

Luke 22:14 - 23:56

Reflections

The Institution of the Lord's Supper

¹⁴When the hour came, he took his place at the table, and the apostles with him. ¹⁵He said to them, "I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer; ¹⁶for I tell you, I will not eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God." ¹⁷Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks he said, "Take this and divide it among yourselves; ¹⁸for I tell you that from now on I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes." ¹⁹Then he took a loaf of bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me." ²⁰And he did the same with the cup after supper, saying, "This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood."

²¹But see, the one who betrays me is with me, and his hand is on the table. ²²For the Son of Man is going as it has been determined, but woe to that one by whom he is betrayed!" ²³Then they began to ask one another, which one of them it could be who would do this.

The Dispute about Greatness

²⁴A dispute also arose among them as to which one of them was to be regarded as the greatest. ²⁵But he said to them, "The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those in authority over them are called benefactors. ²⁶But not so with you; rather the greatest among you must become like the youngest, and the leader like one who serves. ²⁷For who is greater, the one who is at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one at the table? But I am among you as one who serves. ²⁸"You are those who have stood by me in my trials; ²⁹and I confer on you, just as my Father has conferred on me, a kingdom, ³⁰so that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and you will sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel."

Jesus Predicts Peter's Denial

³¹"Simon, Simon, listen! Satan has demanded to sift all of you like wheat, ³²but I have prayed for you that your own faith may not fail; and you, when once you have turned back, strengthen your brothers." ³³And he said to him, "Lord, I am ready to go with you to prison and to death!" ³⁴Jesus said, "I tell you, Peter, the cock will not crow this day, until you have denied three times that you know me."

Reflection

So much bravado. Everyone wanting to be the important one. It certainly mimics what we often see being played out in our lives. It starts on the playground with words like, my dad is stronger than your dad, or my mom is better than your mom. We want to be stronger, better, richer, smarter... name your want to. And we certainly don't want to think that we could be so weak as to fail those we have sworn to protect. Can you imagine what it must have felt like to Peter to have Jesus look at him and say, you will deny me three times before the end of the day? It must have felt like a slap in the face after three years of being a dedicated follower of Jesus.

And in the background to all this discussion is the accusation that someone will betray Jesus even while, and at the same time, Jesus promises the kingdom of God to each of them because of their faithfulness. It is so confusing. Promises of kingdoms and a speech about serving others. They are thinking they have come into Jerusalem to celebrate a king, Jesus finally taking command and overthrowing the Romans and rulers. They have no idea how the night and next days will unfold. It will be horrifying as they experience their own weakness and see the brutality of the Roman Empire once again seemingly put an end to all of their life long longings, hopes, and desires to be free of Roman occupation.

As you consider the story today, where do you place yourself in this picture? How do you fit in? How does your own story of faith, your faithfulness, play out in the story of this night of promises and uncertainty. Keep this in mind as the story is shared of Christ's passion, the night of his arrest, the trial, the crucifixion and burial. Think on what it means that Jesus died, took the burden of sin for all of us...for all of us who don't get it right, who struggle with sin. Think on what it means to have a Saviour who loves humanity so much that he would give up his life so that you and I...all people...can live an abundant life. Life abundant in love, grace, and hope.

Purse, Bag, and Sword

³⁵He said to them, "When I sent you out without a purse, bag, or sandals, did you lack anything?" They said, "No, not a thing." ³⁶He said to them, "But now, the one who has a purse must take it, and likewise a bag. And the one who has no sword must sell his cloak and buy one. ³⁷For I tell you, this scripture [as found in Isaiah 53:12] must be fulfilled in me, 'And he was counted among the lawless'; and indeed what is written about me is being fulfilled." ³⁸They said, "Lord, look, here are two swords." He replied, "It is enough."

Jesus Prays on the Mount of Olives

³⁹He came out and went, as was his custom, to the Mount of Olives; and the disciples followed him. ⁴⁰When he reached the place, he said to them, "Pray that you may not come into the time of trial." ⁴¹Then he withdrew from them about a stone's throw, knelt down, and prayed, ⁴²"Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me; yet, not my will but yours be done." ⁴³Then an angel from heaven appeared to him and gave him strength. ⁴⁴In his anguish he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat became like great

drops of blood falling down on the ground. ⁴⁵When he got up from prayer, he came to the disciples and found them sleeping because of grief, ⁴⁶and he said to them, “Why are you sleeping? Get up and pray that you may not come into the time of trial.”

The Betrayal and Arrest of Jesus

⁴⁷While he was still speaking, suddenly a crowd came, and the one called Judas, one of the twelve, was leading them. He approached Jesus to kiss him; ⁴⁸but Jesus said to him, “Judas, is it with a kiss that you are betraying the Son of Man?” ⁴⁹When those who were around him saw what was coming, they asked, “Lord, should we strike with the sword?” ⁵⁰Then one of them struck the slave of the high priest and cut off his right ear. ⁵¹But Jesus said, “No more of this!” And he touched his ear and healed him. ⁵²Then Jesus said to the chief priests, the officers of the temple police, and the elders who had come for him, “Have you come out with swords and clubs as if I were a bandit? ⁵³When I was with you day after day in the temple, you did not lay hands on me. But this is your hour, and the power of darkness!”

Peter Denies Jesus

⁵⁴Then they seized him and led him away, bringing him into the high priest’s house. But Peter was following at a distance. ⁵⁵When they had kindled a fire in the middle of the courtyard and sat down together, Peter sat among them. ⁵⁶Then a servant-girl, seeing him in the firelight, stared at him and said, “This man also was with him.” ⁵⁷But he denied it, saying, “Woman, I do not know him.” ⁵⁸A little later someone else, on seeing him, said, “You also are one of them.” But Peter said, “Man, I am not!” ⁵⁹Then about an hour later still another kept insisting, “Surely this man also was with him; for he is a Galilean.” ⁶⁰But Peter said, “Man, I do not know what you are talking about!” At that moment, while he was still speaking, the cock crowed. ⁶¹The Lord turned and looked at Peter. Then Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said to him, “Before the cock crows today, you will deny me three times.” ⁶²And he went out and wept bitterly.

Reflection

How often we betray Jesus. We do it each time we fail to live lives of compassion, justice, mercy, and peace. We do it in small ways, like when we gossip or fail to be generous with our time, energy, and resources in ways that make the lives of others, particularly those on the margins, the poor, the sick, the imprisoned, whether physically in jail or imprisoned in lives of struggle, we betray Jesus when fail to be present for them or to lift up their voices. And it can make those people who have much compassion weep as they imagine Jesus turning to look at them because they or we are not strong enough. We fail to see how we can impact the lives of those we love and those we don’t even know in ways that will transform them and us so that all can be alive and well in body, mind, and spirit. Sometimes we lash out, or we ignore, or we fail to even acknowledge that there is a problem because something is not our problem. But Jesus went to the cross for everyone, not just a few. As we continue the story, keep in mind how Jesus suffered because of a love so deep, so broad, and so high that it is beyond our comprehension. It is love for you

and every human being past, present, and future. Listen now to the story of the court proceedings.

The Mocking and Beating of Jesus

⁶³Now the men who were holding Jesus began to mock him and beat him; ⁶⁴they also blindfolded him and kept asking him, "Prophecy! Who is it that struck you?" ⁶⁵They kept heaping many other insults on him.

Jesus before the Council

⁶⁶When day came, the assembly of the elders of the people, both chief priests and scribes, gathered together, and they brought him to their council. ⁶⁷They said, "If you are the Messiah, tell us." He replied, "If I tell you, you will not believe; ⁶⁸and if I question you, you will not answer. ⁶⁹But from now on the Son of Man will be seated at the right hand of the power of God." ⁷⁰All of them asked, "Are you, then, the Son of God?" He said to them, "You say that I am." ⁷¹Then they said, "What further testimony do we need? We have heard it ourselves from his own lips!"

]Jesus before Pilate (Chapter 23)

Then the assembly rose as a body and brought Jesus before Pilate. ²They began to accuse him, saying, "We found this man perverting our nation, forbidding us to pay taxes to the emperor, and saying that he himself is the Messiah, a king." ³Then Pilate asked him, "Are you the king of the Jews?" He answered, "You say so." ⁴Then Pilate said to the chief priests and the crowds, "I find no basis for an accusation against this man." ⁵But they were insistent and said, "He stirs up the people by teaching throughout all Judea, from Galilee where he began even to this place."

Jesus before Herod

⁶When Pilate heard this, he asked whether the man was a Galilean. ⁷And when he learned that he was under Herod's jurisdiction, he sent him off to Herod, who was himself in Jerusalem at that time. ⁸When Herod saw Jesus, he was very glad, for he had been wanting to see him for a long time, because he had heard about him and was hoping to see him perform some sign. ⁹He questioned him at some length, but Jesus gave him no answer. ¹⁰The chief priests and the scribes stood by, vehemently accusing him. ¹¹Even Herod with his soldiers treated him with contempt and mocked him; then he put an elegant robe on him, and sent him back to Pilate. ¹²That same day Herod and Pilate became friends with each other; before this they had been enemies.

Jesus Sentenced to Death

¹³Pilate then called together the chief priests, the leaders, and the people, ¹⁴and said to them, "You brought me this man as one who was perverting the people; and here I have examined him in your presence and have not found this man guilty of any of your charges

against him. ¹⁵Neither has Herod, for he sent him back to us. Indeed, he has done nothing to deserve death. ¹⁶I will therefore have him flogged and release him.” ¹⁸Then they all shouted out together, “Away with this fellow! Release Barabbas for us!” ¹⁹(This was a man who had been put in prison for an insurrection that had taken place in the city, and for murder.) ²⁰Pilate, wanting to release Jesus, addressed them again; ²¹but they kept shouting, “Crucify, crucify him!” ²²A third time he said to them, “Why, what evil has he done? I have found in him no ground for the sentence of death; I will therefore have him flogged and then release him.” ²³But they kept urgently demanding with loud shouts that he should be crucified; and their voices prevailed. ²⁴So Pilate gave his verdict that their demand should be granted. ²⁵He released the man they asked for, the one who had been put in prison for insurrection and murder, and he handed Jesus over as they wished.

Reflection

You heard it. Jesus was innocent. Both Pilate and Herod could not find any basis to the accusations of wrong doing by Jesus, at least not to the standards of even corrupt Roman leaders, yet they acquiesced to the people. When enough people speak out it can bring about good or evil. In this case, though Jesus was innocent, he would suffer the consequences of a riled-up crowd. A crowd riled up by Jewish leaders who felt threatened by Jesus’ teaching, leadership, and example.

How could the people go one day from welcoming Jesus as a king to shouts of “crucify him!”? As we have witnessed over the last few years, all it takes is enough people convinced of a truth whether or not it is true, and then whipped into a frenzy, and the riotous behaviour takes root and spreads. It is insidious. It is frightening and overwhelming. It appears that nothing can stop the injury and damage. Yet...yet, there is more to the story.

The Crucifixion of Jesus

²⁶As they led him away, they seized a man, Simon of Cyrene, who was coming from the country, and they laid the cross on him, and made him carry it behind Jesus. ²⁷A great number of the people followed him, and among them were women who were beating their breasts and wailing for him. ²⁸But Jesus turned to them and said, “Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. ²⁹For the days are surely coming when they will say, ‘Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bore, and the breasts that never nursed.’ ³⁰Then they will begin to say to the mountains, ‘Fall on us’; and to the hills, ‘Cover us.’ ³¹For if they do this when the wood is green, what will happen when it is dry?”

³²Two others also, who were criminals, were led away to be put to death with him. ³³When they came to the place that is called The Skull, they crucified Jesus there with the criminals, one on his right and one on his left. ³⁴Then Jesus said, “Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing.” And they cast lots to divide his clothing. ³⁵And the people stood by, watching; but the leaders scoffed at him, saying, “He saved others; let him save himself if he is the Messiah of God, his chosen one!” ³⁶The soldiers also

mocked him, coming up and offering him sour wine, ³⁷and saying, “If you are the King of the Jews, save yourself!” ³⁸There was also an inscription over him, “This is the King of the Jews.”

³⁹One of the criminals who were hanged there kept deriding him and saying, “Are you not the Messiah? Save yourself and us!” ⁴⁰But the other rebuked him, saying, “Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? ⁴¹And we indeed have been condemned justly, for we are getting what we deserve for our deeds, but this man has done nothing wrong.” ⁴²Then he said, “Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.” ⁴³He replied, “Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in Paradise.”

The Death of Jesus

⁴⁴It was now about noon, and darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon, ⁴⁵while the sun’s light failed; and the curtain of the temple was torn in two. ⁴⁶Then Jesus, crying with a loud voice, said, “Father, into your hands I commend my spirit.” Having said this, he breathed his last. ⁴⁷When the centurion saw what had taken place, he praised God and said, “Certainly this man was innocent.” ⁴⁸And when all the crowds who had gathered there for this spectacle saw what had taken place, they returned home, beating their breasts. ⁴⁹But all his acquaintances, including the women who had followed him from Galilee, stood at a distance, watching these things.

The Burial of Jesus

⁵⁰Now there was a good and righteous man named Joseph, who, though a member of the council, ⁵¹had not agreed to their plan and action. He came from the Jewish town of Arimathea, and he was waiting expectantly for the kingdom of God. ⁵²This man went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. ⁵³Then he took it down, wrapped it in a linen cloth, and laid it in a rock-hewn tomb where no one had ever been laid. ⁵⁴It was the day of Preparation, and the sabbath was beginning. ⁵⁵The women who had come with him from Galilee followed, and they saw the tomb and how his body was laid. ⁵⁶Then they returned, and prepared spices and ointments. On the sabbath they rested according to the commandment.

Reflection

The story of Christ’s passion is where we can see God take what others meant for harm and help it to become something else. In this case it was a horrifying story of Jesus death. It is a story of dying, yes, but also a story of life. Even on the cross Jesus cared for his mother and for his friends. Jesus thought of each person who had been a part of this litany of action that led Jesus from a triumphal entry into the city that he knew would betray him, the city where the temple of God stood. This litany of actions of others would follow him as he celebrated the Passover meal with those who were closest to him, pray in the Garden of Gethsemane, be arrested, mocked and beaten, put on trial, hung on a cross and left to die. Yet he continued to care for all those who participated in this night and day of horror as he spoke the words, “Father, forgive them; for they do not know what

they are doing.” He showed compassion to the thief, who rather than mocking Jesus some more, choose to declare Jesus as innocent and Jesus promised him life in paradise.

Then Jesus died. One might think the story ends there...that death has won, which would mean that none of us has hope for life. If death wins then sin wins and we can never become something more than the sum of our worst and best moments.

But the story doesn't end here. Just as there was a promise of the kingdom of God for the followers of Christ then, and the thief who saw Jesus as the saviour he was, the Kingdom of God is come to earth for us, everyone of us, regardless of social status, of wealth, of health, regardless of how we identify ourselves socially, sexually, or any other barrier or boundary us humans like to mark territory with. There will be silence this week as the story of Easter lies dormant in a tomb. But wait for it. Death looks like it has won, but life is stirring and when life burst forth from the tomb, it will be glorious! Easter is approaching with power, authority, and amazing love.