

Rejected by all

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[0 : 00] Good morning, everyone. The reading is from Matthew 26, starting at verse 57, reading to 27, verse 2.!

That they might put him to death. But they found none, though many false witnesses came forward. At last, two came forward and said, This man said, I am able to destroy the temple of God and to rebuild it in three days.

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

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

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

[1 : 28] They answered, He deserves death. Then they spit in his face and struck him. And some slapped him, saying, Prophecy to us, you Christ. Who is it that struck you? Now Peter was sitting outside in the courtyard.

And a servant girl came up to him and said, You also were with Jesus, a Galilean. But he denied it before them all, saying, I do not know what you mean. And when he went out to the entrance, another servant girl saw him, and she said to the bystanders, This man was with Jesus of Nazareth.

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

Then he began to invoke a curse on himself and to swear, I do not know the man. And immediately the rooster crowed. And Peter remembered the saying of Jesus, Before the rooster crows, you will deny me three times.

And he went out and wept bitterly. When morning came, all the chief priests and the elders of the people took counsel against Jesus to put him to death. And they bound him and led him away and delivered him over to Pilate, the governor.

[2 : 43] Well, good morning everyone. Will you pray with me as we come to God's word? Father, we always need your help to understand your word and believe and obey and be full of your son and your grace.

And so I ask that you be with us now in Jesus' name. Amen. Just a show of hands. Who knows what TED Talks are? How much do I have to explain? Okay. TED Talks are just experts in their field give really short talks, probably shorter than mine today.

I'm sorry. 15 minutes or so. They're experts in their field. Hopefully I pronounced her name right. Brené Brown. Her TED Talk is the fourth most watched.

After two decades of her research, I just want to share a few of her insights. So let me quote. Connection is why we're here.

It's what gives purpose and meaning to our lives. Neurobiologically, that's how we're wired. It's why we're here. But when you ask people about love, they tell you about heartbreak.

[4 : 05] When you ask people about belonging, they'll tell you their most excruciating experiences of being excluded. When you ask people about connection, the stories they told me were about disconnection.

I ran into this unnamed thing that absolutely unraveled connection. Shame. Is there something about me that if other people know it or see it, that I won't be worthy of connection?

I'm not good enough. I'm not rich enough, beautiful enough, smart enough, whatever. I'm guessing this is hitting a nerve because a lot of eyes have stopped looking at me here.

Only one variable, I'm still quoting, that separated the people who have a strong sense of love and belonging and the people who really struggle for it, and that was the people who have a strong sense of love and belonging believe they're worthy of love and belonging.

That's it. They believe they're worthy. End quote. Now, Genesis 1-3 has said this for millennia, but it helps.

[5 : 37] It helps to have an expert in people confirm it. Connection. We're made for it.

But that shame, that fear of being unworthy is in all of us. It's not some. It's in all of us. I think in our passage today, we're going to see the only reason you and I can know for certain we are worthy of connection.

And it is so strong that we can even move towards people who treat us as unworthy. So please, have your Bibles open or on your phones, whatever.

We're in Matthew 26. We're in the courtroom. Well, I'll describe the setting in a moment, but first I want to illustrate the injustice of this scene we're entering.

Okay, illustration. The elders here at Grace have decided to excommunicate Andrew Wilkinson. Now, this is the first he's hearing about it.

[7 : 03] Now, we don't have a reason yet just to quote Hunt for the Wilder People. He's a real bad egg. Now, I'm just wondering, would anyone like to come up to the microphone and just provide some reasons that we should excommunicate him?

Anyone want to? Okay. We love you, Andrew.

We love you. Now, I'm also aware that that illustration is going to be a bit triggering for some in this room who have experienced rejection from the church, but I want us to feel just, not just, how unjust this trial is.

He's standing there as the accused. They've decided the sentence already in verse 59. Now, the chief priests and the whole council were seeking false testimony against Jesus that they might put him to death, and there's no charge yet.

They're spending the night bringing in witness after witness to find some mud that's going to stick. There's so many breaches of Jewish law in this scene that later writings of the Mishnah required.

[8 : 29] It was taking place in Caiaphas' home, not in the temple precinct. Capital cases required, you could not do those at night time.

Here we are in the middle of the night, through the night. There was supposed to be a minimum of two days for a trial, and blasphemy charged.

The accused had to technically use the name of God for it to be a legal sense with Leviticus 24.

But justice can be put aside, is their thinking. The hour demands it. They've got to hurry. They're afraid of the crowds. If they don't hurry this night, there's going to be mob violence the next day.

He's arrested Thursday night. Sabbath begins Friday at sunset. He needs to be dead by then. Pilate sees cases brought to him in the morning.

[9 : 30] They've got to get it done by dawn so that he's dead by dusk. And they need a charge against him that will satisfy the Jewish crowds.

It is so unjust. If anyone's wondering, if you want a picture of all the Gospels in terms of the flow of events here, the most likely harmonisation of the four Gospels is that first he's examined by Annas, seems to be a more private examination.

Then, while the Sanhedrin is getting together, you only needed 23 of the 70 council to make a quorum. So while they'll get together, we shouldn't see the whole 70.

But then we've got this scene before the courtroom. And then you'll notice in chapter 27, verse 1, when morning came, all the chief priests and the elders turned up and they confirmed the decision, probably in the temple court, and then they take him off to Pilate.

Now, can I quickly pause and just say, there's no grounds here for anti-Semitism. There's some awful anti-Semitism going on in Australia. This is not grounds for it.

[11 : 01] Jesus is a Jew. His first followers were Jewish. So getting back to the story. They need a charge against him that will satisfy Jewish opinion.

So verse 60, at last, two came forward and said, this man said, I am able to destroy the temple of God and to rebuild it in three days. Finally, finally, they've got something approaching blasphemy here.

The temple is where God put his name. His reputation is bound up in the temple. He did drive out the money changers, as we've heard.

He did rearrange the furniture, claiming it's his own house. You can only rearrange furniture in your own house. He said, my father's house will be called a house of prayer.

Now, is the charge true? Is it accurate? When he prophesied the destruction of the temple in 70 AD, that was to his disciples in private.

[12 : 12] What he said in public is in John chapter 2. Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up. And John adds, he was speaking about the temple of his body.

He didn't actually, the charge is close, but it's not accurate. He didn't say he will destroy the temple. He said he would be destroyed. He will be the temple.

He will be that high priest who connects us to God. He will be that final sacrifice that deals with sin. He will be the meeting place of God. So the charge isn't true.

And I bet every fibre of his being wants to defend himself. How do you go when someone says something untrue about what you said or did?

How do you like the thought that people you care about have a false view of you? I remember being hit by a rubber in class at school and the teacher saw my reaction being hit by this projectile and I got put on detention.

[13 : 33] You teenagers at school know the destructive power of gossip.

Or at work and you're treated as a scapegoat for some error, the company made. How do you go? What many people have found so unique about Jesus is like a lamb that is led to the slaughter and like a sheep for its shearers is silent so he opened not his mouth.

His silence is its incredible strength. His silence but it frustrates Caiaphas almost got him but he doesn't incriminate himself and so he puts him under oath before God.

Now he's trying to force the situation. If you remain silent under oath you're breaking the law. If you retreat and say you're not the Messiah crisis over because word will spread if you affirm it well you have to be guilty and so he's forcing the issue.

I adjure you by the living God tell us if you are the Christ the son of God. have you ever thought about how unusual that question is?

[15 : 26] Have you ever been asked that before? You are your words and your life there's something about you tell me are you the Christ?

This is such a strange question in history it's remarkable that this learned high priest even asked this question but then knowing the hatred and rejection Jesus would receive his response is more remarkable it's out of this world he doesn't shrink back but he tells the truth so verse 64 is key here Matthew often picks a saying of Jesus that interprets the whole story and here we have it verse 64 is the key to this story let me read it again Jesus said to him you have said so but I tell you from now on you will see the son of man seated at the right hand of power and coming on the clouds of heaven so there's two parts of this you have said so it seems to be a reluctant yes we should probably hear it as well in a sense yes but not what you think not this political idea of Messiah who would vanquish the Romans and establish the Jewish authorities and not in that sense in a sense you're right in calling me Christ son of

God but I'm going to pick a different phrase so that you understand me son of man and bows open the morning for us already to understand he's upping the ante here the prophet Daniel he's a Jewish man he could not imagine anyone being seen as divine except Yahweh but then he's given the vision behold with clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man a human being and he came to the ancient of days and he was presented before him and to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom that all peoples nations and languages should serve him his dominion is an everlasting dominion which shall not pass away some people ask what's the difference between

Christianity and other religions all religions are making truth claims the difference is look at this prisoner here's this prisoner standing before the judges saying you're not going to see me like this again how I am today but you will see me when God gives me dominion over all the world when I'm seated on that glorious throne and all the nations including you Caiaphas including you in this room and me all will stand before me and I hold the destiny of everyone in my hands you see me as a blasphemer that God's angry at me no the father delights in me honouring me as the object of the world's worship you sentence me to death I'm going to rise and I'm going to come on the clouds of heaven who is this guy saying this to quote to quote

C. S. Lewis because he can say it better than me man then comes to man to God says he was a man who goes about talking as if he was God claims to forgive sins says he always existed says he's coming to judge the world at the end of time now let's get this clear among pantheists anyone might say that he was a part of God or one with God there's nothing very odd about that but this man since he was a Jew could not mean that kind of God God in Jewish language meant a being outside the world who'd made it and was infinitely different from anything else when you grasp that you'll see that what this man said was quite simply the most shocking thing that has ever been uttered by human lips so what is he worthy of what do you think he's worthy of

[20 : 34] Caiaphas asked that question to the room and they say he's worthy of death the high priest tears his robes in anger in grief that this man has claimed the place of God and maybe to quieten their own conscience for condemning an innocent man I'm not sure why they do that they spit in his face struck him slapped him mock him prophesy to us Christ who is it that struck you the one who alone is worthy of all our connection all our love is put to shame he's hated he's rejected he's condemned and amazingly again he who called down twelve legions of angels remained silent rejected by all and he remained silent and then we come to

Peter verse 58 Peter follows at a distance he seems to be halfway between courage and cowardice he's faced with the fear of experiencing the same injustice and hatred that when the servant girl implies the accusation you also were with him publicly whoever was listening before them all he lies I don't know what you mean he seems to retreat further away probably into the darkness and another servant girl accuses him and he intensifies his lie with an oath before God I do not know the man having lied twice the third accusation he calls God's curse down on him

I do not know the man us westerners probably see him weeping outside when the rooster crows we probably see that as guilt he's done the wrong thing now that I'm sure there is guilt I think it goes deeper Peter's identity is shattered at this point who is he is he the Peter of verse 35 or is he the Peter of verse 74 which Peter am I even if I must die with you I will never deny you or am I the Peter who calls down God's curse and three times I do not know the man he shattered who am I he's weeping bitterly in shame I think any sense of self worth of

God's connection and Jesus connection is shattered he feels so ashamed rejecting rejecting his friend rejecting his Lord something a question that came to my mind is Peter's denials didn't actually affect the outcome of Jesus going to the cross or not it didn't affect the court why do all four gospels emphasise Peter's denials in any religion any belief system any friendship group any family any political party any club do!

Not even his closest followers are loyal as he deserves. Every single person is unworthy of connection with God.

[25 : 54] Enemies and friends rejected him. I think Peter illustrates the primary cause for Jesus being killed.

See if you can agree with Don Carson when he says this. Every Christian is as guilty of putting Jesus on the cross as Caiaphas.

But thoughtful believers will surely admit that their own guilt is what drove Jesus to the cross.

I think Peter's here so that we go, I put Jesus on the cross. Which is the true Dave Bott, the one who preaches on a Sunday, hopefully sometimes confidently and passionately, or the one who in conversation in private has an opportunity to say he loves Jesus and keeps his mouth shut in fear and shame.

Which is the true Dave Bott? Now I could pick heaps of other inconsistencies. Caiaphas wasn't the primary cause.

[27 : 17] What drove Jesus to the cross was his desire to do the Father's will in moving in love towards our unworthiness, in our rejection of him, to unite us to him forever.

He moves in love towards our faithlessness. I think Peter is like the Apostle Paul.

Do you remember where Apostle Paul, he counts himself as the chief of sinners so that the rest of us might know God's amazing patience and mercy?

I think Peter is like that. When we look at Peter, you and I can be assured, as we see Jesus' commitment to Peter, he tells Peter ahead of time, you will fail me.

Within hours, you will fail me. And Luke's Gospel says, at this moment he looked Jesus in the eyes. What piercing shame, but I think also connection.

[28 : 36] I think in Peter, we see the only way you and I can know for certain we're worthy of connection.

It's not the Peter who believed in himself. Even if I must die with you, I will not deny you. Here's how you can be worthy of connection.

Be broken. Weeping. Ashamed. Spiritually bankrupt.

Unworthy. And then seeing your God move toward you in love and commitment, taking your shame to the cross. I think saying, in effect, I am committed to you.

Even to death, knowing full well you won't treat me with the worth I deserve. I am committed to you. To quote Tim Keller again, you are absolutely and totally adopted, accepted, loved, treasured, and delighted in by the only person in the whole universe whose opinion counts and whose opinion will last.

[29 : 58] will last. Well, speaking to someone this week, they've experienced unjust gossip in the workplace and mocked and excluded.

It sounded like a kind of personal death to their identity. It made them not want to go to work, of course, if maybe you've experienced something like it.

But their testimony was that in that agony, in that helplessness of the injustice of the situation, that they found a friend. They had a friend in Jesus that sticks closer than a brother.

They found a deeper place of personal worth. In what they already believed, they just now know it in a deeper, personal way.

And it turned that situation into an opportunity to share in the sufferings of Christ, the injustice, and to enter that darkness and show this world the grace of God who moves towards our rejection in loving commitment.

[31 : 35] I was really encouraged by it. So can I finish just by asking, brothers and sisters, what opportunities has God given you at the moment to find your worthiness of connection in your one true heavenly friend?

friend. Whatever sense of unworthiness you're hearing in your own mind, stop listening to yourself and preach this passage to yourself.

It may be in your marriage. You can't even reach out and take their hand at the moment. It may be with school friends.

It may be with your parents or with your kids. Maybe all of the above. But what opportunities has God given you that you can go deeper in knowing that your Lord is committed to you.

That you are absolutely and totally adopted and accepted and loved and treasured and delighted in by the only person in the whole universe whose opinion counts and whose opinion will last.

[33 : 02] and then to willingly enter that situation sharing in Jesus' death, in the injustice of it, but sharing in his resurrection life and showing showing those people the love of God.

Our God who moved towards us when we rejected him. that they too might know connection with Christ.

But what opportunities has he given us at the moment? Will you pray with me? Let's pray. Lord Jesus, we have only scratched the surface in terms of how worthy you are of of all our heart, soul, mind and strength and seeing the awfulness of when we're not faithful to you.

We've only scratched the surface but I pray you might fill each one of us with how deep your commitment to us is. Your grace knowing full well we can't treat you as you deserve.

but you took the shame we deserve. Lord, fill our hearts so that we might have peace and joy and hope in you and so that we might honour you in whatever situation you have us in at the moment.

[34 : 43] That we might trust that the situation you've got us in is an opportunity to display this Christ. Pray this in Jesus' name.

Amen. Amen.