

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

DEC 12TH-13TH, 2020 // BOOK OF MATTHEW

FAMOUS LAST WORDS (MATTHEW 26:30-35)

After Jesus and His disciples celebrated the Passover feast, they sang a hymn (probably Psalm 113) and went to the Mount of Olives.

- Now Jesus speaks another prediction- all of His disciples will fall away when He is arrested.
- The prophet Zechariah had predicted it centuries ago (Zech. 13:7), and it would all be part of God's plan of redemption.

But Jesus assures them that their failure would not be final, and after the resurrection He'd be waiting for them back home in Galilee (vs. 32).

- Peter seems to think Jesus has it wrong, and corrects Jesus' prophecy with a bold assurance of his loyalty- "though they all fall away because of You, I will NEVER fall away" (vs. 33).
- But instead of assuring Peter, Jesus confronts him in his spiritual pride.
- Peter thought he was better than the other men, but Jesus reveals to him that he's actually more of a coward than all of them.

We so often overestimate our own spiritual strength and underestimate the power of our flesh.

- We are not as strong in ourselves as we think we are- we are all capable of falling prey to temptation and committing acts of betrayal and cowardice against the Lord.
- That's why we need His strength! We must keep watch and guard ourselves from temptation.

ANGUISH IN THE GARDEN (MATTHEW 26:36-46)

The divine part of Jesus knew what was about to happen, but the human part of Jesus knew how much it would hurt.

- It would not just be physical pain Jesus would endure, it would be spiritual suffering as He absorbed the full wrath of God.
- A "cup" was frequently used in the OT as a metaphor that stood for our lives, which could be filled with a variety of things.

Our "cup" can be filled with blessing and salvation (Ps. 23:5, 116:13), or it can be filled with wrath and horror (Isa. 51:17, Ezek. 23:33).

- Often the "cup" stood for God's judgment and wrath, and by going to the cross, Jesus would drink the cup of God's wrath, all the way to the bottom.

Jesus' request to be spared suffering and death was the desperate cry of a Son's heart to His Father (vs. 39a).

- The Father heard and accepted the Son's request- but He didn't grant it. The Son, in loving obedience, submitted to the Father's will (vs.39b, 42).
- Sometimes God's plan is painful, but it's always glorious and perfect.

Peter and the other disciples had promised to be faithful to death, and yet they couldn't even stay up with Jesus and keep watch! (vs. 40, 43, 45).

- They needed to be praying and keeping watch so they wouldn't fall into temptation, but instead they had failed their Lord and allowed apathy and weariness to overtake them.

A BETRAYAL AND ARREST (MATTHEW 26:47-56)

While He was still speaking, Jesus' enemies arrived.

- Judas leads the crowd of Jewish religious leaders and what was most likely a detachment of Roman soldiers and temple guards (vs. 47).
- The fact that Judas came with soldiers, swords, and clubs proves that he didn't understand who Jesus was and what He'd come to do- Judas came expecting a fight.

But Jesus came and calmly surrendered, even as Judas marked Him for arrest using a sign of endearment and friendship (vs. 48-50).

- As Jesus is arrested, one of His disciples (John 18:10 tells us it was Peter) attacks with his sword and cuts off the ear of the high priest's servant (vs. 51).
- In his zeal to defend Jesus, Peter had completely subverted the plan of Jesus.

"Put your sword back into its place. For all who take the sword will perish by the sword" (vs. 52)

- The battle that was being fought that night wasn't a military battle of swords and clubs, it was a spiritual battle to win victory over the enemies of sin, death, and the devil.
- The weapons Jesus' disciples brandish aren't swords- they are the Gospel, prayer, God's Word, and His Spirit.

If Jesus had wanted to defeat this small army in Gethsemane in a military exercise, He could've called down 12 legions of angels (72,000) (vs. 53)!

- Retaliation was completely unnecessary because all of this was part of God's divine plan.
- Even the fact that Jesus hadn't been arrested in the temple teaching in daylight was a part of God's plan (vs. 55-56).

Each of us must decide whether we'll take up the word or the cross.

- Will we humbly submit to God's will for us, even when it involves pain?
- Or will we take matters into our own hands and assert our own will using fleshly means?

- The cross involves suffering, but that suffering ultimately leads to glory and victory.

A FALSE TRIAL (MATTHEW 26:57-68)

Jesus is then taken by the mob to face Caiaphas, the high priest, and the rest of the Sanhedrin (the elders & teachers of the law) (vs. 57).

- This wasn't a legitimate legal trial because it was happening in the middle of the night, in a secret meeting place, during the week of Passover- all of which were against pharisaical laws.
- Peter followed the group and watched the "trial" from a distance (vs. 58).

The whole purpose of the trial was to seek, "false testimony against Jesus that they might put Him to death" (vs. 59).

- But they couldn't find any (vs. 60) that could legitimately stand in a Jewish court due to the law that every charge had to be established by the mouths of two witnesses (even if they were liars).
- Finally two came forward with the same false charge about a comment Jesus had made about destroying the temple (vs. 61).

Jesus never actually said this; they were misconstruing a comment He'd made about them destroying His body and Him rising again in 3 days (John 2:19).

- It's impossible to defend yourself in court against lies and half-truths, but Jesus wasn't interested in defending Himself in the first place.
- While Jesus' accusers lied and brought false charges against Him- He was silent (vs. 63).

Finally Caiaphas challenges Jesus to swear an oath as to whether He is the Messiah or not (vs. 63).

- Jesus admits (without an oath) who He truly is- the Son of Man whom they will all see seated at the right hand of Power (vs. 64).
- This was all they needed- a charge of blasphemy deserving of death (vs. 65-66).

They then began to spit, punch, and slap His face (Mark & Luke tell us He was blindfolded), as they mocked His claim of being the Christ (vs. 67-68).

- Why did Jesus stay completely silent for all of this? Couldn't He see that injustice and corruption was taking place?
- By staying silent, Jesus was expressing His authority and His submission to the Father's plan.
- Jesus was loving them, even as they hatefully abused Him.

"I DO NOT KNOW THE MAN" (MATTHEW 26:69-75)

Meanwhile, Peter sat watching from a distance in the courtyard (vs. 69).

- A servant girl recognizes Peter who had been with Jesus, a charge which Peter denies.
- Later as he went out to the entrance, another woman recognizes him as someone who was with "Jesus of Nazareth," and Peter denies this charge with an oath (vs. 72).

Later someone else notices Peter's thick Galilean accent, and asks him once again if he was a disciple of Jesus (vs. 73).

- Peter begins to call curses on himself and swears once again that he doesn't even know Jesus (vs. 74).
- Amidst his cursing and denial, he hears a rooster crow in the distance (vs. 75)- he'd done what he swore to Jesus he wouldn't do.

Why did Peter deny Jesus?

- Probably because of fear- if Jesus is being accused, beaten, insulted, and condemned to death, Peter is probably next.
- Even though Jesus had warned Peter of this moment, in the frailty of his human weakness he gave into the path of least resistance.
- Even if Peter's spirit was willing, his flesh was weak and he fell to this temptation.

Peter had been so sure of himself and his loyalty to Jesus, but he failed to recognize the weakness of his flesh.

- He didn't pray and ask for God's strength and wisdom, instead he relied on his own.
- One of the most basic and difficult lessons in the Christian life is the art of growing less confident in ourselves and more desperately dependent on God.

We are not as strong as we think we are.

- We are all capable of falling prey to temptation and committing acts of betrayal against the Lord. Everybody has a kryptonite- lust, pride, anger, drunkenness, gossip, rebellion, strife/conflict, cowardice, slander, laziness, dishonesty, or self-righteousness- we all struggle with something.

God's redemptive plan can't be stopped.

- God can still use you despite your failures. God is still good despite your suffering. God is still in control despite injustice. God doesn't need your weapons to fight His battles (or yours)- you can put away your sword and take up your cross (2 Cor. 10:4).

GOD HAS OFFERED YOU HIS STRENGTH.

You can admit your weakness- it's not you being strong, being self-righteous, being in charge, or being right anyway. You are strongest spiritually when you're the most honest with yourself, others, and God about your weaknesses, inconsistencies, and struggles.