

**CELEBRATE EASTER 2017
GOOD FRIDAY - THE CROSS**

Luke 18:31-34

And taking the twelve, he said to them, "See, we are going up to Jerusalem, and everything that is written about the Son of Man by the prophets will be accomplished. For he will be delivered over to the Gentiles and will be mocked and shamefully treated and spit upon. And after flogging him, they will kill him, and on the third day he will rise." But they understood none of these things. This saying was hidden from them, and they did not grasp what was said.

As we continue our Easter series, concluding of course this Sunday on Easter Sunday, looking at the Resurrection in Luke Chapter 24, tonight we go back to this passage in Luke 18, where Jesus gives his third prediction of the cross and the Resurrection. When we read this, we understand that the disciples, the apostles, are not understanding what Jesus is saying. They are completely without comprehension, even to the point where you want to ask, "Well, Jesus, why are you even taking the time to tell them and to explain to them?" But there is a purpose. There is a purpose from the Lord in these passages.

When you take something that's prophetic and it's looking forward, we often find that the fulfillment completely surprises us. Though it's not unclear, it is still surprising to us in the way that it's actually fulfilled. Of course, that was the case here with the prediction that Jesus is making.

But when you, after the fulfillment, go back and look at the prediction, it's interesting how it brings a vividness, an understanding to the actual fulfillment. You understand that that detail was not an accident. It was purposeful. It was intentional. And God told us that this would happen. He prophesied it through the prophets. He told us through our Lord and Savior that this would happen. We see the glory of God magnified and the scope of our understanding is enlarged. That's certainly the case here when we look back at Luke 18 and this prediction. It provides for us a certain clarity after the fact.

Jesus tells them, "We are going to Jerusalem." We need to remind ourselves that the gospels tell us that things did not go well in Jerusalem for Jesus. His life was always in danger. This was the center of the controversy and the most dangerous place for Jesus to be. Jesus is telling them, "We

are going back.” I would think that their thoughts would be, “Well, we are going back. Let’s hope we are able to escape again.” Or maybe they were thinking, “We’ll go back and this time Jesus will overthrow all of those that oppose him. But in reality Jesus tells them, “We are going to Jerusalem and this time I’m going to die. I’m going to give my life.”

So, we want to just make several observations here about what this passage teaches us about the cross. There is an outline for you in the worship brochure. You are welcome to use that and follow along.

1. The cross is the will of God.

Verse 31: “And taking the twelve, he said to them, “See, we are going up to Jerusalem, and everything that is written about the Son of Man by the prophets will be accomplished.” Everything that is written about the Son of Man will be accomplished. The cross is the will of God. Jesus is predicting -- in line now with the Old Testament prophecies that were not really understood -- he is predicting his suffering. It has already been prophesied.

This is so important because it helps us to understand something that the scripture makes so clear. This is the will of God. God did this to give us an understanding that this is the work of redemption and that God’s payment for our sin is complete. There is nothing lacking in Jesus Christ. He pays the debt that we owe for our sin completely, leaving nothing undone.

And it reminds us that before the cross the disciples opposed the entire idea. They didn’t understand it. Not only did they not understand it, when Jesus tried to teach them -- do you remember in Matthew Chapter 16 when he tried to teach Peter about the cross, Peter actually said, “No, Lord, I’ll prevent it; I’ll save you from the cross.” But after the cross, the disciples understood: “Oh, this was necessary! This was the necessary, intended work of God to save us, and now it’s God’s call for us as followers of Jesus Christ.”

We mustn’t be surprised when God leads us to Jerusalem. Sometimes we want to think that life is all about taking the easy way and the most comfortable way, but this is clearly not what is taught to us in God’s word. Don’t get fearful as soon as we say that, because the cross teaches us that God’s salvation is complete. His way is glorious. So, #1 - it’s the will of God.

2. The cross reveals the heart of mankind.

Verse 32: “For he will be delivered over to the Gentiles and will be mocked and shamefully treated and spit upon. And after flogging him, they will kill him, and on the third day he will rise.” There’s something interesting here: He will be handed over. Who is handing him over? The Jewish leaders, and they have the support of the Jewish people there in Jerusalem, handing him over to the Gentiles, and the Gentile rulers will crucify Jesus. Well, Jew and Gentile - who is left?

It’s a compelling point that though all agreed and it was obvious that Jesus was innocent, there was support for his crucifixion. Even more than that, when we read the whole gospel account, we see that one of his own apostles betrayed him. And Peter, really the leader of the apostles, denied him, and all of his disciples abandoned him in this moment. The point is simply to say that there are no exceptions. This reveals our great need for salvation.

Now, what do we do with that? Is God’s intention for us to live under this canopy of guilt and shame? “I’m just unworthy?” That’s not the message. That’s not the final message of the cross. It’s to say this to us, though, it is to tell us: Don’t put your trust in anything other than Jesus Christ. Run from every other form of salvation. Run from every temptation to put your trust in anything other than Jesus Christ. And run to him. He is the perfect Savior. He is completely sufficient to save us and to meet our needs. Scripture tells us that Jesus is not just someone who gives us the way, gives us the truth, gives us the life - he is the way, the truth and the life. He is our salvation. He is our sanctification. He is our redemption. Jesus is sufficient. The cross teaches us something about ourselves so that we will look to Christ alone for our salvation.

3. Gloriously, the cross is victory over death.

The end of verse 33: “...and on the third day he will rise.” This is, of course, the joy that is ours on Easter Sunday. The empty tomb signals to us that sin is defeated, our debt has been paid, and death is conquered. The perfect sacrifice of Jesus has been accepted and we are free.

We have been set free from fear, as Paul tells his son in the Lord, Timothy, in Chapter 1. Do you remember that Timothy battled fear? He had a nervous stomach. He battled anxiety. You can imagine that’s your spiritual weakness, then you have the Apostle Paul as your spiritual dad -- fearless, bold, in prison and still preaching at the top of his lungs. And Paul’s encouragement to his son in the Lord is: Don’t fear. Don’t be afraid and don’t be ashamed when I suffer or when God calls on you to go through a trial. He reminds him of this glorious truth: Jesus has abolished death,

and the fear of it is gone, and all that we associate with it is gone. We have a very certain hope that is ours because Jesus has conquered death.

4. The cross is hidden.

This is obvious from the passage. They just didn't understand it. "They understood none of these things." We are told that "...this saying was hidden from them, and they did not grasp what was said." We understand that the scripture makes it clear that for those who don't know Jesus Christ, there is a certain way in which the cross appears to be foolishness. Paul in 1 Corinthians 1 said, "...but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles..." But the Spirit of God graciously comes in and opens the eyes of our hearts to help us see that the cross is actually the wisdom of God, and that in it, we receive the salvation of our souls, freedom from the bondage of sin, abundant life, the promise of eternal life, the presence of his Spirit.

So tonight I want to invite you...this service is not typical for us. It's intentionally reflective. It's something that we don't do naturally as a culture. We tend to want to be up and a little bit on the side of hyped. We almost measure, if we're not careful, our spiritual experiences according to those highs. But it's so appropriate for us to stop on a night like tonight and consider the cost of our salvation. Consider the love of God that's displayed in that salvation. Consider the completeness of our salvation that's provided in Christ, and also in a very real way to understand that this is God's call for every disciple.

Though in this brief moment in history we may live largely free from that dynamic, we do well to remind ourselves that a week ago on Palm Sunday, churches in Egypt were exploded because Christians were gathering to worship Jesus Christ. And if God has ordained for us a time where the carrying of our cross and following him and partaking of this wonderful salvation is not a time which involves overt persecution, let us use this freedom to not only pray for those that are, but to give our lives in this freedom for the proclamation of the good news of who Jesus Christ is, and to celebrate the joy that is ours in Jesus.

So, we are going to prepare now to worship the Lord at the Lord's table.