

Teachings of Jesus

Gloria Dei Lutheran Church

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Jesus' Teaching in the Gospel of Matthew (Part XI)

26:1-2, Jesus' Impending Suffering and Crucifixion

When Jesus had finished all these sayings: In a sense, the teachings of Jesus have now ended. In these last chapters, which correspond to just a few days leading up to His betrayal and crucifixion, Jesus warned His disciples and the crowd that followed Him about the corrupt religious leadership, and He spoke to His disciples very seriously about things to come and the end of the age.

You know that after two days...the Son of Man will be delivered up to be crucified: They've heard from Jesus some wonderful words about His coming kingdom, but lest they think their Messiah could not be brought low and suffer, Jesus tells them directly that this is not the case.

26:6-13, A Woman (Mary) Anoints Jesus

A woman came to Him having an alabaster flask of very costly fragrant oil: John 12 tells us that this was Mary, the sister of Lazarus and Martha; the same Mary who sat at Jesus' feet when He'd come to their house, and who and was scolded somewhat passive-aggressively by Martha. We see here that her level of devotion to Him was as strong as ever.

John also tells us the critic was Judas. But Jesus defends Mary as an example of someone who simply did a good work for Him. This extravagant giving to and for Jesus would be remembered as long as the gospel was preached.

Judas calls it a waste, but Jesus calls it a beautiful thing. We probably look silly and wasteful to unbelievers given some of the things we do, and the gifts that we give, all in the name of and to the glory of Christ and His kingdom. This is nice reminder to us, then, too, that those acts of faith and devotion, though trivialized and even disdained by the world, are loved by our Savior!

You have the poor with you always, but Me you do not have always: Jesus did *not* say this to discourage us from being generous or kind in our treatment of the poor. His words near the end of Chapter 25 encouraged radical kindness to those in need! Jesus here simply pointed out the appropriate nature of Mary's extravagance of devotion in that moment. Everyone could enjoy the fragrance of the perfume, but the act itself was all for Jesus.

She did it for My burial: Even if Mary herself did not understand the full significance of what she did, her act said something that the disciples didn't say or do. She gave Jesus the love and attention He deserved *before* His great suffering. Kings and Priests were anointed, yet here Jesus claims that she anointed Him for His burial, since it is in His sacrifice that He would ultimately become our Great King and Priest.

26:17-30, The Last Supper

Now on the first day of the Feast of the Unleavened Bread: This must have been a very moving commemoration for Jesus. Passover remembers the deliverance of Israel from Egypt, which was the central act of redemption in the Old Testament. Jesus is now about to fulfill God's ultimate plan for redemption for the entire world.

When evening had come, He sat down with the twelve: The timing might seem a bit odd to us; was this on the Passover or not? Wasn't this a day early? The Jewish day began at sundown, so Jesus ate the Passover and was killed on the same day according to the Jewish calendar. The preparations were the day before.

If Jesus ate the meal at the beginning of the Jewish day (evening), while most Jews would normally eat the Passover at the end of the day (following the night and the morning), it explains why there is no mention of Jesus eating lamb with His disciples at this meal. They ate it before the Passover lambs were sacrificed at the temple, which then corresponds with John's chronology which indicates that Jesus was crucified at about the same time that the Passover lambs were being sacrificed.

However, it would be wrong to say that there was *no* Passover lamb at the last supper; Jesus was the Passover lamb. In 1 Corinthians 5:7 Paul refers to Jesus as "... Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed."

Truly I tell you, one of you will betray me: In the midst of their Passover meal, Jesus makes this startling announcement. He tells His disciples that one of their own – one of these twelve who had lived with Him and heard and learned from Him for the past three years – would betray Him! John adds the detail that Jesus Himself was very troubled in Spirit over this. So, it's not hard to understand why the disciples all (or almost all) would react with shock, and ask, "Surely, not me?!"

Charles Spurgeon:

"It is a beautiful trait in the character of the disciples that they did not suspect one another, but every one of them inquired, almost incredulously, as the form of the question implies, 'Lord, is it I?' No one said, 'Lord is it Judas?'"

The one who has dipped his hand into the bowl with me will betray me: Jesus wasn't pointing out a specific disciple, because they *all* dipped with Him. Instead, Jesus identified the betrayer as a friend, a disciple, someone who ate at the same table with Him. This traces back to a Messianic prophecy in Psalm 41:9:

*Even my close friend, someone I trusted,
one who shared my bread, has turned against me.*

You have said it: I don't think Jesus said this to condemn Judas, but instead to call him to repentance. This is perhaps what Jesus was "troubled in Spirit" over, as John tells us.

As they were eating: We know from John's account that sometime during the evening, likely before or after this dinner, Jesus washed the disciples' feet. John also tells us that Judas left. It seems that might've happened before the celebration of the Lord's supper.

Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it: When the bread was lifted up at Passover, the head of the meal said: "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." *Everything* eaten at the Passover meal had symbolic meaning. The bitter herbs recalled the bitterness of slavery; the salt water remembered the tears shed under

Egypt's oppression. The main course of the meal – a lamb freshly sacrificed for that particular household – did not symbolize anything connected to the agonies of Egypt, however. It represented God's deliverance; the sin-bearing sacrifice that allowed the judgment of God to pass over the household that believed.

Take, eat; this is My body...: Jesus didn't offer the expected explanation of the meaning of each of the foods. He reinterpreted them *in Himself*, and the focus was no longer on the suffering of Israel in Egypt, but on the sin-bearing suffering of Jesus on their behalf.

This is My blood of the [new] covenant: This must have been utterly astounding to hear; Jesus announced the institution of a new covenant. No man could institute a new covenant between God and man; you'll recall that when God "cut" the covenant with Abraham in Genesis 15, the smoking fire pot and flaming torch were both God, and here Jesus can do this only because He is uniquely God and man. He has the authority to establish a new covenant, sealed with blood, just as the old covenant was cut with blood.

Because of Jesus' shed blood on the cross, we have a new covenant relationship with God.

This is My body... this is My blood: The understanding of these words from Jesus differs among Christians.

The Roman Catholic Church believes in "transubstantiation", which teaches that the bread and the wine become the physical body and blood of Jesus.

Lutherans believe in "consubstantiation", which teaches that the bread remains bread and the wine remains wine, but by faith Jesus is truly present in the elements in a way that we cannot necessarily explain or measure. So, Martin Luther did not believe in full transubstantiation, but he did also not stray far from it. In modern times this doctrine is often referred to as the "real presence" of Christ in the sacrament, believing Jesus' words as He spoke them, but making no statement about the physical or chemical properties of the elements.

John Calvin taught that Jesus' presence in the bread and wine is real, but only spiritual. Zwingli taught that the bread and wine are significant symbols that represent the body and blood of Jesus. When the Swiss Reformers debated the issue with Martin Luther at Marburg, there was a

huge contention. Luther insisted on some kind of real presence because Jesus said, “this is My body.” He insisted over and over again, writing it on the velvet of the table, Hoc est corpus meum – “this is My body” in Latin.

He gave thanks: In the Greek, this is the word *eucharistesas* (εὐχαριστήσας). This is why the Lord’s Supper is sometimes called the Eucharist.

Until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father’s kingdom: Jesus looked forward to a future celebration in heaven, the marriage supper of the Lamb (Revelation 19:9).

When they had sung a hymn: We might not think of Jesus as a fellow who liked to sing, because the scriptures just don’t refer to it often, but He did! He lifted His voice in adoration and worship to God the Father. I assume He sang on key, but that’s a matter of pious speculation....

More interesting, perhaps is that they sang, with Jesus knowing what suffering and pain lay ahead for Him. One could not blame him for being in a sober, somber mood, but He also knew glory lay ahead, too.

Traditionally, the Passover meal ended with the singing of three Psalms of praise known as the Hallel, Psalms 116-118. Read those Psalms, and think about how those words would have ministered to Jesus as He sang them on the night before His crucifixion.

26:31-35, Jesus Predicts Abandonment by the Disciples

All of you will be made to stumble because of Me this night: Jesus said this not to condemn His disciples, but to show them that He really was in command of the situation, and to demonstrate that the Scriptures regarding the suffering of the Messiah *must* be fulfilled.

After I have been raised: Notice how Jesus already was looking beyond the cross!

Even if I have to die with You, I will not deny You!: Peter was still unaware of both the spiritual reality and the spiritual battle that Jesus clearly saw. Peter felt bold and brave in the moment, I’m sure, but he had no perception beyond that moment. Before long, he would be intimidated before a servant girl, and he would deny to here that he even knew Jesus.

Assuredly, I say to you that this night, before the rooster crows, you will deny Me three times: Jesus knew that Peter would fail in what he thought was his strong area – courage and boldness. Through this solemn warning Jesus gave Peter an opportunity to take heed and consider his own weakness.

26:36-46, Jesus' Prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane

Then Jesus came with them to a place called Gethsemane: This is just east of the temple mount area in Jerusalem, across the ravine of the Brook of Kidron, on the lower slopes of the Mount of Olives. Gethsemane means “olive press”, and it was there that olives from around the neighborhood were crushed for their oil.

My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even to death: Jesus must have been concerned about the physical horrors of the cross. But even more so, Jesus was distressed at the spiritual horror waiting for Him there. He knew He would stand in the place of guilty sinners and receive all the punishment sinners deserve, even though He Himself deserved none of it. Jesus had to become, in effect, the Enemy of God to take that punishment, and the assumption of that role produce sheer agony in Him.

“Exceedingly sorrowful” is about as good a translation as we can muster in the English. The Greek “perilupos” (περίλυπος) conveys near-violent emotion or shock, expressing a depth literally “unto death”

If it is possible, let this cup pass from Me: Of course, there is a sense in which all things are possible with God (Matthew 19:26). Yet this is true only in a sense, because there are things that are “impossible” for God in that they would be counter to His nature. He does not do those things. For example, in Hebrews we are told “it is impossible for God to lie” (Hebrews 6:18), and that He cannot be pleased without faith (Hebrews 11:6). It was not possible for God to atone for sin and redeem lost humanity apart from the perfect, wrath-satisfying sacrifice that Jesus prepared Himself for in Gethsemane.

Nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will: It wasn't that Jesus had not decided beforehand, or had not consented before, but now He had come to a unique point of decision. He drank the cup at Calvary, but He decided once for all to drink it in Gethsemane.

Could you not watch with Me one hour?: Jesus valued and desired the help of His disciples in this battle of prayer and decision. But of course, even without their help, He endured in prayer until the battle was won.

Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation: Jesus knew Peter would fail; yet He encouraged him, knowing that the resources he would need later were found in “watching and praying”.

Jesus was actually speaking kindly about the disciples when He said, “The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.” He wasn’t making an excuse for them, but acknowledging the reality of their condition.

Rise, let us be going. See, My betrayer is at hand: Jesus knew Judas and those who would arrest Him were on the way. He could have run and escaped the agony waiting for Him at the cross, but Jesus rose to meet Judas. He was in complete control of all events.

26:47-56, Judas Betrays Jesus

With a great multitude with swords and clubs: This is interesting. Did they regard Jesus as a dangerous man with a dangerous group of zealots to defend Him? We’ve not witnessed any skirmishes in the Gospels that lead us to such a conclusion. What had Judas told them that is not recorded for us? Regardless, they came to take Him into custody with great force.

Poole:

“Those skilled in the Jewish learning tell us, that the ordinary guard of the temple belonged to the priests, and such officers as they employed; but upon their great festivals, the Roman governors added a band of soldiers, who yet were under the command of the priests.”

Greetings, Rabbi!: Judas warmly greets Jesus, even giving Him a customary kiss. But the kiss serves only to precisely identify Jesus to the authorities who came to arrest Him. There are no more hollow, hypocritical words in the Bible than “Greetings, Rabbi!” in the mouth of Judas. The words of Jesus – calling Judas “Friend”, must have hurt Jesus, if not Judas, for they were genuine, while Judas’ greeting was not.

One of those who were with Jesus stretched out his hand and drew his sword, struck the servant of the high priest, and cut off his ear: Matthew doesn’t tell us, but we know from John 18:10 that the swordsman was Peter.

He couldn't pray for an hour without nodding off, but he was ready to fight when the bad guys showed up!

He will provide Me with more than twelve legions of angels: Had Jesus wanted Divine help at this moment, He could have had it. An earthly "legion" was six thousand foot soldiers and seven hundred mounted soldiers. Considering that just one angel killed around 185,000 soldiers in one night (2 Kings 19:35), this is really saying something!

All this was done that the Scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled: With all power at His disposal, Jesus was in total command. He was not the victim of His circumstance, but He managed His circumstances for the fulfillment of prophecy to God's glory.

Then all the disciples forsook Him and fled: At this point, all the disciples scattered, running for their own safety. A few (Peter and John, at least) followed back to see what would happen at a distance. None of them stood beside Jesus and said, "I have given my life to this Man. What you accuse Him of, you may accuse me of also." Instead, what Jesus said was fulfilled: "All of you will be made to stumble because of Me" (26:31).

26:57-68, Jesus is Taken to Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin

And those who had laid hold of Jesus led Him away to Caiaphas the high priest: This was not the first appearance of Jesus before a judge or official on the night of His betrayal. We know from John's account that on the night and day of His crucifixion, Jesus actually stood in trial several times before different judges. Before Jesus came to the home of Caiaphas (the official high priest), He was led to the home of Annas, who was the ex-high priest and the "power behind the throne" (see John 18:12-14 and 18:19-23).

Where the scribes and the elders were assembled: Caiaphas had gathered a group of the Sanhedrin to pass judgment on Jesus once and for all. The trial described in Luke 22:66-71.

Peter followed Him at a distance...to see the end: Peter seems determined to prove wrong Jesus' prediction that He would deny and forsake Him at His death.

Now the chief priests, the elders, and all the council: This nighttime trial was out of bounds according to the Sanhedrin's own bylaws and regulations. According to Jewish law, all criminal trials must begin and end in the

daylight. Therefore, though the decision to condemn Jesus was already made, they conducted a second trial in daylight (Luke 22:66-71), because they knew the first one – the real trial – had no legal standing.

This was only one of many illegalities made in the trial of Jesus. According to Jewish law, only decisions made in the official meeting place were valid. The first trial was held at the home of Caiaphas, the high priest.

Also according to Jewish law, criminal cases could not be tried during the Passover season. Only an acquittal could be issued on the day of the trial. Guilty verdicts had to wait one night to allow for feelings of mercy to rise. All evidence had to be guaranteed by two witnesses, who were separately examined and could not have contact with each other. A trial always began by bringing forth evidence for the innocence of the accused, before the evidence of guilt was offered.

Oh, and false witness was *punishable by death*.

The council sought false testimony against Jesus to put Him to death, but found none: This is a remarkable testimony to the life and integrity of Jesus. For having lived such a public life and performed such a public ministry, they could not find even *false* testimony against Him.

At last two came forward and said, “This man said, ‘I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to rebuild it in three days.’”: Aha! Finally, something they could charge Jesus with -- threatening to destroy the temple (as in a modern-day bomb threat). Of course, Jesus did say “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up” as a prophecy of His resurrection, but now it was twisted into a terrorist threat.

Do You answer nothing?: Remarkably, Jesus kept silent and answered nothing until it was absolutely necessary in obedience for Him to speak. Jesus could have mounted a magnificent defense here, calling forth all the various witnesses to His deity, power and character. The people He taught, the people He healed, the dead risen, the blind who see, even the demons themselves testified to His deity. But Jesus remained silent; He was “...led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so He opened not His mouth” (Isaiah 53:7).

Tell us if You are the Christ, the Son of God!: Seeing that the trial was going badly, Caiaphas confronted Jesus, acting more as an accuser than an impartial judge.

Spurgeon:

“It was a tacit confession that Christ had been proved innocent up till then. The high priest would not have needed to draw something out of the accused one if there had been sufficient material against him elsewhere. The trial had been a dead failure up to that point, and he knew it, and was red with rage. Now he attempts to bully the prisoner that he may extract some declaration from him which may save all further trouble of witnesses, and end the matter.”

It is as you said: Instead of defending Himself, Jesus simply testifies to the truth. He was indeed the Christ, the Son of God.

You will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power: Jesus adds this word of warning. He warned them that though they sat in judgment of Him now, He would one day sit in judgment of them – and a far more binding judgment, at that.

He has spoken blasphemy!: The accusation of blasphemy would have been correct, except that Jesus was exactly who He said He was.

He is deserving of death: Their verdict reveals the depths of man’s depravity. God, in total perfection, came to earth, lived among men, and this was man’s reply to God.

They spat in His face and beat Him: They spit on Him; they hit Him with their fists; they slapped Him with their open hands. It is easy to think that they did this because they didn’t know who He was. And that is true in one sense, because they would not or could not admit to themselves that He was indeed the Messiah and the Son of God. Yet it is also not true, because they had heard His message, and rejected it. By his sinful nature man is a natural enemy of God (Romans 5:10, Colossians 1:21). For unbelieving man to literally hit, slap, and spit in God’s face is, therefore, no surprise at all.

Spurgeon suggests some ways that men still spit in the face of Jesus.

- *Men spit in His face by denying His deity.*
- *Men spit in His face by rejecting His gospel.*
- *Men spit in His face by preferring their own righteousness.*
- *Men spit in His face by turning away from Jesus.*

26:69-75, Peter Denies Jesus

A servant girl came to him: Peter was not questioned before a hostile court or even an angry mob. Peter's own fear made a servant girl and some other girl hostile enemies to be feared, and he bowed in that fear before them.

I do not know the Man!: Peter's denials grew worse each time. First, he merely lied; then he took an oath to the lie; then he began to curse and swear.

Peter remembered the word of Jesus...so he went out and wept bitterly: Peter finally remembered and took to heart what Jesus said, but now all he could do was weep bitterly. The good news is that Peter would be restored in faith and repentance, in stark contrast to Judas, who would be lost to anger, despair and death. Both men felt the weight of their sin and disgrace.

Luke tells us that just after the rooster crowed, the Lord turned and looked at Peter (Luke 22:61). Just having Jesus look at him brought Peter to repentance.

