

Title: Cursed!
Text: Luke 22.39-46
Theme: The cup
Series: Luke

Aim: My aim is to help my people grasp the personal cost that Christ paid to be credited with our sin.

Our text is one of the most intense moments, if not the most intense moment in the life of Christ. I don't think we will ever comprehend all that happens here. This is wondrous mystery and somber respect. Jesus is the Son of God and the Son of Man. He is the God-man, truly God and truly man. When you looked at him, he looked truly human. He got hungry, tired, and was tempted. Yet, he was eternal, omnipotent and incapable of sinning. As God he could not, would not and did not sin. As man he experienced temptation like us as if he could.

*For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who **in every respect has been tempted as we are**, yet without sin.” (Heb. 4.15)*

The passion of Christ refers to everything that he experienced that led up to and included his death. He was fully invested in this. His love for his Father, his love for you, his commitment to accomplishing your salvation, his commitment to completing his mission was deeply personal. He was all in. It cost him everything. We say that Jesus paid for our sin because he did. But the price that he paid was overwhelming and beyond us to grasp. This scene is here for us to behold so that we will be humbled, grateful, and moved to affection, genuine faith and worship.

What is more, is that this scene is so deeply personal. It is personal for Jesus; it is personal for us. It was my sin, your sin that Jesus took upon himself. We would rather not look at this, but we need to. Like the disciples, we would rather just be distracted from facing hard realities so we doom-scroll, watch a game, go for a hike, even take a nap. But we need this. We need to know how much our sin cost, so we will now know how much we are loved and how much we are forgiven. In this text, our sin is poured upon Christ. Christ accepts this weight and the unfathomable guilt and grief and its incomprehensible curse and judgment. It is late Thursday night, April 6, A.D. 30. In these verses it is possible that we cross midnight into dark Friday.

Read Text:

Jesus and his disciples observed the Passover meal inside the walls of Jerusalem. From there they made their way out of one of the gates to the lower western slope of the Mt. of Olives that sat directly east of Jerusalem's eastern gate. Mt. of Olives got its name, obviously from all of the Olive trees that grew there. It actually sat higher in elevation than Jerusalem. But, at its base on the western side as it went down into the Kidron Valley was a garden, or a grove that was called the garden of Gethsemane. Gethsemane simply

means olive press. It appears that there had been a press here that would process the olives into olive oil. Here, Christ, like those olives is being crushed and poured out.

Whatever happens here affects Jesus so deeply that he asks the disciples to pray. We will also see how the faithful obedience of Christ is challenged. This is a crisis of his faith. Jesus does not thump his chest and stoically face his fate. He trembles. He hesitates. He asks if there is another way. He is so weakened in body that an angel comes to strengthen him. He is bearing our griefs. He is being crushed for our iniquities and facing the prospect of taking on our sin, he shudders. It is a crisis of faith. He is being tempted as we are, and way beyond what we face. How did it he do it?

1. **Jesus faced the crisis of his faith with prayer.** (39-41)

This place, this garden was a place that Jesus would retire to for prayer. He comes here one last time and tells the disciples to pray so that they would not enter into temptation. This is probably tied to the warning that Jesus gave Peter back in v.31. Pray that you don't fall. Pray to be faithful. This scene begins and concludes with Jesus admonishing his disciples to pray. In the middle of it, Jesus is praying. We need to hear this because we need to believe this. We need to wake up to the fact that we are in a war and Satan wants us to defect. He wants us to be distracted, disillusioned, disappointed and then desert. We are so prone to being distracted by lesser things. And besides, we cannot be faithful on our own. Self-determination and self-discipline are not the key to following Jesus. We cannot follow Jesus depending on ourselves. We have to depend on God all the time, every day. Yesterday's victory came from yesterday's grace. You need humility and strength today. Before my feet hit the floor I generally pray and tell God that I am fully capable of making a colossal mess of my life and many others today and will, unless God sustains me, directs me, corrects me and protects me. I need you God. Don't kid yourself thinking that after a few years of following Jesus that you've got this thing down. You can't handle difficulty and discouragement like bacon grease on a Teflon pan. Moses messed up at the end of his life. David had two serious and fatal failures, one in his final years. Solomon did not finish well. Neither did Uzziah and Hezekiah. And now these 11 men who have been with Jesus for three years are told directly by Jesus, you must pray so that you don't enter into temptation. Look at the command Jesus gave. What do you think is the relationship between prayer and temptation? Some of you are frustrated with your ongoing weakness to temptation and yet, you give such little attention to prayer. This command is more than a weapon against temptation; it is the weapon. You must pray.

Jesus did. Jesus prayed because his temptation was real and in order to face this crisis he had to throw himself completely upon his relationship with God, even as God. His praying set an example for us and the disciples, but it was more. He was crying out for himself. He was fighting for faith in the most intense battle he would ever be in. As we come to find out, the disciples, overwhelmed with sorrow, did not stay faithful in prayer, but fell asleep. It is a picture of the gospel. Jesus fought to be perfectly faithful because we aren't. Jesus prayed

and in praying he called upon God for help even as he did, in our place what we could not do or did not do.

Jesus who never feared anything before, feared this. Jesus, who to our knowledge, never hesitated before, hesitated here. Why? Jesus feared this moment, and yet believed in the necessity of his death. Jesus trembled in this moment, but kept on the path of faith in the plan for our salvation. Jesus fought for faithfulness with prayer. Jesus prayed for obedience unto death, even death on a cross.

Jesus did not check out. Jesus did not take anything to dull the pain. Jesus did not distract himself from the reality of what was going on. Jesus took no short-cuts. Jesus did not close his eyes and wait to wake up when it was all over. He fully experienced this all. It was his to bear and he bore it all. But why was he so repulsed and why did he ask if the Father was willing to remove the cup?

2. The weight of our sin was agonizing and soul-crushing. (42)

Jesus prayed, "Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me."

Why did Jesus request this? What was the cup? The cup could be a reference to your destiny. It could be something good which is how it is used in Psalm 16.5 and 116.13. It could be something bad like disaster or wrath (Jeremiah 25.15 and Isaiah 51.17). For Christ I think that the cup was both destiny and disaster. Jesus was called to "drink" something so disastrous and repulsive that he naturally recoiled at the prospect of taking it. Isaiah 51.17. My view is that the cup represented the suffering of Christ as a result of being the object of God's wrath against sin. His destiny was to suffer and die because the Father's plan was for him to become credited with our sin.

One evidence for the authenticity of the Bible is seen right here. Founders of a religion and heroes of a people are usually painted in super-human poses showing unflinching resolve in the face of adversity. Jesus did not set his jaw and steel his eyes with cold determinism or with a fate-be-damned machoism. He, in the words of Isaiah, was crushed with our iniquities. His sorrow was so real that he felt as if he would die from it and I think that he almost did. He was in sorrow because he was carrying our sorrows. He was broken and stricken with grief because he was experiencing our brokenness and our grief. Think of the anguish of your soul when your sin has devastated your life and the lives around you. When you have to face the tragic consequences of your habits, your temper, your addictions, your decisions, and your utter selfishness, it wrecks your soul. Many people end their lives because they cannot handle their own griefs. I thought about the parents and grandparents of the children in the elementary school in Oregon who were killed this week and wondered again, how do they go on without being completely consumed by grief? Many cannot. What can you say? Where do you go to get relief or forgiveness in the face of overwhelming sorrow?

Think of the grief that you have borne because someone hurt you, someone hurt your child, someone stole from you, someone betrayed you, someone cheated on you. For many of you the rawness of sorrow is fresh and the wounds of grief remain open and sensitive to the touch. There is still infection there. We empathize with people who face multiple griefs in a short amount of time and say, “how much can a person take?” Here, in the garden, Christ is taking it all and he is taking it all at once.

But Christ faced more than the weight of our sin; he faced the actual sinfulness of our sin. We, bizzarringly have a love/hate relationship with sin. How do we reconcile the fact that people can do such heroic things and such terrible things? And many times, it is the same person. People in rehab dream and plot of how to get high again, once they get out. Living with the devastating consequences of our habits we are prone to turn to our habits to distract us from facing the reality of their consequences. Sin is toxic. Sin is offensive. To God, he responds to sin like we respond to the offensive and putrid stench of a decaying corpse. He is repulsed. His entire being gags at its rancid nature. Here in the garden, Christ is praying in deep anguish of soul. Before him is the cup of wrath. This was the moment for which Christ had come to the earth, but in facing this moment, he paused. Accepting the Father’s wrath being poured out on him, meant that he had to accept our sin being identified with him so personally that he would feel and be treated as if he had committed every single one of our sins. He prayed, he asked if it was possible if there was another way. He asked that in a spirit of surrender. It was an honest reaction to what was before him, even as he in faith surrendered to the Father’s plan. He prayed in surrender. This was torturous for him. Our sin is real. His repulsion of it was real. By taking on himself our sin he was accepting our offensiveness, our condemnation and punishment. From that point on, every sinful thing he was accused of, was in that sense true. He was now a blasphemer. He was now an adulterer. He was now a thief. He was now a murderer, liar, betrayer, and denier. He had anger issues. He was it all. That meant that he had to die. It meant that he was condemned and that he would die. The wages of sin is death.

I believe that is why from this point on, he did not argue, resist, run or defend himself. He was now guilty. He accepted the sentence of death as a lamb being led to the slaughter. If Jesus kept the most difficult, agonizing, soul-crushing promise to be your Savior, you can be assured that he will keep all other promises that he has made to you. If this was the price he paid to save you, you can be assured that he will never let you go. You cost too much!

Galatians 3.13 – He became a curse for us. He became cursed because he took our sin and sin brings the curse of guilt and therefore, the fear of death because of the fear of judgment. Jesus prayed. He fought for faith and in a sense had to. He experienced guilt, rejection, judgment and fear of judgment now, for the first time. It was now his. It was personal and it was costly.

3. The obedient passion of Christ cost him everything. (43-46)

2 Corinthians 5.21 says, *For our sake he (God) made him (Jesus) to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him (Jesus) we might become the righteousness of God.*”

In becoming sin, Christ became something that he never was, nor had ever experienced. He had been sinned against, but he himself had never sinned and had never experienced the consequences of it. The weight of this is beyond anything that we can imagine. We've all known people who cave under the weight of their guilt. We've seen people destroy their own lives and the lives of others because they cannot handle their guilt. We hear people say that someone has anger issues. Anger is the surface issue. Anger is not the root, guilt is. Fear is. Insecurity is. That is why anger management is so temporary. We were not made with the capacity to handle guilt. Guilt drives many people to many extremes in order to be distracted from it. Guilt is relentless and there is only one remedy, Christ. The weight of guilt can only be remedied in Christ who bore the weight of our guilt because he was credited with our sin. This was the plan for our salvation and Jesus was obedient to the plan even though it felt so wrong.

v.43 says that an angel from heaven came and strengthened him.

Why would God send an angel to strengthen Jesus? Why does God send any angel? To help! Jesus asked if it was possible for the cup to be removed. But in order for our sin to be paid, Jesus had to become credited with our sin. This was the right plan but had to feel so wrong. So, God sent an angel to strengthen Christ. The Father was answering the prayers of his Son by reassuring him that this agonizing path was indeed the road that he had to take to pay for our sins. The angel did not relieve Christ of the burden. It was Christ's to bear. Being in agony Christ prayed even more earnestly and his praying was so intense that he sweat and his sweat was like heavy drops of blood. Luke does not say that Christ sweat actual blood, which may have happened. But we should take to heart that obvious fact that the faith of Jesus was not automatic nor easy.

Jesus chose to believe the Father and in choosing to believe the Father, he did this for us, as in, in our place as well as for us, in setting us an example. Here is what you do when you face grief and sorrow. Pour out your heart to God and submit to his plan. His plan may be hard, but he will send you aid to follow the road he marked for you.

It is now time to face his death. Christ rises from praying and went back to where the disciples were and finds them sleeping. Christ had challenged them to pray so they would not succumb to temptation. Instead, they slept and, in a few minutes, they would panic and run. This is why we do not pray to saints. They are sinners like us. There is only one standing here who has endured and will endure. There is only one here who is carrying your sin and will pay for it with his death. There is only one who can save you. Behold, your God!