

Repentance and Remorse

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[0 : 00] And the way things are now is not the way they shall always be. We need to remind ourselves of the words of that great Persian adage, this too shall pass.

We may be in the depths today, but this too shall pass. We may be anxious today, but this too shall pass. We may, the enemies of the church may seem so powerful today, but this too shall pass. God seems not to answer my prayers, but this too shall pass. The wicked prosper and the righteous suffer, but this too shall pass.

The way things are now is not the way they shall always be. Well, here in Matthew 27, we encounter a Jesus who is being tortured, humiliated, and crucified.

The kingdom of God is being crushed beneath the iron fist of human sinfulness, the light of the world extinguished by the darkness of this world. The leaders of the Jewish nation ally themselves with the power of Gentile Rome to put their Messiah to death on a cross.

[1 : 20] And as we read Matthew 27, we're asking ourselves the question, is the darkness final, or shall this too pass?

Shall the light of Jesus Christ ever shine again? Yes, this too shall pass. For Matthew 27, with all its harrowing detail, is followed by Matthew 28, with all its glorious declarations.

The death of Jesus Christ is followed by the resurrection of Jesus Christ, and the kingdoms of men are subdued by the kingdom of God. But even here, in these first few verses of Matthew 27, we have that first inkling that things, they are a-changing.

That things too shall pass. Let me propose three truths from these verses, each of which reinforce that adage, this too shall pass.

First, the betrayer becomes the betrayed. Second, the loved becomes the legalist. Third, the sufferer becomes the savior.

[2 : 35] Now, I want us to understand that although it's generally true for us that this too shall pass, as Christians, the most important things shall not pass, shall never pass.

The love of Jesus for us, the glory of God, the grace of the gospel. First of all then, from this passage, the betrayer becomes the betrayed.

The betrayer becomes the betrayed. Of all men, Judas Iscariot, perhaps, is the most pathetic. He had everything and less than nothing.

In the NIV, the passage is entitled Judas Hangs Himself, but it's so much more tragic than that.

Here we find a man who was dead a long time before he tied a rope around his neck.

You'll notice that in verse 3, he's given a name. The betrayer. Yes, that's what the early church called him, the betrayer. His name had become unspeakable to the early church, and so that's what they called him.

[3 : 48] They didn't call him Judas Iscariot, they called him the betrayer. Perhaps the early church remembered the words that Jesus had spoken concerning him. woe to that man who betrays the son of man.

It would be better for him had he not been born. In the eternal fires of hell, Judas wears it around his neck. This sign, Judas Iscariot, the betrayer.

And for all time, he will regret the day he was born. That's who we have here. We have the betrayer. And although it's a fellow disciple, Matthew, who's writing this account, there's no hint of sympathy because this is a sin which could not be forgiven.

And yet, it had all started out so different. For three years, Judas had been a disciple of Jesus. He had sat by his master's fire. He had heard his master's powerful sermons.

He had watched his master's powerful miracles. He had experienced his master's forgiveness and inspiration time and time again. Of all those who had walked on planet earth at that time, he was the

most privileged for the king of kings called Judas, my friend.

[5 : 12] That's what Jesus calls him in Matthew 26, verse 50. My friend. But over time, the silver coins had bewitched him.

Having been given responsibility for the money bag, he thieved. And finally, lured by the thought of getting rich quick, he sold Jesus to the religious leaders of Israel for 30 pieces of silver.

Another option, as we saw, when we considered Judas' reason for handing Jesus over to the religious leaders was that he perhaps thought that Jesus' arrest would lead to a popular uprising among the people, or even that Jesus would manage to persuade the Sanhedrin that he was the son of God.

If it wasn't for increased prosperity, Judas betrayed Jesus, it was for increased political power. Either way, he had been bewitched.

He knew what he was doing. He was betraying a friend. But not just any friend. He betrayed an innocent man.

[6 : 23] A man he knew to be more than a man. If we looked psychologically into Judas' mind, what would we see?

A mind tortured by regret and remorse. Things had not turned out the way they thought they would. The way he thought they would.

And now Jesus is being led away to be crucified by Romans. The weight of money in Judas' pocket became not something attractive, but something repulsive.

The blood money. When I was young and I'd get my pocket money and I'd spend it all within 10 minutes, my father would shake his head and say, that money, it burns a hole in your pocket, boy. Those 30 pieces of silver had become too hot for Judas to handle and racked with guilt, racked with self-loathing, he threw it into the temple courts.

[7 : 24] Having betrayed Jesus for 30 pieces of silver, he now recognized actually he too had been betrayed. He had been betrayed by the lure of the silver into thinking that the money would make him happy.

He had been betrayed by the religious authorities of Israel into thinking that increased political power would make him happy. But having walked into that trap, it sprung.

The betrayer became the betrayed and in a moment of clarity, Judas realized the gravity of his actions. He knew it and the guilt tore open his heart.

He had nothing left to live for and so he ended it all. Betrayed even by the rope he used to hang himself for we read in Acts 1 verse 18, it broke also causing Judas' body to be ripped open and for his insides to pour all over the ground.

The betrayed became the betrayer. Now there's a sense in which we've got to go back to the early church to really understand the impact of the story.

[8 : 46] Matthew, remember, is writing to Jewish Christians who are under great pressure to renounce their faith in Jesus and return to Judaism. They're being tempted to betray Jesus, lured by promises of willing acceptance back into the Jewish community, safety from persecution, safety from harm.

And by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Matthew's bringing them up short with the tragic story of Judas Iscariot and he says to them, you know, the betrayer is always betrayed.

that if you should betray Jesus for the sake of acceptance, comfort, and safety, be sure that they shall betray you also and you shall be left with less than nothing to live for.

Time is too short to fully apply this into our hearts. But my question is, are there things which are luring you away from Jesus today? things which are worth betraying him for?

I knew a fine Christian man who, upset at being single and not able to find a Christian girlfriend, started dating a non-Christian girl and finally betrayed his faith in Jesus.

[10 : 09] But in time, that betrayer became the betrayed as the girl he had left Christ for left him also. That young Christian was left with less than nothing.

It may not be an illicit relationship. It may be a promising career. It may be a desire to belong somewhere else.

Whatever it is, it's luring you to betray Jesus and you think it's worth it. You once were Jesus' friend but having betrayed him, there is less than nothing left for you.

Do you suppose Judas would have betrayed Jesus like he did if he had known it would all end in a lonely field outside Jerusalem at the end of a swinging rope?

Young Christian friend, think very carefully before you betrayed Jesus for the lure of anything. Money, career, relationships, or anything else.

[11 : 22] It really isn't worth it. For us at the moment you might feel a wee bit unhappy. This too shall pass. But the time shall come that if you should betray Jesus for the lure of other things, the decision you have made shall not pass.

And that is the scariest thing in all the world. Secondly, the loved becomes the legalist. The loved becomes the legalist. You know these religious leaders of Israel were a very sorry bunch. Far from covering themselves with any kind of glory in Matthew's gospel, we see them conniving and lying and scheming.

From very early on they've been plotting Jesus' death. In the name of religious righteousness they have hated him. They are the leaders of the people.

They are the leaders of the nation. And throughout Matthew's gospel they have taken their stand against Jesus. They hated how Jesus befriended sinners and Gentiles.

[12 : 40] They despised Jesus' teaching of our supreme need for God's mercy and grace. Hiding behind the respectable man-made laws of the rabbis they have condemned Jesus to death and they've handed him over to the Gentile Romans for execution.

Judas, the very man they had bribed to give them Jesus comes to them and Judas is wracked with guilt and wracked with remorse and wracked with shame.

He's a mess of a man. He needs help. We talk about someone crying for help and by throwing the 30 pieces of silver into the temple Judas is crying for help.

But far from having compassion upon him the religious leaders say to him what is that to us? See to it yourself. They would rather that this mess of a man hang himself than that they should get involved in the messiness of his life.

And then to compound it all they use their man-made religious laws to buy the field in which to bury foreigners so that even in death, these religious leaders can be separate from the unclean Gentile.

[14 : 03] You see these religious leaders, they have exchanged the love God had shown them for the laws that they themselves had devised. They deformed the grace of God toward them.

They had forgotten that God chose them as a nation not because they were the best among all the peoples of the world but purely because God loved them. They had forgotten that it's by faith in God's promises that a man is reckoned righteous and not by his rigid observance of the law.

They had forgotten the grace God had shown them in rescuing them from captivity in Egypt and in Babylon and had begun to believe that they as Israel were better than everyone else and so they used their man made additions to God's law.

God's law of love as weapons and obstacles. That nation which in the Old Testament God had described as being the apple of my eye had become rotten to the core.

They had forgotten that they were in a mess as a nation and God heard their cries for help and had compassion upon them. They had forgotten that they are sinners and wicked in heart and for everything they were as a nation they owed it all to God's love and grace and even now they've condemned their Messiah to death for no higher crime than that he loved them.

[15 : 39] The loved had become the legalist. The nation most loved by God had become the nation which placed its faith and trust in man-made rabbinic laws which for them stood above God's love for them and grace extended to them in the coming of the gospel.

Later on in Galatians 3 in verses 2 and 3 the apostle Paul is dealing with Christians who having begun their discipleship in love are now dominated by law.

having been saved by the grace of Christ now reckoned somehow that their spiritual state depended upon their observance of the law. And he writes to them he says let me ask you this did you receive the spirit by works of the law or by healing with faith?

Are you so foolish having begun by the spirit are you now being perfected by the flesh? to put it even more plainly the Bible's storyline of salvation of how to be put right with God consists in one phrase and one phrase alone.

The righteous shall live by faith. The righteous shall live by faith. At the very beginning Abraham believed God's promises to him and we read God credited it to him as righteousness.

[17 : 15] Faith was the basis upon which Abraham was counted righteous by God. Faith was the basis upon which the apostle Paul was counted righteous before God. Faith was the basis upon which you were counted righteous before God.

So now you've been a Christian for 20 years or 30 years or 50 years. What's changed? Nothing has changed. Faith is still the basis upon which you were counted righteous by God and saved in him. See the problem is it's so easy for us as the love to become the legalists. For us to forget that just as it was by grace we were saved so it's by grace we stand.

And that our acceptance with God is holy and entirely down to Christ's performance on our behalf Christ's obedience on our behalf Christ's sacrifice on our behalf and not our sacrifice for him and not our obedience to him and not our performance.

How easy it is to become the kind of Christian who looks down on others because they do not hold to this or that form of tradition or cultural expression. how easy it is for our Christianity to move from gospel to law from grace to works.

[18 : 40] That's not to say the Christian shouldn't diligently obey the word of God but not as the basis for our salvation but its expression and demonstration. Not to win God's favor but to demonstrate our being the children of God.

In other words whether you've been a Christian for 100 seconds or 100 years it is by grace you stand and the only basis upon which you are saved is that God loves you and Christ has died for you.

How dare we hear someone within our fellowship or outside our fellowship crying for help like Judas did. But because we don't want to get involved in the messiness of their lives we tell them to sort themselves out which is what the religious leaders did to Judas.

How dare we play religious games with those who desperately need to hear the gospel. It may involve us getting our hands dirty but surely no dirtier than Jesus' hands were when they nailed him to the cross.

let's make sure that our awareness and experience of the love of God through faith in Christ as the basis for our salvation let's make sure that never passes.

[20 : 06] The day will come when God shall hold us all to account for what we have thought said and done and on that day what shall be our defense.

it shall not be our love for him it shall be his love for us. It shall not be our work for him it shall be his work for us.

The last point I want to raise from this passage here in Matthew 27 is that the sufferer becomes the savior. Sufferer becomes the savior. We must never ever forget that the focus of these gospel passages isn't the moral or spiritual lessons we can learn from them but it's the character and work of Christ.

Jesus is the hero of this passage. He takes the main place. He comes first in our lives. He comes first in our studies here. And what we learn about him from Matthew 27 is that the die is cast.

That Jesus having been condemned to death is now bound with ropes. He's been led to pad it for sentence to be carried out. That the Jesus who lovingly freed people from their suffering and gave them life has now been spitefully bound and is being led himself to death.

[21 : 33] What we have here is Jesus the sufferer. The sufferer. The Lord of heaven and earth. The Messiah of Israel being treated worse than any common criminal and the sacrifice is being bound and he is being led to the altar.

Just like Jesus himself predicted three times in this gospel, he would be handed over to the Gentiles who put him to death. Just like Judas betrayed Jesus to the religious leaders of Israel, so the religious leaders of Israel betray him to the Romans.

Romans. Which means that the guilt of these religious leaders is no less serious than that of Judas. But whereas Judas was filled with remorse, these religious men, knowing full well that they were shedding innocent blood, carry on with their disgusting plotting.

And Jesus is being physically manhandled, physically abused. the Messiah of Israel bound like a sacrificial animal. Now in weeks to come, we're going to dive down deep into the ocean of Christ's sufferings.

We're going to see him being mocked and laughed at, punched with fists and struck with sticks, a crown of thorns driven into his head and nails driven into his hands and feet.

[23 : 00] And that's just what we're going to see on the outside for his true suffering is hidden. It's the suffering of his soul as he is crushed on account of our sins and bears the punishment we deserve because of our transgression.

I think it was Hugh Martin who once said that the soul of Jesus' sufferings is the sufferings of Jesus' soul. Within hours of these events described here in Matthew 27 verses 1 through 10, the lifeless body of our Savior will hang upon the cross having suffered so brutally that it shall be unrecognizable as a human being just a mangy mass of blood and dirt.

On first inspection, on first inspection, that's where this passage is leading to Jesus' death on the cross. However, we're reading this as part of the book of Matthew.

Listen again to what Jesus has been saying time and time again through the gospel of Matthew. Listen again to what he said to his disciples in Matthew 20 verses 17 through 19, just a few days before this happened.

He said to them, now as Jesus was going up to Jerusalem, he took the twelve disciples aside, that's Judas included, and said to them, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the son of man will be betrayed to the chief priests and the teachers of the law.

[24 : 37] They will condemn him to death and will turn him over to the Gentiles to be mocked and flogged and crucified. On the third day, he will be raised to life.

See what's happening here in Matthew 27 verses 1 through 10, and even in the words themselves Jesus used, is the fulfillment of the prophecies which he had already made concerning what would happen to him.

In verses 1 and 2, having been betrayed to the chief priests and condemned by them to death, they are now betraying him to the Gentiles. Jesus knows exactly what is happening to him.

More importantly, he knows exactly why. he always knew what would happen, and he always knew why it would happen. In Matthew 20, 28, he tells his disciples, the Son of Man came to give his life as a ransom for many.

Jesus is willingly enduring this suffering on the way to the cross, where he will give his life as a ransom for many. where the sufferer will become the Savior.

[26 : 01] The thing is, the suffering will pass, but the saving will not. In a few hours, Jesus will have suffered all he ever will, but for thousands and thousands of years to come, his suffering and death will save a countless multitude of people from their sins.

The hell that he is going to suffer will ensure heaven for those who have faith in him and follow him into discipleship. the suffering of Jesus has passed, but the offer of salvation by faith in him has not yet passed.

Every time the gospel is preached, the offer is being made that you, you as an individual, by believing in Jesus and following him into discipleship, should be saved from all your sins and from the death your transgressions deserve.

That gospel offer has not passed. You are being invited today to enjoy for yourself the resurrection life, love, and peace of Jesus.

But with this we close. The day shall come when this too shall pass, when never again shall you hear the word of the gospel inviting you to come.

[27 : 38] What you shall hear are the laments of your heart crying out, it's too late, it's too late, the door is closed and I am left outside in the darkness.

I loved my 30 pieces of silver, I loved my religion with all its man-made laws, but I didn't love Jesus. How foolish I have been, it's too late.

My dear friends, fill your heart and mind with the urgency of the thought that before this day is ended, this too may pass.

That the offer of the gospel is gone and your eternal joy along with it. Lord, let us pray.

Lord, we thank you for the sufferings of our Lord Jesus, that though his sufferings are past, he remains the Savior.

[28 : 45] Father, we pray today for anyone among us who has not yet come to faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. And we ask that even now as that offer has been made once again, they would say, yes, Jesus is more important to me than those 30 pieces of silver, and I'd rather have him than all the man-made laws of religion.

We pray for those of us who are already Christians. May we never leave the firm moodings of your grace and start thinking that somehow we can please you and find acceptance with you by observing the works of the law.

Help us to maintain the central belief that it's by grace we have been saved and by grace we stand. And we particularly pray for any among us today who are being lured away from faith in Jesus by

any of the things which we talked of earlier, money, career, relationships, an easy life.
Lord, help us to realize that these things too shall betray us and we shall be left with less than
nothing if we do not have Jesus. We ask all these things in his name.
Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.
Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.
[30 : 21] Amen.