

Family Worship Booklet



God tells us that Ezra read from the book of the Law,
day after day, and that the people of God
were filled with joy!

Friday – Luke 22:39-46 – Jesus prays.

Jesus is in the garden of Gethsemane on the Mount of Olives. He has ‘torn himself’ away from eight of his apostles at the entrance to the Garden and has gone on with Peter, James, and John, before leaving them and walking a few paces into the Garden. Luke says that Jesus knelt; the other gospels tell us that he fell on his face. Both are probably true. He would have begun on his knees, and as he became more engrossed in the battle within his soul, he fell forward onto the ground, oblivious to the three who were granted access to this moment in his life.

His opening word is ‘Father’. This is the Son in intimate communion with the Father. It’s a communion marked by pain and distress, for these words are a cry of humiliation from the lips of the Son to the ears of the Father. Many misunderstand the pleading of the Son. They read the words, “if you are willing, remove this cup from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but yours be done”, as a plea from the heart to see if God would somehow reconsider what was planned from all eternity and lift the coming burden from him. They advocate that Jesus’ humanity is breaking through here, and we are seeing his real brokenness as a man pleading with God to be spared the coming horror of the cross and all it entails. But that is not what is taking place here. This is a prayer of complete submission; there is nothing in it about being spared. Every word, from the first expression of the word Father to the last word the Lord Jesus speaks, oozes humble submission to the Father’s will. How can we be sure? Philippians 2:8, “And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.” Whatever the Father has determined the Son will do, that is what the ‘nevertheless’ sentence means.

The ‘cup’ is a figurative representation of the totality of suffering Jesus will experience. The cup in the Old Testament has clear associations with suffering and the wrath of God; see Psalm 11:6, Isaiah 51:17 and Ezekiel 23:33.

Luke alone speaks of the angel from heaven appearing to strengthen Jesus. This strengthening was a sign of God’s acceptance of the submission rendered and an enabling of Jesus’ body to withstand what the cross would bring. It’s a strengthening that evidenced itself in the fact that the intensity of Jesus’ praying increased to the point where he began to sweat blood. What a scene! And all for your salvation and mine.

- Q1. What does Jesus do in Gethsemane?
- Q2. What does his prayer convey?
- Q3. How is Jesus prepared for the cross?

Thursday – Luke 22:39-46 – In Gethsemane.

Jesus and the apostles leave the Upper Room and make their way to the Mount of Olives; Matthew and Mark are more specific; they tell us that the party goes to Gethsemane (Matthew 26:36ff and Mark 14:32ff). Luke does add the little aside, ‘as was his custom’, which is interesting because it gives us an insight into how Judas knew where to find Jesus. In other words, it wasn’t guesswork or the result of some covert operation that Judas could lead the crowd to where Jesus was; he led them to where he knew Jesus always went. We should remember that Satan is a created being, and his power is finite; even if he has ways of doing things that are not straightforward, they are wholly dissimilar in power and magnitude to what God does in the execution of His eternal decrees.

The other gospels tell us about Jesus praying and how he went away and prayed three times. They also record what Jesus said between the first and second period of his praying, but Luke condenses the account of what happened and simply gives us a sight of Jesus praying once. Luke says that Jesus tells the apostles both to pray and what to pray for. In doing so, Jesus is drawing on what he had taught them in Matthew 6:9-13, specifically about needing to pray for the grace to stand firm when trials of temptation come upon them, as they are about to experience. Luke also doesn’t tell us how he separated the apostles by taking Peter, James, and John with him and going off a short distance to pray. The English translation doesn’t capture this act of withdrawal. The Greek says, ‘He tore himself away from them about a stone’s throw’. It wasn’t just that Jesus sauntered off and left them to pray; knowing what was coming, he was concerned for them, and it took effort for him to walk away and leave them. And then, having left the eight disciples a stone’s throw away, he took a further few paces and separated himself from Peter, James, and John. But why did he have to leave them? Because the battle had already begun in his soul, and it was a battle that he had to fight on his own.

Now we come to what I think is one of the most intimate and profound events in the gospel, the praying of Jesus about the cross. The writer of Hebrews says, “In the days of the flesh Jesus offered up prayers and supplications with loud cries and tears to him who was able to save him from death.” This is what we are entering now, and tomorrow we will look at it more. (Hebrews 5:7)

- Q1. Where did Jesus and the apostles go?
- Q2. How did Judas know where to find them?
- Q3. What does Jesus tell the apostles to do?
- Q4. What does Jesus then do?

Monday – Luke 22:31-35 – Jesus prophesies Peter’s denial.

All four gospels tell us about Jesus’ prophecy that Peter will deny him three times. It’s a prophecy that Jesus will give to Peter twice, first here in the Upper Room, as we have read here in Luke and John 13:36-38, and then a second time on their way out to Gethsemane (Matthew 26:30-36 and Mark 14:26-32). When we compare what Luke and John write, we see that Peter’s assurance that he won’t deny Jesus and Jesus’ word about the cock crowing once both relate to the prophecy given here in the Upper Room.

So, what does Jesus say or rather, how does he say it? Because it is often the case that it’s not what we say but how we say it that matters. The first thing we see is that Jesus says the name, Simon. This is Peter’s birth name. The name Peter was given to him by Jesus to represent his rock-like role in the church (Matthew 16:18), but that name isn’t going to be reflected in what Peter is going to do soon. Nonetheless, the double use of his name shows the deep concern Jesus has for this man, just as when he said, “Martha, Martha” in Luke 10:41 and “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem” in Matthew 23:37. So, this is not a judgment upon Simon Peter but a statement arising from a pastoral loving heart, which is astonishing given what Peter is going to do.

Contrast that love and care with the fact that “behold Satan demanded to have you,” and we see the gulf between the way of the Lord Jesus and Satan. And note that the “you” here is plural, so it’s not just that Satan demanded Peter; he wanted to have all the remaining apostles. I say ‘remaining’ because he already had entered Judas Iscariot by this point. So, all apostles are now aware of the threat that had come their way. But who had Satan demanded to have the apostles from? Satan had approached God and sought His permission to bring unparalleled trials upon each one of them. There are clear echoes of Satan’s approach to God concerning Job (Job 1). It is essential for our psychological well-being to understand that Satan cannot just have his way with us as and when he pleases. Satan can only test and try us, having gained permission from God to do so. He cannot assail us either at will or with the degree of power he wishes, and God will always provide a way of escape (1 Corinthians 10:13).

- Q1. Who does Jesus now speak to, and what name does he use to address him?
- Q2. What is the tone of Jesus’ voice?
- Q3. What does Jesus say Satan has done? Whom does Satan have to ask and why?

Tuesday – Luke 22:31-35 – Jesus prophesies Peter’s denial.

So, Satan had asked God for permission to bring untold trials on the remaining eleven disciples; that is what the term ‘sift you as wheat’ means. When Jesus speaks of this again when they are leaving Gethsemane, he speaks of the smiting of the shepherd and the scattering of the sheep (Matthew 26:31ff). So, what had prevented the destruction of these men? Jesus prayed for them and specifically for Peter; literally, he begged on Peter’s behalf to the Father. Is that not extraordinary? Here is Jesus facing all the cross will have for him, and he is begging that the Father will protect this man, who is the most vulnerable of them all because of his impetuous nature. Peter needed Jesus to pray to intercede for him, which is what Jesus does. Why does Jesus tell him this? Because Peter would later need to know and be assured of Jesus’ love for him, so that he would one day return and labour in leading the church in Jerusalem. And note that Jesus’ praying did not stop with this prayer. He is constantly making intercession for us, his people, his Bride. It is what he does as our Great High Priest in heaven. Indeed, this is something that it would be good for us to settle in our hearts and minds.

Now we come to Peter’s words, which we are all too familiar with in our lives. In essence, Peter is saying, ‘How can Satan hurt or lead me astray? I am too committed to you, Jesus. Regardless of what happens, if they send me to prison or even threaten to kill me, I will not deny you’. Note the absence of anything from Peter regarding his dependence upon God. He doesn’t say, ‘if God strengthens and keeps me, then....’ No, it’s all about him and what he will do in his own strength because of who he is. As far as Peter is concerned, Jesus can count on him and need never worry about his commitment. Have you ever thought that? Maybe, like me, more often than you would want to admit to.

Jesus is having none of it; he says, ‘I tell you, Peter....’ Note the change from ‘Simon’ back to ‘Peter’. Jesus is saying to him, ‘so you are going to stand like a rock, are you?’ Then Jesus goes on to tell Peter precisely what is going to happen. Before the cock crows to mark the coming of tomorrow’s dawn, Peter will have denied Jesus three times.

- Q1. How will the Apostles escape destruction at the hand of Satan?
- Q2. What is Peter’s response to what Jesus tells him? What does that say about Peter’s view of himself? Can we have such a view of ourselves?
- Q3. How does Jesus respond to this pride-filled arrogance?

Wednesday – Luke 22:35-38 – Two swords.

Interestingly, only Luke has this section. It begins with Jesus asking the apostles about what they had lacked when he sent them out to preach the Kingdom’s good news. It’s a question which invites a negative response, and that’s what they give when they say ‘nothing’. It’s leading them back to those occasions when they had to live by faith and trust in the providing hand of God. But this is more than bringing out the old photo album and having a flick through it the evening before parting. Jesus is preparing them for what they will face in the coming days. Days when they will be sent out into the world again, but this time they will have to adopt a different approach. Previously, he had sent them out with no moneybag, knapsack, or sandals; they were to go and be blessed by how God would provide for them. Now, they are to take a moneybag, knapsack, sandals and, most chilling, a sword. And if they don’t own a sword, they are to sell their most valuable possession, their cloak, and buy one. Some commentators say this is figurative, that Jesus wasn’t actually saying to buy a sword. They base this on the fact that Jesus reprimanded Peter for using his sword (verse 51). I’m not so sure. When we read about Paul’s experiences in 2 Corinthians 11:26-27, the thought of having some form of self-protection is outlandish.

So, is Jesus not going to be with these men at all? No, he will afford them protection by various means, but he is setting a tone of realism because of what God has prophesied through the prophets of old. In this case, Isaiah (Isaiah 53:12). And what a prophesy it is! Jesus identifies that this prophecy is about him. What Isaiah says, is going to happen to Jesus. The sentence begins with the word ‘And’, indicating that there is more to happen before Jesus is numbered among the transgressors. He will suffer terribly, and then he will die on the cross, as one seen to be in the same class of lawbreakers as two criminals.

How do the apostles respond to this devastating piece of news that Jesus has just identified the man of Isaiah 53 as himself? They point to two swords that are in the Upper Room. What? They point to the two swords they can see. Why? Because they have heard Jesus telling them that they will need swords, and that is all they have heard. They failed to differentiate between Jesus telling them about their future needs and the immensity of what he would experience. Sadly, they are not unique in not seeing the wood for the trees on an all too frequent basis. Jesus’ words, ‘it’s enough’ says it all.

- Q1. What does Jesus begin reminding them of?
- Q2. Why does he do this?
- Q3. How do the apostles respond when Jesus identifies himself as the man in Isaiah chapter 53?