

Christ our Perfect Substitute

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[0 : 0 0] But we're going to turn now to our Bible reading this morning, and if you have one of the church Bibles, you'll find that on page 882, Luke's Gospel, chapter 22, at verse 39.

Continuing our studies now in the very last part of Luke's Gospel, the last movement of the Gospel as Jesus comes to Jerusalem. Last week we looked at his last supper with his disciples, and we pick up the story now immediately after that.

At verse 39 of chapter 22. And Jesus came out and went, as was his custom, to the Mount of Olives, and the disciples followed him. When he came to the place, he said to them, Pray that you may not enter into temptation.

And he withdrew from them, a buttress to throw, and knelt down and prayed, saying, Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but yours be done.

And there appeared to him an angel from heaven, strengthening him, and being in agony, a struggle. He prayed more earnestly, and his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground.

[1 : 1 0] And when he rose from prayer, he came to the disciples and found them sleeping for sorrow. And he said to them, Why are you sleeping? Rise and pray that you may not enter into temptation.

While he was still speaking, there came a crowd. And the man called Judas, one of the twelve, was leading them. He drew near to Jesus to kiss him. But Jesus said to him, Judas, would you betray?

Would you deliver over the Son of Man with a kiss? And when those who were around him saw what would follow, they said, Lord, shall we strike with the sword? And one of them struck the servant of the high priest and cut off his right ear.

But Jesus said, No more of this. And he touched his ear and healed him. Then Jesus said to the chief priests and the officers of the temple and the elders who had come out against them, Have you come out as against a robber with swords and clubs?

When I was with you day after day in the temple, you didn't lay hands on me. But this is your hour and the power of darkness. And they seized him and led him away, bringing him into the high priest's house.

[2 : 1 5] And Peter was following at a distance. When they kindled a fire in the middle of the courtyard and sat down together, Peter sat down among them. Then a servant girl, seeing him as he sat in the light and looking closely at him, said, This man also was with him.

But he denied it, saying, Woman, I don't know him. And a little later, someone else saw him and said, You also are one of them. But Peter said, Man, I'm not. And after an interval of about an hour, still another insisted.

Saying, In truth, this man also was with him, for he too is a Galilean. But Peter said, Man, I do not know what you are talking about. And immediately, while he was still speaking, the cock crowed.

And the Lord turned and looked at Peter. And Peter remembered the saying of the Lord, how he had said to him, Before the cock crows today, you will deny me three times.

And he went out and wept bitterly. Now the men who were holding Jesus in custody were mocking him as they beat him. They also blindfolded him and kept asking him, Prophecy, who is it that struck you?

[3 : 27] And they said many other things against him, blaspheming him. When day came, the assembly of the elders of the people gathered together, both chief priests and scribes. And they led him away to their council.

And they said, If you are the Christ, tell us. But he said to them, If I tell you, you will not believe. And if I ask you, you will not answer. But from now on, the Son of Man shall be seated at the right hand of the power of God.

And they all said, Are you the Son of God then? And he said to them, You say that I am. And they said, What further testimony do we need? We've heard it ourselves from his own lips.

Then the whole company of them arose and brought him before Pilate. And they began to accuse him, saying, We find this man misleading our nation and forbidding us to give tribute to Caesar, and saying that he himself is Christ, the king.

And Pilate asked him, Are you the king of the Jews? And he answered him, You have said so. And Pilate said to the chief priests and the crowds, I find no guilt in this man.

[4 : 33] But they were urgent, saying, He stirs up the people, teaching throughout all Judea, from Galilee, even to this place. When Pilate heard this, he asked whether the man was a Galilean.

And when he heard that he belonged to Herod's jurisdiction, he sent him over to Herod, who was himself in Jerusalem. At that time. When Herod saw Jesus, he was very glad, because he had long desired to see him, because he'd heard about him.

And he was hoping to see some sign done by him. So he questioned him at some length. But he made no answer. The chief priests and the scribes stood by, vehemently accusing him.

And Herod, with his soldiers, treated him with contempt and mocked him. Then arraying him in splendid clothing, he sent him back to Pilate. And Herod and Pilate became friends with each other that very day.

For before this, they'd been at enmity with each other. Pilate then called together the chief priests and the rulers and the people, and said to them, You brought me this man as one who was misleading the people.

[5 : 35] And after examining before you, behold, I did not find this man guilty of any of your charges against him. Neither did Herod, for he sent him back to us. Look, nothing deserving death has been done by him.

I'll therefore punish and release him. But they all cried out together, Away with this man! And release to us Barabbas! A man who'd been thrown into prison for an insurrection started in the city, and for murder.

Pilate addressed them once more, desiring to release Jesus. But they kept shouting, Crucify him! Crucify him! A third time, he said to them, Why?

What evil has he done? I have found in him no guilt deserving death. I'll punish and release him. But they were urgent, demanding with loud cries that he should be crucified.

And their voices prevailed. So Pilate decided that their demand should be granted. He released the man who had been thrown into prison for insurrection and murder, for whom they asked.

[6 : 44] But he delivered Jesus over to their will. Amen. And may God bless to us his word.

Amen. Amen. Well do turn with me if you would to Luke's Gospel, chapter 22, page 882 in the Church Visitors Bibles.

Well Luke 22 then at verse 39. And a passage which is all about Christ as our perfect substitute. It's John in his Gospel that tells us that Judas went out and left the upper room.

And adds the fateful words as he does so. And it was night. But Luke 2 is echoing clearly a sense of gathering darkness as he writes.

We saw last time how he tells us that Satan entered into Judas. And again that Satan was prowling, seeking whom he might devour, wanting to demand all the disciples.

[7 : 53] And now he approaches what Jesus calls in verse 53, his hour and the power of darkness. A time when it seems darkness really does reign over the world.

And even over the destiny of Jesus himself. But of course as we saw last time, Satan is not in control. God is utterly sovereign.

And Jesus is walking a path exactly as it is laid out for him by his heavenly Father. Verse 22. The Son of Man goes out as it has been determined. That is, by the eternal plan and purpose of God himself.

And on the day of Pentecost, Peter is preaching and says that so clearly in his second book, the book of Acts. This Jesus, he said, was crucified and killed at the hands of lawless men.

But, he was delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God. And Luke wants us to be absolutely clear about that.

[9 : 00] Yes, as we read in verse 48 here, Jesus was betrayed. He was delivered up by the kiss of Judas. And yes, as chapter 23 verse 25 says, he was delivered over by the will, by the will of a wicked mob.

But, it was all exactly as it had been determined by the eternal counsel of God himself. Before even the very foundation of the world.

That's what the apostles teach us. And there is nothing passive or merely fatalistic about how this unfolds. Far from it. It was because, and it was only because, Jesus obeyed to the very last.

In Paul's words, he became obedient, even to the point of death, even to death on a cross. It was because, he learned obedience, through what he suffered, as Hebrews 5 verse 8 says.

And thus, learning the cost, the terrible cost of that obedience, he became the source of eternal salvation to those who obey him.

[10 : 13] He came, as the psalmist prophesied, he came to do the will of God. To offer God the perfect obedience of man as he was created to be.

The perfect image of God himself as king of this earth. But which, of course, all humanity from the very first Adam has constantly failed to offer God. But he did.

And as Hebrews 10 says, thus, by a single offering, he perfected for all time, those who are being made holy. He restored, he rescued true humanity forever.

And that's what our passage today is all about, here in Luke's gospel. In Acts 4, again, Luke quotes the church's prayer, saying, against God's holy servant, were gathered together, Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles, and the peoples of Israel, to do what your hand and your plan had predestined to take place.

Another extraordinary statement, isn't it? But here in Luke 22 and 23, Luke is showing us very vividly exactly what that meant and how the evil will of man came to serve the perfect, holy, eternal will of God, as he had promised to do in the birth of Jesus.

[11 : 38] You remember, to Zechariah, promised to give knowledge of salvation to his people in the forgiveness of their sins because of the tender mercy of our God. And Luke is telling us here in these chapters the historical story of the betrayal and the trial and the condemnation of Jesus, but he does so in such a way as to show us vividly, very dramatically, unmistakably, to show us what it actually means.

That's why his book is a gospel. It's a message. It's not just a history. And the message is absolutely clear to us in these verses before us today that Jesus Christ, the perfect Son of God, became our perfect substitute in his life and in his death.

So they might work a complete salvation for all who are his own. So that as Paul says in Romans chapter 5, by the obedience of one, the many will be made righteous.

He is perfectly faithful where we have been pitifully fallen. But not only that, he who is perfect in sinlessness bears all the penalty of our sinfulness.

So that as the Apostle Peter says, Christ suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous to bring us to God. Or as the hymn writer puts it, my Savior's obedience and blood hide all my transgressions from view.

[13 : 13] Guilty, vile, and helpless. We, spotless Lamb of God, was he. Full atonement, can it be? Yes. Hallelujah.

What a Savior. In his glorious life and in his guiltless death, Jesus Christ is our perfect substitute and thus our Savior.

Well, with that by way of introduction and overview, let's look at the text here in a little bit of detail. First of all, in verses 39 to 53, we see the great submission, the great submission of Christ, which is embodied above all at the cross.

Once again, the one who bears the image of God in man, man as the son of God, meets with the tempter in a garden. But unlike the first Adam, this true man, this last Adam prevails and triumphs and he meets the power of darkness head on and though he is king of the earth, he kneels in submission to the will of God in heaven and is faithful to the very last.

One of the dangers when we read the accounts of Gethsemane and the crucifixion and so on is that it's easy to just descend into kind of an emotionalism.

[14 : 37] Oh, poor Jesus. Look how he suffered so. But that's not Luke's intention. Luke's purpose in these verses is not devotional, but doctrinal. He is wanting us to ask the question, why did Jesus suffer so?

And he's telling us the answer. He chose to suffer so. There's no question of Jesus trying to escape what was about to happen.

Verse 39 tells us he did not go to the Mount of Olives to hide. It was his customary place. It's the place he knew Judas would know where to find him. So Jesus is deliberately going into battle here to face his foes.

And Luke is making it clear to us just how great the unseen battle behind it all was. His account of Gethsemane is a bit shorter than the others and he omits a lot of detail.

In fact, he doesn't even tell us it was called Gethsemane. He just calls it in verse 40 the place. But it's Luke who draws particular attention to the great battleground that this was for Jesus.

[15 : 42] He highlights that it was a time of great temptation. Begins and ends verse 40 and 46 mentioning temptation. Luke alone, verse 44 mentions Jesus' agony.

That word is often translated a great struggle, a great fight. And he portrays it as a bloody fight with Jesus' sweat being likened to great drops of blood.

This is a fight to the death he's describing. And of course, we've seen that the whole context portrays it as a great climax of the contest of the powers of evil and the powers of darkness against Jesus.

Right at the very start of Jesus' ministry, remember, after he is declared to be the Son of God by the voice from heaven, he is driven into the wilderness for a great contest with Satan.

If you are the true Son of God, said the devil, take what is yours, this earth, take it by rights, take it by force. Jesus would not succumb. He insists on following every word of the path of God.

[16 : 47] Not disobedience, but submission to God alone. Remember there, Luke tells us, well, Satan left him awaiting an opportune time. Well, here he returns to assault him in this great climactic temptation.

Now, make no mistake, Satan wants Jesus to die, but he wants him to die corrupted like Adam. He wants him to go to his death, struggling against that destiny, shirking from it just because it was so unbearably terrible.

And Jesus, Jesus does shrink from it naturally. Verse 42, remove this cup from me, he prays, because he knows what that cup that he's facing is.

It's not the physical pain and death that worries him, violent and ghastly as it was. Many a martyr in Christ's name has gone serenely to their physical death.

No, no, no. This cup that Jesus shrank from was a cup that he knew was a cup of God's judgment, God's wrath. Psalm 75 says, for in the hand of God there is a cup and he pours out from it and all the wicked of the earth shall drain it to the dregs.

[18 : 03] Or Isaiah 51, the cup of his wrath is what he calls it, this cup of staggering, the bowl of my wrath. And Jesus naturally shrinks from a death which is death as the wages of sin.

It's the spiritual death that plumbs the depths of darkness, of horror, of utter separation from God which can only be described as hell, real hell.

The utter forsakenness that is the bitter wage paid out by the dark power of sin. sin which promises enlightenment and life but delivers only darkness and death eternal.

Remove this cup from me, Jesus Christ to God. And if that was his only prayer then the battle was lost and indeed all our hope is lost.

But no, do you see as he struggles in prayer he says, nevertheless not my will but thine. he is in an agonized battle but not against what God's promise has decreed and God's providence has allowed to unfold no, a battle for obedience to the very last.

[19 : 21] Even in the darkest night when confusion and weakness and mystery were closing in on him and everything he knew of his father's love seemed to be being contradicted in his present experience.

and when the smile of God's face seemed absolutely obscured by the frowning providence of bitter pain and agony. Those are the times when we find ourselves turning so much to self-pity aren't they?

And to doubt and to bitterness and to anger with God. Where is he? What's he doing? Why is he allowing this? And that's a powerful contrast that we see so starkly here between Jesus and his disciples even his closest friends and associates.

Yes it's hard for them it's a very perplexing time. Verse 45 says they were deep with sorrow. Jesus' words had troubled them but they knew nothing of the depth of his temptation.

They were no idea of the greatness of the battle that is raging all around and yet despite Jesus repeated warnings to them to pray so that they are not falling into temptation while he struggles they are sleeping.

[20 : 35] It's the contrast isn't it between the children of dust the first Adam's people and the man of heaven the last Adam the new man. Adam at the beginning said not thy will but mine and as Paul said by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners.

But Jesus in the garden says not my will but thine and by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous says Paul.

And so the battle won in that great struggle Jesus goes serenely to do the will of God to actually carry through what he has resolved to do.

He hears the word of God and he does it. and that's what we see so clearly in verses 47 to 53 in the account of the arrest. It is the evil plan of the powers of darkness full of despicable treachery and yet Jesus is in complete control even here.

The disciples show their total lack of understanding they try and fight against the path of suffering they draw the sword as if the dark powers of evil could somehow be fought off with swords.

[21 : 55] No more of that says Jesus in verse 51. No, no, no. Christ and his people will never fight their cause in that way. We overcome evil with good and as Jesus does in verse 52 challenging evil with words of truth.

No, Jesus will thwart their evil intentions but in a way far greater than any of them can possibly imagine. He'll do so alone surrounded by the sinful wickedness of his enemies and also the sinful weakness even of his friends as he humbles himself becoming obedient even to the point of death on a cross as he learns obedience through what he suffered and becomes the source of eternal salvation for others.

That's the great submission that Christ the second Adam embodied at the cross of Calvary. But I look at the rest of Luke's account and you see in such stark contrast don't you the great sin the great sin of humanity that's exposed at the cross all around Jesus.

We see something like a negative rainbow a rainbow where the purity of white light is diffracted into all those many constituent colors. Here we see as it were the darkness of sin exposed in every shade of hideous ugliness.

First of all and perhaps ugliest of all is what we see in the abandonment of Jesus' own disciples. Sin as callous desertion. All the disciples abandoned Jesus in his hour of need.

[23 : 41] Luke's focus is particularly on Judas and on Peter. And all of them desert him in acts of dreadful personal disloyalty.

And that of course is the very heart of sin. It's a desertion from a deep personal relationship with a loving God a giving God the one who gave us our very life but whom we scorn and drop so callously in an act of unspeakable unfaithfulness.

The overriding imagery you know that the Bible uses for sin is that of spiritual adultery unfaithfulness turning to whores turning away from the faithful lover of our souls.

And it's that aspect isn't it of sin that just it shows up the great ugliness of the deep personal assault that human sin is on the heart of God himself.

That's the bitter reality of adultery isn't it? When the deepest and dearest human bond we know is treated so callously it wounds so so deeply so personally that sometimes it just is impossible ever to assuage.

[25 : 03] And that's what we see so vividly here in Judas and in fact in Peter. There's really not such a great difference between them and their betrayals. Judas betrays Jesus with a kiss Peter with a curse.

Although Luke is a little kinder here to Peter than Matthew is and doesn't record his swearing. Such a frightening thing isn't it to us to realize that Judas was part of Jesus' inner band for three years.

And all that time Jesus must have known what was in his heart. I wonder if Judas was in Jesus' mind when he told that parable of the sword you remember and spoke of those who in time would be choked by the riches and the pleasures of life.

It could bring such a desertion as this. Maybe it's Peter's denial that's even more sobering for us because he was a great one he was a natural leader he was a gifted man and yet in a way it was his very greatness that made his fall his collapse so enormously great.

But both men indeed all the disciples callously desert Jesus and that is the essence of human sin. Every time we take the easy way out and don't stand with Jesus we desert him.

[26 : 28] We're saying like Peter I don't know him. Every time we put the pleasures of life or the cares of this world before his interests we betray him with a kiss.

Yes Jesus you're our friend but we'll betray you. It's the worst kind of hypocrisy it's the worst kind of sham isn't it of treachery. I looked up Judas in my thesaurus two-timer traitor deceiver deserter sin's callous desertion of the lover the giver of our lives.

And then in verses 63 to 65 in the actions of the henchmen of these religious leaders we see sin as coarse defiance the sheer ferocity the bitter hatred that they vent upon Jesus mocking beating blaspheming coarse men behaving in a bestial way just gratuitously and violently.

But it's extraordinary isn't it the rage that so often we see vented against the Lord Jesus Christ even today even from people who don't even believe he exists. Why is it then that people so love to swear and curse in Jesus name?

Why is there so much bitterness and rage at the very thought for some people that the words of Jesus might be spoken even in a school lesson or the words of his scriptures might possibly be seen in a public place?

[27 : 59] There's an element isn't there of sheer defiance at the heart of human sin. It is rebellion. It is rage against the very notion that anyone should dare to make me and my life something under their control.

And anyone who dares to speak for God who does demand to have control over my life I will therefore rage against. Christ. And that was seen above all in the person of Jesus himself.

And then of course in the council of the Jewish leaders in their response in verse 66 and following we see the corrupt dishonesty of sin. The great question is about his identity at least that's what they say it is.

Are you the Christ? Tell us. But they have seen and heard more than sufficient to know by now. all the evidence anyone could ever need to trust in Jesus Christ.

But Jesus knows they have no desire whatsoever to know the truth. And so he says in verse 67 if I tell you you won't believe nor will you respond if I ask you.

[29 : 07] So he won't plead with them because their minds are closed. And again so often isn't it true followers of Jesus Christians are branded as closed minded bigoted people. And yet in my experience so many people are utterly closed minded and refuse even to consider the claims of Jesus through sheer prejudice.

They just won't even engage. Don't want to know. Just want to dismiss it. That was the Jewish leaders. That's the council.

It's utterly dishonest. All they want is something to condemn Jesus with. They don't care whether it's true or not. Not interested. While sins as the apostle Paul is corrupt and dishonest at its very heart.

It turns the truth of God into a lie. And once you exchange truth for lies, the very heart of your life, pretty soon you start to be able to not distinguish the difference between truth and lies.

It's very frightening to see people living with deception for so long. It becomes so deep rooted in them that they're deceiving themselves a lot of the time. sin. Then there's Pilate.

[30 : 20] We see in him the cowardly duplicity of sin. They can't get Jesus executed for blasphemy of course under the Romans. That's the council's charge.

So they go to Pilate and say well it's treason. He's leading a rebellion against Caesar. Well Pilate would be very hard on that. He very often was. We know from the history books his livelihood as governor depended upon it.

But immediately Pilate could see it was utter nonsense. Verse 4. I find no guilt in this man. But of course Pilate is a politician. He's venal. He's out for his own promotion.

So he passes the buck very happily to Herod. And when Herod sends him back verse 15 also clearly with a not guilty verdict. Pilate repeats his ruling. But he caves in like a complete coward doesn't he?

To the will of the people. The mob. He doesn't want to compromise his career. He doesn't want to compromise his popularity by doing the right thing for Jesus. Well there's a lot of people you know who have seen the truth about Jesus quite clearly quite convincingly.

[31 : 29] It's just that the cost is too high for making a stand with him. It costs popularity. It costs acceptance with people. It costs my advancement perhaps in life.

And so like Pilate they'll give a verbal assent to Jesus but in reality distance themselves. And if you do that you see you're siding against Jesus.

It's a stark warning isn't it to those who know the truth but have got an eye more on their status and standing in the world than on the implications of standing with Jesus.

don't go the cowardly way. Don't go the way of duplicity of double mindedness. Don't let your career goals make you like Pilate. You'll ruin your own spiritual life wherever you'll ruin your children's spiritual future.

I mentioned Herod and surely with him what we see is sin's contemptuous derision. Here's a man who trivializes spiritual things. Verse 8 tells us that he was glad to meet Jesus but he's such a shallow man isn't he?

[32 : 36] He just wants a show. Religion for him is about entertainment and Jesus denies him that in verse 11 and then he shows his true colors contempt.

His men mock him deride him because he won't dance to their tune. Won't do what they want. There's a deeply arrogant contempt at the heart of sin that inflates the human ego to be the center of all things elevating the merely mortal above God.

That's sin. And so any concept that God is there at all is that God should serve man not vice versa. And we'll show contempt for any other kind of idea of God than that.

So if Jesus would dance to our tune if he doesn't give us the answers we want if he doesn't affirm the behavior that we want will show him content.

Herod of course had a chance. Herod had a personal envoy from God in the person of John the Baptist do you remember? But you see John the Baptist wouldn't give Herod what he wanted.

[33 : 46] He criticized his chosen way of life. And Herod chopped his head off to shut him up. But you see you can't play with Jesus Christ.

The real Jesus. The real God of heaven revealed on earth. You can't treat him like that. If you will not engage with him seriously he will withdraw and he'll have nothing to say.

So many shades of sin aren't there exposed here around the cross of Jesus. And it culminates in verses 18 to 25 in the collective demand of sin which is to destroy and to banish the very presence of God himself from the earth in the person of Jesus.

Give us violent murderers. Give us rebel fighters. Give us anyone but God in the person of Jesus. It seems so stark, so astonishing doesn't it when we see it here before us.

But of course the cross simply exposes the great sin of man which from the very beginning to this present day wants to banish God our creator from this world.

[34 : 52] and from our lives and from all interference with our lives. From all stopping us asserting our own will.

We want autonomy. The man's collective demand notice verse 25 their will is the destruction and the death of God in the person of his son.

The very opposite of Jesus who prays not my will but thine in great submission to God. They're shouting not your will but mine. The great sin of man exposed so vividly in everyone around the cross at Calvary.

Herod, Pilate, the Gentiles, the peoples of Israel gathered together against your holy servant Jesus asserting their dark and ugly and sinful will.

And yet only doing what God's will and his plan had predestined to take place. You see how this story of great submission and great sin becomes the story of great substitution.

[36 : 07] The great substitution that the Savior affects at the cross. Look at two things that Luke focuses attention on. First of all the significance of these two trials of Jesus under the Jewish council and then under the secular powers of Herod and Pilate.

Why did all that take place? Why couldn't they just have assassinated Jesus privately? That would have been much less hassle, wouldn't it? The drone approach.

Well they didn't have drones but they had daggers. Surely that would have done. It's because God purposed that it must be this way. God determined that there should be a courtroom on earth to mirror the great courtroom in heaven and where Christ is seen to be on trial as we sang in our hymn in the place of sinful man.

Just as in the garden his obedience of mission was in our place, so also in our place will he be tried and condemned on charges of blasphemy and treason.

Blasphemy was the charge of the Jewish court claiming the unique place of God as the son of God and the unique power of God. Of course the irony is it was they who blasphemed God because religion that denies the real truth about Jesus the son of God is blasphemous as Paul says in Romans chapter 2.

[37 : 35] You who boast in the law dishonor God by breaking it and the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you God's own chosen people. Of course that's no different today is it?

The people who name the name of Christianity but expose the real Jesus the true Jesus and his gospel and his commands they blaspheme him. But that's the charge against Jesus blasphemous usurping of the place of God.

But of course because they need more than that for a death penalty from Rome they come to Pilate with a different charge and his charge is treason rebellion against the king's rule proclaiming himself a king in the place of Caesar.

Of course that's utterly false we know from the previous chapter Jesus had already told them paid tribute to Caesar. Again there's a great irony isn't there? Pilate says I see no guilt in this man but these people verse 5 who have accused him of treason are the ones who themselves are unwilling to accept the verdict of Rome.

No we're not having your verdict of innocence give us guilty. But you see Jesus is standing accused in these earthly courts however corrupt and farcical they are of exactly what mankind stands accused of before God.

[38 : 56] Blasphemy. Ever since Eden man has sought to usurp God's place usually as gods is what the devil said and we grasped it. Man has sought to be in God's place ever since.

And treason rebellion against the rule of God rejecting his way going our own way as enemies of God I'll do it my way. That wasn't Frank Sinatra who invented that it's been going a lot longer than him.

But here is a man as the incarnate son of God and in our place condemned he stood. That also explains Jesus' silence before his accusers.

He makes no defense because as Isaiah 53 foresaw like a lamb led to the slaughter is silent he opened not his mouth. Why? Because he chose to be our substitute in death.

He is purposefully bearing our sins in his body on the tree. Not only as his submission in Gethsemane epitomized is not only offering his perfect life of obedience for us offering to God what we could never be but also as a perfect sacrifice bearing the guilt of what we should not be but every one of us is.

[40 : 17] A blasphemous treasonous rebel who is callously deserted the one who loved us and who made us treated him with derision with defiance with dishonesty with duplicity.

See what Luke is showing us so clearly here the great substitution at the cross. If you're still not convinced by that just home in then on the last paragraph verses 18 to 25 because what he shows us here surely is that God himself so ordained the events at the cross that the great exchange was even acted out in front of everybody there as though crying out to everyone had ears to hear see what this is.

Just look at the vivid illustration of great substitution that there is in the actual substitution of Jesus and Barabbas. Three times Pilate tells us Jesus is absolutely innocent.

Verse 4 and then again verse 15 and here in verse 22. But three times the people shout him down. Verse 18 away with him.

Verse 21 crucify him. Again verse 23. Everyone is against him. Everybody cries out rather for a man called Barabbas and we're told about him twice in verse 19 and 25.

[41 : 44] He was a man justly imprisoned for murder and for insurrection. For treasonous rebellion just as Jesus is accused of. And murder which indeed is a blasphemous crime against the image of God in man isn't it?

It's a crime against God himself in his image. That's why in the Old Testament it always carried a death penalty. Their united will, look at verse 25, is to substitute the blasphemous treasonous guilt of Barabbas for the holiness and true deity of Jesus.

That's their will. But remember Jesus' words in verse 42 of chapter 22.

It's God's will, God's will that is being fulfilled in all this. And his will is that Jesus embraces to the very end being a substitute of the innocent for the guilty.

And so although everyone colludes with the will of Satan to destroy the perfect image of God in man, which has been Satan's relentless purpose since the very beginning of creation, come to climax in the assault of Jesus.

[43 : 05] That's their will, but it's God's unassailable purpose that the very actions of theirs which bring about the great exposure of human sin, in all its darkness, in all its ugliness.

It seeks to crucify the Son of God that these very actions actually bring about the great exchange that God has purposed through his divine grace.

And Christ suffered the innocent for the guilty, the righteous for the unrighteous, as Peter says, to bring us to God.

This is a substitution that man meant for evil, but God purposed for good, for the saving of many lives. A great substitution, the great exchange, pictured so very vividly, even that day, in Barabbas, a guilty, vile, and helpless sinner deserving death, and in Jesus, the spotless Lamb of God.

Full atonement. Can it be? Yes, because Jesus was faithful even unto death to drink the cup of wrath of God's anger against sin in our place, and to offer the beauty of obedient trust in his Father for us in our place.

[44 : 31] The great substitution effected at the cross of Calvary. can't miss it in Luke's account, can we?

You might say, well, well, that's all interesting, but what's it got to do with me? I wasn't there. I'm not Herod or Pilate or Peter or Judas. Nothing to do with me and my life.

Friends, that's not so. That old Negro spiritual is right, isn't it, when it sings and says, were you there when they crucified my Lord? And the answer of the Bible is yes, we were all there.

Because the scene around the cross that we've been observing here just exposes the truth, doesn't it, about every human heart. And the truth is, it was our sin that put him there.

We're all involved, every human being, in the death of the Lord Jesus Christ. Like it or not? Because the cross is where all history is focused. The cross is where all eternity is decided for everyone on this planet.

[45 : 47] Michael Wilcock puts it very well in his commentary when he says that two plans converge at Calvary. The plan of the will of lawless men to crucify Jesus and the definite plan and foreknowledge of God.

But he says the difference between them is all important. And men must choose on which side they'll be, either beneficiaries of the plan by which God brought Jesus to the cross, or accomplices in the plan by which Satan brought him there.

As C.S. Lewis says, you will certainly carry out God's purposes however you act, but it makes all the difference to you, whether you do so as a Judas or as a John.

All the difference for all eternity. But friends, let me end with this. If you belong to Jesus Christ, can there be anything more wonderfully assuring than to know that he was and he is and ever shall be the great substitute for you.

That all that you have never been and know that you can never be, he is and has been and will be for you. And that all that you have been and all that you still are, that in your honest moments shames you.

[47 : 23] all that also, he has borne for you and taken away from you. We can't trust ourselves, can we?

Can't read this passage without realizing that. We're all betrayers at heart. That's why we find reading about Judas and Peter so very difficult, I think, isn't it? But we can trust Jesus.

He would not betray his father. He would not betray his calling as savior. He would not fail any, any that he came to save.

And if you trust him, he will never ever fail you. Never. Let's pray.

Lord our God, how can we understand the depths of love and mercy in your heart that saw your own beloved son, the righteous, stand for the unrighteous, such as we, bearing shame and scoffing rude, in my place condemned he stood, seals my pardon with his blood.

[48 : 53] Hallelujah. What a savior. May we know him and love him and rejoice in him all the days of our lives.

Amen.