

Luke 22:39-53

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[0 : 00] Well, we're spending morning and evening in Luke's Gospel. We don't normally do that, but I've really, really enjoyed it actually. I wonder whether we should do it more often. Kind of wallow in the book of the Bible. And that's what we're going to do. It's my last Sunday before holiday next week.

And we should go to Luke 23 to 25. Verse 25, I think. I read a letter in this past week that was written by a colonel in the German army who at the age of 42, having been falsely accused of taking part in an attempt to assassinate Adolf Hitler, he was executed, put to death in October 1944. His name, Alexis Van Renn. And a few minutes before his execution, by hanging, he penned these words to his wife.

My dearest beloved, in a moment, I shall be going home to our Lord in complete calm and in the certainty of salvation. These words remind us, don't they, of another man, a more famous man, who was executed the next year, in 1945.

He was hanged in Flossenburg. And the camp doctor, who had witnessed many, many executions, gave this testimony. The man's name was Deidre Bonhoeffer.

[1 : 25] The doctor said this, I was most deeply moved by the way this lovable man prayed, so devout and so certain that God has heard his prayer.

At the place of execution, he again said a short prayer and then climbed the steps to the gallows, brave and composed. In the almost 50 years I worked as a doctor, I have hardly seen a man die so entirely submissive to the will of God.

And so my question is this, what happened to the Lord Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane? What happened to the Lord Jesus there? Because there's no tranquility there, is there?

There's no calmness of spirit. His experience is that of anxiety, it is that perspiration falls onto the ground in death's family, like great drops of blood hitting the ground.

Luke tells us, and he is the most discreet of all the Gospel writers, he describes the event. And he tells us that our Lord Jesus was in agony as he faced his death.

[2 : 33] Mark tells us that he was in such a state of kind of mental exhaustion, he felt such pressure on the eve of his crucifixion, that the only language he would use, which we would use, is to describe somebody so shocked by what he or short saw, that they're driven to total distraction.

And yet the strange thing is that what this Saviour experienced before his death in the garden of Gethsemane, explains why those wonderful Christian believers have faced their death in such peace and even anticipation, isn't it?

And even joy. It is this unique Gethsemane that we look at tonight that makes it possible for me and for you to find God's grace and God's peace in the midst of all the world has to throw at us.

And that is the reason why millions of Christians have died peacefully in the face of execution for their faith. The only possible explanation for that is the Lord Jesus Christ and Gethsemane.

And this is the beginning of what Jesus is about to experience in the course of these next few hours. And I think it's important for us to realise that what Luke is doing is Luke is taking us to the very edge, to the very edge of the most sacred day in history in the whole universe.

[4 : 02] It's the day that makes Christian believers, it makes it possible for Christian believers to die sinning because our Saviour died crying.

Do you remember how the writer of the Hebrews says, the writer of the Hebrews says that with loud crying and tears Jesus prayed that his Father would save him from death.

Such is the pressure on the Lord Jesus here in the Garden of Gethsemane that the pressure itself is in danger of killing him. And I want to try and explore, and yet tonight even the greatest mind amongst us can only go so far.

I want us to think about this passage which takes us to the wonder of the Gospel and to the heart of what we hold so dear, our salvation. And it helps us to understand why it was Martin Luther said that the reason Christians no longer have fear of death is because no man feared death like this man.

And Luke takes us to the heart of it. Instead it happens chronologically and geographically. And he's actually prepared us, hasn't he? He's been preparing virtually all the way through his Gospel. [5 : 17] In chapter 2 he emphasised the absolute reality of the humanity of our Lord Jesus. That he grew in stature.

And he grew more and more facing the task that his Father placed before him. So he not only increased in wisdom, and in the way he so wisely used God's Word in so many different circumstances, especially in temptation, but he grew in favour with men.

Not only with man, but with God also. And we must never lose sight that there's a sense in which in these verses Jesus enters a kind of no man's land. Between heaven and earth.

That'll be seen, won't it, in that really mysterious cry on the cross, my God, my God, my God, why have you forsaken me? There was, there was never a day, was there?

There was never a day in his life when his Father loved him more than this day. And that is where this great paradox and mystery lies.

[6 : 27] It lies at the very heart of the Gospel of God's grace. It says that his Son was obedient to the Father's will. And was brought to a place of awful isolation.

And dereliction. On the cross of Calvary. Where he seems to have lost all sense of his Father's favour on him.

Crying out, my God, my God, why have you forsaken me? That was the hour. and because of that amazing obedience his father must have sung, his father must have been able to sing that song if ever I loved you, my Jesus is now there seems to be three stages, as there nearly always is that I want us to focus on tonight and the first is that Luke is drawing our attention to the Lord Jesus' isolation his isolation from his disciples and from all humanity his isolation from the disciples and all humanity he began to prepare us for that in chapter 7 and 9 you've got the transfiguration and that discussion between Jesus and Moses and Elijah and they discuss at the end of chapter 9 what is the exodus that Jesus is about to accomplish and the disciples, those three, they would have got a glimpse of what was about to happen in that discussion because the exodus began, didn't it, how did it begin?

the exodus began with a terrible night of darkness and death and judgment and we need to notice that it is within a few verses of that turning point, isn't it?

he speaks about the transfiguration of his exodus that you get to chapter 9 where Jesus steadfastly sets his face to go to Jerusalem and you get a picture of a group of disciples who have been around Jesus but now they begin to follow Jesus at a distance they are slightly mystified at this determination of his to go to Jerusalem they don't understand it and in a sense there is distance again and again he explains what he's doing and again and again they don't get it and now as he goes to the garden of Gethsemane it's interesting how the story is set up so look at verse 39 and he came out and went as was his custom to the Mount of Olives and the disciples followed him they are not around him they are following him and there is it where you would see if there was a movie there's another scene, isn't it?

[9 : 01] in the city of Jerusalem there's another man there's another force there's another power there's the dark side of Judas and he is leading another group of men but they have swords and they have clubs and Jesus says to them this is your hour and the hour is the hour of the power of darkness and Jesus is going to be isolated from those he counts near and dear and isolated from those who came to arrest him and it's really clear the ESV helps us here look at the titles that follow Betrayal and Arrest of Jesus denial of Jesus Jesus is mocked Jesus before the council Jesus before Pilate Jesus before Herod Pilate delivers Jesus to be crucified the crucifixion the death of Jesus Jesus is buried and so more and more as you walk through these passages you see that Jesus is going into a sphere which no one can enter and follow him no one can stand before him beside him at the cross in chapter 23 verse 48 there it is isn't it there are crowds that have assembled but all his acquaintances and the women that are followed 23 verse 48 from Galilee they stood at a distance watching these things none of the ransomed knew how deep were the waters crossed or how dark was the night that the Lord passed through ere he found the sheep that was lost there's an isolation of Jesus at the heart of the gospel he goes where none other can go and

where he goes is not only isolation but Luke makes it vividly clear the way that he tells this story that Jesus' isolation had to do with Jesus' substitution

Jesus' isolation and secondly Jesus' substitution and I think we never grasp the gospel you never grasp the gospel until you understand that the death he died was not his death but our death and Luke expresses that in very dramatic simplicity I wonder if you were making a film of this think about that if you were thinking about a film like this this is what I would do Jesus he moves from the upper room to the garden of Gethsemane and my camera would follow him there as he went and then it would move backwards to the upper room to the upper room where they had left and it would focus on that cup do you remember we saw it last week that cup that's sitting on the table the cup of blessing in the Passover meal that Jesus as he picked up that cup he said I will not drink of the fruit of this vine again until I drink it anew in my father's kingdom and then he gives that cup of blessing to his disciples and he says drink drink deeply of the cup of blessing it's a wonderful thing what can we give to the Lord for all his benefits towards us we will take the cup of salvation that is the cup of blessing through faith in Christ the blessings of grace and salvation and fellowship with the father and all these things he offers that family around the table and he says to his disciples drink deeply of this cup and then Achim would zoom back out to the garden of Gethsemane and it's a shadowy figure there isn't it as he kneels and he prays at a distance for his beloved disciples and the darkness is pierced by a prayer the prayer that you hear is father if it is possible let this cup pass from me and you know the bible makes it very clear what that cup is too there are many references to that cup in the old testament that is the terrible cup of judgment that will fall upon sinners it's fascinating go home and look at some of the passages and you notice so many things that they say that will happen to whoever drinks that cup of judgment are quite literally fulfilled in the experience of Jesus you will drink and be moved and be driven to destruction your glory will be turned into shame you will be demeaned and you will be mocked and you see what is happening here in this picture the Lord Jesus has given to his disciples the cup of salvation the cup of blessing and said drink this cup and drink it deeply but the only way that they can drink the cup of salvation and blessing is if he goes to the garden of Gethsemane and drinks this other cup because this isn't simply an experience of human isolation this is isn't it the saviour's commitment to an act of saving substitution and the whole Bible comes to its epicenter it's like those Old Testament pictures of atonement the sacrifice of two goats over which the priest would confess the sins of the people one was to be slain and the other was to be taken into a no man's land by the hand of a worthy man and then let loose and there in the wilderness he bore the sin and the guilt of the people and here is Jesus beginning to enter into the fulfilment of those two pictures he bears our sin and our guilt and he goes out into that awful wilderness that he is beginning to experience and within hours he will become the sacrifice for our sins it's precisely as Isaiah prophesied he would be led as a lamb to the slaughter and as a sheep before his shearers he would be done he would be wounded for our transgressions he would be bruised for our iniquities the chastisement that would bring us peace would be upon him with his stripes we will be healed it's the absolute heart of the gospel isn't it that he dies in order that we might live forever that he bears God's judgment in order that we might be free of it he goes into the darkness that you might come into the light he chases our guilt that we might experience his righteousness he takes our curse in order that we would know his blessing that's how the apostles understood what Jesus was doing God makes him to be sin for us him who knew no sin Paul says in order that this great exchange that we might become the righteousness of God Galatians 3:13 God makes Jesus a curse in order that the blessing might come to us it is not only isolation it is isolation in the most radical sense in order that there might be substitution taking place of Jesus taking my place under [16:41] God's judgment to bring me into God's amazing blessing there is a green hill far away outside a city wall where the dear Lord was crucified why was he crucified he died to save us all we may not know we cannot tell what pains he had to bear but we believe it was for us he hadn't suffered there rock of ages cleft for me in my place condemned he stood sealed my pardon with his blood and that is what makes us want to stand up at times in a very Presbyterian way and mumble hand as we stand on the outskirts of God's family Christ isolation Christ substitution Christ submission thirdly you see what he says in the garden he says not my will but yours and that is an amazing statement it's amazing for this reason I hope clearly it indicates to you that there is nothing absolutely nothing in the Lord

Jesus that would encourage him to drink this cup he is really saying to his father think about this if you can he is saying to his father this is not my will how could it be how could it be about the will of the perfectly holy saviour to want to do anything that would lead him into a position where he cried out my God my God why have you forsaken me no holy man could do that to will to be forsaken by God would be sin wouldn't it Jesus was a holy man so there's nothing about this situation that in any sense whatsoever naturally attracts his his holy humanity his holy humanity runs from this situation father if it's possible let this cup pass from me we must never minimise the reality of that statement by the fact that

Jesus says not my will but yours be done so I wonder if you see what's happening here Luke has been setting it up so we understand it right from the very beginning do you remember how he said early all in Luke's chapter he's saying very clearly that Jesus is the last Adam he's the son of Adam Jesus is paying the price for Adam's sin and Jesus is reversing all that Adam did in his disobedience remember Genesis 3 Adam came to a tree and it tells us that every tree in the garden of the knowledge every tree in the garden including the tree of the knowledge of good and evil is described in identical terms that it was beautiful to behold and delicious to eat the fruit but about this one tree God has given a command do not eat from the tree from that tree and there is nothing in Adam's nature that says don't eat that trees fruit there's nothing that says in Adam's nature don't eat apart from

God's bare naked command and the will of his heavenly father that says to Adam in the garden of Eden it says trust me and obey me for there's no other way to be happy but to trust and obey trust me Adam but Adam disobeyed and Adam rebelled against God so now we come to another garden and you are with the last Adam a second Adam to the fight and to the rescue came and he is going to an altogether different kind of tree isn't he he's going to a tree that is of such a nature that everything in his holy humanity wants to resist it oh father no isolation from you you imagine it is actually inconceivable isn't it what this must have meant to him he'd never known a time in all of his life when he wasn't conscious of his heavenly father smiling upon him loving him pouring out his favour upon him delighting him in him and he comes to this tree and there is nothing about this tree that could possibly attract him but it is his heavenly father's will there was a greed in concert with his son from before the foundation of the world that his son would be submissive to the father's will in an obedience in which there was no attraction whatsoever in the deed of son that he was summoned to do and knowledge how much he loves you and me and there in the garden of gethsemane in this great moment it's what Paul speaks of isn't it in Philippians chapter he became obedient even unto death even the death of cross and he's really saying as he looks at this but father this is on a cursed tree he knew his bible to the lord jesus cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree

Paul knew the same bible galatians 3 13 he was hanged on a tree and therefore he tasted the curse of god that would bring such desolation upon him and as we meditate on it we think jesus how could he do this for me he's done this for us he's done this for me can you understand the wonder of soul of tarsus being able to say the son of god loved me and gave himself for me and it is this that brings us salvation a child can understand it can't he dies for my sins and I receive his righteousness and his forgiveness upon a life

[23 : 41] I did not live upon a death I did not die I stake my whole eternity we'll come later on to verses where people pitied the Lord Jesus they pitied him for what he was suffering do not pity him don't pity him you can go to hell pitying the Lord Jesus there are millions who felt sorry for the Lord Jesus warring how it might don't pity him Jesus doesn't want to pity you are the one who pities what he's looking for his faith and he's looking for the dawning of the truth upon your mind that Jesus died for me so I may live with him for all eternity Jesus was alone that I may never be alone even in the midst of all loneliness

I will never be alone Jesus has become a substitute for me and he's taken my place on the cross that I may be able to share his place at the right hand of the heavenly father and know his grace and his glory throughout all eternity he has paid the price that I might have the gift that's all ever you do tonight don't pity him praise him and sin I stand amazed in the presence of Jesus the Nazarene oh how marvellous oh how wonderful and that is the gospel and there is no other gospel there's so much no other gospel that Paul says if an angel comes and preaches another message let him be damned but you say there must be another way you're going to stand before almighty

God on the last day of judgment on your life and say I know what your son went through but I thought I would come another way don't you think God is going to say on that day if there was another way I would have found it there is no other way there was no other good enough to pay the price of sin he only could unlock the gate of heaven and let us in it is not our doing but his doing and the cup is going around the room inside the cup goes around the room in the preaching of the gospel the cup of blessing and Jesus offers you this cup of blessing I offer it to you says Jesus because I am going to drink the last bitter dregs of the cup of terrible judgment and cursing this cup it comes to you tonight will you drink from it what shall we do we take the cup of salvation and we call on the name of the

Lord and we drink he did this for you do you believe he did this for you do you do you trust him there is no other way you can make up all kinds of other ways but if the heavenly father demanded that his son go through this for your salvation I cannot begin to tell you how foolish you would be to think that you can say to him I found another way the cup of the gospel is in your hands drink it drink it deeply this is our gospel trust him love him say to Jesus how could you do all this for me it's so simple isn't it because

I love you with all my heart Jesus trust me follow me serve me it's amazing isn't it what a savior that's part