

April 1, 2007

“The Death of the King” Luke 22:19-20

FCF: Confusion about the meaning of Jesus’ death

PROPOSITION: (magnet) Because of the purpose of Jesus’ death,
(anchor) His followers can have hope and need not despair.

SCRIPTURE INTRODUCTION:

Jesus arrived in Jerusalem to the joyful expectant shouts of “*Hosanna! O Lord, save!*” That was Sunday. By week’s end, He was being led out of the city to angry derisive shouts of “*Crucify him!*” Palm Sunday had given way to Good Friday. Which was preceded by “Maundy Thursday” – the eve of His death, the evening of the Last Supper. How did Jesus view what was to transpire? As you read the Gospels, there was a resoluteness about Him. Clearly, He was well aware of what was happening.

But His disciples were not. Despite all He had told them, after His crucifixion, it seemed all hope was lost. Knowing that, Jesus spoke clearly to their concern before it all seemed to come completely undone. What did He say? How did He view His death?

SCRIPTURE READING: [Luke 22:1-20](#)

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

SERMON INTRODUCTION

How does one make preparations for an impending departure? Not just for oneself but for those who will be left behind? Coaches know something of this in the plays they give to their players before the game. Parents know something of this in the instructions they review with their children before going out. It’s said that, among other things, one of the marks of a great leader is to prepare one’s people for the day when they’re not there. There is an element in each of these with “the words of institution” Jesus gives pertaining to the Last Supper. But, of course, there’s more as well for He has not really left us. He is still with us through the presence of the Holy Spirit.

But still, this was to be a change. And, good and necessary as it was, it came as a shock to His followers. Jesus knew that. But He knew why He had come. The shadow of the cross has loomed increasingly large throughout His life. And now the time had come. He knew He was about to die. Here’s the question. How did He view His death?

The context of this meal is vital to recognize. For 1500 years, the Jews had been celebrating the feast of the Passover to commemorate the exodus from Egypt – not just the parting of the Red Sea but even more the night they were spared the loss of their firstborn sons through the blood of a lamb spread over their doorposts. For 1500 years, they had been looking back and forward to a greater exodus to come. In the midst of that meal, we read that after Jesus gave the traditional words of blessing and thanks, (**READ [Luke 22:19-20](#)**). His words clearly show He knew what was coming – this bread and His body, this wine and His blood – all of which He wanted His followers to remember. Why? What’s going on here? How did Jesus view His death? And how should we?

I. THE FACT OF THE PURPOSE

The first thing we need to see is that He saw a purpose. He saw a purpose.

A) Not Unexpected

Despite appearances, despite how everything looked, this was not unexpected.

1. They “gave Him over”

We read in the Gospel accounts of how Jesus was “given over” – delivered and handed over. Judas gave Him over to the priests, the priests to Pilate, Pilate to the crowds.

2. But His life was not taken

And surely this is one of more stunning things we read in the Bible – the condescension of the Son of God to allow Himself to be given over and betrayed. Which is what this was. They gave Him over. That’s clear. But His life was not taken from Him.

B) But Chosen

1. He gave Himself

For what transpired the next day was neither unexpected nor accidental in any way. It was chosen. We read elsewhere that the Father gave the Son and indeed here we see the Son gave Himself (**READ Luke 22:19**). He gave Himself. This was a purposeful act.

2. He poured Himself out

Even more, we read (**READ Luke 22:20**). Now this is not a reference to pouring in the sense we say, “*I poured myself into that project.*” Now certainly, Jesus did. But this is not a sentimental pouring. This is a sacrificial pouring – not just of energy but of blood.

There was purpose and intentionality to everything we see here. Which should make a huge difference – a difference in our appreciation of what He has done.

Illustration:

Think in terms of gift giving or, more specifically, re-gifting. Someone’s given you a gift for your birthday. For whatever reason, you don’t want it and yet have no way of returning it. Down the road, you find yourself needing a gift to give someone else. And so you pull that old thing out, rewrap it, and re-gift it. Now, I don’t know what the moral implications are of all this. I do know we’re embarrassed when we’re caught. Because no matter how great the gift may be, the second receiver almost always feels cheated. For they wanted something with them in mind. Somehow, a gift given willingly with forethought and purpose means so much more to us. It makes all the difference.

Application:

Now understand that what Jesus has endured for us on the cross was with forethought and purpose. He chose it. Despite all He knew it would entail – the physical agony of His body ripped asunder, the spiritual horror of His fellowship with His Father ripped asunder, bearing the weight of everything rightfully due upon you and me – despite all that He knew it would entail. With you and me in mind, He chose this. There was purpose. And as His disciples reflected on that in the days, weeks, months, years after that night, that gave them cause to know that no matter what, there was always hope and ultimately never a reason to despair. That was true for His followers then. And now.

II. THE NATURE OF THE PURPOSE

For there was clearly a real purpose to even this. But as great as that may be, it pales in comparison to recognizing what that purpose was (**READ Luke 22:19-20**).

A) “The New Covenant” – Background

“The new covenant in my blood” – what is Jesus referring to here?

1. What had been

Understand how things had been to this point. Israel had been given God’s commands to guide them. They had been given the ceremonies to capture and image their abiding need of His work. Prophets, priests, kings, promises, statutes, and tradition – such was their heritage. But their history was one of rebellion and waywardness. Was there any hope?

2. What was coming

Yes – in a day that was coming, in a further unfolding of God’s plan, in something beautifully new (**READ Jeremiah 31:31-34**). The problem had never been in what God had given His people. The problem was their hearts. And now comes the assurance that

the very root of the problem is going to be addressed – their sinful hearts. Freedom from sin’s penalty. Freedom from sin’s tyranny. “A new day is coming!” says Jeremiah.

B) “*The New Covenant*” – *Implication*

Now, fast forward about 650 years. What does Jesus say?

1. The fulfillment of that promise

That new day has come. The fulfillment of that promise has come.

2. The culmination in Himself

The fulfillment of that promise has come, culminating in Himself. As we sing at Christmas, “The hopes and fears of all the years are met in Thee tonight.” “*Here! Now!*” Jesus says. “*In Me! In what I am about to do! I am ushering in the new covenant.*”

Do you hear what He is saying? Do you recognize how bold this is?

Illustration:

I can’t help but think of C. S. Lewis’ quote in Mere Christianity (READ quote):

A man who was merely a great man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would be either a lunatic – on a level with the man who says he is a poached egg – or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make the choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God: or else a madman or something worse.

Application:

This indeed does thrust a choice before us. As we listen to these words of Jesus and come to understand something of what He is saying, we have to decide if He is a liar worth impugning, a lunatic worth ignoring, or the Lord worth following. For it comes down to this. What He is saying here is either true or it isn’t. If it isn’t, then let’s be done with it. If it is, then let’s consider the implications (READ Luke 22:19-20). The day of the new covenant, according to Jesus, is dawning now. His death, horrific and hopeless and murderous and meaningless as it seemed, was one of purpose and intent. And Jesus, knowing how desperately we needed to hear this, commanded that we gather regularly to contemplate and celebrate these things – taking in the bread and the cup.

CONCLUSION:

I’m reminded of one of the last visits I had with my grandfather. Sarah and I had traveled in from out of state. He had cancer. And it was spreading. We were preparing to say goodbye and there was an awkwardness in the air. And I will never forget his words. “*This won’t be the last time we see each other.*” Now, in the immediate sense, he meant on this earth. And he was right. We did see each other again just a few weeks after that. But, years later, I can’t help but think that perhaps he had something else in mind – that it could not be the last time we would see each other because we had both given ourselves to Christ. He was preparing me for when he was going to be gone.

Now the connection here is this. Those were wise and compassionate words spoken that day in his yard. And that night in the upper room. And the promise made to me was possible only because of the promise made to them. Jesus knew very well what was about to happen. He had set out to do it. And He was preparing His disciples for it.

My point being this. In every way this world is being reclaimed by the King. “Hosanna!” The shouts of the people – “O Lord, save!” – were truer than they knew. They did not appreciate how great the conquest was He was coming to bring because they did not appreciate how great was the tyranny under which they lived. But this King, the Host of this table, has come to reclaim and renew it all (READ Luke 22:19-20). There’s purpose in His death. And the purpose is us. That’s worth hearing. “Hosanna!”

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