

Going Forward

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[0 : 0 0] Good morning friends, I bring you warm greetings from fellow Australians. You were held in much love and esteem by us and it's a great pleasure to be with you and I thank David for his warm welcome this morning.

Luke chapter 22, page 81 if you'd like to follow it. But part of Luke's God-given genius is that he is able simultaneously to report what happened while at the same time encouraging us today who read what he has written.

In turn I would like to make some reference to what he reports and then to dwell at some length on his encouragements for us for just today. To simplify it, his report falls into what we might call three scenes.

The middle scene is the Passover and the Last Supper at which Jesus institutes the Lord's Supper.

He takes bread and breaks it. He pours out wine and he says, this is my body for you, given my blood poured out for you.

[1 : 2 7] That's the middle scene. The scenes on either side, which are like bookends, are rather grim.

For in the first we see one of Jesus' friends, Judas, who we learn from other Gospels was the treasurer of the group and a thief, going and making compact with the temple authorities to betray Jesus.

For it was Passover time, thousands of people, volatile, crowds possibly out of control, the possibility of the Roman troops moving in and there being a massacre and so on.

And so Jesus is an inconvenience to be removed. And in a sense, there's a kind of a pincer movement on the one hand by an insider in compact with outsiders, two terrible jaws that are poised to crush Jesus.

The third scene is in the immediate aftermath of the Last Supper.

[2 : 5 4] And once again, this is not a scene of brightness, but of darkness, for we see these men actually arguing amongst themselves who is the greatest amongst them.

This is followed immediately by Jesus' discernment that Peter, the most senior of all, the twelve, will actually soon repudiate any knowledge of Jesus.

And this is followed in turn by an unusual conversation which really understands, shows little understanding on the part of the disciples about the way things are to be in the future where they are actually thinking that the way of violence is to be theirs.

So they are the three scenes. And we can see that the middle scene, which is really about redemption and salvation, casts light on the need for redemption and salvation in the greed and treachery of Judas on the one hand and the grasping naivety of the disciples in the third scene.

So the central scene, which is about redemption, is such a powerful location in Luke's narrative as it stands between the two outer scenes, which reveal human weakness and human wickedness.

[4 : 35] So much for Luke's report. I see three things in particular today that I think Luke is wanting to encourage us by.

The first is Jesus' faith. He's all alone. Absolutely alone.

Betrayed by one. To be denied by another. To be deserted by all. To face religious leaders who should have cared and protected for an innocent man but didn't.

And to face the cruel brutality of the Roman authorities. And Jesus is absolutely alone.

And here we see his trust in God. He understands what is God's will for him. to go forward into this situation.

[5 : 45] And yet he's not a fatalist. He's not impassive. His emotions are real. He sheds tears. He pleads with God to take the cup from him.

But discerning that it is God's will for him to go forward, he does. And he does so alone. Each of us face each of us face our crises.

Each of us have our fears. Each of us faces a future that is for each of us unknown, uncertain and contingent.

Each of us face our own death in due course. Some very soon. Some, please God, in the long distance. But each of us goes forward.

And we see in Jesus the man of God who goes forward as one who trusts in his heavenly father for whatever the next thing will be.

[6 : 56] I have a friend who is a Supreme Court judge. He is mostly criminal trials and I said to him recently, you must see a lot of sadness and difficulty in your courts.

And he replied that yes, he did. And he then commented that he didn't think that people handled such hardships so well today as he's not a young man in previous years and I said is this because this is not an age of faith?

And he said precisely. People just don't seem to have anything to fall back on. How thankful therefore we are as God's people that we have the sacred scriptures that show us Jesus as a man of God going forward trusting his heavenly father providing us with a wonderful example to imitate and follow.

I guess there was nothing harder for Jesus in all of this than actually at the last supper which is to be an expression of loyalty and faith as his disciples are actually together surrounding him for one of them actually to go out of that place and betray him.

Second thing that I find in this passage from Luke is Jesus teaching about the meaning of his death. The breaking of bread and the outpouring of wine is a vivid picture of violent death of blood being separated from flesh of the crucifixion if you like.

[9 : 09] Jesus said to them and to us it is for you my body is broken for you my blood the blood of the new covenant is poured out for you the little English word for translates a Greek word that means instead of if I do your shopping for you I'm doing it instead of you my wife is laughing if I mow your lawn for you I do it instead of you Jesus gives his life for us instead of us to face the judgment of God the penalty of God on our weakness and sins in our place and for our sake for us the shedding of Jesus blood he says is the end of the old covenant and the beginning of the new under the old covenant at Mount

Sinai the blood of an animal was shed in this new covenant the blood of Christ is shed in Jerusalem under the old covenant the law of God was written on tablets of stone under the new covenant the will and the law of God is written within on tablets of human flesh in the heart the old covenant was an external standard imposed upon the people which they did not and could not keep under the new covenant there is the internal reality and power of God by the Holy Spirit that enables us to a very significant degree to fulfill the law of God and the will of God the new covenant happened in history when Jesus died and the

Holy Spirit came the new covenant comes to us existentially and personally when we understand that this Christ has died for us for us and with the arms of faith we wrap our arms around this one who died for us that is when the new covenant overtakes us and engulfs us and begins to empower us within with the power of the Holy Spirit to live lives focused on love and the example of the Lord Jesus in our ministry and care of one another all of this Luke teaches us from this passage about the meaning of the death of Jesus the Lord's Supper and I'm very sorry that it's one of those days when it's not the Lord's

Supper for us but the Lord's Supper is very precious to us it addresses our eyes as we watch the bread broken and the wine outpoured it addresses our ears as we hear the words my body broken for you my blood shed for you it addresses our ears it addresses our mouths as together we eat and drink the emblems of our salvation and we do not do it as individuals we do it together because we are a family we are the people of God all this and more Luke teaches us about the death of

Jesus and the third thing that Luke is teaching us and again being selective Jesus is teaching us in that third scene how to live under the new covenant from the time Jesus began to move to Jerusalem from Caesarea Philippi up in the north near the border of Syria and Lebanon from that time as Jesus is moving to Jerusalem Jesus is continually teaching the disciples about what life will be like when he is no longer with them and how they are to behave together when he is no longer with them and that teaching he intensifies and consolidates on this the Thursday evening on the eve of his death let me mention three things very briefly firstly the disciples are grasping for greatness in the world of that time whether the

[14 : 53] Greek world the Roman world or the Jewish world or our world today or whichever society we live in people measure greatness by the power people exercise and the wealth they have that society was harsh and corrupt a dog eat dog world ours I think is also but maybe less so but here is Jesus the king of kings and the lord of lords the son of god himself washing feet dying dying for them I am among you says Jesus as one who serves so the new covenant society has values which are the very opposite of those in the secular society the mark of greatness in our society is serving one another brother let me be your servant let me be as Christ to you second

Jesus promises to redeem Peter yes he knows what Peter will do he discerns that Peter will in a moment of weakness repudiate all knowledge of Jesus but he foresees that Peter will be redeemed he says I am praying for you Peter that you will be strengthened and that you will turn and you will strengthen your brothers and sisters and he did I guess over the years there must have been thousands of fishermen who fished the waters of Lake Galilee to this very day and I guess none of us know the names of any of them except Peter and Andrew and James and John and Peter in particular is one for whom Jesus prays and this man who is so deeply flawed so over confident so wrong

Jesus prays for him and he goes on and becomes the great leader that he became and we need to know that the Lord Jesus in heaven is praying for us that we will be strengthened that we will go on and serve God's people and serve the world in the way that Peter did Jesus is praying for us at this very time the third in verses 35 to 38 is a curious little passage and not time really to think about it but Jesus is contrasting the time in which they were in Galilee when all was okay all was trouble free comparing that with what the future will hold he is saying that he is numbered with the transgressors in other words a criminal he is to be put to death as a criminal and he is saying that they will be tempted as it were to react violently by means of the sword and there's that strange little conversation about swords and so on which probably were little pointy things not rapiers and Jesus is actually speaking ironically that even though again and again and again he has said to them that his is not the way of violence yet they still don't get it and his words his final words it is enough it's always saying well you guys just don't get it to you apostle Paul said that all who live a godly life will be persecuted and certainly those original disciples of

Jesus were persecuted history moved on and the wider world became broadly Christian we have moved into a situation first post Christian then ex Christian and even today almost anti-Christian ours is not the way of the sword is it ours is the way of prayer and humility and the imitation of Christ let me draw all this together three things quickly a reminder of Jesus wonderful example of trust in God knowing that betrayal denial desertion suffering injustice agonising death lay ahead all alone he presses forward trusting God and we can imagine him thinking these well known words though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death

I will fear no evil for you are with me your rod and your staff they comfort me you prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies you anoint my head with oil my cup overflows surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever many crises along the way many fears things get harder as we get older there's no easy exit from this life who knows what the future will bring we need to have firm trust in God who loves us second final point it is good to have deep thankfulness for all that the Lord supper means to us it tells us the gospel by the action we see in the minister breaking the bread pouring the cup the words we hear my body broken for you my blood shed for you the bread and the wine that together we share as a reminder that we are

[21 : 50] God's people together and thirdly thankfulness to Jesus teaching about the future and the promise of the Holy Spirit to strengthen us to do his will so in the years to come the Spirit of God remade those grasping naive weak fallible men and made them brave and strong and wise they carried the word of Christ into the world and changed it and so can we Amen would you kneel and join me in prayer

Father God as summer begins we give thanks for yet another year of teaching and learning for our children both in their schools and here at St.

John's we pray that in the summer ahead their teachers would be renewed and encouraged we pray that the students would rest and be reinvigorated and that all of our church family would be kept safe during the many activities that occur during the summer Lord as we have read and heard today we are ever mindful of the sacrifice you have made for each and every one of us help us all to live and love with a servant heart incline our hearts and minds to your living word it's been a fairly terrible week and we pray for the many parts of the world where there is strife today thinking especially of Iran Pakistan Iraq and the turmoil in these countries we think and pray especially for our soldiers in Afghanistan and in other peacekeeping missions around the world and we would ask that you would both encourage and support them and their families during this difficult time of separation

Lord in your mercy hear our prayer Lord we have a duty to pray for your church in this world and we ask that you fill it with all truth and in all truth with peace we pray that where it is corrupt you will purify it where it is in error you will direct it where anything is amiss you will reform it where it is right you will strengthen and confirm it where it is in want you will furnish it and where it is divided and rent asunder you will make it whole again and we pray especially this morning for the decision that we are facing and we pray for the Supreme Court Justice that he would hear you through his decision making process in particular we pray this morning for the ministry here at

St. John's we give thanks for our leadership team for our youth and church school leaders and we think of our youth who are away on a trip down in the United States we pray for our music ministry and for office staff we give thanks for the volunteers of so many ministries without whom very little could be done we ask that you would encourage and renew the volunteers to help them to see your will being done and we pray that your word would be central to all that they do Lord in your mercy hear our prayer we pray this morning especially for the missionaries who have gone forward from this church and the missionaries that we support thinking especially of Susan Norman Heather Bellamy Joss Stringhold and Richard and Don Bates Lord we ask that you would comfort and encourage them in the difficult work that they do we ask that they would be confident in proclaiming the truth of your gospel and that others might know your love through their works we pray that their financial emotional personal and spiritual needs might be met and that others in this parish would be encouraged to seek to serve you in some kind of ministry we pray especially this morning for those parts of the world where the gospel is not known or where

[27 : 03] Christians are persecuted and we ask for safety for those who might share your word amongst the people of these places Lord in your mercy hear our prayer dear Lord Jesus we take a moment this morning to pray for all those people we know who are sick or suffering and are in need of your comfort and we pray especially for George Ron Harold Yvette Paul Rowena Ben and Nancy we ask that you might provide them healing or deliverance from all their afflictions Lord in your mercy hear our prayer Lord so much of what we see and hear today overwhelms us and it is a very difficult time to be young we pray for the children and youth of this parish that they could find meaning and direction from your word and that we might honor our baptismal covenants to them by ensuring that we continue to support them in their relationship with you as difficult as it is to be young in many ways it is even more frustrating to grow old so Lord we also pray for and remember the elderly of our parish we pray that we would support and honor them and we give thanks for their godly wisdom we would ask that you would help us to minister to them dear Lord in these times of economic uncertainty family financial and marital stresses we pray for the unemployed or underemployed of our parish and ask that they might find meaningful work give them hope

Lord and we pray that we could find the time in our own busy lives to give generously towards those families who may have a particular need Lord in your mercy hear our prayer finally Lord Jesus we give you thanks for this day give us the confidence to face this week in a world that still rejects you encourage us to share your meaning in our lives with someone who does not know you and pour your grace and mercy upon us Amen