

Good Friday Service

The Son of Man in the Hands of Men.

As they were gathering in Galilee, Jesus said to them, “The Son of Man is about to be delivered into the hands of men, and they will kill him, and he will be raised on the third day.” And they were greatly distressed.

(Matt. 17:22–23)

This passage sits as the follow-up to the Transfiguration account. As we saw a couple of weeks ago: Jesus displayed his glory on the top of the mountain, and he proved his glory down the mountain. Both Jesus’ face and hands are glorious. Moses’ radiant face would fade; Jesus’ glory remains. Moses’ radiant face was outward, borrowed from God; Jesus’ glory is from the inside out, inherent to him. Hence, that’s why he is called the Living God—he doesn’t receive life; he gives it. The Old Testament speaks of the shadow of things; Christ speaks of the essence of things.

Why? Because Christ has come, lived a perfect life, and died a sacrificial death to save us.

What’s the difference between the two testaments? The cross of Jesus Christ! It has changed the whole of history—BC and AD—history is narrated before and after him. Particularly, his cross has changed the way his people relate to God himself: In times past, people went to the Temple to worship; nowadays believers are the walking Temple of God—dwelt by him 24/7. Before, thousands of sacrifices were offered to make momentary peace between God and his people; now, Christ’s one-time sacrifice has brought eternal peace to all who believe. In the Old Testament, there was a delay of punishment; in Christ there is forgiveness and justification of sins.

When the Gospels make a connection between the Transfiguration and the cross, they are connecting glory with the cross.

This is the second time that Jesus predicts his death in plain English—or should I say, in plain Hebrew/Greek. Overall, there is nothing new here: (i) he tells them his death will be painful, (ii) it won't be an accident, and (iii) he will resurrect on the third day. That teaches us, firstly, the event will be cruel. Secondly, he chooses the event, not the other way around; he takes up the cross—it is not thrown at him. Lastly, he is going to win! Love suffered, but love wins. All of this is part of the plan; it is not an accident or a slip on a slope.

The two new pieces of information about Jesus' cross:

1. There are, however, two new pieces of information in this passage. First, in Luke, Jesus says “listen carefully” before he talks about his cross. Attention! Warning! Watch out! All those vivid expressions ring the bells for us. The ESV renders it this way: “Let these words sink into your ears.” In Greek, the word is *tithēmi*, meaning: think of having \$1,000 and setting aside \$200 into a savings account—the famous “rainy day” fund. Now that amount becomes the spotlight—untouched, purposeful. That's exactly the idea Jesus is conveying to the disciples: “My disciples, everything I say is important, but *tithēmi* (save) this—I will be murdered by men.”

And though Jesus is emphatic, repetitive, and detailed, the disciples can't understand it, they refuse to ask about it, and they sorrow because of it. They are struggling in two ways: the paradox and the emotions.

A. Firstly, they struggle with the paradox: Messiah, king, power, miracles, divinity— don't blend well with pain, defeat, and death. Read this: God dies on the cross. Can your mind comprehend such a statement? No, it can't, because the words *God* and *death* are mutually exclusive. When we put ourselves in their shoes, we become more compassionate toward them and toward our own limitations as well. The words “resurrecting on the third day” were meant to describe exactly all that they believed—Messiah, king, power, miracles, divinity—but they were not enough. They struggled just as we struggle. We have a tendency to dwell on the extremes, separating each side of the coin instead of grasping the whole coin.

B. Secondly, they struggle with the emotions: When I worked as a Case Worker, some of my clients had hoarding issues—their hearts were attached to their stuff. They had spent their whole lives living as homeless; finally, once they got a shelter to live in, they became very protective of their belongings. Whenever their accumulation increased to the point of disturbing others, I had to request that they dispose of some of their belongings. I assure you that it took time to accomplish the task. With lots of patience and kindness, step by step, I would talk and give warnings until they finally had the courage to dispose of their belongings. I can see Jesus doing the same with the disciples! Little by little, he is preparing them for that very disturbing day when he will be crucified.

2. The second valuable piece of information Jesus shares with them: **betrayal.** Not only would the Son of Man be unlawfully murdered; he would be betrayed. Jesus wasn't captured nor indicted; he was delivered—betrayed. When injustice happens to any of us, it is painful; how much more betrayal? Perhaps that's one of the worst feelings in life. It feels like you were stabbed in the back; that someone you trust pulled the rug out from under your feet; that your friend threw you under the bus. The sports world doesn't forget when players switch to the rival club. But that's not even close to the feeling Jesus had to deal with. Judas did not switch teams; he ditched his team and delivered the Head of the Church onto the platter of the enemy – with a kiss.

Conclusion:

Lastly, these verses have a visual theme to them. See that Jesus calls himself the “Son of Man,” that divine being prophesied by the prophet Daniel. He says that the “Son of Man” will be delivered into the hands of “men.” He who is **greater** has been delivered to the **smaller**—by whom? By someone who walks **next** to him.

As we celebrate Communion on this Good Friday, the words of the Apostle Paul agree with this passage:

For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on 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." For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

(1 Cor. 11:23–26)

Only Jesus Christ is able to:

- Turn death into life.
- Turn betrayal into fellowship.
- Turn sorrow into joy.

There's a fellow Brazilian named Augusto Cury; he is a psychiatrist, and he used to be an atheist. He called himself more atheist than Nietzsche or Marx. As a psychiatrist, he set out to study the greatest figures in history. He wanted to understand how their minds exceeded the average ones. He eventually ventured into the Gospels to analyze the mind of Jesus Christ. When he read that Judas betrayed him with a kiss, and that our Lord's reaction was to call him "friend," he was speechless. Augusto Cury is now a believer.