

Pre Communion Service

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[0 : 00] Let's turn again for a little to the chapter we read, Matthew's Gospel, chapter 26, and reading in verse 47.

While he was still speaking, Judas came, one of the twelve, and with him a great crowd with swords and clubs from the chief priests and the elders of the people. Now the betrayer had given them a sign, saying, The one I will kiss is a man, seize him.

And he came up to Jesus at once and said, Greetings, Rabbi, and he kissed him. Jesus said to him, Friend, do what you came to do.

Then they came up and laid hands on Jesus and seized him. As we know, the betrayal of the Lord Jesus Christ has to rank as one of the worst deeds that was ever performed in this world.

Indeed, the name Judas has found its way into everyday society and language. And anybody who does it dirty or anybody who stabs somebody in the back or somebody who betrays somebody is labeled a Judas.

[1 : 18] It's a name that has stuck ever since. And in fact, the aftermath of what Judas did was so overwhelmingly bad for Judas himself that it was more that he could cope with.

Because he comes back throwing the money that he had and he said, I betrayed innocent blood. As we know, he went and he hanged himself. Now prior to this, Jesus had been in the upper room with the disciples.

And it was a time of great intimacy and so on. And then they went, they made their way to the Garden of Gethsemane. And it's very interesting that it highlights, as they made their way to the Garden of Gethsemane, that it specifically mentions that this was a place that the Lord often went to.

And it was a place that Judas knew well. And so we see that the Lord is making his way deliberately to the most likely place that Judas would think he would be.

Judas knew the way that Jesus operated. And he knew that in all probability that Jesus and the disciples would make their way to the Garden.

[2 : 34] And so that's why it highlights and mentions in John's Gospel, and it says there about the Garden, Now Judas, who betrayed, also knew the place for Jesus, often went with his disciples there.

So the thing is that Jesus knew full well all that was about to happen. And Jesus had been telling the disciples this very thing in verse 45.

Then he came to the disciples and said to them, Sleep on and take your rest. See, the hour is at hand, and the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise, let us be going.

See, my betrayer is at hand. And so Jesus, although the disciples weren't grasping exactly what Jesus was saying, all the time Jesus was telling them.

In fact, when they went up to Jerusalem, he says, I'm going up and I'm going to be put to death and I will rise a third day. And they weren't grasping it. They couldn't understand what he was saying.

[3 : 34] And even to this very point, it shows that all the time Jesus was in total control. Jesus was fulfilling a heavenly timetable.

All that the Father gave him to do, he was doing every single day. And it's interesting because some people have very, very strange ideas about the message and the work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

There are some people who look at Jesus and they marvel at his teaching and his kind of philosophy and the way of life that he lived.

And they say, what a wonderful way. But what a tragedy that he died on the cross. Isn't it awful? Because the way they look at it, they see this wonderful person who was establishing a new system, a new way of living, which really challenged all the old way of living.

And they were saying, what a tragedy that he ended up on the cross because they're thinking his new lifestyle and all that he was teaching died with him.

[4 : 48] And there are many people who look on Christians as losers. And they think of Jesus as a loser. Somebody who had huge potential, had wonderful ideas, who taught superbly.

But it all went pear-shaped and he died and everything died with him. There are a lot of people, even to this day, that's what they think of Christianity.

And they look down on Christianity and they say, Christianity is for losers. There are very influential people in this world and that's the way they look at it. Sadly, they completely miss the whole mission and message of Jesus.

Because Jesus all along told them why he was here and what he was going to do. And a careful study of the Gospels will show that Jesus was in control all the time.

That he was fulfilling everything the Father gave him to do. There are other people who think that as Jesus made his way to the cross, that he did so almost like a superman, without any cares, without any concern.

[5 : 58] Well, I shouldn't say without any concern. But that he went to it boldly. And that he wasn't troubled in any shape or form. Because as the Son of God, he was able to rise above all these things and meet it head on.

And that he wasn't overly troubled. Well, again, that's completely wrong. Yes, Jesus met it head on. But at a fearful cost.

His soul was troubled. He tells us these things, even just in this chapter. In verse 37, and taking with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, he began to be sorrowful and troubled.

Then he said to them, my soul is very sorrowful, even to death. The agony that Jesus was experiencing before any nail went into his hands or feet, or before he was battered and flogged, or any of these things, there was an iron in his soul.

And the prospect of what he had to endure brought Garden of Gethsemane into the most intense place of conflict.

[7 : 19] And Jesus wrestled with the Father over and over. Remember, three times he went away. And three times he came back. The disciples were sleeping.

But there was an intensity so great, we're told in Luke's Gospel, that he sweated, as it were, drops of blood. We often think of prayer time as a time of great liberty and great blessing.

And it is. But sometimes prayer time can be a time also of pain. We mustn't always think that it's just always going to be a time where everything goes really well.

You go to the Psalms and you'll find often the Psalmists in distress in prayer. And you know this, you will know it as well as I do, there are times when we begin to pray.

And it becomes a time of pain. Because sometimes the Lord reveals things to us that we don't want to know. Sometimes the Lord will reveal to us things that we need to know about ourselves.

[8 : 28] Sometimes we can go and pray about one thing. And as we really begin to pray about it, the Lord is at work saying, OK, you're concerned about that. I'm far more concerned about other things in your life.

And the Lord will convict you and convince you of certain things that need to be sorted, need to be dealt with. And these can be really painful times. And so prayer, although it can often be a time of great blessing, great liberty, great freedom, and a time of joy can also be a time of pain.

And Jesus knew that. Jesus loved to be in fellowship with his Father. But this was a time where prayer was agony. Prayer was wrestling.

Prayer was painful. And then Jesus comes back and he says to his disciples, that's it, the betrayer is coming. And it's at this point that Judas leads this great crowd who come with swords and with clubs.

There's the temple police. There's the Roman security soldiers. And Judas, of course, had given them this. He had said to them that there would be this sign that he would go and he would kiss the one that they were to capture.

[9 : 51] And, of course, that's why the betrayed with a kiss always stands out as just such a horrible way of doing it because a kiss is always a sign of welcome, of affection.

And the very sign of affection and welcome becomes the sign of just absolute betrayal. So Judas comes and he greets Jesus and he says, Greetings, Rabbi or teacher.

And, you know, there's something very interesting here with regard to Judas. Because if you go back, remember we read there where the twelve were reclining at the table.

And Jesus tells them that one of them is going to betray him. And you'll notice that they begin to question. And they become very sorrowful.

Verse 22. And they were very sorrowful and began to say to him one after another, Is it I, Lord? But you'll notice when it comes to verse 25, Judas, who would betray him, answered, Is it I, Rabbi?

[11 : 05] So you'll notice that Judas uses a different title for speaking to Jesus than the other eleven disciples. The other eleven call him Lord.

Judas calls him Rabbi or teacher. Now Jesus was a teacher to the other eleven as well. But you know what this is saying is, Judas couldn't call him Lord.

Because Jesus was never Judas' Lord. To be the Lord, it means that you are king, you are ruler within the heart. And Jesus was not king in Judas' heart.

Judas had another king, money. Jesus, in fact, had said he had a devil. And so, although Judas appeared on every front to be like the other disciples, And the other disciples didn't in any way suspect that Judas was the betrayer.

Because there was nothing that they could see outwardly that distinguished him from the others. But Jesus could. But here is Judas making such a clear statement.

[12 : 15] And all he can say is, Teacher. Can't say Lord. And that is key to the Christian. Tonight, can you say of Jesus, He's my Lord.

He's my King. He is the one that I submit to. He is the one I love. Yes, He's my teacher as well. He is the one who has, His word is more important to me than any other word.

His word is my rule and my hope for life. And eternity is built upon the word. But He is my Lord. He's my Savior.

He's my Lord. He's my King. He's the one who rules in my life. Yes, there are times that I sin and I get it wrong. And it hurts me.

Because I know I hurt Jesus. Because I love Him. And I don't want to be like that. And that's what distinguishes. Are you tonight somebody who is able to say Lord?

[13 : 17] Well, the Lord's people can and they do. And then we find that Jesus, He says to Judas, He calls him friend.

Do what you came to do. Now that word friend here is interesting. It's not the friend of a close friend. This word means an acquaintance.

Not a close friend. And so, just like an associate or an acquaintance. But in between Judas kissing Jesus and Jesus saying to them, do what you came to do.

John's gospel tells us something amazing happens. And do you remember at that moment, they asked, Jesus said, who is it that you're seeking? Who are you seeking?

Because that's the beauty of all the gospels. Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, always, they all bring in a little different light onto what is happening.

[14 : 26] And one will tell you this. They all tell you the same things. But some will highlight something else. And you'll get a little glimpse in from here and from there. And in John's gospel, it tells us that Jesus asked, who is it that you're looking for?

And they said, Jesus of Nazareth. And Jesus said, very simply, I am he. Literally, I am. And these words, of course, were loaded.

Because these are the words of God himself. Because Jesus is God, a very God. God. Remember when Moses was being called by God to go and lead the people of Israel out.

And Moses said to them, when I go to Pharaoh and they ask, who is it that is sending? Say, I am. Remember when Jesus was debating with the scribes and the Pharisees early on in his ministry.

and he was talking about Abraham and they said to him, how can you talk in the way that you're talking? You're not yet 50. And Jesus said, before Abraham was, I am.

[15 : 41] Not I was, but I am. And Jesus is the eternal I am. I have no beginning. I have no end.

And yet, this is the amazing thing that he has come in human nature. And it's, you know, it's quite extraordinary how people dismiss Christianity. And they just, they cast aside the claims of Jesus because there is nobody else in the whole history of this world who has ever made claims like Jesus.

Many people have claimed to be great prophets and leaders of great things. Nobody has stood on this earth and said, I am God of very God.

And it's, it's the most extraordinary thing for people to just say, ah, dismiss that. Jesus is the only person who has made these claims.

They are extraordinary claims. And remember how C.S. Lewis was saying that, that only, only somebody who was utterly deluded within himself or somebody who was an imposter or else somebody who really was that person.

[17 : 04] And then when you look at the life of Jesus, his claim is backed up by what he did and how he lived. And C.S. Lewis is saying that.

He said, it is really the most extraordinary thing for people to dismiss these claims. And yet, the majority of people do. They don't even face up to the fact that it's a unique claim.

So this is what Jesus is doing. And as Jesus makes that statement, I am. And he's saying to them, I am God. There is a moment, there is a flash, just a flash, of the glory that is his.

That glory which was veiled as he came in human nature. But for one moment, he was seen for who he was. Just that moment. And they all fell backwards to the ground.

The whole lot thrown back. These tough Roman soldiers, these temple police, bang, they were down on the ground. then they get back up.

[18 : 14] And it's, I often think of it, surely for that moment they must have realized all of them, just in the presence. And it just shows us that the glory that is veiled, when that glory will be unveiled, and we'll see him as he is, nobody can stand in his presence.

Remember, it tells us that of the dedication of the temple, that the priests could not stand to minister, for the glory of the Lord filled the house.

Ezekiel will tell us when the Lord revealed his glory to him, he fell down. It was the same with Isaiah, when he saw the glory of the Lord.

He said, I am undone. Literally, he began to unravel. That's what it meant. Saul of Tarsus, when Jesus revealed himself, he fell to the ground.

John in the Isle of Patmos, when Jesus again revealed himself, he fell as one dead. And yet, people dismiss this Jesus. These moments where Jesus reveals the fullness of who he is.

[19 : 27] No created humanity can stand before it. And so, Jesus is giving this display to these people, people, and he's more or less saying to them, you've come with me with your swords, your clubs, and you're going to arrest me for one second.

I'm going to show you who I am. And they just, down on the ground. And of course, they get back up, and Jesus doesn't reveal any more of that.

And it's everything is just back to normal. And so, Jesus is showing that he went willingly. Everything was willingly.

And we find then that, I find it often amazing how they didn't, those who came to take Jesus, they didn't take the little band of followers as well, because remember it was a little band.

There were only 11 men there. And it would have been very easy for them to think, right, we're going to get rid of Jesus. And you know, the best way we can do is get rid of him, but let's get rid of that little band as well.

[20 : 37] Of course, that wasn't going to happen then, because they were going to be at the forefront of the establishing and the founding of the early church. There was going to come a time when some of these men were going to suffer.

James was beheaded. The same was going to happen to Peter, except remember how the angel delivered Peter. John was banished to Patmos. These men did suffer, but not until the kingdom was being established.

But Jesus says something wonderful again in John's gospel, and it's this, take me, but let these men go. Take me, but let these men go.

And it's one of the most wonderful statements, Jesus. Because, you know, it wasn't the Roman soldiers that took Jesus.

It wasn't the Roman soldiers that tied Jesus to the cross. It was our sins and his love to the Father. That's what bound Jesus to the cross.

[21 : 43] There was no Roman soldier that could have taken Jesus against his will. There was no Roman soldier that could have hammered nails into the blessed hands and feet of Jesus unless he had willed it.

But because of his commitment to us and his commitment to his Father, he willed that these things would happen. The law of God calls out against us, condemning us.

The law of God condemns us, every single one of us, to hell. But here comes Jesus saying, take me, let these go.

And that's what has happened for every single one of us. That's what Jesus has said, take me, but let him go, let her go.

It's because, here we see just the substitution in nature of Jesus. And that's what God the Father has done to his son.

[22 : 44] He has taken him and he has put him on a tree. And he has made him take our hell upon himself in order that we might go free.

And you know, there's something else I find quite amazing there. Because you know how Jesus made himself available when they came seeking him.

You know what it says in the Bible, seek the Lord and he will be found. here it is taken to its most extreme. Here are these men and they've come seeking Jesus to do him hurt and to do him harm.

And yet he makes himself available. Isn't that extraordinary? You can turn that a reverse way around. Can you think of the judgment day of those people who came seeking Jesus to put him to death?

Unless they had found mercy before. And we pray that some of them did. We believe the centurion who was in charge of the whole thing did.

[24 : 00] Because he began to testify, truly this is the Son of God. when he saw, when he was watching what took place on that cross, he became utterly convinced that this was no ordinary man, that this was the Son of God.

And we pray that, or hope that it would be true of others as well. Because Jesus said, Father, forgive them for they know not what they do. We believe that that was an answer to Jesus' prayer with regard to the centurion.

But the point we're making here is how available Christ makes himself to us. Even those who came seeking him to do him harm, he made himself available.

How much more for those who seek him in order to have life. He will never, ever, ever, ever, ever turn away any who truly come seeking him.

And so that's why in verse 50 he says, do what you came to do. And so they laid hands on him and seized him. And he did that for you and for me.

[25 : 12] Jesus asks us to do one simple thing in return for him. He never, ever wants us to forget what he did. And we don't.

But you know, this is the beauty of the Lord's Supper. It's like, you know, sometimes you can see something in the distance, and if you take a telescope or binoculars and look, and all of a sudden what's in the distance, it becomes so clear, and you say, wow, that's amazing.

You can look at a boat away out at sea, and you get the binoculars, and then it comes into focus, and you begin to see everything, and you say, wow, that's wonderful. In a sense, the communion is like that.

We have an awareness and we see what Jesus has done, but the communion brings his message, his mission, his everything, so close to us, because we become involved with what he did.

And he gave to his disciples a pattern, and he said, listen, this is what I want you to do, take it, this is my body broken for you, take the wine, this is my blood poured out for you.

[26 : 22] And we're continuing to do that, in order that we will remember him, till he comes again. so, if you love the Lord, if you're able to say, as the eleven disciples said, Lord, is it I?

If you're able to call him Lord, then your place is really at the table. And you look into your own heart and examine yourself, that's what we're told to do.

And if you love the Lord Jesus, your place is at the table. Let us pray. O Lord, our God, we give thanks for your patience with us, for your grace towards us, and for your love.

And we pray, Lord, that you will bless us, that you will uphold us, that you will keep us, and that you will strengthen all your people. And we ask, O Lord, that you will give courage to any who are seeking to confess your name, and who may be finding it difficult.

Lord, encourage them, we pray. Watch over us and bless us and enrich our lives and do us good and take away from us our sin. In Jesus' name, Amen. Our concluding singing is Psalm 116, and this is from the Scottish Psalter, Psalm 116, from verse 13 to the end, on page 396.

[27 : 46] I'll love salvation, take the cup, and God's name will I call, I'll pay my vows now to the Lord before his people all.

Dear in God's sight is his saint's death, thy servant Lord am I, thy servant sure, thine handmaid son, my bands thou didst untie. Thank offerings I to thee will give, and on God's name will call, I'll pay my vows now to the Lord before his people all.

So on. Psalm 116, 13 to the end, I'll love salvation, take the cup. I'll love salvation, take a cup, on God's name will I call, I'll pay my vows to the Lord before his people all.

Before his people all. Before his people all.

I'll pay my vows now to the Lord before his people all.

[29 : 30] Dear in God's eye is his March his men, sirs Mike Wadi Thou distant time.

My paths thou distant time. My paths thou distant time.

Thy servant sure, Thy handmaid son, My paths thou distant time.

The God brings I to thee will give, And on God's name will fall.

I'll pay my mercy to the Lord, Before His people all.

[30 : 59] Before His people all. Before His people all.

I'll pay my counsel to the Lord, Before His people all.

Within the course of God's own night, Within the midst of thee, O city of Jerusalem, Praise to the Lord give ye.

Praise to the Lord give ye. Praise to the Lord give ye.

O city of Jerusalem, Praise to the Lord give ye.

[32 : 26] Over to the Lord for hid, Next being Dothry, I'll be fifteen. Florian Ones Some Religion Save to the Lord for Hours Oh Shregistries Release Today We have a Report Janage whichever■■■