

Good Friday

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Preacher: Philip Wells

[0:00] So in the midst of the sweep of God's huge purposes for cities and nations and the cosmos, we come to this little group of a dozen or so people around a table sharing a Passover meal.

And it says that they were very sad, which I'm sure is an understatement, and began to say to him one after another, surely not I, Lord.

And he says, one of my close friends, one who dips their hand into the bowl with me, will betray me. And even Judas says, surely not I, but the Lord knows it's him.

And as they eat the Passover, Jesus transforms it by taking bread and wine and giving bread to his disciples, just very simply, and saying, eat this.

This is my body. If you enlarge it, this is my body broken for you. And he gives them the cup, which would have been present at the Passover.

[1:25] He transforms that and he says, drink this. This is my blood. And it's covenant blood.

You could enlarge on that. This is new covenant blood. This blood is for the forgiveness of sins. And a kingdom is coming new.

It's very simple, but very sort of pregnant words that Jesus utters, indicating his death, but indicating the benefits of his death.

His body will be broken. His blood will be shed. But this will bring in a new kingdom, a new covenant, forgiveness of sins.

And he invites his people. This is for you. Not just sort of in the abstract for the nations, but individually, mouthful by mouthful, sip by sip.

[2:27] This is for you. Take it. Eat it. Drink it. Benefit from it. Be part of this yourself, personally. Let's sing this song that we sometimes sing at communion.

I hope we all are able to sing this. Behold the Lamb who bears our sins away. Be seated. Jesus says, this very night you will all fall away on account of me.

For it is written, I will strike the shepherd and the sheep of the flock will be scattered. But after I have risen, I will go ahead of you into Galilee.

Interesting. No longer Jerusalem, the center of operations. But somewhere foreign. Galilee of the Gentiles. God's kingdom is moving on.

Things are changing. But now we come to his arrest. And they go to the Garden of Gethsemane.

[3:36] As we know, we could stop and read that, but we'll pass on. And we'll follow as Jesus is arrested. And these two remarkable things happen.

That he is judged. And first of all, we'll read, have read to us chapter 26, verses 47 to 66.

You can hardly believe it, can you?

The king who came to his city. The king who came to his city. To weep over his city. To give them one more chance, coming, looking for fruit.

Should be arrested by the guardians of the city. Should be arrested and put on trial. The king put on trial.

[4:36] And what charge can they bring against him? Well, there's lots of false charges that they try to bring. And the nearest they get is this almost correct quotation concerning the temple.

And what they eventually condemn him for is telling the truth. Are you the Christ, the son of the living God?

Jesus says, well, you said it. And they said, ah, that's it. It's almost incredible, isn't it? That the people who were put in charge of looking after the kingdom, waiting for the king to come. When the king comes, find him worthy of death. They find him worthy of death. So, as God's people judge their Messiah, it actually judges them.

Perhaps the Gentiles will do better. And we'll read about the judgment of Jesus before a Gentile court in chapter 27, verses 11 to 26.

[5:47] Amen. So, the Gentiles do know better. Representative of one of the greatest empires the world has ever seen, the Roman Empire pilot.

Knows perfectly well what right and wrong is. His wife even reminds him of that. But he's not prepared to do what's right. He does what works, what's expedient, what gets him out of trouble. And he claims that it's somebody else's fault. And he washes his hands and says, it's not my responsibility, it's your responsibility. So, together, as it says in Psalm 2, the leaders of the people and the nations conspire together against the Lord and his anointed.

And that's exactly what happens here. And Jesus is led out to this form of death, this crucifixion. And he's nailed to a cross to await a lingering and painful death.

Let's sing number 408. So, we've followed Matthew's account of that week.

[7:08] I know we've done it quickly, like a fast coach trip through a foreign country. But, oh, the sights we've seen. The king entering to the cries of Hosanna.

The tears he wept over his city. The depth of unsparing criticism he had for the leaders who had so much privilege and messed it all up.

I've got a little summary here. It was a day of judgment. A day of judgment on Jerusalem. The privileged city.

Who for hundreds and hundreds of years had been invited to the wedding feast but had refused to come. So much privilege.

Yet so ungrateful. So rebellious. The tenants who weren't prepared to be tenants but wanted to be landlords.

[8:14] Like human beings do. An example for us to avoid.

The privilege is that we have more even than Israel had. And how important for us to produce the fruit.

To respond to the king. A day of judgment on the Gentiles, on the nations. As represented by Pilate the governor.

Morally. Morally. Morally. No better. Morally. Incapable. He knew what was right and wrong but not prepared to stand up for it.

Entirely. Entirely lacking in moral backbone. Cowardly. Unprincipled. Indifferent towards the God that had made them and given anything, everything to them.

[9:23] Willing to sell an innocent victim to get out of trouble. To sell them down the river. And yet, in grace, God opens his kingdom to the obnoxious nations.

And says, you can be forgiven. You can be part of this kingdom. This king of the Jews can be your king too.

To wait for him. To bear fruit for him. And a day of judgment on Jesus himself. I think as Matthew portrays it. It's almost the day of final judgment.

Brought forward into the future. As Christ dies on the cross. And the rocks split. And earthquakes happen. And it's almost the end of the world. There and then. But he comes as the key king.

The key figure for every human being. Jew or Gentile. The key person for the whole of the cosmos. The king who, unlike all the other kings who failed and died, is the forever king.

[10:37] The king who in himself is righteous. How dare human beings put him on trial. And how appalling that they should put him on trial and found him at fault.

But the king but also the lamb. It all took place on Passover. The lamb who's slain to take sins away.

The Jews mess up appallingly. The Jews mess up appallingly. The Gentiles mess up appallingly. And one person says, I'll pay the price for all of that. The king who says, I will not only be the king who rules, but I'll be the king who saves.

I'll be the king who digs into his pockets and pays this enormous price. For Jew and Gentile. For those obnoxious, ungrateful people. I'll pay the price.

[11:41] And then welcome them in. They will come to me. I'll bring in a new deal. A new covenant. Sealed in the blood of the lamb who suffered for the forgiveness of sins.

And as we reflect upon that, there is this invitation and this question. Look at this new deal. This new covenant. How remarkable it is.

How free it is. Come to me, says Jesus. I'll bear your burdens. I'll carry your sins.

I'll be your saviour, your shepherd, your friend. I'll never leave you nor forsake you. The steadfast love of the Lord lasts forever. That's the sort of king I am. That's the sort of kingdom you can be part of.

And he welcomes people into that. So I say, are you up for that new deal? Are you up for that new covenant? And I say, almost like as a wedding, will you have this woman to be your lawful wedded wife?

[12:44] Will you have this king to be your king? To wait for his coming. To offer your life to him. To do as he sees fit.

So that you will bear fruit for him. Let's sing number 453.

And then I shall ask Pastor Tony Bickley to come up and close in prayer for us. We shall see.