify against you? That Jesus remained silent. And the high priest said to him, I adjure you by the living God.

Tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God. Jesus said to him, You have said so. But I tell you, from now on, you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of the power and coming on the clouds of heaven.

Then the high priest tore his robes and said, He has uttered blasphemy. What further witnesses do we need? You have now heard his blasphemy. What is your judgment? They answered, He deserves death.

Then they spit in his face and struck him. And some slapped him, saying, Prophecy to us, you Christ. Who is it that struck you?

[ 3 : 38 ] Now Peter was sitting outside in the courtyard. A servant girl came up to him and said, You also with Jesus the Galilean.

But he denied it before them all, saying, I don't know what you mean. And when he went out to the entrance, another servant girl saw him and she said to the bystanders, This man was with Jesus of Nazareth.

And again he denied it with an oath. I do not know the man. After a little while, the bystanders came up and said to Peter, Certainly you two are one of them.

For your accent betrays you. Then he began to invoke a curse. And the words there, On himself, are not in the text. Almost certainly what that means is he began to invoke a curse on Jesus and to swear, I do not know that man.

And immediately the cock crowed. And Peter remembered the saying of Jesus, Before the cock crows, you will deny me three times.

[ 4 : 44 ] And he went out and wept bitterly. Amen. And may God bless to us.

This is his word. A solemn word it is. Matthew 26. Well, turn with me if you would please to Matthew chapter 26.

And to the passage you read beginning verse 46. Page 832. If you have one of the church visitors' Bibles. Now as we've already seen in our studies here.

Matthew is no mere historian. He is a historian. He's recording the facts of history of course. But he's also a theologian. He's a teacher. He's a preacher to the church. As of course is Jesus himself. All through the gospel, Matthew shows us Jesus teaching his followers what his life and mission is all about. What it really means. So we shouldn't be surprised that at the climax of it all.

[ 5 : 45 ] At the passion of Christ. Above all, we should be given a clear explanation. As well as an accurate narration. And that's what we've already seen.

Jesus himself explaining his coming death as a promised sacrifice. As the ultimate Passover. And as a purposeful substitutionary death for sin.

So we mustn't be taken in by people who want to reject what they call just certain theories of the atonement. No, no, no. That will not do. It's not certain theories that we're rejecting.

If we do that, it's clear certain biblical truth. It's truth conveyed by the Lord Jesus Christ himself. And presented so clearly by the gospel writers to us.

And Matthew's passion is a complete theology of the cross. And we mustn't forget that. But of course, and this is very important too.

[ 6 : 43 ] Matthew, all theology that is truly biblical theology will also be supremely practical theology. Matthew, the theologian, is Matthew the pastor.

He's writing for the church. He's writing for God's people to equip them, to challenge them, to strengthen them. That's been Jesus' concern all through his ministry. He's teaching his disciples, isn't he?

That their lives and ministries are completely bound up with his life and ministry. And so they'll inevitably reflect. Their path will be reflected in his path.

In their ministry will be seen the path of his ministry. So they must understand clearly the way of Jesus. Otherwise, they'll never understand the way of discipleship. And nor will we.

And right from the start, Jesus is very clear about the stark contrast. That there will always be between his way and the natural way of this present world.

[ 7 : 45 ] There'll always be a clash between the way of this world and the way of the cross. Jesus' way is only the way of the cross.

And that means the way of loss, the way of death. The way of utter rejection by this world. And so, of course, the disciples' way can't be any other.

Whoever comes after me, said Jesus, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. And in these last hours of Christ's earthly ministry with his close disciples, he's very much concerned, isn't he, with their future ministry.

He's pointing them repeatedly to the time after his death and resurrection. And he's determined that they will understand what that era of their kingdom witness is going to be like for them.

And that's Jesus' clear focus in these last hours. Look back to verse 32 of chapter 26. Where he points them, doesn't he, to their future task. After I'm raised up, I'm going to go before you to Galilee.

[ 8 : 48 ] He said, because that's where their ministry is going to begin. Or back in verse 13. He talks, isn't he, about the gospel being proclaimed in all the world after his resurrection.

Just as back in chapters 24 and 25. He promised that before the last judgment comes, the gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world. And only then the end will come.

And if you recall, Jesus described that ministry very plainly, didn't he? They will deliver you up, betray you up to tribulation. The same word betray is used 15 times here in chapter 26.

They will put you to death. And you will be hated by all nations for my sake. And many will fall away and betray one another.

And betray the Lord and his gospel. If you go all the way back to Matthew chapter 10, where Jesus is teaching about mission, you find the same emphasis. It's enough for the disciple to be like the teacher. For the servant to be like his master.

[ 9 : 51 ] If they call the master of the house Beelzebul, the devil, how much more those of his household. You see, again and again and again, you see what he's saying? The cross is not just a theology.

It's not just something out there. It's not just detached from life and real experience. No, the cross is a way of life. And it's one that confronts every human being.

As an experience, either to be embraced and entered into, or to be rejected and scorned. The way of the cross is the way, the only way to the new world, Jesus has been talking about.

The way of the cross is the narrow gate that you must enter to find life. The way of the cross is, therefore, what confronts the whole wide world in the message of Jesus.

And it forces a choice. Either to reject the narrow and hard way, to embrace the wide and easy way of the world.

[ 10 : 53 ] That's the road to destruction. That's the way of the world. Or to embrace that narrow and hard way. The way that alone leads to life.

And Jesus is absolutely clear all through his ministry. It's not mere lip service to his gospel that counts. It's real life response. No good saying, Lord, Lord.

That won't cut any ice on the day of judgment. It's doing the will of the Father in heaven, says Jesus. And it's when the rubber hits the road in real life situations that we all face in life.

When we're forced to show our true colors. To put our money where our mouth is. It's then, isn't it, that our hearts are really exposed. Have we really begun to follow Jesus, his way?

Or are we really just, in fact, seeking those treasures on earth? Have we truly surrendered to the way of the cross? Have we submitted to the Father's will for our life, like Jesus, and said, not my will, but thine?

[ 12 : 02 ] Or is the truth, actually, that however hidden it might be, we are, in fact, scorning that way of the cross, the way of the Savior?

And there comes a time, friends, in all of our lives when we're confronted decisively by the cross of Christ. And all of that is forced out into the open. That's what we see right before us in this passage today.

Matthew wants us to see so clearly the contrast between the response of the Lord Jesus and the response of the world when confronted four square with the looming cross.

We've already seen those contradictory attitudes to the message of the cross in the attitudes of Judas and the woman in the first part of chapter 26. But now you see these attitudes are being exposed so plainly in real actions.

when the challenge of the cross comes right up close and personal to people. And it is a total contrast, one of surrender or of absolute scorn.

[ 13 : 09 ] Jesus is the perfect, sinless Son of the Father, and yet He surrenders everything to the Father's will. He embraces that cross serenely. And that's the road to His glory, to His enthronement in power as a Son of Man that verse 64 foresees here.

It's the way to fulfillment of all God's purposes for Him and for the world. But in total contrast, what we see here is the scorn and the rejection by the world of the way of the cross.

And yet we're shown just as clearly that that is in fact the way to ruin. And the contrast is woven all through the whole passage. So I want to look at it under these two headings. The scorn of the way of the cross, the way of the world, and surrender to the way of the cross as we see in Jesus' own way.

So first of all, the scorn of the cross. I'm sure you can see how Matthew's flagged it up for us again. By the way, he structures his account of these incidents for us. He's deliberately showing us different ways that the world shows its deep scorn for the cross of Jesus.

And he challenges us all, all of us, to look at ourselves and to ask the question, actually the question that the disciples asked back in verse 22. To ask the question, Is it I, Lord? Could this be me?

[14:27] You see, he shows us three representatives, each showing their scorn and their rejection of the cross and the challenge of the cross. First Judas, and then Caiaphas, and then Peter.

And each incident flags up particular aspects of the scorn shown by this world to the real Jesus, the crucified Christ of God.

So let's look at the story, first of all, beginning at verse 47 of the arrest, and at Judas, who represents for us the defiance of the worldly man. Not just Judas, of course.

He's the lead figure, though. And of course, it's heavy with irony, isn't it, that Christ's betrayal is masterminded by one of his own, verse 47. One of the twelve. Just flags up for us, doesn't it, the sheer ugliness of the whole episode.

One of his own. And yet he's at one with a brutal world in their spiteful hatred of Jesus Christ. Clubs and swords, the masked power of violent men arrayed against the Son of God himself.

[15:32] You could hardly have a clearer picture, could you, anywhere, of sin as rebellion against God and the rule of God. And Judas embodies for us that rebellion personally.

He may have been one of the twelve, but we know, don't we, already, that he really was at heart a man of the world. What did they say? What did he say to them? What will you give me if I give you Jesus? What can I gain now in this world's currency?

And whatever the specifics of Judas' reason for doing what he did, it's clear, isn't it, that his ambitions, his worldly ambitions, were not being served by Jesus the way he wanted them.

His heart was set on this world. And that's why now he allies himself with this world. And he betrays Jesus, verse 49, with a kiss.

That's not a sign of affection. A true disciple would never have done that uninvited to their rabbi. It was a studied insult, says a scholar. A public act of defiance, an open repudiation of Jesus' authority.

[16:41] That is the essence of sin. Open defiance of the rule of God in the person of Christ. And it might remain hidden for a long time, but in the end, it comes out into the open.

And it's sin at its most ugly. And yet, he began as one of the twelve. And that's still so today, isn't it? Some of the bitterest opponents of the Christian gospel today are those who once found themselves in the evangelical gospel camp.

But the truth well out. And Judas was a man of this world. And in the end, the powerful appetites of this world consumed him.

When the real way of the cross was made plain for him, when it stood right in his path and made a demand of him to choose, he met it with scorn. And he was exposed as a man of this world.

Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth where moss and rust destroy. For, says Jesus, where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. And where your heart really is, friends, your ambition will carry you in the end, even if it leads you into open defiance of the Son of God.

[18:02] That is a sobering warning for all of us. Jesus is telling us the cares of this world are powerful. They're captivating. They are so powerful that they can lure you on a quest of what is actually irrational madness.

But what does it profit a man if he gains the whole wide world, said Jesus, and loses his life, his eternal soul? But alas, many do exactly that.

Many who have, like Judas, one time been followers of Jesus in open defiance in the end of the way of Jesus. Because when they're really confronted with his way, it's an offense and it's scorned. But can you see the folly of that kind of rebellion? It's sheer madness to think that you can rebel against the Son of God Most High like that, isn't it? Look at verse 53.

Jesus says, I can call on twelve legions of angels, seventy-two thousand angels. What have you got? Clubs and swords. Don't you realize you're deluded if you think you can win ultimately in your rebellion against God and his Christ?

[19:16] Read Psalm 2. When the whole world is united against him, what is God in heaven doing? He's laughing with ridicule and scorn at the folly of human beings who think they can rebel and win.

It's a real warning to the rebellious in the world. You may scorn the cross of Christ but you will never triumph in the end. Don't be so foolish. Whoever saves his life says Jesus will lose it ultimately.

And that's what really matters. And you just have to read on, don't you, to see where Judas defiance got him in the end. It's a real warning. Of course, it's also a real encouragement, isn't it, to real followers of the Lord Jesus.

Because this world's defiance can't ever stop the kingdom of Christ, even with violence, even with persecution. They couldn't stop Jesus teaching, verse 55, every day in the temple. Nor could they stop his mission, verse 56, even in their defiance. That only served God's sovereign purpose to fulfill all that the scriptures had spoken.

[ 20 : 31 ] The world's rebellious people may well unite against the Lord Jesus and the way of salvation through his cross alone, but they can only ever do what his hand has predestined to take place.

That's what the apostles say, isn't it, in Acts chapter 4. And that's just as true today. That has been true ever since. Christ's gospel, Christ's church is spreading today all over this world.

all through the centuries there's been the blood of martyrs, but all through the centuries that blood has been the seed of the church. And for real disciples today who are walking the way of the cross with Jesus, the world's weapons are powerless against the real power of God, the way of the cross and the word of the cross, that is our powerful weapon.

Not swords, not guns or suicide bombs. Note that, verse 52. Put those away, says Jesus. That's not the way. Our weapons are not the weapons of this world, but the weapons of the sword of the spirit, which is the word of the cross.

A word wielded by those who will embrace the way of the cross, not defying it out of rebellious love for this world's gain. The open defiance of the worldly man.

[ 21 : 57 ] But that's just one way that the people of this world show their scorn for the cross of Jesus. We see another, beginning in verse 57, very clearly, with Caiaphas. And Caiaphas shows us the derision of the worldly church.

Here we see the same scorn for Christ and his cross, but it's dressed up now, isn't it? It's hidden in the respectable ecclesiastical garb of religion. And what comes across here is the sheer dishonesty of institutionalized religion that rejects utterly the real Jesus and therefore rejects utterly the God that they claim to serve.

Caiaphas is the high priest. He's the representative of the church of God. And yet, the scorn of the true Jesus here is utterly dishonest. It's contemptible.

They'll have Jesus, if he will submit, if he will count out of their religious prejudices and their paraphernalia, but certainly not if they must submit to him.

And since they won't submit their worldly hearts to his unique lordship, verse 66 tells us they've got to silence him. They've got to destroy him. We must kill him.

[ 23 : 13 ] He deserves death. It's such a strikingly clear parable, isn't it, of sin as sheer perversity. The simple refusal to believe and to accept the plain words of Jesus and the clear evidence of his unique authority.

But they're willingly blind to it because they do not want to submit to him. They're at every opportunity. Back in chapter 21, we're told they saw all the wonderful deeds he did.

What did they do? They were indignant. When they heard him teaching with extraordinary authority, what did they say? Who gave you this authority? We didn't give it to you. They couldn't stand the fact of heaven's power and true authority being exercised on earth and they weren't in control of it. And there's so little changes, isn't that so, in institutionalized religion? So much of the institutional church today is exactly the same. That's why you get officials of the mainline denominations persecuting churches that are growing and planting gospel works, doing things that they can't control because they can't stand their power and their institution being rendered obsolete by the power of God at work, by the authority of the gospel of the cross, asserting itself without their say-so.

That's why in all the mainline denominations in the Western world today, there's a perverse refusal to recognize that where there is life and growth in the church is because there's real belief and therefore there's real submission to the Lordship of Christ, His word, His authority through His scriptures.

[ 24 : 53 ] Because it's such a threat, isn't it, to their worldly idols, to their ecclesiastical structures, to their hierarchies and their ideals that they're so determined to preserve because they worship them.

It is their God. And if the real Jesus, if the real Messiah turns out not to fit their worldly establishment ideas and expectations, well then, that Jesus must be silenced.

Just look at the perversity, look at the prejudice at work here. Verse 59, they're deliberately doing what? Seeking out false witnesses. And verse 61, eventually they grasp on the vaguest sounding things, a totally twisted distortion of what Jesus actually said about the temple.

But you see, their real God and religion's real God is their temple. It's their institution. And they will not have that institution threatened even by the Son of God.

That's what enrages them. You see, that's what they won't have. They will not have Christ if His authority means that. In theory, of course, they'll bow to God's authority.

[ 26 : 06 ] Of course, they'll recite their creeds and so on. But when the actual reality of what that means confronts them, then they're exposed. So God in heaven, far away, that's fine.

That's no problem. God in the flesh in front of you invading your life as Jesus does, claiming unique authority over what you think and what you do, telling you, verse 64, that He is the Lord and judge over everything, well, that's a very different matter.

You see there in verse 64, what Jesus is saying is, yes, I am who you say I am. And what it means is, I am your Lord and judge and I will come in power and glory to judge your life.

So you must bow the knee to my authority now. You must accept me as I am. You must accept my way, the way of the cross, the way of submission, this saving way alone.

And to do that, you'll have to turn your back on your worldly church with its veneer of godliness.

You'll have to submit to God and to His true gospel of the cross and to my authority of my words for your life.

[ 27 : 14 ] But no, we won't have that, they say. Look, verse 66, we must silence that gospel. Kill Him. He deserves death. Verse 67, spit at that, slap that, scorn that kind of Jesus.

And friends, that's just the same way as it is today in our own time. Established churches for the most part are slapping and scorning and spitting at the authority of Jesus and His word and His rule.

They're showing the same perverse prejudice against any who do cherish the word of God, who do bow to its authority. They just as firmly are rejecting the true Christ's way of self-denial and of cross-bearing.

No, there's no cross to bear in their gospel. Jesus affirms you just as you are. There's no need to turn away from the world's desires and urges and indulgences.

And any idea of Jesus coming on the throne of judgment as He says so plainly here in verse 64, that's met with howls of derision. Kill that idea. Kill it dead.

[ 28 : 25 ] And above all, dare to touch the institution, the denomination with all its power and pomp and glory and so on. Well, quite literally, all hell breaks loose as we know only too well.

The same sheer self-deception and willing blindness to the reality that Christ's kingdom is not of this world. That has dogged Christian history just as it dogged the history of Israel all through the scriptures and just as it dogged the earthly ministry of our Lord Jesus himself.

You see, friends, the truth is that if religious structures, church structures and institutions don't point people to the ultimate reality of what really does matter, to the Son of God seated in glory coming on the clouds of heaven to separate people as a shepherd separates the sheep and the goat into a judgment of eternal consequences.

If they do not do that, then all such institutions, however historic, however good, they are worthless, they are empty, they have become enemies of the cross of Christ.

They've become idolatrous, worldly things that scorn the true way of salvation, the way of the cross. See, these verses are showing us, aren't they, so clearly that the preservation of a worldly institutional church demands the silencing, demands the destruction of the true Lord Jesus Christ because the challenge of the cross is and always will be anathema to this world.

[ 30 : 14 ] And that is a real warning to the church in the Western world today because it's so desperate to preserve its place, preserve its influence in society and that's why it is constantly trying to silence Jesus' words and his apostles' words and their authority to fudge their words, to hide their words on all these issues today like homosexual practice, like gender issues and hundreds of other things because you cannot court the world and carry the cross.

you have to choose. You have to choose. And in the institutional church, that's the test, isn't it, when the chips are down. Who do you choose to stand with?

Will you choose to stand with the lovers of the gospel or with the lovers of a worldly institution? And it's very hard because you choose the way of the world, there will be many rewards now.

If you stand with the gospel lovers, you very well lose all your assets, lose your church buildings, lose your home, lose your pension and everything else. If you stand with the institution, they'll make you into a moderator or a bishop.

And that's the truth. Jesus says in verse 64, don't forget what's coming. And all who have passed summary judgment on Jesus and his words now to preserve their worldly ecclesiastical influence, they shall see him on his judgment seat at the last in power.

[ 31 : 44 ] And they'll discover then that you can't court the world now and wear the crown then. And that brings us to the last paragraph here, verse 69, and to Peter.

He shows us, doesn't he, the denial of the worldly disciple. And the emphasis here is just on the pitiful shame of that disloyalty, isn't it?

It's a picture of sin as woefully falling short as human beings of the glory of God. And you can see, can't you, the deliberate contrast Matthew shows us between Jesus' interrogation inside the palace and Peter's outside.

Verse 67, Jesus is inside, under arrest, being interrogated, intimidated, with violence, with scorn. And yet he's serene, he's dignified, he's majestic in his composure.

And here, verse 69, Peter's outside in safety. And his interrogators, a wee servant lass, a wee girl, and then another one. And yet Peter is utterly undone.

[ 32 : 53 ] Poor Peter. Three times, you see, Jesus is questioned by the high priest. Verse 62, and verse 63, and again, verse 68. Three times, he refused to deny himself.

And he gives each time positive witness to his glory. While three times, outside, Peter denies Jesus.

And worse, as I said, verse 74, almost certainly means Peter actually curses Christ. That's what happened, wasn't it, to believers later under the Romans?

They were forced to curse the Christ to save their life? Or they were put to the lions? And three times, Peter says, I don't know him.

I don't know him. To hell with that Jesus. I don't know him. And in a very real sense, he spoke the truth, didn't he? Because he didn't seem yet to know the real Jesus.

[ 33 : 56 ] He didn't know the power that comes only from death to this world. Because to really know Christ like that and the power of his resurrection means to know his cross.

To embrace his cross. To know him in his sufferings. To surrender yourself to his way. And the power of real witness to Christ's glory and a life that will show that truth about Jesus to the world, that lies only in embracing the way of the cross with Jesus and no other way.

But Peter, you see, Peter was like so many of us. He wanted to have a foot in both camps. He still hadn't grasped but a lot of us still haven't grasped that the truth is what Jesus said repeatedly so plainly.

No one can serve two masters. You'll hate one and love the other. You'll be devoted to one and you'll despise the other. You can't do it. And in our naivety and our folly, you see, we think we can serve Jesus and still enjoy all the things that the world offers to us.

We can still be in with the world. We can still have it all with no cost, with no pain, with no choice. We can have Jesus but also my ambitions and my indulgences and my acceptance by this world and by its institutions and by its people and by its prizes.

[ 35 : 19 ] Can you see, friends, Matthew is telling us the cross of Jesus cuts through all of that because if you embrace the cross of Jesus and the way of Jesus truly, the world will see you for who you really are.

The world will recognize your accent, as it were. Look at verse 73. Certainly, you are one of them. You see, your accent betrays you. Then, you have to choose, don't you? Will you carry the cross and face that shame with Jesus or will you then curse Christ and be ashamed of him as Peter was here?

You see, whatever the details are in your situation, it will come down to that same central choice always. Scorn for the way of the cross and therefore rejection of the real Jesus Christ or surrender to the way of the cross and therefore rejection by the world of you along with the real Jesus Christ. Well, we've seen the scorn in the various manifestations Matthew highlights for us. Let's look instead now as we close up the way of true surrender, surrender to the cross.

The serene submission of Jesus to the way marked out for him in total contrast to all around him and to their attachment to this world. It's no accident that this follows on immediately after the

agony, after the wrestling of Gethsemane because what we're seeing now, you see, is that attitude forged there, shown and played out in the actions that we see here.

[ 37 : 00 ] While the men of the world flee the challenge of the cross, Jesus, the man of heaven, embraces the cross calmly, serenely because he is already crucified in spirit.

He faces the cross as someone who has already surrendered to. In the garden, he submitted to the Father's will, not my will but thine. He submitted to the scriptures.

Verse 54, here, they must be fulfilled. And so now, you see, he can submit even to his enemies because he's already crucified to this world, to its ways, to its power.

So here, he can turn his back on the world's ways and power. Verse 52, he can turn his back on swords and clubs. He's not helpless as we've seen.

Far from it. The whole power of heaven is at his disposal. But, you see, the legions of angels are not to be deployed in the way of earthly power.

[ 38 : 01 ] No, Jesus works his heavenly power on earth in a way that this world scorns. His power lies solely in trusting in God's promised words, the scriptures, and in trusting in God's purposed work in his cross.

You see, Jesus has the real power, the real authority in this world because his mind is set not on the things of this world, but on the kingdom of the world to come.

That's verse 64, the coming of the heavenly kingdom, the consummation of everything that God has promised through his death and resurrection. And that's his focus. And he knows that that is the only road to that abiding glory, the road to his cross for him and and for every true disciple who would follow him.

It was for the joy set before him that he endured the cross despising its pain and shame. And even in his darkest hours, even when when all conscious assurance of that was lost in a cloud of dejection in his dereliction on the cross, even then he held on to that trust that he had in the promise of his father, in the word of scripture that it must be so.

Verse 36, all this, verse 56, all this, even this has taken place so that the scriptures might be fulfilled. Even then, in deepest darkness, he trusted and he obeyed.

[ 39 : 29 ] He did not scorn the cross but he surrendered to it. And you see, friends, it's when the way of the cross confronts us in real life, in concrete situations, forcing us to choose between the immediate blessings of this world or submission to the will of the Father in heaven and the path that he has prepared for us.

It's then, isn't it, that we find out whether we really have been storing up for ourselves treasures on earth or treasures in heaven. It's then that we discover whether we've really known the true Jesus Christ, the Christ of the cross or just some illusion, some Jesus of our own imagining when our path disappoints us in this world's terms and our ambitions are not served by Jesus the way we want them to be for the opportunities that we hope for, the career that we wanted, the family we wanted, the health we hope for, whatever it might be.

It's these times, isn't it, when we face great temptation to act like Judas and rebel openly against the Jesus who's disappointed us in this world or to act angrily like Caiaphas because Jesus' real mission in his church is disrupting and challenging to our cherished pattern of church life the way we want church to be, the way we want to protect it to be or just to be foolish and naive like Peter and think that we can have a foot in both camps, that we can serve Jesus and still be full friends with this world and its ways, avoiding the loss, avoiding the self-denial, avoiding the pain of that choice.

I suppose many of us have found ourselves like Peter, haven't we? Often. That when the rubber really hits the road, the challenge of the cross is just very great, too great and we fail, we fall.

And in fact, every time we sin, we're denying Jesus like that, aren't we? We're saying, curse him, I don't know him. So hasn't the last line of verse 75 here been true for you sometimes?

[ 41 : 53 ] Weeping bitter tears of shame and sorrow. But you know, sometimes it does take tears in your eyes to begin to see clearly, doesn't it?

There's a kind of tears in your eyes that won't blur your vision but that will clear your vision and actually help you to see clearly at last. Remember before how Jesus had to rebuke Peter so sharply, get behind me Satan, these are not the things of God but the things of man.

You're seeing with the world's eyes. Back in chapter 16 when Jesus began to speak about the cross and Peter rejected it, recoiled in horror.

But here, you see, at last, it was in the place of abject failure. It was in the place of collapse, wasn't it, that Peter at last began to learn the truth about himself because he was brought utterly to an end of himself.

And yet it was from that place that Peter was reborn, that he was remade to become that rock of faith Jesus had promised he would be.

[ 43 : 02 ] The Peter who could write to others later on saying rejoice, rejoice in sharing in Christ's sufferings now that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed.

Isn't that a total transformation? Maybe that's an encouragement for somebody here this morning. There is mercy. There is restoration.

Even for those who have denied Jesus, cursed Jesus by what they've said and done. But it will involve tears because it means surrender to the way of the cross and that is painful always, isn't it? There is no pain-free crucifixion. but that's the only road to the glory of God's kingdom. But it's a message to all of us, isn't it?

Whoever we are, the cross of Jesus will confront us every day of our lives. It will call us to surrender, to follow our Savior day after day after day.

[ 44 : 04 ] and it is a way of pain. But it is also the way of power, of real kingdom power. And it is the road to glory.

It is the only road there for all of us. There is no other way, any other way beckoning, friends, is surely in the end the road to ruin. It is the road to hell. So Matthew, the preacher, Matthew, the pastor, is calling out to all of us this morning in these words.

And he's saying, don't scorn the cross of Jesus. Surrender to the cross of Jesus. Learn to scorn the praise of men and learn to lose with God.

For Jesus won the world through shame. And he beckons the his road. His road.

Let's pray. Near the cross, O Lamb of God, bring its scenes before us.

[ 45 : 13 ] Help us walk from day to day with its shadows over us. So that in your cross, O Christ our Lord, and not in this world, in your cross, may be our true glory ever.

For we ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.