

Text Matthew 26:36-39

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³⁸ Then he said to them, "My soul is very sorrowful, even to death; remain here, and watch^[d] with me." ³⁹ And going a little farther he fell on his face and prayed, saying, "My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will."

Main Point

Sorrow from impending wrath

Introduction (300)

Hook

Can you imagine what a condemned criminal faces the day before his execution?

Alone in his cell knowing that when the sun rises that will be his last day.

What would fill his mind in those moments?

Fear of his coming death. Fear of what comes after?

Regret of his past actions? Regret at the harm he has caused?

Questioning if anyone would miss him?

Desperation, Panic, sorrow, and a deeply troubled soul.

To know this was your last day would deeply affect anyone.

Today, on this easter Friday, we consider Jesus on the night before his execution. He too knew death was imminent. He too was deeply troubled and his soul was full of sorrow.

But his sorrow and the trouble of his soul were different from a criminal awaiting just punishment.

His trouble was different because he was innocent, but he was about to face the wrath of God.

Outline

Today we turn our minds to the Garden of Gethsemane. The place where Jesus stood in the face of impending wrath.

And as he stood there, as he knelt there, and fell on his face there in desperation, there his soul was troubled. There he felt sorrow beyond imagination.

This is a dark time in the life of our saviour. A dark time in history.

And the gospel writer, Matthew, records it for us in this passage.

In these verses we will turn our minds to the **Countless sorrows** Jesus faced

Then we see the **Cup of Sorrow** that Jesus was about to drink

And finally, we see Jesus **Resolved** in the face of **Sorrow**

Part 1 – Countless Sorrow

Exposition

Context/background

So, first let us turn our minds to the countless sorrows Jesus faced in that moment.

The events of Jesus praying in the Garden follows from a hectic week in Jerusalem for Jesus and his disciples.

Jesus and his disciples had been heading to Jerusalem for some time, but even this journey was full of turmoil.

Before they even reach Jerusalem, Jesus explicitly explains to his disciples that he is about to be executed. In Matt 20:17-19 we read:

¹⁷ And as Jesus was going up to Jerusalem, he took the twelve disciples aside, and on the way he said to them,

¹⁸ “See, we are going up to Jerusalem. And the Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests and scribes, and they will condemn him to death ¹⁹ and deliver him over to the Gentiles to be mocked and flogged and crucified, and he will be raised on the third day.”

Jesus knew what was about to happen. He knew why he was on earth. He knew why he was going to Jerusalem.

The disciples still did not get it, and they would have been further confused when it seems the whole city of

Jerusalem welcomed Jesus into the city as if he was a King. The people lay down their cloaks on the road as Jesus rides into the city and they call out:

“Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!”

And then Jesus cleansed the temple, teaches with authority and even rebukes the Pharisees and Sadducees publicly. In the midst of these triumphant events, the disciples would have pushed the notion Jesus dying far from their minds.

But the reality of his death is never far from Jesus’s mind. In Matt 26:1-2 we read

When Jesus had finished all these sayings, he said to his disciples, ² “You know that after two days the Passover is coming, and the Son of Man will be delivered up to be crucified.”

And so, following these hectic days, Jesus and his disciples sit down to eat the Passover meal. And even here a lot is happening. During this time, Jesus institutes the Lord’s supper, he prays for his disciples, he even washes his disciple's feet.

And then when the meal is finished, around midnight, they leave the upper room and go to a nearby garden.

And this is where our passage pickup:

*³⁶ Then Jesus went with them to a place called Gethsemane, and he said to his disciples, “Sit here, while I go over there and pray.” ³⁷ And taking with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, he began **to be sorrowful and troubled**.*

³⁸ Then he said to them, “My soul is very sorrowful, even to death; remain here, and watch^[d] with me.”

Total rejection

Why is he sorrowful and troubles? Because He knows.

He knows what is coming. He knows what is happening even then.

He knew he would be betrayal by Judas. One of his own close followers. One who called him master and teacher. One whom he loved.

He knew, that when the moment came, his remaining followers too would desert him too. He knew he would be left alone and abandoned.

He knew that Peter would deny him three times. He knew that Peter would curse him and turn his back on him. Even Peter, one who was so bold and zealous.

He knew that Israel was rejecting him. The very ones he had come to save, the ones he wanted to rescue from the fire, were spitting in his face and stabbing him in the back.

He knew the blatant injustice he was about to face. He knew that he, the author of justice would be subject to injustice. To corrupt officials and lying witnesses, all in the name of God.

He knew he would be cursed and mocked

He knew he would face suffering and death.

*“He was despised and rejected^[b] by men,
a man of sorrows^[c] and acquainted with^[d] grief;^[e]
and as one from whom men hide their faces^[f]
he was despised, and we esteemed him not”. (Isiah 53:3)*

We can see why he would say

“My soul is very sorrowful, even to death..

Becoming Sin

But these things are not the worst of it.

Above and beyond the rejection, above and beyond the betrayal, above and beyond injustice, he was about to face the horror of becoming sin.

He was about to receive the blame for our sin. He was about to take on the responsibility for the actions of wicked people. And not in a hypothetical way. In a very real and concrete way.

2 Cor 5:21 explains this for us

²¹ For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

It is hard to imagine the horror of it.

For someone who has never sinned to bear the guilt of countless sins.

The shame, the guilt, the desperation, the regret, the remorse, the fear, the desire to hide, The feeling of being unclean, unworthy and unwanted.

All that to be heaped on the sinless soul of Jesus.

Illustrate becoming sin

Jesus felt the curse of sin like no one else could. The sting and the evilness of it in a way we could never fathom.

He was made sin. He was not just around sin, observing sin. He was made sin.

Cold blooded murderer or rapist may not feel the weight of guilt and shame, although their crime are hideous, because they justify their evil actions.

We too do not grasp the seriousness of sin and often justify our sinful behaviour. So it is hard to imagine what it would feel like for a perfect person to be made responsible for sin.

But imagine the guilt and shame you would feel if you accidentally ran over a child while driving. You have no intention of this, but you are responsible. The inner turmoil could drive you to insanity. The guilt and the shame would be overwhelming.

In a similar way, Jesus would feel the guilt like no one else because those actions are in complete opposition of who he is. The very thought of these evils would repulse him, but he is about to take responsibility for them.

He would be declared guilty of murder, of rape, of hatred, of malice, of gossip, of lust, of disobedience to parents, of lying, of thieving, of adultery, of fornication, of child abuse, of worship of idols, of converting, of blaspheming, of all the evils and the sins you can think of.

He would be declared guilty of all these things. He would feel the weight of the shame and guilt of all these things in a way none of us could every imagine.

The perfect holy one was about to be made sin.

Oh, we can get a glimpse now, of why Jesus was “*very sorrowful, even to death...*”

Part 2 – Cup of Sorrow

But the horror of becoming sin does not end with guilt and shame.

Sins are crimes against a holy and just God. And it is right for God to be angry at sinners. Angry at those responsible for sins.

And so when we read of a cup, in verse 39, this is referring to God's wrath. To his holy and righteous anger against sin and sinners. That is the cup Jesus was about to drink.

*³⁹ And going a little farther he fell on his face and prayed, saying, "My Father, if it be possible, **let this cup pass from me**; nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will."*

Exposition

OT passages

Let me read through a few passages in the Old Testament and notice how scripture talks about this cup...

The cup is the metaphor. The real thing is the wrath of God...

Ps 11:6

*⁶ Let him rain coals on the wicked;
fire and sulfur and a scorching wind shall be the
portion of their cup.*

Ps 75:8

*For in the hand of the Lord there is a cup
with foaming wine, well mixed,*

*and he pours out from it,
and all the wicked of the earth
shall drain it down to the dregs.*

Isaiah 51:17

*¹⁷ Wake yourself, wake yourself,
stand up, O Jerusalem,
you who have drunk from the hand of the Lord
the cup of his wrath,
who have drunk to the dregs
the bowl, the cup of staggering.*

Jeremiah 49:12

¹² For thus says the Lord: "If those who did not deserve to drink the cup must drink it, will you go unpunished? You shall not go unpunished, but you must drink. ¹³ For I have sworn by myself, declares the Lord, that Bozrah shall become a horror, a taunt, a waste, and a curse, and all her cities shall be perpetual wastes."

Ezekiel 23:31-33

³¹ You have gone the way of your sister; therefore I will give her cup into your hand. ³² Thus says the Lord God:

*"You shall drink your sister's cup
that is deep and large;
you shall be laughed at and held in derision,
for it contains much;*

*³³ you will be filled with drunkenness and sorrow.
A cup of horror and desolation,
the cup of your sister Samaria;*

And finally, Hab 2:16

*¹⁶ You will have your fill of shame instead of glory.
Drink, yourself, and show your uncircumcision!
The cup in the Lord's right hand*

*will come around to you,
and utter shame will come upon your glory!*

The Cup Jesus is about to drink

This is the cup Jesus is about to drink. The cup reserved for the enemies of God. The cup of wrath and judgement.

Rain of coals, fire, sulfur, a scorching wind, a horror, a taunt, a waste, a curse, a perpetual waste, laughed at, held in derision, horror, desolation and shame.

This is the wrath of God against sin.

This is the torment of Hell.

This is the cup Jesus is about to drink. These are the realities he is about to face.

The cup is the horror of hell, and Jesus in the garden, peers into it. He sees what he must endure. He feels not only the filth of sin but the just consequence of sin.

It is not without reason that He cries “*my God my God why have you forsaken me*” when he drinks this cup to the full.

It is not without reason that, pending this moment, he is “*very sorrowful, even to death...*”

The cup is poured and he is about to be drunk.

Application

This cup was for us

This cup should have been for us to drink. By right, we should all take part in this cup for the sins we have committed.

We were the enemies of God. We deserved the rain of coal, the fire and the sulfur.

We are the rebels. We deserve the curse, the horror and the shame.

Not him. He was sinless. He was perfect. He never did wrong. Always did right.

But for some reason, somehow, He chose to drink that cup on our behalf. To carry the weight of the wrath of God in our place so that we may live.

And here we see the great pain, the great sorrow, the great anguish that it is for him to do that. Here we get a glimpse of the price he was willing to pay to rescue us. To save us. To restore and redeem us.

We see that he was willing to endure untold agony so that we might live.

Part 3 – Resolved Sorrow

And it is not without inner conflict that he considers this task at hand. Look at verse 39 again.

*³⁹ And going a little farther he fell on his face and prayed, saying, “My Father, **if it be possible**, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will.”*

Exposition

Possible to save another way?

“If it be possible let this cup pass form me”.

When Jesus says “*if it be possible*”, He is not asking if it is possible for him to escape. That God would show him a back door out of the garden and run from the

Roman soldiers. We know he has the power to walk straight through a blood thirsty mob, and the power to bring soldiers down with one word.

No, when he said "*if it be possible*" he is asking, pleading if there is an alternative to saving mankind.

He is not trying to worm himself out of a difficult task. He is struck with the horror of what he must do and considers if there are any alternatives.

And the struggle is real. This is not right. This is not justice. That the holy one would be made sin. That the righteous one would be punished. That Jesus Christ should feel the torments of Hell. This is not justice.

The son of God deserves honour, glory and absolute worship. That is right and just.

But something beyond justice is at work. Something more than justice drives Jesus. Because there is no other way, because there is no alternative, because this is the only way to save his people, he will do it.

He will put aside what he rightly deserves and he will show unmerited favour towards his people.

He will take on sin because he loves his people.

He will show grace regardless of what is just.

He is prepared to suffer the wrath of God to make a way for sinners to be reconciled to God.

This is why he came and thus he said "*nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will.*"

Turning to God for strength

And the struggle is hard. The turmoil is real. The inner conflict rages.

And in the midst of his turmoil, he turns to His Father in Prayer. He turns to His Father for strength.

We are given but these few lines, but the account shows that Jesus prayed for at least an hour and probably more.

Fervent, earnest prayer. Pouring out his heart, his sorrow and his troubled soul.

And in his praying, he also submits. In his praying his human will submits to the will of the Father.

The struggle was real, but the outcome is decisive

Once decision made no turning back

Even as he contemplates the cup of wrath, he is resolved to save his people.

And this resolve will lead him all the way to prison, to be beaten, to be mocked, and to be crucified. But his resolve is firm.

His resolve is strengthened after the turmoil in the garden. Like any of us, once the decision point had passed, confidence grows and action becomes simple. So too with Jesus.

Just moments after his agony in the garden, as Jesus is about to be arrested, and his disciples seem to want to defend him, we see his resolve in action when he says to Peter:

¹¹ So Jesus said to Peter, "Put your sword into its sheath; shall I not drink the cup that the Father has given me?" (John 18:11)

The inner conflict was over. Jesus was resolved.

He would drink the cup that day. He would drain it down to the dregs. He would suffer the wrath of God in the place of sinners. He would pay for all their sins.

Later that day, as he hung there on the cross in agony, suffering the punishment for my sins, for yours and countless others, he would cry out, *"It is finished,"*

Because it was. It was finished. He had drunk the cup of the wrath of God, and he had drunk it to the bitter end.

His work was done, and he breathed his last.

Application

There is no other way

In the Garden, Jesus asked the Father, *"If it be possible let this cup pass from me"*.

But it was not possible. There is no other way to reconcile sinners to a holy God. The work of Jesus on the cross is the only way.

If there was another way, Jesus would not have faced the agony he did. But there is no other way.

And the fact that the Son of God had to suffer and die to rescue you should highlight the seriousness of your situation and the seriousness of sin.

We are all sinners against God. We have all broken his law. We all deserve punishment. We all deserve to drink the cup of his wrath.

Either you rely on the fact that Jesus paid for your sins, or you will face the wrath of God for all of your sins. Which will it be.

There is no other way to escape.

Conclusion

As we bring out time together to a close, let us keep these things in our minds over this easter weekend.

Let us keep pondering the countless sorrows that Jesus faced. Yes, the rejection and the physical pain, but also the horror of becoming sin. The guilt and the shame he choose to take upon himself for our sake.

Let us keep thinking about the Cup of God's wrath that that so repulsed Jesus, but that he took willingly regardless of it's agony.

Let us keep thinking about the fact that that cup should be ours to drink. By right we should have drank it, not him. But by Grace we have been spared it's horror.

Let us keep thinking about resolve Jesus showed despite the sorrow. The quite confidence and strength that came from submitting to the will of the Father.

The resolve that led him all the way to the cross and to the tomb.

Let us Pray