

Sunday Morning Communion English

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Date: 21 February 2016

Preacher: Rev F Renwick

[0 : 00] Let's turn to the passage that we've read in the Gospel according to Matthew chapter 26. And we'll read again at verse 38.

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

Amen. Now let's, by God's enabling, seek to explore something of what's going on in this area of Scripture.

I said last night as we explored the great doctrine of justification by faith, and we explored the peace that comes through faith, being at peace with God, no longer being his enemy, and the enmity on both sides being taken away.

I did say that we would explore this area of that passage in Romans.

[1 : 27] It is through the Lord Jesus Christ. And I want to tie up, if at all possible, that this morning.

And I want to tie it up by simply asking one basic question. And the question is this. And you'll forgive me if I'm using another version, but that's the one that's just in my mind.

When Jesus says, My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death, we want to ask Jesus this simple question. Why?

Why? What is wrong with you, Jesus? What is the problem? When someone who is none other, God, come as a human being, is saying, I am close to the edge.

My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death. What is the problem? What is going on? And I suppose in order to answer that question, we have to explore something that at the end of the day, we know very little about, but we know it's the truth because it's revealed to us in the word of God.

[2 : 52] That this Jesus of Nazareth isn't just a human being. He is the eternal God as well. The second person of the Trinity.

And you know, I used to get so uncomfortable in the area of the Trinity because I just felt I was in the shallows all the time. And this impression that others have grasped it.

There isn't a human being in the face of the globe who has grasped it. That doesn't mean to say there's nobody who hasn't grasped it. And there's nobody who doesn't fully understand it.

God himself fully understands it. He knows it. But we are tinkering around the edges and we are in the shallows.

And I know that we will have so many questions. And I don't know if God will ever answer them all. Maybe he will. But I think on this side of eternity, we are just going to have so, so many questions about what's involved in someone being the eternal son of God and being a human being as well.

[4 : 07] Do you know, in the 4th century, there was a document produced. It's called an Icyan Creed. And it is a document that the church ought to value greatly because it defends who Jesus really, really is.

Do you remember, at 30 years of age, Jesus begins his public ministry. And yes, the people are interested in his miracles. But they're not just interested in his miracles.

There are words that go along with these miracles. He's mighty in word and he's mighty in deed. And yes, these miracles are stimulating people's minds.

And they're raising all kinds of questions. If you had been there at the wedding in Canaan of Galilee, what would you be saying? I think you would probably be saying something along these lines.

How did you do that? Who are you? What are you doing here? Why have you come? And Jesus used that as a launching pad to explain to people who he really was and what he was about.

[5 : 22] And he told them quite clearly, I am the son of God. And in his mind, there's no ambiguity as to what that means, nor was there any ambiguity in the minds of the church leaders of the day.

He's claiming divinity. And that is why he was crucified. I know there are other factors come into the equation. These church leaders were turning up at their place of worship and they were looking around saying, where's everybody?

And the answer was, they're off with that person called Jesus. And that created a spirit of envy. And you know what envy can do?

It can cause all kinds of havoc. And envy was part of the equation. But ultimately, it was this claim to divinity that was so blasphemous that made him out to be a liar, a friend of sinners, and possessed by a demon.

And that is why we will celebrate Easter in coming weeks. It's an attempt by the church authorities of the day to eradicate this world of a man called Jesus of Nazareth.

[6 : 40] And it is a warning to us, is it not? That people can be in the foremost positions in leadership within churches and be getting things terribly, terribly wrong.

It means this, that even they must be taken to the touchstone of Scripture, that even they must be taken to this divine word and they must be measured up against the canon of Scripture.

That is why it is just so important for us to be in this word and to know what God has to say. A man in the pulpit can be telling you the greatest nonsense in the world.

How will you know? How will you know if it's right or wrong? Well, here's the touchstone. Here is the revelation. And you know that nice seeing creed was produced out of a sheer battle within the confines of the church.

What's new? Do you know, it is so easy to become battle-worn with the battles that go on, not with the world, but with the battles that go on within the confines of the church.

[7 : 53] But I suppose there's nothing new in that. And it was a man called Athanasius who stood up against another man called Arius.

You know, Arius, he sounded so good. Arius said, there's no creature in the universe that is greater than Jesus.

And he came forth with all his arguments and all his defenses. He's there at the top. He is supreme. He is the absolute in terms of creatureliness.

And Athanasius said, no, he's not. And the battle began. And the battle was on the grounds of one solitary letter.

Our letter I, the Greek letter Iota, there are two words, homoousius and homoousius. And that's where the battle, and you know, the world looking on was saying, there they go again, these Christians, battling away with one another.

[9 : 13] Do you know what was said of that moment in time? It was said that the world was at war over an iota. And it was.

It was. Do you know what we would do today? I mean the church. The church would today fudge it.

The church today would say, well, you believe what you believe and I believe what I believe. Let's just fudge it so that everybody's involved in this glorious shade of mediocrity.

And Athanasius was having none of it. It was said of him that he stood alone against the world. And we are thankful today that he stood alone against the world because he wasn't willing to say that Jesus was at the top of the creaturely pile.

He was saying, no, no, no. It's far more than that. He is none other than the second person of the Trinity. He is the eternal God.

[10 : 24] And he was right. He was absolutely right. And here we are today exploring something that he defended so valiantly.

and yet there is still a lot of mystery attaching to it. Do you know, Jesus has many, many names and every single one of them is a window into something of who he is and his character.

He's the door. Who else do you know that's called the door? Why on earth would you call anyone the door but he's the doorway into heaven for his people? He's the way.

Who else do you know that's called the way but he's the way to heaven for believers? But at the beginning of John's gospel he's called the word. And you know, that's an interesting name for anyone to have the word because we use words as vehicles of communication.

That's what I'm using just now as we communicate with one another. we use words as the vehicle of communication and at the beginning of John this is what we read in the beginning was the word and the word was with God and the word was God.

[11 : 48] And the bit I want to hone in on is the word was with God. It's the Greek word pros and it literally means towards.

and the image we have is this here is God and here is the second person of the Trinity the word and they're looking at one another and they're in communion and they're felt they're not back to back they're face to face they are towards one another and they are interacting and they're having communion and they're having co-union and they're having fellowship and God the Father loves everything he sees in the second person of the Trinity and the second person of the Trinity the word loves everything he sees in the Father.

And then two thousand years ago something happens to a virgin in Israel she produces an egg and by a miracle of the Spirit of God it becomes the first cell of a human being and nine months later in a stable in Bethlehem there's a child lying in a manger and he doesn't look like God in the words of Philippians he has emptied himself what does that mean well it doesn't mean that he ceases to be God the second person of the Trinity but it means this he is veiled with layer upon layer upon layer of covering so much so that it's a manger and for most of the first thirty years of his life he lives in the back streets of Nazareth and nobody seems to notice it's interesting you know we all have our ideas as to what holiness is but Nazareth has had holiness in its midst for the best part of thirty years and nobody seems to have noticed

I think it might tell us something about how far off the mark we can be with what holiness it really is and you know the song is sung away in a manger no crib for a bed and it goes on to say the little Lord Jesus no crying he makes and it's not true have you ever come across a baby that doesn't cry there's something wrong with a baby that doesn't cry and there was nothing wrong with Jesus he did cry sometimes this cry was a cry to be changed and sometimes this cry was a cry to be fed and that's all part of a motherhood

Mary trying to work out what kind of cry is it now do I feed him or do I change him this veiling of the second person of the trinity is such that he's there as a human being and I don't know how Jesus of Nazareth took his first step but I rather think it might be pretty much the same way as any other child in a home takes his first step maybe maybe Mary held him there and maybe Joseph was just a few not even feet but inches away saying come on come on and he takes that faltering step that's what it is to be human that's what it is to be a baby and he too has to learn the alphabet before he can learn what a word is and he has to learn what words are before he can string make a sentence and before he can string sentences together

[16 : 37] I don't know at what stage what was happening but that's the way it went that's what it is to be human but by the age of 12 years old he was astonishing people on that visit to the temple in Jerusalem and after that visit to the temple in Jerusalem that wee window into his life we have 18 years of silence and then comes the beginning of this public ministry and you'll remember how it begins it begins with the baptism John the Baptist his own relation he had to have it revealed to him who Jesus really was and only after he has that manifestation from God is he in a position to say behold the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world and you'll remember what happens at that baptism there is a voice from heaven and it is the voice of the

Father and it is the voice of the Father saying to Jesus you are my beloved son in whom I am well pleased what's God saying well I think God is saying this you've been in the battle zone for 30 years and I've given you a remit and you have fulfilled it absolutely and utterly and I just love it you are my beloved son but he's saying more than his satisfaction with the remit he is reminding Jesus you are my son why is he doing that do you remember what happens straight after the baptism of Jesus he goes out into the wilderness for 40 days and 40 nights and what happens there he is tempted by the enemy of souls and what is the thrust of his temptation the thrust of his temptation is this if you are the son of

God do this do that do the next thing if you are turn these stones into bread do you see what the thrust of it is you think you are someone you are not really who you think you are and what you must do is you must listen to me and you must bow down and you must worship me and Jesus is saying man shall not live by bread alone but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God and you know his strategy over the last two millennia it has not changed because you know you will be here today a believer how many times whether you're Christian sojourn has been a short one or a long one how many times have you sat down and said to yourself am I really a believer have I made a terrible mistake about it all if I do these things and say these things and in particular think these thoughts is it possible for me to be a believer remember at moments like these that we're living in a spiritual war zone and remember the enemy of souls is trying to get you to disbelieve what you believe exactly the same as he did with a

Jesus of Nazareth and there's another reason why God is saying it to him at this stage because for 30 years he has been in this world and it hasn't been easy but I tell you it's going to get a lot more difficult now and God the Father knows that because public ministry will bring an onslaught that hasn't been there before I'm not saying that the first 30 years were easy they weren't he's hardly born into this world when a man wants to slaughter him and the wickedness of that man is such that he's saying to the wise men call in to see me on your way home and I'll go and worship him as well but God's not having it and he's off to Egypt as a refugee with Mary and Joseph but Herod is absolutely fuming to the extent that he says to his soldiers right just go and eradicate every male two years old and under that's wickedness that is profound wickedness from the word go he's battling but when he's 30 years old and the public ministry is about to begin the father knows what's about to deluge him and he's saying you are my beloved son in whom

I am well pleased you'll remember the next time he says it to Jesus it's on the Mount of Transfiguration what was the Mount of Transfiguration all about well Moses and Elijah are they Peter James and John are Jesus are they Peter James and John and Jesus are they what's the subject up for discussion it's his exodus it's his going out it's his death you see when Jesus gets to the Mount of Transfiguration he's not very far from this place called Gethsemane where we read of him that his soul is exceedingly sorrowful and it is God the Father reminding him once again you've done 33 years now and the last three have been the hardest of all but you've never faltered and you've never failed you've fulfilled my remit you are my son and you're still my beloved son

[22 : 52] I love everything you've done but even God the Father knows that the last lap of his life is going to be the hardest of all and you know way back in the councils of eternity when the second person of the trinity is interacting with the first person of the trinity and there's going to be a creation and there's going to be a humanity for him he's saying yes I'll go yes I'll go yes I'll do it but you know it's one thing to take on a task see when you get down to the nitty gritty of it and it's just so close to you that's a different thing all together and I think that that's what's happening in the garden of Gethsemane here is this man and he's now looking around the corner of his life and what is around the corner around the corner is a place called

Golgotha around the corner is a place called Calvary and it is important for us to remember this Gethsemane is not Calvary Gethsemane is Jesus looking at Calvary as he peers around the corner and what's he saying I am tremblingly afraid I am just so so afraid you know sometimes we make the mistake with Jesus that he just took everything in his stride because of who he was after all he was God and that made it easy for him well that's a dreadful mistake to think of him in terms of a glorious ally some wonderful combination that made him a some kind of superman so that he could just take it all on just like that is to make a dreadful mistake he was and still is the second person of the trinity but he was also a human being absolutely and utterly

God and absolutely and utterly human and that's what's being manifested to us in the garden of a gethsemane my soul is exceedingly sorrowful so sorrowful that my prayer to my father will be if it is possible let this cup pass from me what's he what's he saying I think he's saying this as he looks at the dauntingness of going to a place called Calvary as he looks at the dauntingness of what Spurgeon calls all hell distilled he's basically saying if there's any other avenue if there's any other way let's go down that road but this is a crucial bit we must remember he crowns his prayer with nevertheless not my will but thine be done and what is the will of

God it's exactly the same as the will of Jesus of Nazareth and God's will is this that people who flee to him for salvation will have the opportunity of being afforded it as a free gift we spend so much time of our lives so many of us engaged in the bondage of trying to reach a mark where we think we're good enough now for God to save us it's madness we'll never save ourselves but we must listen to this God as he tells us it's a free gift it's a free gift Abraham was accounted righteous on the basis of his faith thousands of years before Jesus was in this world he looks down the avenue of time by the eye of faith and he sees

Christ's day and he rejoices in it more than two decades after he's gloriously saved the mark of the covenant that was just so important to Jews who were working on the basis of our salvation by works is put on Abraham Abraham was saved without any earning of it whatsoever and that's what the passage in Romans 5 is all about that's the way New Testament believers are saved as well on the basis of gift faith but it does take a lot of doing it's the substitutionary atonement and it will never ever be accomplished unless Jesus gets himself from Gethsemane to the place called

[28 : 39] Calvary and the question for you and I is this even although the prospect of it is just so daunting to this man and he's honest enough to have let it be made known I am so close to the edge will he or won't he well you know the answer to that is there's a table here today there's a cup and there is bread let's not miss out on the simplicity of it that wine represents bloodshed that bread represents a body broken but I'm getting at this he doesn't stay in Gethsemane he takes himself to a place called Calvary and it's on the basis of that and that alone that any of us at all will ever be saved the devil has you tortured and me at times concerning worthiness and particularly at a time of communion but you know what you've got to say to him you've got to tell him

I'm not here on the basis of my own worthiness I'm here on the basis of the worthiness of the lamb that was slain and that's a worthiness that will secure salvation for time and for eternity let's sing a few verses of psalm 63 and verse 5 even as with marijuana with fat my soul shall filled be then shall my mouth with joyful lips sing praises unto thee we'll sing down to the end of the verse marked 8 psalm 63 verses 5 to 8 even as with marrow and with fat even as when you even as with fat

Then shall my heart with joyfulness sing graces unto thee.

When I do thee upon my head, remember with delight.

And when only I meditate, it watches off the night.

[31 : 53] In shadow of thy wings I'll joy, for love might help us be.

My soul, thee follow, heart and me, thy right hand doth sustain.

We now come to that part of the service that's known as the fencing of the table. And we have our warrant for the table in 1 Corinthians 11 and verse 23 where we read, I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you.

The Lord Jesus in the night when he was betrayed took bread and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, This is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.

In the same way also he took the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this as often as you drink it in remembrance of me.

[33 : 09] For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. Now the fencing of the Lord's table is basically pointing out who should be there and who shouldn't be there.

And essentially I suppose over the last couple of sermons last night and tonight I have sought to spell out who it is that should be at the Lord's table.

If anybody is thinking along these lines, you know what, I'm a sinner. I can't get away from that, but I'm not this kind of sinner. This person has done this and that person has done that.

And my neighbor down the street has done this. And somebody at work has done that. So I'm not quite as bad as they are. I think you're well off the mark. I think you're well off the mark.

Do you know what the Apostle Paul said he was? He said he was the greatest sinner in the world. And I think every sinner should be there.

[34 : 19] Now I know those who are into logic will be saying, but everybody cannot be the greatest sinner. There can only be one greatest. Well, in actual fact, I don't think that is the case.

Do you know why? When the Spirit of God begins to work on an individual and the process of sanctification is underway.

It's the beginning of an adventure and it is a glorious adventure because ultimately it leads to us being in the immediate presence of Christ throughout the endless ages of eternity.

But it's a very painful adventure as well. Because you know what he does? God in dealing with us peels back the layers on our lives so that we get to know who we really are.

And that is a very painful process. It has people very low on the water at times because they don't realize what God is doing with them.

[35 : 34] But God in manifesting who they are is engaging in his work of sanctification. You know, the reality is this.

You are here today and I don't really know who you are. And you're glad that's the way it is. And I'm here today and you don't know who I really am.

And I'm glad that's the way it is. The people we know best in this life are ourselves. We have an insight into who we are that we don't have into any other human being or indeed any other Christian.

That is why an individual is left saying it's the chief of sinners calling God. Remember I mentioned last night the sinner in the temple?

The man who gets himself to the place where God is and when he gets himself to where God is he's trying to get as far away from God as possible. He stands afar off and he cries to God Oh God it's not our sinner here it is the sinner the sinner par excellence calling out to you and I'm asking you for something God and what I'm asking you for is mercy mercy.

[37 : 04] And that's the way we should come to the Lord's table. And of course we can even be at the moment we're sitting at the table be deluged by the enemy of our souls with all kinds of things we've done and said and thought in the past and things that we're thinking about right now that would disqualify us if we listen to him from doing what we're doing.

But what we're saying to him is this there was a moment in the life of Jesus of Nazareth when his soul was exceedingly sorrowful even unto death and to the ignorant eye you would almost say he's about to chicken out he's about to buckle he's about to go under but that's not what happens.

he takes himself from Gethsemane to Calvary and yes the church leadership of the day stands around Calvary and they realize he's gone he's actually dead breathes a huge sigh of collective relief and all the problems with them are gone until the third day and they have bigger problems than they ever imagined and the world and the church has wrestled with that problem for two millennia now but it's not a problem to you and I if we are believers it's the heart and it's the basis of our salvation and so we say to the enemy of our souls yes I know I'm a sinner and I know I'm the greatest sinner in the world and yes I know you've told me how bad it is well in actual fact it's a thousand times worse but there was bloodshed and it's covered it all and that is what ought to make us sing from the depths of our souls this day there's one other thing

I have to say and it's this we cannot trust ourselves we live out so much of our day so many of our days hoodwinking ourselves and hoodwinking God we pay a price for it the table of the Lord is a place of honesty we stand before him and we say to him as we unveil our souls this is who I really am and I am so embarrassed this is who I really am and I am so ashamed help me Lord help me and the reality is he's more willing to help us than we are to be helped but it is important that we come clean with God we can afford to we can afford to there are areas of our lives that we would be horrified if others knew thankfully they don't they remain hidden but you cannot operate at that level with God but we can afford not to because of what has happened and the part of this

Lord Jesus Christ it is justification on the basis of faith it's peace with God but it's through what Jesus of Nazareth has done and he has done it let's exalt let's exalt in it we read in Galatians chapter 5 verse 16 but I say walk by the spirit and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh for the desires of the flesh are against the spirit and the desires of the spirit are against the flesh for these are opposed to each other to keep you from doing the things that you want to do but if you are led by the spirit you are not under the law now the works of the flesh are evident sexual immorality impurity sensuality idolatry sorcery enmity strife jealousy fits of anger rivalries dissensions divisions envy drunkenness orgies orgies and things like these

[41 : 52] I warn you as I warned you before that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God but the fruit of the spirit is love joy peace patience kindness goodness faithfulness gentleness self-control against such things there is no law those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires if we live by the spirit let us also walk by the spirit let us not become conceited provoking one another envying one another amen and may God bless to us that's a reading from this word now the elements will be prepared as we sing a few verses of Psalm 118 from verse 15 in dwellings of the righteous is heard the melody of joy and health the Lord's right hand doth ever valiantly we'll sing from verse 15 in dwellings of the righteous of joy and health the Lord's right hand of joy and health the Lord's right hand of heaven valiantly the bright hand of the mighty Lord exalted is so high the right hand of the mighty Lord above heaven valiantly

I shall not die but live and shall the works of God discover the Lord have me just I set sore but not to death in your heart oh set the open unto me the gates of righteousness then will I enter into them thanks god and this is in theé the view

I pray for the leaders and thus my safety be.

Amen. In like manner also he took the cup when he had stopped saying this is the new covenant in my blood.

Thank you all of it for needing this bread and drinking this cup. You do show forth the Lord's death until he comes. I know the theologians will tell us in the great scheme of redemption there wasn't the chance that Jesus would fail.

[46 : 56] But I want to look at it from a human angle for a moment. And I want to remind ourselves of this. When the arresting band come to the garden of Gethsemane one of these disciples Peter is out with a sword and he almost kills a man.

And at one level I want to say good on you Peter but I don't know if we should say that when we consider what they've just done to Jesus in the garden.

Because Jesus so manifests his humanity in that garden he says to them will you watch with me and will you pray and they just fail him so miserably.

They are sound asleep. Could you not watch? Could you not pray? Could you not just help me out? The answer seems to be no.

But you know what it's like to be human. You know sometimes humans get themselves into situations where there isn't another person on the planet can help them out in any way whatsoever except for this just to be there.

[48 : 39] and it looks as if Jesus' humanity is so much like ours that just to have faltering and failing and almost hopeless disciples around him that there was some kind of relief in it for him as his back is so hard pressed against the wall when he utters my soul is exceedingly sorrowful even unto death.

one of these failing disciples gets the sword out and Molchus' ear is on the ground of the floor of the garden and we know what's going through the mind of Peter he was streetwise and he didn't hang about to ask questions before he acted he was the kind of person that was in there doing and who did his thinking later on but his thinking is if I can hold him back just for a few for a handful of seconds Jesus can take to his heels and run and Peter was so bamboozled when Jesus said to him now Peter enough of that put it away and Peter is thinking why on earth are you not taking the chance why on earth are you not running do you know what Jesus said in his prayer in the garden if it is possible if there's any other way well he is a way here's his chance he can disappear into the darkness of a Jerusalem night but he stands there and he says no Peter put it away and the question is why and the answer is to provide this cup and the wine and the bread here today and all that it means and all that it signifies on behalf of sinners such as you and I who have fled to him as friend and savior he gave thanks let's endeavor to give thanks oh lord our god we thank you that you are who you are we thank you that you've got your finger on the pulse of every one of us and you know us far better than we have ever known ourselves you know what our problem is our own selves come to the floor and we push you out how we do it it's astonishing but we do and you knew it would be that way and so you have provided this means of grace to reel us in once again to remind us who you are and what you've done and to cause us as we draggle wretched sinners to exult and rejoice afresh in salvation on the basis of a savior called Jesus and all the efficacy and all the merit of his finished work oh lord our god may we as we set aside these elements from an everyday use to a sacred use by the eye of faith feed our souls afresh this day and all we ask is in Christ's name amen he said take heed this is my body broken for you like manner also he took the cup saying this is the new covenant in my blood drink ye all of it for as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup you do show forth the Lord's death until he comes for us contain each second

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