

What is He doing? SMBC Student Jacob

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- [0 : 0 0] I've got a real love-hate relationship with Facebook. It's mostly a hate relationship. I constantly find myself deleting my Facebook account only to reactivate it again, whether it's a month later or a couple of weeks later or even 10 minutes later.
- Because I always find that there's something on it I need. It's either a person's contact details that I just don't have anywhere else or there's some information about an event that I just don't seem to be able to access in any other way.
- So I feel like I need to have this thing Facebook. If you're not in my generation and you've been lucky enough to miss Facebook, I feel very envious of you. But for me, I keep ending up back on Facebook and it makes me angry.
- I hate Facebook because I feel so much of it is a waste of my time. I feel like I end up at the end of the day just reading through the Facebook newsfeed. I feel like the word newsfeed is a mockery of the word news because most of what is on there is just it's not relevant, it's not interesting and it's not helpful, which is I think what news is meant to be.
- I find this just utterly bizarre. The constant stream of just boring, pointless information that people want to put up. Every time I see a photo of someone, they put a photo up of the sandwich they're eating, or a cup of coffee they're drinking.
- [1 : 1 0] I just want to just yell at the screen, why are you showing me this? What does your cup of coffee have to do with me? Why do you want me to see this? The other sorts of posts which just frustrate me is the kind of ones that people put up, which is just the information without any of the information that matters.
- So people say, like, you know, ah, what a frustrating day. And then you just want to say, what was frustrating? You've just given me some information without the information that I need to make anything of what you're doing.
- Or the other kind of posts which is just information about what they're doing and they do tell you what's really going on. But again, you just want to ask, why do I need to know? When people say, oh, I'm going to the gym then studying after.
- You just feel like saying, okay, like, I don't know why you're communicating this to me. It's utterly bizarre. It's very different experience to when you see that you've been, you know, a photo's gone up and you're in it or something to do with you is there.
- You suddenly get very interested. You want to see what you look like. You want to see what people are saying about you, whether people like it or not. But for the most part, Facebook is just boring. And boring is when it's just information that has nothing to do with you.
- [2 : 1 7] And I wonder if we, as we've just kind of read that Bible passage, and as we come to church tonight, maybe you're feeling the same thing. Maybe it's your first time in church tonight and it's so awesome that you're here.
- We love that you're joining us and thinking about this kind of stuff. And you're open to checking out this idea of Christianity. But you're quite skeptical because you're maybe just thinking to yourself, how could this really have anything to do with me?

How could this book, which was written 2,000 years ago, have any kind of effect on my life today? Why do I need to know this? Maybe you're even a Christian here. And as that was read, maybe even that same feeling, just thinking, oh, I've read this before.

What does it matter? What's it got to do with me? We know deep down that it should matter. We know deep down that, like, I guess it does have something to do with me. But we just don't feel it. And so it becomes boring to us. What does it have to do with me?

My hope tonight is that as we kind of work through this passage that was read to us, we will all walk away knowing what this has to do with us. We'll all walk away seeing that this actually has profound importance to our lives today.

[3 : 20] That it matters. Because in seeing what this has to do with us, it's ultimately how we experience love. It's in this passage that we see just how much we're truly loved.

So we're about to get into it now. I'm just going to pray, if that's all right, and ask that God would be with me as I speak. Maybe you want to pray, whether you're here for the first time or you've been coming for years and years, just to pray that God would be showing you what this has to do with you tonight.

So I'm going to pray. Heavenly Father, we want to bring ourselves before you knowing that you are high above us.

You are beyond our comprehension. And the only way we're going to hear you speak is if you choose to speak to us. The only way we're going to hear your voice is if you speak. The only way we're going to have this hit us is if you do a work in our hearts.

So just, Lord, be with me as I speak, be with everyone here as we think about this passage, as we try to look at it with fresh eyes and see just what it reveals about you and the way you are towards us.

[4 : 24] We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. So we've got Easter coming up next week. And this passage that we're looking at today is set just before Easter, the very first Easter. It's two days before the Passover.

And as we go through this story, I just think maybe we can just not really be struck by the weight of it. I really want us to be thinking and just thinking how weighty and heavy this passage is.

Remember, this actually happened. It's two days before the Passover, which is the time when all of Israel remembered the way that God rescued his people from Egypt.

And the Jewish leaders, who we heard last week had a problem with Jesus' authority, are looking for a way to kill him when he's on his own. And Jesus is in the house of a guy called Simon the leper.

And it's not a strange thing for Jesus to be in the house of someone who's known for the disease that they have. It's what Jesus did. He spent time with people who were just different to him and people that no one else wanted to be with.

[5 : 22] And while he's having dinner at Simon the leper's house, a woman comes in with a jar of perfume, expensive perfume. We know it would have cost around 300 denarii, which is about the same as a year's wage.

And she gets this perfume. And what she does is ridiculous. She breaks this jar and she pours this expensive year's wage perfume all over Jesus. And everyone is just angry.

What a waste that she's doing. Doesn't this woman realize just what could be done with perfume that's that valuable? Doesn't she know what she could do if she sold it and gave it to the poor?

Surely that is more important than what she's done here to Jesus. Surely she's doing a foolish thing. They rebuke her. And then Jesus turns to them and says, leave her alone.

Why do you trouble her? She's done a beautiful thing to me. For you'll always have the poor with you. And whenever you want, you can do good for them. But you will not always have me.

[6 : 19] She has done what she could. She has anointed my body beforehand for burial. And truly I say to you, wherever the gospel is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will be told in memory of her.

Now I think there's a lot of strange things in what Jesus just said there. But one of the strangest is the fact that he said that she has anointed him for burial. Back in these times, the time when you get kind of perfume poured over you is when you're a corpse and you're about to be buried.

Jesus is saying he's pretty much the same as a corpse. He's getting ready to be buried. He's getting ready to die. After this, Judas Iscariot, one of Jesus' closest friends, goes out, finds the Jewish leaders and agrees to hand Jesus over to them to betray him for money.

It's then the next night. And Jesus has organized another dinner. This time it's in the capital city of Jerusalem. And they're going to eat the Passover meal, which is the meal where Jews remembered that thousands of years before, God rescued his people from Egypt.

And this meal is a stressful, tense meal.

[7 : 39] And the reason for that is that Jesus knows what Judas has done. He knows that just the night before, he's been betrayed. And so he turns to the 12 disciples who are there and says, One of you will betray me.

One of you who is eating with me. Who would betray Jesus? Who would betray this man who has shown so much power? Who would want to betray this man who has shown so much love and mercy to all people?

This man who Peter has identified as the Christ. The one that God is sending into the world to heal all of the brokenness. To make all of the pain and the problem of this world go away.

Who would betray a man like this? And so the disciples turn to each other. Is it I, they ask? Surely not I, Lord. They can't conceive how someone could have betrayed Jesus.

But he doesn't give them a name. He simply says it is one who is eating from the very same dish. Jesus knows what is about to happen. He knows he is about to be betrayed and he is soon to die.

[8 : 45] Then Jesus stands up in this meal and does something very unusual. He gets some bread in his hands and he breaks it. And he hands this bread to everyone there and says, this is my body.

Then he gets a cup. A cup of wine and hands it around and gives thanks for it. And says, this is my blood of the covenant which is poured out for many. This is an unusual thing for someone to say at the Passover.

Normally what someone would say at the Passover is, this is the bread of affliction which our fathers ate in the land of Egypt. Let everyone who hungers come and eat. Let everyone who is needy come and eat the Passover meal.

Jesus is saying that he is the bread of the Passover. He is the ultimate answer to hunger and need. And why is he speaking about his blood being poured out?

Again, he is speaking of his death. He is saying that he is going to die. What a meal to be at. A meal marked with betrayal and death.

[9 : 51] We can read over that too fast sometimes. Then leaving this meal, Jesus and his disciples, they go to the Mount of Olives. And Jesus explains that all of his friends are going to leave him.

They are going to abandon him, even his closest friend Peter. And they go on a bit further than to the Garden of Gethsemane. And here in the Garden of Gethsemane, we see something of Jesus that I don't think we see anywhere else to the same extent.

We see Jesus' deepest emotions in this garden. Jesus tells his disciples to stay and wait for him while he goes to pray.

He takes Peter, James and John a bit further on with him and then tells them to wait while he goes. And then we see that Jesus becomes greatly distressed and troubled.

Why is he troubled? He says to them, My soul is very sorrowful, even to the point of death. He's overwhelmed.

[10:53] He goes on further and he falls to the ground. He can no longer stand and all he can do is praise. And he prays a prayer of desperation. He asks that this hour would come past him.

He asks that this cup which he's facing will be taken from him. What is this hour that he's speaking of? What is this cup that he doesn't want to face?

We've seen through these passages, we've just walked through it, that Jesus speaks much of his death. He knows that he's soon to be tortured and to be nailed to a Roman cross to die a slow, painful death of asphyxiation. And surely that would have been a terrifying thought.

But many others have faced similar deaths quite calmly. Many of Jesus' followers, in fact, have faced horrible deaths of executions and shootings and hangings and burnings and drownings and being fed to lions, many of whom are recorded of doing so with a song of joy on their lips.

Polycarp, who was one of Jesus' early followers, was sentenced to be burned at the stake for refusing to burn incense to the emperor. And he was given one last chance by the magistrate to recant, to say, look, I'm no longer a Christian.

[12:08] That's all he had to do and he wouldn't be burnt. But Polycarp's response was, The fire you threaten burns but an hour and is quenched after a little. So come, why do you delay?

Do what you will. He boldly looked death in the face, calmly, ready for it. So are we to assume that Jesus' followers are braver than their leader?

I don't think so. I think there's something going on deeper in this passage. There's something going on deeper than just physical death. The first readers of this would have known two passages in the Old Testament.

Ezekiel chapter 23 verses 32 to 34 and Isaiah chapter 51 verse 22, which both refer to the cup of God's judgment. The cup that Jesus is asking will be taken from him is the cup of God's wrath.

The cup of punishment and anger. This is what Jesus is facing here. Not mere physical death. But he's facing the wrath of God. The anger of God.

[13:17] Now I'm very aware that we don't like to think of God as a God of anger and a God of wrath. But frankly, it doesn't really matter what we think of God. The Bible says that he is. The Bible says God is a God of anger and wrath towards sin.

And what sin is, is pretty much me saying, I don't want you, God. I just want me. I want your stuff. I just want you to think of God as a God of anger. It's pretty much saying, look, God, there is more things that are important to you than you in my life. Whether it's me or whether it's some of my possessions or some other idea.

It's this coldness towards him. It's this rejection of relationship towards him. That's what sin is. And God hates it. God is angered at sin. He's furious. And because he is just, he punishes sin.

And Jesus is getting ready to face that anger, that wrath. Jesus, the one who never sinned himself, is brought to a point where he cannot stand, where all he can do is pray in desperation, because he knows he is one day away from coming face to face with the full anger of God.

And this is because of sin. Not his sin, but your sin and my sin. He didn't sin like we did, but he's about to become the full weight of it.

[14 : 33] The way that the Apostle Paul puts it in 2 Corinthians 5.21 is, he became sin, who knew no sin. That's what fills Jesus with sorrow.

That's what troubles him and makes him filled with distress. So the answer to the question, what has this got to do with me? What has this passage about something that happened 2,000 years ago got to do with me?

Well, it was my sin that put him there. It was because of God's anger towards me that Jesus went to the cross. Jesus knew that he was about to come face to face with the anger that God felt towards you.

We need to let that sit for a minute. Have you ever stopped to look at yourself and see yourself as the reason for Easter? You are the reason that Jesus went to die? John Stott says this great quote, which is, before we can begin to see the cross as something done for us, we have to see it as something done by us.

Before we can begin to see the cross as something done for us, we have to see it as something done by us. It's not because Jesus was some political or religious threat to the Romans or the Jews that he went to die, but because of our sin.

[15 : 57] That's why Jesus died. This isn't normally how I view myself and my sin. I know that if I thought about this more seriously and more frequently, that every time my heart runs after things other than God, every time I feel with bitterness or lust or greed, that is what put Jesus on the cross.

I don't think I'd be as content with the sin in my life. I don't think I could possibly be. I certainly couldn't love it the way that I so often do. So often as Christians, I think we can get to a point where we're just content with sin in our life.

There's no room for that given this passage. Sin is what drove Jesus to the cross. Brothers and sisters, don't become content with it or fine with it to remain in your life. There is nothing in the world as serious as sin, because sin is what killed Jesus.

Your sin and my sin. We are the need for Jesus to die. And maybe you've heard all this, everything I've just said so far, and you're just really thinking, that does not sound nice at all.

We've talked of blood. We've talked of wrath. We've talked of sin. We've talked of anger. We've talked of death and punishment. I just want a God of love.

[17 : 10] I just want a God who loves and who is kind and generous and merciful. I don't want that God. Maybe that's what you're feeling. That's what I'm feeling a little bit of. But what I think we see in this passage is that unless we first see this idea of wrath and this idea of God's judgment, we're never going to understand just how much God loves.

How do you measure how much you're loved? How do you measure someone in your life, how much they love you? Is it by their words? I don't think that's a very good measurement a lot of the time.

It's not hard to say the words that I love you. Husbands can tell their wives they love them while cheating on them, and it means very, very little. Do you measure love by people being in a relationship and standing by you when times are easy?

Again, there's a lot of reasons other than love why people might choose to stand by you when nothing's going that wrong. I think the way that we measure love is by how much it costs. That's the way we normally measure it.

So in terms of gifts, I know I'm going to feel more loved if I get a gift which has either taken a lot of thought or a lot of effort and time, or even a lot of money more than a gift which is, like I got it one time from my auntie.

[18 : 21] It was a key ring torch that said Australia Post on it. So I even knew she just got it from the post office, right? It just meant very, very little. Sorry, sorry, auntie. But when someone puts thought into it, it makes a big difference.

But I think even then, gifts can still be superficial. I think for me, the times I felt most loved is when it's cost a lot relationally. So for example, a few years ago, I had depression really, really bad, and what that meant was that I wasn't that fun to be around.

I didn't have very much energy to give back to people I was friends with. I became very kind of inward-looking and self-centered and just not that pleasant. And so after a while, a lot of my friends kind of stopped bothering to call me and spend time with me, and that's just kind of what happens when that goes on.

But I had a few friends that did, and they stuck with me for months and months and months, even though they weren't really getting much out of it. And that made me feel loved. I felt loved that they'd be doing that just for me.

There was no other motive, nothing in it for them, but they just loved me. Real love is costly love. And when the Bible speaks of God's love, that's what it's talking about.

[19 : 27] It is a costly love. Without cost, love is just superficial. It's meaningless. If there's no price to pay, there's really no particular evidence of God's love.

And so what we see in this passage is a guarantee of how much we're loved. If you've got a Bible in front of you, we're going to rewind a little bit back to verses 22 to 25, back before the garden, back at this Passover meal.

And I want us to see what it cost God to love us. Jesus gives the disciples something here. I wonder if you can see what he gives them. Physically, he hands them some pieces of bread, and he hands them a cup full of wine.

But what he's actually giving them here is far more significant. This is just symbolic for something else. He's giving them himself. He gives his body. He gives his blood, which the next day will quite literally be flowing from his hands and feet as he's nailed to the cross.

From his head as a crown of thorns is placed on it. From his back, from the wounds, from the whips that he's endured. From his side as a spirit is thrust through it. His blood will flow. And that is what he's giving his disciples.

[20 : 36] He is giving his very self. And this blood is the blood of the covenant. And a covenant is a guarantee. It's a guarantee of his love for them. That's what he gives. He gives his body and his blood as a guarantee of his love.

In taking the cup of God's wrath, as he dies, he's paying a price. And the price he's paying is the greatest price that could ever be paid. The son of the eternal God comes and dies for us.

We are present in this story as the reason that Jesus had to die. But we're present in this story in another way. We are present in this story as the recipients of God's love.

Do you understand how loved you are? You are loved to the extent of the price that was paid for you. So far as you have sinned, that is how much you are loved.

You might be here tonight just feeling, I am too sinful to be loved. Maybe even this weekend you've got reason to know that. Maybe even this weekend you've been filled with bitterness and anger towards someone that you know that you should love.

[21 : 44] You've been holding something in your life far more important than God and you know it and you know that he knows it. Maybe even this very weekend you've jumped into looking at porn again. Or you've been greeting and withholding of your money.

Or you've ignored Jesus when you should have listened to him. Or said that you don't know him when you should have stood up for him. There's something here in your life that you just know, God couldn't love me because of this. God could never love me.

What you witness in this passage tonight is Jesus saying, I love you this much. Do you know how much I love you? I love you so much that I'd give my very self for you.

For your sin. I know that my sin is massive. None of you in this room have any idea how sinful I am. I am so, so sinful.

It boggles my mind that God could love me. And I wonder for you, it might well be the same. Imagine if everyone in this room could see every thought you've ever thought, every deed you've ever done.

[22 : 45] You might think, there's no way anyone here would love me. God knows you. He has seen everything you've done and everything that you've thought. And here he shows by his blood that he loves you nonetheless.

It's incredible. If you have never experienced this love, you find it hard to, it doesn't make sense, or something like that, don't miss tonight as an opportunity to come and speak to me after, or to Sam, or to someone else from SMBC, or someone who brought you, whoever it is.

Knowing this love is incredible. There is no love like it. There is no love that is proved so severely. Despite everything we are, that we would be loved by Jesus.

So what does this mean for us? We've seen that this passage isn't just some weird Bible text from 2,000 years ago, but this has everything to do with us.

Our sin is the reason Jesus had to die. And his love for us is the reason that he chose to. So surely that's going to affect how he responds.

[23 : 52] At the very start of this story, so rewinding back even further, we see two responses to Jesus. We see Judas, who in verse 10 goes and betrays him. He chooses money instead of Jesus.

Before that, we see something, we see another response. Jesus says, It's hard to know to what extent she saw Jesus as valuable, but we know it was a lot.

But how much more for us, having seen what Jesus has done in going to the cross and dying and taking the cup of God's judgment for us, do we know that he's valuable? Do we know that he is worthy to be treasured and to be loved more than anything?

The reason I'm talking about what this woman did after the other two kind of scenes, even though it happens first chronologically, is because we need to understand that the only way we're ever going to love God is if we first understand how much he has loved us.

The most common mistake I make is to think that if I'm not really loving God enough, then he mustn't be loving me. That if I'm not devoted to God enough, he must not really have any time or energy left for me.

[25 : 27] But that's ridiculous in light of this passage, because we see that Jesus, I know that Jesus died for me when I was still dead, when I was still sinful and wretched and poor and broken. There was nothing I could ever do to make God love me.

But he loved me first. And so the only response that now fits to that is that I would go about loving him back. Not to earn anything, but because it's just the only response that fits. I loved the week I've spent here at this church, and one of the things I just love most about it is the second part of the vision, which is treasuring Jesus.

I love that that's in there, and it's right smack bang in the middle, because it doesn't really make any sense just to kind of know things about Jesus and not have it affect us on any deeper level. Jesus is a treasure. He's a treasure worth more than anything.

And we see that most clearly at Easter time, and we see the fact that he died for us and gave of us his body and his blood as he died and took the cup of God's wrath. He's a treasure.

This woman sees Jesus for who he is, and it changes everything. Our world is fine with us devoting ourselves to anything other than Jesus.

[26 : 35] You can throw yourself into pursuing a relationship or a family or a career or making lots of money or getting really good at music or at sport or at art or anything else, and no one's going to call you crazy. The one thing our world has a problem with is if you devote yourself and everything you are to Jesus.

You'll be called radical. You'll be called a fanatic or over the top. When Christians have gone to other countries to tell people about Jesus and they've been killed for it, people say, oh, they wasted their life.

It's not true. Nothing is a waste when given in the service of Jesus. It is impossible to love Jesus too much or more than he deserves. It is impossible to give too much up for the sake of him.

Even those who give their entire lives for him will find them. The reason Polycarp, who I mentioned earlier, was able to be joyfully burned at the stake for Jesus was because he knew even if he lost everything he had, even his life and his body, he would have something more valuable than all.

He had Jesus, and Jesus is going to be with him for eternity. That cannot be taken, and it is better than any life or any possession or any relationship or any success. He's better than everything.

[27 : 40] So if you're a believer here today, just be encouraged to keep giving to Jesus. Give to him your time and service here at church.

Give yourself to him in living out in the world in a way which honors him and glorifies him and loves other people. Let his love for you affect how you spend your money or your gifts or your skills.

Give yourself to him in prayer, knowing that he is worthy of that relationship, that that relationship is valuable. Give yourself to him in worship. As you go out into the world and by word and deed, live in a way which honors him.

Worship him in that way. As you gather as a church, as we sing in a moment, give yourself to worship in him there. It's impossible to be over the top in our response to Jesus. It really is. He has done an incredible thing for us.

There's nothing we can do which is over the top. So let us worship him and rejoice and be glad that he has died for us and he has loved us. If you're someone here though today who's, like we said before, still checking out the whole Christianity thing, again, it is great to have you here.

[28 : 51] And you may still have a bunch of questions that need answering, things that don't quite line up. But one thing to reflect on might be, what is it that you are giving everything to? What are you totally devoted to and that you treasure more than anything?

And then ask, is it worth it? Is your career worth it? Or the relationships that you have? Or the skills that you're trying to amass? Can travel save you from the wrath of God?

Can a good job and money love you unconditionally for everything that you are? Jesus can. Jesus can save you from the coming judgment of God.

Jesus promises that anyone who accepts him, trusts in him, eats of him, metaphorically, he will love forever with a covenant of love. We've seen that this has everything to do with us.

It is us that drove Jesus to this point of despair because of our sin, but we see that he did it willingly, lovingly, and has loved us more than anything. I'm looking forward to responding to this in song in a minute.

[29 : 59] I'm going to pray now. Heavenly Father, your word is rich. This story is rich with the weight of how bad sin is, and we may be feeling struck by that.

We may be feeling aware that we are guilty, and we're the reason that drove your son to die. But Lord, your love is greater. Your blood poured out shows us that no matter who we are, what we've done, what mistakes we've made, how cold we've been, how much we've ignored you, even this weekend, you love us.

And it is a good thing that it's not up to us to be worthy of your love, but that you choose to love us. I pray that we'd go out wanting to live a life in response to this, not to earn your love because it's already been bought for us by the blood of Jesus, but it's to respond because that's the only thing that makes sense.

The only thing that makes sense when we've seen your love is to love you back. So fill us with a love for you. Fill us with a devotion. Help us treasure you more than anything in our lives. And we ask this in Jesus' name, whose blood was poured out for us.

Amen.