

Jesus Rejected

Matthew 26:47-75

Introduction:

This passage describes Jesus's further rejection by the people. After spending some time praying in agony at Gethsemane and after communing with His Father as the disciples slept, the hour came and Jesus, after praying for the third time, alone, comes back to his disciples. The disciples are still sleeping when Jesus wakes them up and tells them, "Rise, let us go! Here comes my betrayer! (Mat. 26:45b).

The moment arrived for Jesus to be delivered in the hands of "sinners". Really, there was no good reason to arrest him. Jesus has not done anything wrong or bad to deserve the punishment. But Jesus, following a divine plan of redemption, went through this plan at great cost to him. For us, created in the image of God, for us to know God and his love, God himself in Christ was willing to take the punishment for our sins that we deserve, so that in Christ we may know God. There was no other way. This was not about a God who is so angry and thirsty to punish the sinner that he punished Jesus in our place.

No, it was about a God, our Heavenly Father, who in his immense love for us, sent his Son Jesus through whom we can know God. And it was in his life and teachings that we find our life. But we were such sinful and blind to God's attempt to reach out to us in Christ.

The life and teachings of Jesus were an affront and self-revelation to a fallen humanity: their blindness, hatred and self-interest. And so, humanity rejected that offer of a new life in

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Christ and instead turned against God and rejected him by rejected his Son, Jesus.

In today's passage, we will see how in three different scenes men's wicked intentions are revealed. But the one, the only one who was good, innocent and sinless is the one who gets the punishment. And all this, according to Jesus, was "so that the Scriptures of the prophets may be fulfilled" (Mat 26:56b).

His Arrest:

Betrayal by Judas: with a kiss

Matthew did not say how or when Judas left the last Passover, but John 13:30 says that "after receiving the piece of bread, he immediately went out. And it was night". Judas, apparently, once revealed as the betrayer, left the table after receiving the bread. He was probably very angry when he left. So, the next time we see him that night, he is coming back with a multitude or a crowd from the chief priest and the elders of the people. Judas went back to the high priest and the elders and he probably had already arranged for the Chief Priest and the elders, to have a crowd and Roman soldiers on standby so that when he came back from the Passover supper, he would have had a good idea where Jesus would be.

So, he comes and "greet Jesus" with a "greetings Rabbi". Now, according to Matthew, all the other disciples used the term "Lord" when they refer to Jesus. This was a term that Matthew

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uses to highlight that the disciples recognized Jesus as more than a Rabbi. By using the term “LORD” Matthew emphasizes the Lordship of Jesus over his disciples. According to Matthew, the disciples and others call Jesus Lord. We have examples of this: the two blind men, when Jesus asked them, after they followed him crying loudly, “Have mercy on us, Son of David”, Do you believe that I am able to do this? They answered “Yes, LORD”. and then he opened their eyes.

But not Judas, by now, he speaks of Jesus as a Rabbi, but we don't know if he was at least sincere in calling him Rabbi or not. Then Judas kisses Jesus.

If you ever felt betrayed in the most horrible way, Jesus knows how that feels. Jesus heart with pierced with pain. Exactly the kind of pain one feels when you feel betrayed. When you feel that someone “stabbed you in the back”. Jesus simply tells him, “friend, do what you are here to do!

The crowd with swords and clubs from the chief priest and elders

And now the crowd knows who to arrest! And they do so immediately! They laid hands on him! They are armed with swords and clubs. These clubs were weapons not sticks that the crowd picked up on the way to arrest Jesus. The crowd is coming armed to fight a bandit or a revolutionary. Jesus suffers the rejection now, not only Judas, but of all these people, some of whom, don't even know who he is. They are just following orders!

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Jesus and his disciples find themselves surrounded by an armed crowd who would not hesitate to use violence against them. And so, one of the disciples, whom according to John 18:10 was Peter, drew a sword and struck the slave of the high priest, cutting his ear! So, Peter at this stage is ready to fight. Only one sword against many, and only one man against a crowd. But Jesus stops him!

Earlier Peter had said, “Even though I must die with you, I will not deny you”. Up to this point, he is ready to fight. But Jesus has another lesson for Peter!

Jesus: Not by the sword

And so, Jesus said to Peter, “Put your sword back into its place; for all who take the sword will perish by the sword” and then, “Do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father, and he will at once send me more than twelve legions of angels? But how then would the scriptures be fulfilled, which say a must happen in this way?”. In this moment, we would justify Peter for trying to use force to defend himself and the others. But Jesus reminds him that it is not to be accomplished this way.

Jesus life and suffering was done with the purpose of ending the cycle of violence that have involved us for too long. The only way out of this circle of violence is through peace, but before that can happen, we must be willing to pay the ultimate price for peace. That is what Jesus had taught and this was not the time that he was going to undo his teaching.

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Jesus had taught on the sermon of the mountain, “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God” and “Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven”. And this is really, hard! I don’t deny it. I hope I can be a peacemaker even when I face violence for doing the right thing!

Jesus led by example and even in this hard moment he takes the time to remind Peter that he cannot continue the circle of violence! Let them be violent but you, Peter, trust in God! Jesus gave his life to give us peace with God and our neighbor. There are many people who have given their lives for peace. I pray to God that we can be an instrument of peace amid a world of violence. The sword only perpetuates the circle of violence!

Not a bandit (or a revolutionary)

When according to Matthew, Jesus said, “Have you come out with swords and clubs to arrest me as though I were a bandit? The NIV translation says, “Am I leading a rebellion that you have come out with swords and clubs to capture me? This question and the use of the word bandit has political connotations. Jesus is saying that he is not one of those who were trying to revolt violently against the Romans and the political structure of the Jewish people.

Some say that there were many seditious leaders in those days. Jesus specifically warned his disciples about these false Messiahs who were trying to lead the people to revolt against

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Rome and the Jewish leaders, but many were becoming just criminals and robbers. Perhaps Jesus said this as a rebuke to Judas: be careful that in your zeal you don't become or follow one of those false Messiahs. Judas had already become a thief.

Jesus tells the crowd that they didn't have to arrest him this way! He was at the temple every day teaching, unarmed and if they really thought that he was one of those bandits, they could have arrested him right there! Jesus was not out in hiding in the mountains leading and training an army of rebels and thieves! No, he was too busy announcing the kingdom of Heaven right in the Temple! But he reminds them that it must be this way to fulfil the Scriptures!

Jesus life was righteous! And he taught the truth and promised only that which God alone can fulfill: the in-breaking of the Kingdom of Heaven! A Kingdom where humans no longer treat each other according to the ways of the world but according to the ways of God. And it was God who in Jesus came down to earth to reveal himself to us in ways that we can understand and ways that are so radically different from the ways of the world! We must reject the world's way and embrace and adopt the ways of God in Jesus.

Abandoned by his disciples

And after all this, the disciples also abandon him. They run for their lives! They all had joined Peter earlier saying that they would die for Jesus before they would deny him. And now they run away!

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If we ever feel that our best friends abandon us in difficult and critical times, God in Jesus knows how that feels! And in those dark moments feel God's calming presence and lean on him even more.

Jesus was abandoned by his best friends but he never stopped loving them and wanting them back and wishing them the best. Jesus loved them so much! And God loves you too! Jesus always knew and was sure of the love of his Father for him. John 15:9 Jesus says to his disciples, "As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you Now remain in my love! If you ever feel abandoned by your friends, remember Jesus' words, "Remain in my love". Yes, remain in his love! Do not let go of it! Jesus loves you!

At the trial before the Sanhedrin

Caiaphas:

So, Caiaphas was the high priest at that time. And he gathered the teachers of the law and the elders. They were assembled in court. Their purposed was to judge sentence Jesus. They had ordained Jesus' arrest and now they have Jesus.

Peter's watch from a distance:

Sometimes we only we remember Peter's denial during this time, but he followed the crowd and Jesus up to the courtyard. He was near Jesus. So far, he was keeping his word that he would not disown Jesus even if that meant his death. I admire the courage and keeping of his word that Peter has demonstrated

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up to this point. Peter can be our example in courage up to this point. Peter learned from close distance about the humility of Jesus. Even when Jesus had all the power to destroy the people who decided to be his enemies, Jesus chose not to, and was gentle with his enemies and with his friends!

Later, in his life, Peter himself had to appear before the Sanhedrin to be questioned by the High Priest! Just like Jesus was questioned by the High Priest as Peter stood a short distance from where this was happening. At that time, according to Acts 5:29, when the high priest said, “We gave you strict orders not to teach in this name! You have filled ‘Jerusalem with your teaching and are determined to make us guilty of this man’s blood” Peter answered “We must obey God rather than men!

False accusations

The High Priest tried to come up with false accusations against Jesus so that they could put him to death, but could not find anything. When finally, two false witnesses agreed on a statement that Jesus had made, the High Priest didn’t even use that accusation to condemn Jesus.

So, he asked him, “**Are you the Messiah, the Son of God?**” Jesus answered this question with the truth! Jesus response was, “You have said so! But I tell you, from now on you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power and coming on the clouds of heaven” So, the High Priest tore his clothes and said, “He has blasphemed! Why do we still need witnesses? You have heard his blasphemy. What is your verdict? They answered, He deserves death! Then they began to abuse him!

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Still false accusation

Jesus was not blaspheming when he answered the High Priest's question. He was telling the truth. But it was a truth that the Sanhedrin didn't want to hear. This answer, if accepted by them, will cost them everything they had at this point. Because the Kingdom of Heaven is radically different from the kingdom of this world.

Sentenced to death

Jesus was condemned to death for answering the High Priest's question with the truth. And the fate of Jesus was sealed! Later Peter, writing to the church, said, "If you are insulted because of the name of Christ, you are blessed, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you. If you suffer, it should not be as a murdered or thief or any other kind of criminal or even as a meddler" (1 Peter 4:14-15).

Peter saw Jesus in front of his false accusers and tells the church that they might suffer like Jesus suffered. And to expect to suffer just like Christ suffered, the sinless for the sinful! The ones suffering for their sins should have been the sinners, instead the sinless suffers at the hands of the sinful so that the sinful may have a chance to know God in the revelation of the truth.

Denial

Peter's denial of Jesus

Unfortunately for Peter, the night wasn't over! Two servant girls, one first and then the other, recognized Peter as one of

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Jesus' followers and confronted him. He denied it twice! Then a group of bystanders saw him and said, "certainly you are also one of them, for your accent betrays you" Peter once again denied and this time he began to curse! We don't know what he said in his cursing, but it was bad! And then the reminder, a cock crows and Peter remembers the words of Jesus.

Peter's bitter cry

and I think it is so sad! Peter did what he never wanted to do! Deny Jesus! He promised that he wouldn't do that but he did it! And he felt bad! He now realizes how weak he was and he didn't like it at all! And he cried a bitter cry! And Jesus knew it!

They both probably heard the cock crow and they both knew what had happened! I think that if Jesus would have been able to, he would have been with Peter gently remind him of his love for him and forgiving him. When and if we do things that deny the name of Jesus and after which we are truly remorseful and repent, Jesus forgives us. He knows it is hard to stand up in a world that is so overwhelmingly rebellious and resisting the will of God for the world. And sometimes we just fail! But Jesus doesn't ever fail us.

Conclusion

Jesus suffered rejection like few have ever experienced! Even though Jesus, according to Matthew, knew that prophecy was being fulfilled in him, that didn't make it any easier to carry the burden of suffering. Jesus suffered the same way you and I suffer! Betrayal and rejection was painful to Jesus the way betrayal and rejection is painful to you and me.

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Later, Peter wrote “but rejoice insofar as you are sharing Christ’s sufferings, so that you may also be glad and shout for joy when his glory is revealed” (1 Peter 4:13). Suffering for the cause of Christ was a given assumption in the early church. The early church was born under persecution. But the early church also found out that in Christ, not only they lived free from the condemnation of sin but also in the glorious hope of an eternal glory in Christ who will himself restore, support, strengthen, and establish you”

What is important for the church is to know and understand that suffering is part of the cost of obeying the call of our Lord Jesus. He is our example to follow. Obedience to Christ will cause suffering to us, but it is in obedience and living up to Jesus’ teaching that we can transform the world one day at a time and one person at a time.