

Matthew ch26 v38 Saturday morning communion

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[0 : 01] Can we turn back to the passage that we read together in Matthew's Gospel and chapter 26? Matthew's Gospel, chapter 26, and we can read again at verse 38.

Verse 38, then he said, Then Jesus said to them, My soul is very sorrowful, even to death. Remain here and watch with me.

My soul is very sorrowful, even to death. We have here the man of sorrows that Isaiah so clearly prophesied about.

And his sorrow at this point in his experience is so great that it almost kills him, even to death, he says.

And that friend is just at the thought of what lay ahead of him on the cross. His sorrow was that great.

[1 : 17] The awfulness of it does not bear thinking about. And Jesus, who at this point, who's on the point of collapse, prays to his Father and says, Is there any other way that lost sinners can be saved other than by this cursed cross?

Is there any other way? The Garden of Gethsemane and the events that lead up to Christ's arrest? They help us, I think, to grasp to some small degree, at least, just the awfulness of what he experienced.

We cannot really go into the cross. We cannot really go into this. But at least it helps us to see what he suffered as a man.

What he suffered in his humanity. Because here the whole weight of what is to come upon him, it crushes him.

It crushes him in the Garden of Gethsemane. And what is so striking about what we see in this garden is that it presents Jesus to us in a whole new light in one sense.

[2 : 39] Because throughout his ministry, we see him as someone who is calm and composed, who knows what he is going to do, and he is just getting on with it.

In Luke 9, we read that he set his face as a flint towards Jerusalem. Nothing was going to get in his way. Nothing was going to stop him doing the task that his father had given him to do.

And even at the start of this chapter, chapter 26 and verse 2, we read him saying, You know, to his disciples, you know that after two days the Passover is coming and the Son of Man will be delivered up to be crucified.

And there's no hint, as he says that, there's no hint of the anxiety that now surrounds him in the Garden of Gethsemane.

Here in Gethsemane, it's a different story. And if we can say this about the Son of God, it seems to us as we look on, as we observe what takes place here, it seems to us as if panic sets in.

[3 : 51] Maybe that is going too far. We can't say at least that fear set in. Yes, there is an outward composure and calm.

And yet his words and his actions show us the darkness that is encompassing Jesus at this point. We see his humanity in all of its frailty shudder at what lay before him.

Shudder at the realization of what he must suffer for you and for me. And yet he resolves to go there for you, for me, despite knowing, despite grasping the awfulness of what it would entail for him.

Today I want to study the events of the Garden of Gethsemane and to notice three things from this section that we read, or really from the section from verse 36 to about verse 42.

First of all, his sorrowfulness. His sorrowfulness. My soul, he says, is very sorrowful, even to death.

[5 : 07] And we'll consider what it was that caused that sorrow. Secondly, though, his shrinking back. He recoiled from the cross at this point when he says, If it is possible, may this cup pass from

me.

We can consider what it was that caused him to shrink back for these moments in Gethsemane. Secondly, his sorrowfulness, his shrinking back.

And thirdly, his submission. His submission. He came to the point where he said, May your will be done. May your will be done.

I wonder, was there any reluctance in there? Having not long before shrunk back from it. No, there wasn't. There was no reluctance whatsoever.

And we shall see that, I hope. So these three things, and his sorrowfulness, his shrinking back, and his submission. Let's consider his sorrowfulness then, first of all. My soul is very sorrowful.

[6 : 21] What were the causes of this sorrow? Well, I only intend to look at one cause today. And that was his isolation.

He was alone. He was alone. No mere man could help him in this situation. And particularly when we read that he went a little further.

He went to the place where no one could help him. Jesus was alone. There had been a time in his life where he had enjoyed great popularity and support.

We read of him growing up in Nazareth, that he grew in wisdom and stature and in favor with God and men. There was a time when he was popular.

There was a time when they crowded around Jesus. If you just read John chapter 6. And John chapter 6 opens with Jesus the center of great popularity.

[7 : 27] We read this, a large crowd was following him because they saw the signs that he was doing. But before you reach the end of that one chapter, John 6, we read that they're deserting him.

They are turning their back on Jesus. After this, many of his disciples turned back and no longer walked with him. They began to desert him in their droves.

And just here in Matthew 26, before he goes out to Gethsemane, or before he goes into the garden, Jesus says to them in verse 31, to his disciples, to his closest friends, you will all fall away because of me this night.

All of them. There would be nobody left to help him, to support him, to stand by his side. The isolation that caused his sorrow.

He arrives at Gethsemane and he takes with him his three closest disciples, Peter, James, and John. And it is to these three men that he shows his humanity in all its weakness.

[8 : 39] That he exposes his sorrowfulness. That he shows the plight that he's in. How vulnerable he had become. My soul, he says, is very sorrowful even to death.

The weight of the sin of the world was beginning to weigh down upon him. The wrath of a just God who must punish sin was beginning to close in upon him.

And here we have the king of glory. The king of glory. And his glory is veiled, friends.

Veiled to such an extent that he is looking to mere men for help. That he says to these disciples, will you pray with me?

Will you pray with me? I'm hurting. My soul is hurting. Very sorrowful even unto death.

[9 : 46] This is almost killing me. Is what Jesus is saying to these three men. In Mark's account, he describes Jesus' situation at this point as being greatly distressed.

Greatly distressed. Now, the word from which that translation comes is an interesting word. The root of the word, it comes from the word to be amazed.

In the Greek, *thambeo*. To be amazed. It's a word that's used, for instance, when, I think it's in Acts chapter 3, when Peter and John heal the man at the temple gate, beautiful.

The man who was lame all his life. And he is healed. And the people are amazed. We read of them that they were filled with wonder and amazement. That's this word, *thambeo*.

But there's a more intense form of it. *Ek thambeo*. And *ek thambeo* only appears three times in Scripture.

[10 : 54] And one of them is Peter's description of Jesus at this point. It is an extremity of amazement or astonishment.

It is the word that I think the authorized version translates as sore amazed. Sore amazed. It's bordering on horror.

That is how Jesus' situation is described at this point in the Garden of Gethsemane. And he says to his disciples, I want you to do something for me.

I want you to watch with me and to pray with me. And we marvel at that, friends, because here you have the creator and the sustainer of the universe.

The one who upholds all things by the word of his power. The one who is upholding these disciples with his everlasting arms underneath them and around them. And he has been brought so low that he says to them, I need your help.

[12:08] I want you to pray for me. For a low ebb our Savior was brought to. And it would get worse.

Because we read there in verse 39, going a little further, he fell on his face. A little further. I think it's Luke that tells us that it was about, just about a stone's throw further that he went.

But who can measure the gulf, the distance that was between him and his disciples in that little bit further?

They couldn't go where he went. They couldn't understand what he felt. They couldn't fathom what was going on.

Just a stone's throw, friends. But what an infinite nature that gap was. No one could follow him. No one could understand him.

[13:15] He was alone. He was isolated at this point. And even though he has three close friends with him, they can do nothing for him in his current agony.

He has passed beyond the point where human help can do anything for him. And that's why Luke tells us that an angel was sent from heaven to strengthen him.

An angel. He had got that low. An angel had to be sent to strengthen him. Well, that then was his sorrowfulness. He was overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death, at the isolation, the aloneness of being the sin bearer of the world.

I want to move on, though, and look secondly at his shrinking back. We look at verse 39. Going a little further, he fell on his face and prayed, saying, My father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me.

He's on the deck. He's fallen on his face before God. And he's saying, Father, is there any other way but this?

[14:33] Father, is there any alternative way that my people can be saved but the curse of the cross?

You know, he'd already pledged himself to go there in the eternal covenant. He'd already set his face as a flint towards Jerusalem. But here he's asking, is there an alternative?

You know, God could have saved Jesus, but he couldn't save Jesus and us. The wages of sin is death.

The penalty had to be paid. Somebody had to die. And if it wasn't him, it would have been us. There was no other way.

What caused Jesus to shrink back then from the cross? Can I suggest three things? First of all, there was the understandable reaction of one who was fully human.

[15:41] Who shrank back from all the suffering that would be entailed on the cross. He knew. He was brought up with a scripture. He knew his Old Testament. How many times have you read passages like Isaiah 50, verse 6?

I gave my back to those who strike and my cheeks to those who pull out the beard. I hid not my face from disgrace and spitting. Was he having second thoughts?

No, but he was overcome, as any human would be, by the reality of the suffering that lay ahead of him. He knew Isaiah 53.

He knew it. He knew it. And he knew it well. He was wounded for our transgressions. He was bruised for our iniquities.

The chastisement of our peace was upon him. By his stripes, by his wounds, you have been healed. Here was the shrinking back of one who had a true body and a reasonable soul.

[16:51] Shrinking back from human suffering. But there was another thing that he shrank back from. And it wasn't the physical suffering. It was what his holiness shrank back from.

And that was being made sin. This man who knew no sin. This man who never committed any sin. This man who hated the very thought of sin. Contemplating being made sin for us.

His holiness shrank back from that. But there's a third thing he shrank back from. And it's this. That the punishment which would be inflicted on him.

Would be inflicted by his own father. Would be inflicted by the one to whom he was united. They were one.

[17 : 51] And what effect would it have on this relationship between himself and his father. He knew that his father's eye was too pure to behold iniquity.

He knew that he would have to turn away from sin. He shrank back from the effect on his relationship with his father.

Of being made sin for you and for me. The natural fear of a human being. The holy fear of one who is sinful.

The fear of a son who was one with his father. All caused him to shrink back. To recoil at the thought of the cross.

In Gethsemane. The help of man was of no use to Jesus. Not only did an angel have to come and strengthen him.

[18 : 56] But Luke in his account. Luke being the doctor. He gives us more of the detail. Of the effect on Jesus.

And he tells us that he prayed more earnestly. And that his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling to the ground.

Can't help but wonder what it means for Jesus to pray more earnestly. I imagine that every prayer he ever prayed was earnest.

The depths. The depths. The desperation. The depths. The desperation. To pray more earnestly. Than he's ever done. The effect of this terror of this.

On his body. That he would sweat. Like great drops of blood. And bear in mind friends. Bear in mind that this was a cold night.

[19 : 56] So cold that hardened soldiers huddled round a fire in the high priest's courtyard. And in the cold and dark of Gethsemane.

Your Savior sweated. Like great drops of blood. All his suffering. The suffering that he was yet to face.

Much of it was external. Much of it. But this was internal. The turmoil of one who has come to realize.

What lies ahead of him. The horror of what is before him. Bears down upon him to such an extent. That he sweats like great drops of blood. That then was his shrinking back. His shrinking back.

We've seen his sorrowfulness. We've seen his shrinking back.

[20 : 54] Thirdly. I want to look at his submission. Verse 42. Again for the second time he went away and prayed. My father if this cannot pass unless I drink it.

Your will be done. What caused this change? What has taken him from saying.

If it is possible let this cup pass from me. To now saying. Your will be done. Well somehow.

Somehow he's come. To lay his own will aside. And focus on the father's will. You see in his first prayer. He talks about his will.

Verse 39. Going a little further. He fell in his face and prayed saying. My father if it be possible let this cup pass from me. Nevertheless not as I will. That's my will.

[21 : 56] That this cup pass from me. But when he goes away a second time to pray. There's no mention of his will. It is simply your will be done.

Your will be done. There's a version in the epistle to the Hebrews. That says that he learned obedience. Through the things that he suffered.

Is that what's going on here? I don't know. But he came from. From thinking about. Was there a way to avoid this?

To being determined. To do. His father's will. Was it reluctant? Not at all. Not at all. Jesus had previously said about his life.

No man taketh it from me. I have power to lay it down. And I have power to take it again. This I received from my father. He lay his life down willingly.

[22 : 58] Willingly. Not reluctantly. Oh you know Jesus could have saved himself. If he wanted to. We read a little later on. When the soldiers come to arrest him.

And Peter pulls out his sword. Jesus says to him. Put it away Peter. Put your sword away. Do you not know. He says. That if I wanted. I could call on my father.

And he would send. Twelve legions of angels. Could have saved himself. If he was going reluctantly. But he wasn't going.

Reluctantly. In fact. In John's account. What he says to Peter. When Peter. Draws his sword. Is put your sword away. Shall I not drink the cup. That the father.

Hath given me. He wanted. To do. His father's will. That was his desire. You see the cross.

[23 : 55] Was a divine. Assignment. It wasn't a human. Accident. And Jesus wanted to do. What his father. Had sent him.

To do. There's something else. Of note. In John's account. At this point. And. I can mention it. Just as we. As we draw to a close.

And it's something. That's beautiful. That Jesus says. To those who come. To arrest him. He says to them this. He says. If you're looking for me. Then. Let these men go.

Let these men go. Let them go. Take me. And let them go. Him. And her. And her. And him.

Let them go. And take me. Instead of them. That is what submission. To the father's will.

[24 : 53] Meant for Jesus. And that's what submission. To the father's will. Means for you today. Jesus says.

Take me. Take me. But oh. Be sure. Be sure. That you let them go. And then John adds this.

He says. That Jesus said this. To fulfill. What he had previously said. Which was this. I have lost none of those. You gave me.

I have lost none of those. You gave me. And that is as true today. Friends. As it was. Two thousand years ago. That Jesus will never lose.

That Jesus will never lose. Any one of those. And the father has given him. Because he said. Take me. And let them go.

[25 : 52] Let them go. Here we have friends. The one. Who was very sorrowful. Even unto death. The one who yes.

Momentarily recoiled. Shrank back. From the horror of the cross. That lay ahead of him. But the one who resolved.

To do his father's will. For you. And for me. This is the way. My father's will. I will drink the cup.

Which he hath given me. Oh little wonder friends. That the hymn writer would write. About Jesus.

Man of sorrows. Man of sorrows.

What a name. For the son of God. Who came. Ruined sinners. To reclaim. Hallelujah. What a savior.

[26 : 51] He drank the cup. He took your place. And now he asks. That you will take. The place that he has earned.

For you. At his table. That's all he asks. Just that small thing. He did all this. For you.

He suffered all this. And much more. Much more. And all he asks of you. Is to take that place.

Which he earned for you.

At his table. Do this. He says. In remembrance of me. Oh if you are his. Today. Be sure. Be sure.

That you profess his name. And that you sit at his table. With his people. For whom he died. When we gather here. God willing.

[27 : 48] Tomorrow. A man of sorrows. And acquainted with grief. Let us pray. Thank you.