

Decision

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 05 April 2020

Preacher: Christiaan Hofstra

[0 : 0 0] Well, a very good morning, Brunsfield. It is wonderful to be part of your service this morning. I'm very sorry that we're not able to meet physically together, but I hope you're keeping well, and not just physically, but spiritually, and that God is really using this time to speak to you as a church, but also to you as individuals.

So this time is going to be a time of transformation and a deepened devotion to Him and everything that happens. So we're going to be looking at this passage in Matthew 26, verse 36 and onwards.

And if you have a Bible, I encourage you to have it open wherever you are, because we'll be looking at that together in a moment or two. But let me take you back first to 1945.

On April 9th, the German pastor, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, who was associated with an attempt on taking Hitler's life, faced the gallows just outside of his prison cell in the Flossenbergl concentration camp.

Now, his famous last words are actually debated whether they are authentic or not, but they are quite impressive. He possibly could have said, this is not the end for me, as he faced his death, but it's the beginning of life.

[1 : 1 1] But even so, whether it was authentic or not, he certainly seemed, according to eyewitnesses, totally at peace and serene. And it's interesting that when you look up the different famous or lesser famous martyrs, that's often the description you find.

Some even faced their death with utter joy. So how different when we read about Jesus' agony and sorrow and his pleading with the Father, how different the picture seems to be as Jesus faces his own death.

Now, just to give you a little bit of context, it's nearly what we would call Good Friday, but the week has been tough. Ever since the triumphal entry, Jesus had opposition growing against him time and time again.

He's also spent a lot of time with his disciples, trying to get as much teaching and training into them before it was time for him to die on the cross. And of course, the cross itself was looming larger and larger over that week.

And events described here in our text describe Thursday night. Jesus had time with his disciples celebrating the Passover and actually giving it a completely new meaning, some of which will have only been fulfilled by Jesus' death on the cross and maybe only would have made sins afterwards to the disciples.

[2 : 3 5] But afterwards, we now find ourselves in a garden, very appropriately called Gethsemane, which meant the oil press, which may have been a hint to what lay ahead for Jesus as he would trod the wine press of the anger of his Father.

One certainly can't help but think of another garden, the very first garden, which was the garden where the rebellion all began. But here in this second garden, it would lead to restoration, paradise restored, paradise made completely new.

And Jesus came here to this garden to pray. And people, this morning, I want us to see three things as we look at this passage together. First, I want us to see what leads Jesus to pray and see how actually Christ's agony reveals to us Christ's love.

for us. Secondly, we should also listen to what Jesus prays and very much see that Christ trusts the Father in his suffering. Thirdly, though, we must also see the lack of prayer of those who are with him and see how this passage also confronts us with how the disciples are found wanting.

So let's first look at what led Jesus to pray. And I wonder if there's ever been a time where you have faced something very challenging, very scary, perhaps, maybe something very difficult.

[4 : 0 9] May have been an exam, maybe a driving test, your third or fourth attempt. But it might have been also an operation. Or maybe you've even faced death itself. Whatever it may have been, you know what it can be like and how it can really hit your stomach and it can give you sleepless nights.

What we find in verse 37 and verse 38, the description that Jesus is becoming more and more sorrowful and troubled. It says, he says to them, my soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death.

It's very much like how Psalm 42 puts it, how his soul seems to be downcast and disturbed within him. And it even leads him to pray to the Father, if it is at all possible, may this cup be taken from me.

Now, let's not misunderstand Jesus. He's not having second thoughts. He's certainly not afraid of the abuse, the insults or the lashes which are going to confront him.

It's something much deeper. The Greek here literally means astonished or amazed. Now, you may think this is impossible for an all-knowing and an all-powerful God to be astonished or amazed at anything.

[5 : 3 3] But people, it's the realization, it's the first experience that Jesus has of the horror of what lay ahead. As one commentator puts it, all Jesus can see right now before him is the evil, the wrath, the abyss, the chasm, the nothingness of the cup that he was about to drink, which meant exclusion from God and with that, the exclusion of his love and his light.

And people, let's remember that this is really only a foretaste by Jesus' staggers. See, people, the cup is a reference to God's wrath.

For example, Isaiah chapter 51, verse 17 tells us, Now, this notion of God being angry and God's wrath is not something that many of us like.

It might be exactly the aversion you have to Christianity. See, I told you that Christian God is always angry. But part of our problem is seeing anger from a human perspective and in that sense from a human broken perspective.

Where we see anger the way we've experienced it ourselves as something uncontrolled, explosive, often disproportionate and a violent reaction and very much the opposite of love.

[7 : 1 7] However, it is actually possible to be angry not as opposite of love but as part of love. Something I can get really angry about almost in a helpless way is abuse.

You just have to open the pages of the newspaper and you'll find abuse of all kinds but particularly child abuse. And I guess it is motivated by love for me because as a father, as a parent myself, it's the last thing I would ever want to see happen to my very own children.

And so similarly, God's love actually demands his anger at sin for him to ignore it or not to do anything about it would be unloving indeed.

And Jesus would drink God's anger, his judgment, all due to our filth in our place. And to put it in other words, Jesus actually would experience the death that is due to sinners.

And people, that's why on the one hand we should by all means fear death yet at the same time we don't have to. I remember growing up somebody saying, do you know that where Jesus hung on the cross is really where you should have been hanging?

[8 : 35] But I want to take it one step further because not only should we have hung where Christ hung on the cross, we should have also been where Christ was in the garden where we would have like Jesus been absolutely troubled by the sinfulness of man especially our own.

Yet because Jesus came out of his very own free will and placed himself into this agony that he experienced in this garden our prayer can actually be different from Jesus' prayer.

And so rather than praying to Father God if it is at all possible may this cup that we deserve pass from us we can actually pray to the Father and say thanks to your grace and your mercy this cup has passed to Jesus and I no longer have to fear death.

And so people this is the love we want this is actually the love that we need it's a love that no one else can give us. It meant that the cup of judgment could become a cup of blessing which we still rejoice and celebrate today.

It also means that we have a high priest who not only fully understands anything that we go through but also continues to pray for us today bringing each one of us before our Heavenly Father.

[10 : 02] Can I encourage you that if you do not yet know this love that you may today commit your heart and your life to this Jesus and may you trust in him and know his love in what we see here today for Jesus agony reveals Jesus love for us.

Now secondly we also want to see that Christ trusts the Father in his suffering. Verse 39 doesn't just tell us Jesus praying to the Father if it's possible may this cup pass from me but he also says yet not as I will but as you will.

People may be very clear that Jesus does wrestle and yet he obeys. Sometimes we don't share that enough with one another but it's okay to wrestle to wrestle with the things in life that we find difficult or find hard to understand.

Isn't that what most of the Psalms are about? People wrestling with God and yet the wrestling must always end with a submissive and a joyful obedience because this is exactly why Jesus prays not just to wrestle but also how he prays because Jesus as we'll see is when he prays he calls God his Father and it shows us so many things.

Doesn't it remind us that Jesus knows exactly who he's talking to and isn't it also a reflection of their relationship and isn't Jesus knowing that God his Father is good and cares and is not only all powerful but also all wise and Jesus knows that he's loved hence he dares to say in pure submission not my will but yours that submission is even beautifully demonstrated by Jesus actually falling face down before the Father what a picture of humility and submission and that submission again is seen in the movement in his prayer where once he prayed if this cup could pass later on in verse 42 he says but if it's not possible I'm ready people Jesus trust the

[12 : 30] Father in his suffering I wonder how we react when we face any challenges or any fear or any suffering I think a lot of us either try to run away we try to avoid discomfort at all means we maybe even put our head in the sand or we try to sort it out ourselves we place the trust in us and if we pray we don't necessarily wrestle in prayer we might just chuck it towards God and even if we wrestle we might only wrestle without the submission to follow in that sense I do wonder how much this virus and all the fear that many have experienced in the anxiety has it changed us at all I mean how easy do we find it today to truly pray not my will but yours but this people this trust that Jesus had is the trust that we need people we ought to be praying far more than we do and when we pray we must know that we're coming to our heavenly father who is good who is generous who longs to bless and works all things for the good of those who love him and people like

Jesus we must also come in that submissive humility what I would consider true worship falling face down and in many ways isn't this what the Lord's prayer is all about you may have heard this suggestion already but the hand washing for 20 seconds can be accompanied by singing happy birthday twice but it's also the time you can use much better by praying the Lord's prayer because there we pray just like Jesus our father and then we pray who art in heaven and then we worship him and say hallowed be your name that is like coming to him face down to before him and then we say your kingdom come and then exactly your will be done on earth in my life as it is in heaven people will be like Jesus trust the father in our suffering but thirdly sadly we do find a real contrast to Christ's prayerfulness in the disciples prayerlessness verse 40 and verse 41 tells us that

Jesus returns to the disciples and finds them sleeping and he says could you men not keep watch with me for one hour he asked Peter watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation for the spirit is willing but the body is weak I found it quite tempting to nearly overlook this or certainly underestimate its importance I mean we can make excuses can't we for the disciples it's late the middle of the night it's been an intense week I mean wouldn't you have fallen asleep yourself of course it's sad that they weren't more supportive but if you're anything like me I start yawning from about 930 onwards I remember in my college days somebody had organized an all night prayer meeting boy did I struggle through that indeed and yet people in the context it's very clear that the disciples sleepiness is understood first of all as disobedience disobedience to Christ's call to watch and later to watch and pray

I even wonder if it's the initial form of denial that Jesus predicted not only Peter but also his disciples to be guilty of later Matthew particularly mentions that it happened three times that they fell asleep and so even though there's no crow remember Peter had just said to Jesus I will never leave you nor forsake you but here's the beginning of him already starting to give in and give up and deny his very savior his lord but Jesus also points out that it's not just disobedience it's not just some form of denial it's actually that prayerlessness is actually dangerous he is calling to watch and pray so that they will not fall into temptation well what temptation may this be it's probably the temptation of unfaithfulness the disciples are found wanting and people I do wonder how the church compares to them how we compare for we like the disciples have also been called to watch and pray and it's interesting that in 1st Peter chapter 5 verse 6 through 8 and I wonder if Peter might have even thought back of that moment in

Gethsemane he writes humble yourselves therefore under God's mighty hand that he may lift you up in due time cast all your cares on him because he cares for you be self-controlled and alert your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion people how often do we find that combination of watching and praying of being alert because of the devil our enemy again in Ephesians chapter 6 it reads and pray in the spirit on all occasions keep alert and always keep on praying one commentator says no prayer no power people not only is prayer the secret to faithfulness and fruitfulness in our life to God but it's also the defense people insufficient prayer and a prayerless frame of mind if we're not vigilant we will be ensnared also by temptation and into temptation people were told that

[18 : 40] Jesus his Jesus Christ his soul was heavy and the disciples eyes were heavy but people even if our eyes are heavy actually exactly because our eyes are heavy we must watch and pray there is too much at stake I guess part of the problem their problem as well as our problem was just simple incomprehension of all that was going on not fully realizing what Jesus was about to do they hadn't fully grasped the love of Christ which was on display now the tiredness wouldn't have helped but all this incomprehension even of what was at stake would not have helped them in their lack in trust in the good father so people may this scene and the agony that Jesus went through for us be a great reminder not only of the great love that Christ had for us that even though he had a picture of what he was still to go through and he went through with it and for it for us may it also encourage and challenge each one of us to like him put our trust fully in the father whatever we may be suffering today and ultimately may we always be watching and praying like Jesus it's so encouraging to see that that even when the disciples fail

Jesus Jesus doesn't fail the father how wonderful to see the depth the height the width and the length of the love of God even before we get to the cross may it encourage you may it challenge you and change you forever let me pray with you just now heavenly father we thank you again for your word we thank you that it's relevant thank you that it can speak right into our situation in 2020 but thank you lord that you've taken us back this morning to that moment in which Jesus Christ saw the death which really we as sinners are due thank you that you put your trust in the father and said not my will but yours and so you willingly took your place on the cross for each one of us we thank you for that great love and we ask you to help us now to put our trust in the father also just like you and to be a church and to be a people who watch and pray so that we will not fall into that temptation of unfaithfulness for your glory in Jesus name amen