

Jesus' Faithfulness

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- [0:00] There's a movie called Silence. I don't know if you've seen this movie, but it's about the persecution of Christians in Japan in the late 1500s.
- In that movie, there's a character called Kichijiro, which is that guy on the right-hand side, who I find so frustrating.
- He's a Christian, he's a Christian, Japanese Christian, but when he faces threats of persecution, every single time he runs away or even denies his faith in Jesus.
- And so while lots of his Christian friends and family are being killed because of their faith, he always survives because he always denies his faith.
- But every single time after he denies his faith, he returns to the church and repents. And then he repeats it again, over and over again until the end of the movie.
- [1:01] I get frustrated by this Kichijiro character, but when I watch it, I know that in my daily life, I'm often like Kichijiro, in a much smaller scale perhaps.
- Perhaps I don't deny him with my lips, but I deny him when I sin. I deny his kingship.
- And then I realize what I'm doing and I repent and then I do another sin. And then I realize what I'm doing and repent again, over and over again. My faithfulness to Jesus is often hot and cold.
- I wonder if you feel the same about your faithfulness to Jesus. Well, in our passage today, we will see that this problem of unfaithfulness is not only our problem.
- It was also the problem of the first disciples. When they faced the imminence of the cross, the disciples, especially Peter, but really all of the disciples, failed.
- [2:14] But we will also see how Jesus stayed faithful. We'll see the contrast and then we'll see how they relate to each other.
- So, first, we see Jesus' faithfulness through struggles, sorry, in your Bible in verse 39 to 40. Jesus went out as usual to the Mount of Olives and his disciples followed him.
- On reaching the place, he said to them, pray that you will not fall into temptation. What's the temptation? Well, I think the temptation to be unfaithful to Jesus.
- In the midst of a crisis, it would be easy for the disciples to abandon their allegiance to Jesus. Remember from last week, earlier Jesus had said that Satan was sifting all the disciples to see if anyone would fall.
- And so here, Jesus taught them to pray so that they might not fall. But Jesus himself also prayed. And in his prayer, we see his faithful obedience to the Father in verse 41.
- [3:30] He withdrew about a stone's throw beyond them, knelt down and prayed, Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me. Yet not my will, but yours be done.
- Jesus prayed here that he might not have to take the cup of wrath. God's wrath is a scary thing.
- And yet his prayer is bracketed by faithful obedience. It starts with, Father, if you are willing, request.

And it ends with, yet not my will, but yours be done. Even in the middle of a great stress, Jesus displayed faithful obedience to his Father.

He made his request, but he did not force his will. He did not run away from God's will. He did not deny God in a time of crisis.

[4:32] He was faithful through and through. And so the Father answered his prayer in verse 43. An angel from heaven appeared to him and strengthened him.

The Father answered Jesus' prayer, not by letting the cup pass, but by sending his angel to strengthen Jesus.

In a sense, the Father answers Jesus' prayer with a no. Nope. But he does answer with a strengthening.

This had to happen. Jesus had to endure the cup of wrath for our sake. So we don't have to face God's wrath. It had to happen. But the Father showed that he listened to Jesus' prayer and plea by providing care.

I wonder if sometimes that's how he answers our prayer as well. Nope. But I will strengthen you through it. So here on the one hand, Jesus prayed very honestly that he struggled to face the Father's wrath.

[5:54] But on the other hand, Jesus faithfully obeyed the will of the Father. Although he struggled, he stayed faithful. Verse 44.

Verse 44. And being in anguish, he prayed more earnestly. And his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground. Here we see Jesus as a full human.

He was, after all, 100% God and 100% human. He was so stressed, he struggled with the thought of having to endure God's wrath.

He had a bodily reaction to his intense stress. His sweat was like drops of blood. Whether that means that his sweats were thick drops like blood, or whether he was literally sweating blood, the point is that he was in great distress, and it showed in his body.

In other Gospels, Jesus even said, during this moment, my soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death. death. This was an intense, stressful moment.

[7:14] But Jesus was so faithful to God that the more agony he felt, the more fervent he prayed. In contrast, this is what happened to the disciples in verse 45.

When he rose from prayer and went back to the disciples, he found them praying, asleep, exhausted from sorrow.

Why are you sleeping? He asked them. Get up and pray, so that you will not fall into temptation. The disciples were in sorrow as well, but they did not pray.

That's us. Instead of relying on God in a prayer, they relied on themselves, and so they were exhausted, but they did not pray.

See the contrast between the disciples and Jesus? This is failure number one. But we are often like this as well, aren't we?

[8:22] We fail in being faithful in prayers when times are hard. I do. When we face a crisis, what's the first thing that we tend to do?

Some of us might look at our bank account to see if we can afford a solution. Some others might look to upskill so we can bring about the solution ourselves.

There's nothing wrong with these approaches, but how many times do we actually fail? The first thing that we do is fall on our knees praying and relying on God in a time of crisis.

Like the disciples, when crisis happens, we might get exhausted, but do we pray?

We often fail at being faithful. Now sure enough, after Jesus told the disciples to pray, the crisis was heightened.

- [9:33] Verse 47. While he was still speaking, a crowd came up. Too late now to pray. And the man who was called Judas, one of the twelve, was leading them.
- He approached Jesus to kiss him. But Jesus asked him, Judas, are you betraying the Son of Man, the Messiah, with a kiss?
- Judas. Now the kiss here shows the close relationship between Judas and Jesus. After all, the text highlights Judas as one of the twelve.
- He's part of the inner circle of Jesus. And yet he betrayed Jesus. Jesus. Here we see the close relationship broken, which is always a major effect of sin.
- Sin always brings about brokenness of relationships, conflicts, hatred. And rather ironically, we see the disciples participating in the conflict in verse 49.
- [10:42] When Jesus' followers saw what was going to happen, they said, Lord, should we strike with our swords? And one of them struck the servants of the high priest, cutting off his right ear.
- This is failure number two. Until now, the disciples still failed to understand the true serving nature of Jesus' ministry, that he came not as a military Messiah, but as the Prince of Peace to bring healing to this world.
- Early on in chapter 2, when Jesus was born, the angel sang, glory to God in the highest heaven and on earth, peace to those on whom his favor rests.
- Even when Jesus came into Jerusalem in chapter 19, which is the event that we celebrate today on Palm Sunday, he came riding not a war horse, but a donkey, a symbol of a peaceful and humble king.
- But the disciples still failed to understand, let alone participate in that ministry. Ironically, in verse 49, the disciples are called followers of Jesus.
- [12:12] And yet, instead of following Jesus in bringing peace, they participated in violence. Instead of bringing healing, their tendency was to destroy.
- Jesus, however, in contrast, was faithful to what he came to do. In verse 51, imagine being the man here, joining a mob with clubs and swords.
- What do you expect if you join a mob with clubs and swords? You expect violence. Jesus, and then finding himself receiving healing from Jesus instead.
- Jesus was faithful to the will of the Father, that he must die for our sake, and so he didn't fight back. But he didn't have to heal the man. By healing the man in the midst of all this kerfuffle, Jesus was expressing his faithfulness to the ministry of peace and healing.
- Despite all that violence and broken relationships around him. His rule and reign are that of peace and healing.
- [13:39] Violence and broken relationships belong to the kingdom of darkness. Verse 52, Then Jesus said to the chief priests, the officers of the temple guard, and the elders who had come for him, Am I leading a rebellion?
- That you have come with swords and clubs? In violence? Every day I was with you in the temple courts, and you did not lay a hand on me. But this is your hour, when darkness reigns.
- Unfortunately, disciples of Jesus, us included, have often reflected the kingdom of darkness, rather than the kingdom of Jesus. We have often failed in echoing Jesus' ministry of peace and healing, haven't we?
- And instead, our tendency is to participate in violence, in conflicts, in the breaking of relationships. When we get insulted, what's the first thing that we do?

Insult back. How many times have we resorted to shouting back at our kids, or our spouse, or our neighbors, when they shout at us? I've done that many times with my kids, I'm afraid to say.

[15:02] How many times have we cursed at others on the road, just because they have hurt our ego, by honking at us? Or at church.

How many churches have split, because of issues like, internal politics, or bruised egos? The disciples here, were not even defending their own ego, they were defending Jesus.

And still, Jesus did not want them to resort to violence. Because Jesus' ministry, is that of peace, and healing. But we have often failed, at being faithful, to that ministry.

So, Jesus was captured, in verse 54. Then seizing him, they led him away, and took him into the house of the high priest.

Peter followed at a distance. When some there, had kindled a fire, in the middle of the courtyard, and had sat down together, Peter sat down with them.

[16:14] Peter was, still a little bit, faithful enough, to follow Jesus, although he followed from a distance. But then he got into trouble, in verse 56.

A servant girl, saw him seated there, in the firelight. She looked closely at him, and said, this man was with him. But he denied it.

Woman, I don't know him, he said. A little later, someone else saw him, and said, you also are one of them. Man, I am not, Peter replied.

About an hour later, another asserted, certainly this fellow, was with him, for he is a Galilean. And maybe, he was talking to them, and using a Galilean accent, I don't know.

But it was found out. Peter replied, man, I don't know what you're talking about. Just as he was speaking, the rooster crowed.

[17:17] Remember from last week, what Jesus said, what Judas said to Jesus? Lord, I am ready to go with you, to prison, or to death.

But now, his bravado disappeared. Peter denied, any knowledge of Jesus, and even denied, belonging in the band, of Jesus' disciples.

This is failure number three. Verse 61. The Lord turned, and looked straight at Peter. Then Peter remembered, the word the Lord, had spoken to him.

Before the rooster crows today, you will disown me three times. And he went outside, and wept bitterly. Either Jesus was still waiting outside, or he was in the process of being escorted out, or he was looking out through a window.

We don't know. But Jesus looking at Peter, reminded him that Jesus knew what he had done. Jesus had known before it happened. But this should also remind us, of what Jesus had said beforehand, from last week, that he had prayed for Peter, and therefore Peter would turn back.

[18:38] There's hope for him, because of Jesus' prayer. And indeed, his response, Peter's response, in verse 62, shows that hope. Peter wept bitterly.

Although he had failed in confessing Jesus, his heart still loved Jesus. His heart was broken, after he realized what he had done.

Again, we have often failed in this way too, haven't we? We have often failed in faithfully owning our relationship with Jesus, in the midst of pressure, and dangers.

And I'm not necessarily talking about formal persecution, and dangers like, what Jesus was facing here. We have often failed, even in our daily lives, in small things.

When our co-worker, for example, mocks Jesus, are we often tempted to distance ourselves from him?

[19:50] When our neighbor asks what we do on Sunday, are we tempted to just mention kids' sports, and taking naps?

I don't know. But leave church out of the conversation? Just a few weeks ago, I was praying with a friend at a cafe, and I saw that people were looking at us as my friend was praying.

And when it was my turn to pray, I was tempted to whisper, and just pretend that I was talking to my friend, rather than talking to Jesus.

Thankfully, the Holy Spirit rebuked me, right there and then. But the temptation can be strong to deny Jesus in our daily public lives, or to be ashamed of him.

Sometimes we fall, like Peter. we have often failed at being faithful. The story continues.

[21:01] Verse 63. The men who were guarding Jesus began mocking and beating him. They blindfolded him and demanded, prophesy, who hit you? And they said many other insulting things to him.

Throughout the story, we see the failure, the unfaithfulness of the disciples, but also the faithfulness of Jesus. And here as well, the soldiers were making fun of Jesus, but Jesus still faithfully followed God's will and plan.

He didn't even say anything to the soldiers. And here the text is referring to our Old Testament passage in Isaiah 53. He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth.

He was led like a lamb to the slaughter. And as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth. This is what Jesus did.

This is what Jesus was going through. For what? Why? Well, in the previous verses, for our transgressions, for our iniquities, he was punished, so we have peace with God.

[22:18] We have been seeing the contrast between our unfaithfulness and Jesus' faithfulness, and here we find out that Jesus faithfully followed God's plan and faithfully endured suffering and faithfully served in peace and healing so that his faithfulness might cover our failures.

His faithfulness substitutes for our unfaithfulness. And didn't Jesus already explain the theme of union with him through the bread and the cup?

And so we are united with him and so all he achieved becomes ours. His faithfulness is credited to us as our righteousness. from the start, Jesus' faithfulness in prayer covered the disciples' prayerlessness to the point that Jesus' betrayal, Peter's betrayal was redeemed by Jesus' prayer.

Jesus' power of peace and healing covered the disciples' destruction and violence. They cut the ear, they caused the destruction, Jesus restored it.

As Jesus' disciples, we too have often failed in being faithful. I have. But Jesus covers our failures with his faithfulness and obedience to the point of death, which we will look at more deeply on Friday.

[23:57] What kind of God would do this? The kind of God who loves us deeply despite our sins and failures and our denials of him.

So how do you react? How do you react to what Jesus has done? You might react like the soldiers making fun of Jesus.

Christianity might be a joke to you. But despite your mocking, Jesus still faithfully offers the cross to cover for your sins and failures. And I pray that you might take his offer seriously so that his righteousness can be yours.

You might react like the religious leaders who, although they were religious, did not want Jesus. You might think you're sufficient, that all is well, that your religion can save you.

You might think you can save yourselves using your own morality. And so there's no need for Jesus. but despite that, Jesus still faithfully offers the cross to cover for your sins and failures.

[25 : 14] And I pray that you might see the hopelessness of your own morality and put your hope in Jesus. Or you might react like the disciples who desperately, desperately failed in understanding what Jesus wanted of them.

At times you might fail desperately in your prayer life. I do, sometimes. At times you might fail desperately in emulating Jesus, in bringing about peace and healing.

I do, sometimes. At times you might fail desperately in confessing Jesus to the people around you. I do, sometimes. but like Peter, you weep bitterly every single time you see the magnitude of your sin.

And you return to Jesus to seek forgiveness. And what happens to Peter? Well, it's worth mentioning how the Gospel of John concludes the story of Peter.

Peter denied Jesus three times and after the resurrection, Jesus asked Peter three times, Peter, do you love me? And Peter answered Jesus three times, Lord, you know that I love you.

[26 : 40] We might fail desperately in obeying Jesus in our daily lives, but we still cling to him because we love him. And in turn, his love covers our failures, his faithfulness covers our unfaithfulness, and his death covers our sins.

So we get another chance, and another, and another, and another, every time we repent, to increase in our faithfulness to him.

And that is great news. Let's pray. Father, we thank you for this great reminder of what Jesus has done, how he was faithful in his life, and he was faithful even unto death.

And thank you that his faithfulness is counted as ours, by your grace, through our faith. So help us, Lord, in our union with Jesus, through his spirit, that we might increase in our faithfulness in Jesus.

And we might see the worth of Jesus more and more, so that we might be faithful to him until he returns.

[28 : 07] In the name of Jesus, we pray. Amen.