

Christ our Passover Lamb

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[0 : 0 0] But we're going to turn now to our Bible reading, which is in fact in Luke chapter 22, not chapter 23 as it says on the sheet, that was my mistake.

But chapter 22, you'll find it on page 881 if you have one of our church visitors' Bibles. And we're now into the very last act of Luke's great gospel drama, the very final stage in the road to glory that Jesus has been walking with his disciples since the turning point in Luke's gospel back in chapter 9, verse 51.

Do you remember there we were told that the hour was near for Jesus to be taken up, that is taken up into the glory of heaven. And so he set his face resolutely towards Jerusalem because the road to glory for Christ must lead through the cross at Jerusalem.

And so all the action in this last section is around Jerusalem. And we saw chapter 19, verse 28, Jesus' first entry into the city of Jerusalem.

We call that the triumphal entry. And he sent two disciples ahead of him to borrow a colt for Jesus to ride on.

[1 : 2 0] And we read there, remember, that they went ahead and they found it just as Jesus had told them. And now we'll see at the beginning of chapter 22 that we have a repeat pattern exactly.

Jesus sends two disciples on ahead of him, this time to find a room to borrow for eating the Passover. And as we'll see, exactly the same, they found it just as Jesus told them.

That's one of Luke's markers. It's the equivalent of old-fashioned bold print. They didn't have that in the days of old scribal manuscripts like we have today. But it's like a big heading saying, look at this, I'm telling you something.

This is very carefully ordered. So let's read then from Luke chapter 22, verse 1. Now the feast of unleavened bread drew near, which is called the Passover.

And the chief priests and the scribes were seeking how to put him to death, for they feared the people. Then Satan entered into Judas called Iscariot, who was of the number of the twelve.

[2 : 2 4] He went away and conferred with the chief priests and officials how he might betray him to them. And they were glad and agreed to give him some money. And so he consented and sought an opportunity to betray him to them in the absence of a crowd.

Then came the day of unleavened bread, on which the Passover lamb had to be sacrificed. So Jesus sent Peter and John, saying, go, prepare the Passover for us, that we may eat it.

They said to him, where will you have us prepare it? He said to them, behold, when you've entered the city, a man carrying a jar of water will meet you. Follow him into the house that he enters, and tell the master of the house, the teacher says to you, where is the guest room where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?

And he'll show you a large upper room furnished. Prepare it there. And they went and found it just as he had told them. And they prepared the Passover.

When the hour came, he reclined at table and the apostles with him. And he said to them, I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer.

[3 : 33] For I tell you, I will not eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God. And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks, he said, take this and divide it among yourselves.

For I tell you that from now on I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes. And he took the bread. And when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, this is my body, which is given for you.

Do this in remembrance of me. And likewise, the cup after they had eaten, saying, this cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood.

And he said, this cup that is filled with me. But behold, the hand of him who betrays me is with me on the table. For the Son of Man goes as it has been determined.

But woe to that man by whom he is betrayed. And they began to question one another which of them it could be who was going to do this. And the speed also rose among them as to which of them was to be regarded as the greatest.

[4 : 40] 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. You are those who have stayed with me in my trials.

And I assign, I covenant to you as my father has covenanted to me a kingdom. That you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom. And sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

Simon, Simon, behold, Satan demanded to have you all. That he might sift you all like wheat. But I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail.

[5 : 40] And when you have turned again, strengthen your brothers. Peter said to him, Lord, I am ready to go with you both to prison and to death. Jesus said, I tell you, Peter, the rooster will not crow this day until you deny me three times that you know me.

And he said to them, when I sent you out with no money bag or knapsack or sandals, did you lack anything? And he said, nothing. He said to them, but now let the one who has a money bag take it.

And likewise a knapsack. Let the one who has no sword sell his cloak and buy one. For I tell you that this scripture must be fulfilled in me. And he was numbered with the transgressors.

For what is written about me has its fulfillment. And they said, look, Lord, here are two swords. And he said to them, that's enough. Amen.

May God bless us this, his word. Well, do turn with me, if you would, to Luke 22 and page 881 in the church Bibles.

[6 : 46] Christ, our Passover lamb. Jesus' first entry into Jerusalem that we've already looked at came with maximum publicity.

He proclaimed himself openly and his coming kingdom as a sovereign come to reign. He is the Lion of Judah, long foretold, come at last, as promised.

But this second entry to Jerusalem is quite different. It's quiet. It's hidden. As Jesus comes actually to inaugurate his kingdom as a savior come to redeem.

Because although a king, he is also the Lamb of God. Long foreshadowed, but now at last come to take away forever the sins of his people according to God's covenant promise.

And at the heart of the story lies this great unfathomable paradox. That the sovereign announces his coming at last of his long-awaited kingdom, his glorious reign.

[7 : 58] And yet he is despised and rejected by his very own people. And yet, through that very rejection, he becomes the savior who accomplishes his great redemption of all his people of faith throughout all the world.

In other words, the suffering of Jesus at the hands of cruel and wicked men and at the dark powers of Israel is not a mistake. It's not a tragic failure.

In fact, it's nothing less than the eternally planned and purposed means of God's redemption of his people. It's been foreshadowed and prophesied all through Israel's history.

Above all, in the Passover, which brought about the great deliverance from the bondage of Egypt into the promised land of God's sovereign rule and God's care. And all that the Passover foreshadowed so eloquently is now to be fulfilled ultimately.

First of all, in pregnant symbol, in Jesus' last supper with the disciples, in the broken bread and the poured out wine. But then, of course, in his personal suffering at the cross, in his broken body and his shed blood.

[9 : 24] That's why Paul the Apostle says in 1 Corinthians 5 verse 7, Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed to deliver us from the malice and evil into the sincerity and the truth of life in the kingdom of God.

So let's look at what Luke emphasizes for us in this account as it unfolds in three movements. First of all, the events that precede the Passover, then the explanation during the supper itself, and then the discussion that takes place with the disciples afterwards.

And you'll see that in each narrative, there's an emphasis on the inevitability of everything that happens. So verse 7, the Passover had to be sacrificed.

Verse 13, it happened just as Jesus told them. His word is fulfilled. Verse 22, the Son of Man goes as it has been determined.

Verse 37 and 38, the scripture must be fulfilled in Jesus. All that is written about me has its fulfillment. That's very clear, isn't it? What we're being told is that Luke is narrating events that will prove to be nothing less than the culmination and the climax of the whole story of human history.

[10 : 43] Indeed, of divine history. That which the scriptures have unfolded since the very beginning of time. Now make no mistake just what a great claim is being made here.

These events are about nothing less than the key to history, indeed the key to eternity. That's a bold claim. It may be that you've never been here before, never been to church before, and perhaps never even really engaged with the Christian message before.

And maybe you consider it rather an indifferent matter. Let me just say this morning to you, if that's the case, that just can't be so.

Either the Christian message is to be dismissed as untrue, without any real foundation, in which case it's not just trivial, actually, it's dangerous folly.

Either that, or, if it is true, if the historical Jesus is to be credited with any real truth, then this is the most important issue in the world, and for every single human being in the world today.

[11 : 59] So let's look at Luke's words concerning Jesus. First of all, in verses 1 to 13, Luke wants us to grasp the truth about the real presence of Satan.

The real presence of Satan, and Christ's sovereignty over all things. And his message is clear. The dark power of Satan, although real and terrible, cannot derail the determined plan of God.

Judas is under Satan's control. But it is Jesus who exhibits complete sovereign control. His word is directing everything down to the very last detail.

As verse 13 says, all will be just as he has told them. Verse 1 tells us that the Passover is approaching, the greatest of Israel's festivals, that spoke about that great redemption of the Exodus, and celebrated the salvation of a great Redeemer God.

But what a height of irony. Look at verse 2. The very chief priests and scribes, who taught the people in the temple about these things, were seeking to put to death the Redeemer himself, in the person of God's Son.

[13 : 11] Now that's no surprise, of course. We've read time and again that they want to kill him. Just look back to chapter 20, verses 19 and 20, and you'll see. They were being inhibited thus far because of the fear of the people.

But now we're told they feared so much his influence over the people, that they just must have him dead before he could win them over completely. So great was their perversity and their wickedness.

But verse 3, if you look, explains the sheer vitriol of their hearts, and it points us to the sinister and horrific reality of evil.

It points us to a world that we shudder even to contemplate, the domain of Satan. Because behind every human wickedness lies the dark power of the devil himself.

And he can and he does influence and even drive and control the behavior and the actions of human beings in this world.

[14 : 12] We're told here that Satan entered into Judas himself. Evil is real.

And Satan is real. And his horrible and ugly darkness is manifest in this world in the perversity of the minds and hearts of human beings and their behavior in this world.

That's what this means. Now again, many people today find that very difficult to believe and contemplate. But friends, this is not, let me say, just a matter of something primitive and superstitious.

We've seen all the way through Luke's gospel how Luke, who was a physician, is very careful in his analysis. Yes, he has given us instances of demonic possession, but he has also carefully differentiated those from other illnesses, ordinary illnesses and disease.

We saw that back in chapter 4, for example. In fact, Luke is reporting these demonic episodes because they are so unusual and because they seem to be directly related to the ministry of Jesus.

[15 : 22] as if Jesus' presence is what draws out these manifestations of the dark powers of evil, just because of who Jesus really is. It is his presence in the world that signifies a great cosmic conflict coming to its climax, coming to its denouement.

So it's not just that in these primitive times, simple people thought like that, and nowadays we know better. We can explain all these things just by, you know, mental illness or something. Not at all.

Luke is not a naive fool. He was a sophisticated, educated man. As, in fact, our doctors today, you go to any GP and ask them, and they will tell you very clearly that they can tell the difference between patients they know are mad and patients they know are just bad.

Ask any policeman, he can tell you that too. Our modern world loves to explain everything away as though it was just merely a scientific matter of genes or a social matter, poverty or whatever it is.

But you see, deep down, we know that doesn't work, don't we? That's why it's no surprise that our newspaper headlines so often can't help but use that language of evil and of darkness and of devils.

[16 : 42] Sheer evil is the headline above multiple reports of a terrible rapist. Devils! The headline about abusers of children, even babies, sexual abuse of babies in organized gangs of ghastly pedophilia.

or multiple beheadings by the army of the Islamic State and so on. Can we deny the reality of the power of evil and the capacity for sheer wickedness in the human heart?

Can any merely materialistic explanation really suffice? Well, the Bible says no. We can't.

The Bible says evil is a reality. And the truth behind all the wickedness in our world is ultimately a dark, malevolent force the Bible calls Satan.

It's not just Luke's idea here in verse 3. Jesus himself is plain in verse 31 talking about Satan. In fact, the whole Bible tells exactly the same story since the very first rebellion of man deceived by the devil.

[18 : 03] that is the power that lies at the root of all that is wrong in this human world of ours. And that's why, of course, human beings can't fix this world of ours.

Not with our best efforts in economics and science and politics or anything else. That's why we can't fix the world. Because this world has a problem that transcends the physical.

Because humanity has fallen under a great deception of the evil one. And this whole world is beholden to him. And it's under his power. Jesus calls it the power of darkness.

And it's a destructive power, a disintegrative power. Let's go back and read in Luke chapter 8 for a vivid picture of the destruction, the disintegration that Satan's power always wreaks in a human life in that story of the Gadarene demoniac.

It's a parable of the whole of humanity. And that is the reality of the human condition according to the Bible, according to Jesus. And let me say, if you go home today and just spend five minutes on Google on the internet, you'll find plenty of evidence to back that up.

[19 : 19] But notice here what the chief manifestation of that evil is in the life of human beings. It's manifest in the burning desire to destroy God himself in the person of the incarnate Son of God, Jesus Christ.

The chief mark of demon possession is not pedophiles and rapists and sadists. The chief mark of demon possession is wanting to destroy the Lord Jesus Christ.

because the true aim of the evil one is a destruction of God himself and the destruction of all things related to God's kingdom. And notice who Satan's chief accomplices are here.

It's those within the official religious establishment who use the name of God, who talk about God, who seem no doubt to many to be very godly, but they want to silence and destroy the real Jesus Christ.

Because the real God that he revealed in ultimate clarity and truth, they discovered was a God they didn't like and they didn't want. And Judas, verse 3, one of the twelve, one of Jesus' closest insiders.

[20 : 47] And yet he became a servant, a tool of the devil himself. Verse 5 says, for money. That's a giveaway John tells us in John 12 in his gospel that Judas was covetous, that he used to steal from the common purse.

He wanted to see what Jesus could give him, what he desired for his fulfillment, but the real Jesus turned out to be quite different from the Jesus that Judas wanted.

And so to preserve the kind of Christ that he wanted, he turned to destroy the Christ who was real. And of course, Judas is far from unique in that, isn't he?

Remember back in Luke chapter 8, Jesus told the parable of the sower and said exactly that, that some would be led away by the evil one by the lure of riches and pleasures in life.

And that is so often the case, isn't it? For some, it is the love of money that causes people to kill off the real Jesus in their life, to replace him with a pretend Jesus, a puppet Jesus, who's very different, lets you do what you want.

[21 : 54] For some, it's other desires. Often, it's sexual fulfillment, perhaps, in the way that the real Jesus won't allow. And so we silence him and we want to invent a new Jesus in our image, to our liking, who says, yes, that's fine.

But maybe Luke wants us to be shocked by these words here. So even if we think we're real insiders with Jesus, we ask ourselves, if we really hate what Jesus actually stands for, if we resist his way, if we're disappointed with him and want to remodel him in a different way, to silence his true words and make him say something rather different, then we're also showing that we hate him, aren't we?

Be careful. Luke's saying, be careful lest Satan is deceiving you to destroy you. The presence of Satan is real.

But of course, what Luke wants us to see above all is that Christ's sovereignty is supreme. And verses 7 to 13 show us that, that nothing can stop the determined plan of God.

It is under his total control. Every detail, even down to apparently random matters like jar-carrying men, it's all according to plan, it's all according to Jesus' word.

[23 : 20] Indeed, not just in the midst of Satan's worst assault, but through it and even because of it, God's great victory is being played out.

so that in Satan's apparent victory was the utter defeat of all dark powers. There's a sense of serenity, isn't there, of almost effortless inevitability about these verses showing how the disciples went and prepared for the Passover in the face of all that devilish opposition.

because God's sovereignty is supreme. It cannot be assaulted even by the darkest powers of hell. The powers of evil were successful in their effort because they did put Christ to death.

But their victory became their defeat and his defeat became his triumph and the means by which he triumphed. Hebrews 2 puts it this way, by death he destroyed him that had the power of death, that is the devil.

As one of our hymns says, the very spear that pierced his side drew forth the blood to save. How can that be?

[24 : 40] Well, the answer, of course, lies in the very heart of this passage in verses 14 to 23 where Luke's focus is unmistakable. It's on the Passover, the real Passover, sacrifice and Christ's suffering for his people.

Jesus himself explains that it will be the death of the Savior for his people that brings deliverance from Satan and release from the bondage to sin and death just as the Passover lamb brought redemption from the bondage of Egypt and constituted God's covenant people as his own chosen ones buying for the promised land through that great exodus out of Egypt.

Now note first just how precise the timing of Jesus' coming death is. Jesus says in verse 22 he goes to his death as it is determined.

That is by God and the scriptures and not least by the place of the Passover. Look at all the times it's referred to. Verse 1, the Passover draws near. Nearly every verse from verse 7 talks about it.

The Passover lamb must be sacrificed. Verse 8, they went to prepare the Passover. Verse 11, to eat the Passover. Verse 6 tells us that the enemies want to do away with Jesus away from the crowd.

[25 : 59] In fact, in Matthew 26 in his account we're told that they explicitly said not during the feast but God's sovereign will and purpose has determined that it must be in the midst of the Passover.

It's while eating the Passover that Jesus takes the elements of the meal and explains the full significance of his coming death on the cross in terms of the institution of a new covenant, the everlasting covenant that the prophets had longed for.

Because the whole point is that Jesus' death is the ultimate fulfillment of everything that the Passover signified. The Passover, of course, remembered a real event in history, the great Exodus that constituted Israel as a nation that brought them out of bondage into the promised land.

It begins in Exodus chapter 12 and God says to them, this month of the Passover will be the first of months for you. It's a total new beginning, a new calendar when the blood of the Passover lamb sheltered them from God's judgment on Egypt and brought them redemption and freedom.

And it ends in Exodus chapter 24 up on Sinai where again the blood of the covenant binds this chosen people to God himself to live under his rule with them as his people.

[27 : 20] But of course, the yearly celebration of Passover looked not just back to all of that, but it looked forward to the great deliverance that was still to come, to the great redemption. The ultimate deliverance through the Messiah, the deliverance from the bondage of sin, the establishment of an everlasting covenant of peace, the world to come where all God's people's sins would be put away forever and a new life, a new beginning would be forever.

That was the new covenant that Jeremiah spoke of that would be everlasting where his people would be made new and clean. The whole heavens and the earth would be renewed. The curse of sin would be banished forever.

And so every year, you see, the Passover feast was like a visible, tangible prophecy looking for fulfillment. Well, look, Jesus' death is going to fulfill that Passover hope.

That's what Jesus is saying here in these verses. Here is the real Passover fulfilled. Here is the great Exodus begun at last. Do you remember back in Luke chapter 9 on the Mount of Transfiguration when Moses and Elijah appear in glory with Jesus?

They spoke to him about the great departure, the great, literally, Exodus that he was to accomplish at Jerusalem. And you just can't miss here the heavy, heavy allusions to Jesus fulfilling the Passover.

[28 : 50] Verse 7, as I've said, the Passover lamb must be sacrificed. Look at verse 15. Jesus says, I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover, eat this Pascha before I suffer, before I Pasco.

It's not just illusions, though. Jesus explicitly uses the language of fulfillment in verse 16. I won't eat it again because it's being fulfilled. The promised kingdom of God is arriving.

Again in verse 18, he won't drink again until the kingdom of God comes. that day is now dawning, he says, long promised. This is the last prophetic Passover foreshadowing the great coming redemption because that redemption is come.

Jesus' death fulfills the Passover. And his Passover is explicitly framed as a sacrifice that delivers from sin.

That's absolutely evident in all Jesus' talk about the new covenant. If you read Jeremiah 31 where Jeremiah talks about that, you'll see it's all about the forgiveness of sin and iniquity.

[30 : 06] Jesus' words here in verses 19 to 21 inaugurate a new ordinance filled with new significance that supersedes the Passover. He speaks in explicitly sacrificial terms.

His body and blood is given for his people. Given is the language of offering given to the priest. For you is the language in the Old Testament of the sin offerings and the guilt offerings of given in the place of the sinner.

This cup, says Jesus, poured out for you explicitly refers to Isaiah's suffering servant in Isaiah 53 whose life would be poured out to death to bear the sins of many.

the new covenant in my blood speaks not only of Exodus 24 and that blood of the covenant that gave new life to Israel, but of course it speaks of Jeremiah's new covenant where sins are no more, where therefore there will be forgiveness that is lasting and life that is everlasting.

It's absolutely unmistakable this is the heart of the New Testament faith. Paul says, Christ, our Passover lamb has been sacrificed for us.

[31 : 22] And Peter says, we have been ransomed, redeemed by the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish and so set apart as holy for obedience and sprinkling with the blood of Jesus.

This is the beginning of a new calendar, of a new life, of a new age. It's not just forgiveness of sin and the removal of guilt and removal from sin's power and bondage and slavery to Satan.

It's a new birth into a living hope of new life restored in communion with God forever. This is the restoration of the true destiny of man.

It's the beginning of a whole new order of creation. It's as big as that. And that's what Jesus is proclaiming here in the midst of the darkness and the tragedy of the human condition which could hardly be more starkly emphasized than by the presence of Judas.

Right there, verse 21, the betrayer's hand is on the table with him. Epitomizing the reality of what sin really and truly is.

[32 : 32] Revolt against God as he truly is and as he makes himself known to us in Jesus Christ. Rejection of his rule and arrogant insistence on our own self-rule.

Denial of God's divine rights over us. And so a determination to banish him, to silence him and to kill him. That's the root of sin.

But look what Jesus says. Woe to the one who thinks and acts in that way.

John tells us in his gospel that at this point Judas went out and left them. In the fateful words, Judas went out and it was night. You see, to go that way is to cast yourself into utter darkness.

outside of the shelter of Christ's Passover where there is no hope and no salvation. Only the assured certainty of judgment.

[33 : 45] Don't be deceived, Jesus is saying. But Jesus does offer a way out of that sin and sickness and brokenness in fellowship with him.

A way that can transform everything that we are by nature which is just like Judas. Which is why all the disciples were asking themselves which one of us could do this. Any one of us could do this.

He offers us a way out of that and a way in to a new life. No longer held by the darkness and bondage of sin. And a share in the greatness of the Son of God himself, the servant king.

And you see that's what verses 24 to 38 lay out for us. The real pattern of service and Christ sustaining of his own.

The life of the servant king who will be in his people through the new covenant will work greatness in his own people as we too are crucified with him.

[34 : 49] And our pride is humbled by the cross. the cross which works real penitence in us. Even as Satan's ongoing assaults work real perseverance in us through the sustaining intercession of the Savior himself.

See verse 24 makes the point that by nature all the disciples are just the same. They're all just like Judas. Indeed all humans are. Full of self. You see self-assertion, self-aggrandizement, self-belief.

That's our world. We recognize it so clearly. Verse 25 don't we? Those who can lord it over others and extract what they can from them. In a dictatorship you impose it.

In a democracy you just try and get it for the ballot box voting for whoever is going to give you the best deal. But you see the power of the cross of Jesus brings deliverance from that self-centered self-rule.

It brings a new beginning. Not so with you says Jesus verse 26. Notice all the way through these verses the emphasis on you. He's speaking to those who will be his people redeemed by his blood into the kingdom of his everlasting covenant.

[36 : 03] The Passover delivers from bondage into a whole new world. A different world. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 5 because of Christ's Passover deliverance we've left the dead leaven of the old life.

The malice and the evil. for the new way of sincerity and truth. And Peter says we're redeemed by the blood of the Lamb from the futility of life before and we're born again through the living and abiding word into a life of purity of heart and sincerity of love.

And that's what Jesus describes here in verses 26 to 30. A new life of true greatness seen in his everlasting kingdom. verse 30 eating and drinking at his table and therefore exhibiting the greatness of the one who shows his true greatness by humble service of others.

What an upside down kingdom that seems to be to us doesn't it? How utterly different from our idea of lordship in the world. I am among you he says as one who serves the great king.

but isn't it in fact our human world that actually is the upside down world? How different would our world be if the kings and rulers of our world acted like this?

[37 : 26] How different what's playing out in the Middle East in our newspapers today would be? That Jesus of course is speaking here directly to his apostles who have a unique place and verse 30 they're about judging the tribes of Israel that's something unique to them but Jesus talks this way so often for all his followers that it's clear that the way of true greatness is to be the norm for all who belong to his kingdom.

Verse 26 the way of true greatness is to serve the way of true honor in his kingdom is utter humility and yet all are so weak see the disciples by nature are just like the world and they're also vulnerable verse 31 you see the you there is plural he tells us that Satan assaults all of them Satan demanded to have you all to sift you like wheat to shake you out to take you apart to take you down even Peter the leader of the band now Peter is no sap Peter knows it's going to be hard to stand with Jesus he says that in verse 33 he's ready for prison and for death and Peter was brave if you look down to verse 50 when they came to attack Jesus John's gospel tells it was Peter who drew that sword and attacked one of them although Jesus rebuked him then as well as we'll see but Peter didn't really understand his true depth of weakness and he would crumple under the psychological pressure of having to stand with Jesus apparently against all the opinion of the world around him and that's so true to life isn't it sometimes people are extraordinarily brave in one circumstance and utterly crumple in another one it must have been so hard mustn't it for Peter to hear those words in verse 34 so deflating so insulting even but Peter must be made to face up to that devastating truth and to the truth of what

Jesus meant in verse 32 that he would come through but not through anything at all in himself but only through what Jesus would do for him Peter's own pride would let him down utterly but Jesus prayers would not fail him and that alone would keep his faith from failure from utter collapse Jesus prayer Jesus intercession it's not something different from his redeeming work as a savior from sin as a deliverer it's just the personal application of that work through his effectual call to true faith in somebody's heart he grants Peter true faith that will not fail through the blood shed in his mercy extended to him personally and truly and notice it is his sovereign choice and will to do that look at verse 29

I assign to you literally I covenant to you to those who are my own I covenant a kingdom the blessing of the new covenant verse 32 I have prayed for you it is a sovereign act of God and yet it will not be apart from faith in Peter and true faith always involves true penitence the death of all pride you see verse 32 speaks of Peter turning repenting he must repent of his weakness and his sin but he will and he can because Christ's blood intervenes before the throne of God interceding for him to sustain him and to keep him in God's great mercy that's Christ's sovereign saving prayer for his own we sang it his blood pleads peace for us and by that power his saints forever by grace shall stand but it's so often so isn't it that it's only when we're forced to see our own great weakness our real weakness indeed our real wickedness often through some great humbling in our life so often it's only then that we see our great need our need for Jesus our need for his cross as our only hope in life and death when we realize that there's no hope at all in our own life in our own pride but only in his and in his prayer for us how many many people over the years especially great ones who never come to faith in

Christ through some great humbling in their lives some great humiliation and yet you see even in that again where Satan intends evil to damage to destroy God means it for good even Peter's great failure will in the end become a means of strengthening his Christian brothers that's what Jesus says in verse 32 when you have turned strengthen your brothers the pain of Peter's sin becomes the power of Peter's strengthening ministry through his wonderful experience of God's forgiveness and God's great mercy and Peter did become a great leader a great servant of Christ it's Peter in his letter who writes of God's great mercy that has caused us to be born again into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus from the dead it's Peter in those letters who writes with such tenderness with such understanding to beleaguered

[43 : 29] Christians around the Roman Empire scattered to encourage them to strengthen them and sometimes it is those who have known what it's like to fall so terribly badly who can help others who can strengthen others the most because they know what it is to have been humbled by their sins but also lifted and restored by the God of all grace and comfort the God who restores and comforts and strengthens and establishes even such as them so deep and so wide is his great mercy maybe that is an encouragement for somebody this morning smarting under the shame of knowing that you failed the Lord Jesus terribly badly that you take hold of Jesus words here this morning and when you have returned when you have repented and received his forgiveness strengthen your brothers and sisters with your renewed joy at the great mercy of

God in Christ the sustaining prayer of the Son of God will use even the ongoing humbling of our own sin to shape us into true servants of his kingdom humbling us to see more and more our need of mercy and the cost of mercy by his precious blood so that we love mercy and so that we show mercy and walk humbly glory which Jesus says is the way of greatness in his eternal world and to that end also he will use the ongoing hostility of Satan towards his own because that is the call of the kingdom and Jesus makes that clear in that last paragraph prepare for opposition is what he's saying for hostility for battles it's unmistakable Jesus is a king who has been rejected by even his own people and we can't expect the world therefore to welcome and provide for his people if Jesus was considered an outcast a transgressor as Isaiah the prophet promised he would despised rejected then so it will be for those who follow him they'll have to provide for themselves in a hostile world and be prepared for attack even violent assault protect themselves although of course Jesus is certainly not telling his followers to attack anyone else with a sword in his name that's enough he says in verse 38 when they think that that's what he's saying and you'll see it even clearer down in verse 51 when they actually do take up their swords no more of that says Jesus but what he is saying is be real the real pattern of service in my kingdom will be so foreign to this world that this world will hate you and will oppose you and will even assault you that's been the history of the

Christian church through 20 centuries it's the story of the Christian church in the majority of the world today what we have lived through in our lifetimes here in the west is an anomaly although perhaps that's changing but there are some here who have known that real and present physical hostility in other places but friends if that makes us tremble Luke surely writes these things to say to us fear not Christ our Passover lamb has been sacrificed for us we have been ransomed by his precious blood and he has covenanted to us the kingdom that he has received from his heavenly father the everlasting kingdom of life and so if you belong to Jesus then he says to you just what he says to Peter Satan demanded to have you but I have prayed for you that your faith will not fail yes we will know the humbling because of our own sin and yes we will know the relentless hostility of

Satan but what he means for evil God has determined for good for those who are his own he's sovereign over all and he has suffered for his people so that he will sustain them to the end so the message is trust him and follow him and you also will find it just as he has told you let's pray our heavenly father we thank you for the stark realism of your word it hides nothing from us of the truth and reality that we can see and hear with our own eyes and ears of what this world is truly like it hides nothing in the small print pretending that to follow

Jesus is nothing less than a holiday we thank you Lord that you give us the truth but in that truth you give us great abiding hope and so we pray that you would help us even as your blood continues to intercede for your own that though assailed by the evil one and they're often floored by our own weakness and sin we would prevail through the grace and mercy of Jesus Christ our Savior alone in whose name we pray Amen