

## **Northwest Community Evangelical Free Church**

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Sermon manuscript

### **Sermon Series: Jesus' Hard Path That Leads to Gospel For Us**

**Betrayed...Denied...Judged...Condemned** Study #4  
(Luke 22:31--23:25)

#### **Introduction: A very human Jesus...**

We believe that the Jesus who walked the earth two thousand years ago was God, in the flesh. We affirm His divinity,<sup>1</sup> proved by His miracles, His love, and His wisdom. The evidence is that Jesus is and was, God. And we also affirm His HUMANITY.<sup>2</sup>

Further, Jesus isn't 50% God and 50% man. He is 100% God and 100% man *at the same time*. (Some Sunday school teachers have been known to say, "*Jesus is a 200% person!*")

Today, we'll see no miracles - except for one little one.

But we will see a fully human Man who was just like us in all things except for sin. We'll watch as this Man endured pain He could have avoided but didn't because of His passion for His Father's will and His passion for our redemption.

Today, again, we are eager to see Jesus.

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<sup>1</sup> See The Nicene Creed, an ancient creed of the church, that clearly states Jesus' divine nature. See also The Athanasian Creed for its concise statement of both the human and divine nature of Jesus.

<sup>2</sup> See The Chalcedonian Creed, written in 451 A.D. It resulted from decades of debate about how we should understand the nature of Jesus. The gist of the Chalcedon Creed is this: *Jesus Christ is simultaneously fully God and fully man.*

#### *Reviewing Jesus' final week ...*

We remember that on the first day of Jesus' final week, He rode into Jerusalem on the back of a donkey's colt to the cheers of adoring crowds, who welcomed Him as the Messiah who would liberate them from Roman oppression.

Of course, He had come for another - and more important - liberation, a liberation from sin and eternal death. And we remember the moment of Jesus' greatest popularity at the triumphal entry on this Palm Sunday.

Following that grand entrance were days of increasing tension marked by Jesus' cleansing of the temple, of His being attacked by religious leaders, and by His own thorough thrashing of them for their hypocrisy.

Last Sunday, we saw Judas make a deal with these leaders to betray Jesus. We watched as He and His apostles enjoyed one last Passover meal together. We listened as Jesus spoke to His apostles one last time about the centrality of service in His kingdom.

Now we listen as Jesus told His apostles about a few things that were yet to come.

#### *Previewing what is to come...*

He predicted a future in which the twelve apostles will sit on twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel. (22:28-30)<sup>3</sup>

He warned Simon Peter that he - Peter! - would this very night repeatedly deny Jesus. (22:31-34) Peter assured Jesus that this would never happen.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Judas would soon be replaced by Matthias (See Acts 1).

<sup>4</sup> Note Peter's sunning lack of reflectiveness. Jesus, who had never told him anything untrue had just confronted him with a sober warning. Why would he not have turned reflective when the wisest Man he had ever known had just told him that he would turn faithless in just a few hours?

Jesus then warned them that hard times were soon to come. He prepared them for what life was going to be like after He was gone. He told them about coming persecution and opposition. (22:35-38)

Then, Luke reverts to story-telling mode and tells us what happened when Jesus and the Twelve left the upper room in Jerusalem where they had eaten the Passover and walked (it's late at night; they walked in the dark) to the Mount of Olives.

### **PRAYING: Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane (22:39-44)**

#### **Jesus, to Gethsemane (v. 39a)**

***[39a] And He came out and went, as was His habit, to the Mount of Olives...***

Exiting the city, they would have followed a dry riverbed called the Kidron to get to the Mount of Olives. Somewhere on the slopes of Olivet, there was a garden that was well-known to Jesus and to the Twelve.

Since none of them had homes in Jerusalem, they likely stayed here during the three great annual Jewish festivals (Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles).

#### **Jesus, to the Disciples (vv. 39b-40)**

***[39b]...and the disciples also followed Him. [40] Now when He arrived at the place, He said to them, "Pray that you do not come into temptation."***

Jesus is about to pray. And if you read about this event in Matthew and Mark, you'll notice that they record details Luke doesn't.

For instance, we don't read here that Peter, James, and John joined Jesus at a separate spot. We don't read here about those three repeatedly falling asleep when Jesus told them to ***"Watch and pray!"***

Except for this one exhortation to them all to pray, Luke's focus is all on Jesus.

#### **Jesus, in Fervent Prayer (vv. 41-44)**

***[41] And He withdrew from them about a stone's throw, and He knelt down and began to pray, [42] saying, "Father, if You are willing, remove this cup from Me; yet not My will, but Yours be done."<sup>5</sup> [43] Now an angel from heaven appeared to Him, strengthening Him. [44] And being in agony, He was praying very fervently; and His sweat became like drops of blood, falling down upon the ground].***

Luke is the only one of the Gospel writers who tells us that an angel appeared to Jesus. Luke alone tells us that Jesus was ***"in agony"***<sup>6</sup> and that His sweat was so heavy that it ***"became like drops of blood."***

Luke describes Jesus' mood and emotional state in extreme terms. I think he does this to let us see that Jesus saw more clearly than He ever had what He was about to face.<sup>7</sup>

He had long been aware that He would be betrayed by a friend, denied by a closer friend, abandoned by His followers, and condemned by His own people. He knew that He would be brutally tortured and then crucified by the Romans.<sup>8</sup>

He knew that the time was at hand. None of that would have been a surprise to Jesus.

And to think that the mere physicality of the suffering that He was going to face brought about this sudden distress doesn't seem to me to do justice to what we know of the Man's character.

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<sup>5</sup> The actual prayer probably lasted for a considerable time. Certainly, it was more than the sentence prayer we have here.

<sup>6</sup> Matthew and Mark tell us that He was ***"deeply grieved," "troubled"*** and ***"very distressed."***

<sup>7</sup> So Craig Blaising, Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society, 22/4 (December 1979), pp. 333-343. Excellent article.

<sup>8</sup> It had only been a few days since He was anointed for His death by Mary in Bethany. (John 12) The chief priests had already determined to put Him to death and Judas had already contracted with them to turn Him over to them. (Luke 22) Jesus had told the disciples that the Passover is the last meal He would have with them. (Luke 22)

I think that there was something else beyond this that hit Jesus' soul with the force of a tsunami. Listen again, carefully, to His prayer.<sup>9</sup>

***"...if You are willing, remove this cup from Me."***<sup>10</sup>

Many people hear this and think that Jesus was praying that He would be spared going to the cross.

The idea is that now that the cross looms so close, Jesus shrinks in horror from the whole ordeal. But, in the end, He accepts not His own will, but God's will to die the death of crucifixion as a sacrifice for the sins of the world.

I have come to believe that that narrative doesn't square with the prayer Jesus prayed. And to get to the heart of what Jesus is praying, I think we have to understand what He had in mind when He spoke of the ***"cup."***

Very frequently in the Old Testament, when speaking of God's wrath, the prophets and other writers would use the terminology of pouring out ***"the cup"*** of God's wrath.<sup>11</sup>

Isaiah wrote about the cup of God's wrath being poured out on His own people, the Jews, for their rebellion. Isaiah followed that warning with the promise that this ***"cup"*** would be taken away.

God assured His people that having drunk the cup of His wrath, His wrath would be turned away from them, ***"removed."*** (Isaiah 51:22)

I think Jesus took His cue for His prayer from Isaiah.

His ***"agony"*** and extreme sweat was not primarily due to the extreme physical suffering He would face.

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<sup>9</sup> All of the records of the prayers of Gethsemane from the synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke) are brief, with only minor variations.

<sup>10</sup> This part of His prayer is a first-class conditional construction in Greek. This grammatical form accepts that what follows the "if" is almost certain and is often translated, "since." For an example of this form, see Philippians 2:1ff. Here Jesus is affirming, by faith, that this hour will pass Him by.

<sup>11</sup> See Psalm 75:8; Jeremiah 25:15.

What rocked Him to the core was the realization that He was going to drink of the cup of God's wrath.

His prayer wasn't a request that He would escape the cross. It was a request - by faith - that having drunk the cup, the wrath of God would be ***"removed"*** from Him.

We saw last week that all that Jesus was experiencing here at the end was spiritual warfare on a cosmic level.<sup>12</sup>

The enemy's temptation was to plant in Jesus' mind the idea that the cup would not pass from Him, that He would be under God's condemning wrath forever.

Jesus battled that temptation with a trusting affirmation that just as the Jews had drunk the cup and God had removed it from them, so this hour of testing, this cup, would pass from Him, too.

And when He prayed, ***"Yet not My will, but Yours be done"*** He was resting in His Father's care. ***"Yet not My will, but Yours be done"*** was the victory. Jesus passed the test. The battle is won.

He will now move forward into the most horrible experience of suffering any person has ever known - physically, emotionally, relationally, and spiritually - steadfastly trusting His Father. The time has come.

***[45] When He rose from prayer, He came to the disciples and found them sleeping from sorrow, [46] and He said to them, "Why are you sleeping? Get up and pray that you do not come into temptation."***

Late night sleepiness is something I totally understand AND they had just eaten a big meal.

But this sleepiness is alarming. The same Simon Peter who had just promised Jesus that he would stand for Him unto death (as had the

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<sup>12</sup> Remember that Satan entered Judas. (Luke 22:3) We have just seen that an angel appeared to Jesus in the garden.

others, too), has just succumbed to drowsiness. And we think, *“This is not a very promising start...”*

His only comment to the disciples here is to urge them - again! - to pray that they not enter into temptation.

As He spoke these words, the night sky was lit with soldiers’ torches. The quiet of the Garden was interrupted with the shouts of a mob armed with swords and clubs making their way to arrest Jesus.

### **BETRAYING: Judas Betrayed Jesus With a Friendly Kiss (22:47-53)**

#### **The Act of Betrayal (vv. 47-48)**

***[47a] While He was still speaking, behold, a crowd came, and the one called Judas, one of the twelve, was leading the way for them...***

The main character in this multitude that invaded the Garden was Judas Iscariot. Judas was one of the twelve apostles. He had followed Jesus for a long time, now.<sup>13</sup>

And Judas was the key to the Jewish leaders’ hopes for success on this night because Judas was the only one familiar enough with Jesus to identify Him in the dark.

With his knowledge of Jesus’ habits, Judas led the crowd to the garden. And to identify Jesus, the agreed-upon sign was the normal kiss of greeting, a kiss on the cheek, to indicate friendship.

***[47b]...and he approached Jesus to kiss Him. [48] But Jesus said to him, “Judas, are you betraying the Son of Man with a kiss?”***

The Greek word for “kiss” is built from one of the words we translate “love.” It is the love of a friend for a friend.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>13</sup> As far as we know, Judas was also the only one of the apostles who hailed from the land of Judea (the city of Kerioth), as the rest were Galileans.

<sup>14</sup> Christian recording artist Michael Card has written of Judas’ act in one of his songs ( “Why?”): *“Why did it have to be a friend who chose to betray the Lord?”*

And Judas’ kiss was the ultimate in contemptuous deceit. The kiss of betrayal prompted a question from Jesus’ apostles.

#### **Violent Fallout From the Betrayal (vv. 49-51)**

***[49]...“Lord, shall we strike with the sword?”<sup>15</sup>***

And without waiting for a response, ***[50]...one of them struck the slave of the high priest and cut off his right ear.***

From John’s Gospel, we know that the swordsman was Peter.

So, Jesus, having just come to the end of His earthly time with His disciples, having taught them the way of peace, having taught them that His Kingdom was not of this world, one of them pulled a short sword on an innocent servant.

Jesus rebuked Peter, and the rest. ***[51]...“Stop! No more of this.”*** - and here’s the little miracle - ***And He touched his ear and healed him.***<sup>16</sup>

Jesus then turned His attention to those who were responsible for His arrest.

#### **Powerful Words From the Betrayed (vv. 52-53)**

***[52]...“Have you come out with swords and clubs as you would against a man inciting a revolt? [53] While I was with you daily in the temple, you did not lay hands on Me; but this hour and the power of darkness are yours.”***

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*And why did he use a kiss to show them? That’s not what a kiss is for! Only a friend can betray a friend, a stranger has nothing to gain. And only a friend comes close enough to ever cause so much pain.”*

<sup>15</sup> The sword that Peter was using was sort of like a “Saturday night special.” It was the “*maxaira*” - an illegal weapon at feast times - a short sword a man could hide in the folds of his cloak.

<sup>16</sup> As far as I can see, the only miracle Jesus performed after the raising of Lazarus from the dead was this miracle of restoring the right ear to a slave who was simply standing by when Jesus was betrayed and arrested.

With that, they led Jesus away and brought him - in the middle of the night - to the home of the high priest.

Luke tells us that Simon Peter was following *“at a distance.”*

The next scene is from the courtyard of the high priest with the servants and slaves of the high priest and his companions.

### **DENYING: Peter Denies Jesus (22:54-62)**

#### **At the Home of the High Priest (vv. 54-55)**

***[55] After they kindled a fire in the middle of the courtyard and sat down together, Peter was sitting among them.***

From the courtyard where Peter was sitting and warming himself, he could see and hear the proceedings of Jesus' interrogation before the high priest.

While Jesus was undergoing His trials, it becomes evident that Peter was also on trial.

This is Peter, the rock. Peter, the apostle who expressed such self-confidence in the Upper Room.<sup>17</sup>

The bravado Peter had shown earlier in the evening at Passover was tested by a casual question from someone who sat with Peter around the fire.

#### **Three Times (vv. 56-60)**

##### *First denial (vv. 56-57)*

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<sup>17</sup> Was it Peter's determination to show himself faithful to Christ that had carried him into the courtyard of the High Priest in the first place? Was Peter determined to demonstrate that Jesus was wrong when He had said that Peter would deny Him?

***[56] And a slave woman, seeing him as he sat in the firelight, and staring at him, said, "This man was with Him as well."***

This woman is not high up on the ladder of social significance. She's not of high rank. She's not wealthy. She posed no threat to Peter.

But she had seen Peter with Jesus. Maybe it was Peter and Jesus walking through the temple or walking around Jerusalem together.

Peter's response was quick and ugly.

***[57] But he denied it, saying, "I do not know Him, woman!"***

Just allow Peter's words to hang there for a minute.

Peter had been called to follow Jesus while fishing one day. He instantly left his nets to follow. He walked the roads of Palestine for three years with Jesus, watched miracles and healings, listened to Him teach and saw Him go toe-to-toe with Pharisees.

And here, he flatly denied knowing Him. Some time passed and someone else - this time a man - spoke to Peter.

##### *Second denial (v. 58)*

***[58] And a little later, another person saw him and said, "You are one of them too!" But Peter said, "Man, I am not!"***

You may have caught the contempt in this man's words. *"He's 'one of them.'"* Nobody wants to be *"one of them."* Peter sure didn't.

So, He vehemently denied again that he had ever been in any way associated with this Jesus, whoever He might be...

There was a third exchange, this time with another man in the courtyard.

##### *Third denial (vv. 59-60)*

***[59] And after about an hour had passed, some other man began to insist, saying, "Certainly this man also was with Him, for he, too, is a Galilean."***

It was obvious that Peter was a Galilean, a northern hick. Just like Jesus. Galileans were easy to spot in Jerusalem. They stood out.

But Peter wasn't about to be outed.

***[60a] But Peter said, "Man, I do not know what you are talking about!"***

Now, sadly, we saw this coming. Peter's bluster, His insistence that He would hang tough even though everybody else might fall away - even as Jesus predicted otherwise.

When you have trouble in the water, the third time under is the last time under. In wrestling, when your shoulders are pinned to the mat through the referee's "three count" the match is over. In baseball, three strikes and you're out.

Peter has fulfilled Jesus' prophetic warning to a tee. ***[60b]...And immediately, while he was still speaking, a rooster crowed.***

It is heart-breaking to see Peter's heart failure here. He has failed once, twice, three times.

He has denied being a follower of Jesus after having promised that he would never do such a thing. He has denied ever even knowing Jesus after promising that he would die for Jesus.

But as disappointed as we are with Peter, we couldn't be more disappointed in Peter than he was in himself when he realized what he had done.

Peter's bold denials give way to remorse as he realized that he had fallen into precisely the trap Jesus had warned Him about.

## **One Look (vv. 61-62)**

***[61a] And then the Lord turned and looked at Peter.***

From the courtyard to the hall in the high priest's home there was a direct line of sight. Peter could see Jesus; Jesus could see Peter.

Peter and Jesus locked eyes. ***[61b]...And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how He had told him, "Before a rooster crows today, you will deny Me three times." [62] And he went out and wept bitterly.***<sup>18</sup>

The redemptive good news is that while Simon Peter struck out three times, he was not "out" of the game.

He was restored to wholeness by Jesus' strong, gentle rebuke on the shore of the Sea of Galilee when Jesus asked him three times, "Simon, do you love Me?"

Peter's remorse was his repentance. He went on to lead a very faithful life of following Jesus. He was down, but not out.

And for the last two thousand years, Jesus has been restoring down and out followers, putting the broken back together, and putting "Simons" back into service.

I am so grateful for the many times Jesus has restored me, has put me back together, has allowed me, after a failure, to serve Him again.

But the crushing result of Peter's denials on this night was one more abandonment of Jesus.

To this point, He has been betrayed, arrested, and denied.

Over the hours that follow on this Thursday night / Friday morning, Jesus will experience unrelenting continued abandonment and suffering.

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<sup>18</sup> Matthew 26:75 also records Peter weeping bitterly.

After Peter ran off into the darkness, the soldiers who were holding Jesus in custody at the high priest's home began mocking and beating Him. They blindfolded Him and blasphemed Him. (23:63-65)

**CONDEMNING: "Innocent. Guilty, as Charged!" (22:66--23:25)**

**Jesus Before the Jewish Sanhedrin (22:66-71)**

These soldiers then took Him to the larger hall where the Sanhedrin tried Him at daybreak. These leaders demanded that He tell them plainly if He was the Christ, the Messiah.

So, He did. Speaking Messianically, He courageously, boldly, told them that He, ***"the Son of Man will be seated at the right hand of the power of God."*** (23:69)

By those words, Jesus effectively sealed His fate. His own people, the Jews, will now turn Him over to the Romans for judgment, specifically to the Roman governor. Pontius Pilate.<sup>19</sup>

Pilate is an interesting figure. By this time, he had been ruling in Jerusalem for about five years.

And, like all Roman governors, Pilate had immense power over his subjects, in this case, Palestinian Jews. He had authority over their politics, economics, social policy, even to some extent, over their religion.

He had the authority to appoint the High Priest. He could reverse the Sanhedrin's decisions.

And (most importantly), he had the power of capital punishment. And every decision Pilate made was backed by the power of the Roman military.

The Jewish leaders led Jesus to Pilate.

**Jesus Before The Roman Governor, Pilate (#1) (23:1-7)**

***[23:2] And they began to bring charges against Him, saying, "We found this Man misleading our nation and forbidding us to pay taxes to Caesar, and saying that He Himself is Christ, a King."***

If we follow this passage, it becomes obvious to us that Pilate had no interest in pressing charges against Jesus. ***[5] But they kept on insisting, saying, "He is stirring up the people, teaching all over Judea, starting from Galilee, as far as this place!"***

Pilate wanted to be done with Jesus. So, when he heard that Jesus was from Galilee, he sent Jesus across town to Herod (Antipas), who happened to be in Jerusalem, probably for Passover. Herod was the Roman-installed Jewish ruler of Galilee and Perea.

Pilate sent Jesus to Herod because He wanted someone else, anyone else, to deal with Jesus.

**Jesus Before the Jewish King, Herod (23:8-12)**

Herod was ***"overjoyed"*** that Pilate sent Jesus to Him. He had been wanting to see a miracle from Jesus for a long time. Jesus gave him nothing.

Herod questioned Jesus at length. Jesus said nothing.

Herod was so offended by Jesus' refusal to cooperate that he unleashed his own soldiers on Jesus, who ***[11] treated Him with contempt and mocked Him, dressing Him in a brightly shining robe, and sent Him back to Pilate.***

That exchange between Herod and Jesus brought Jesus one step closer to His death. But it repaired the relationship between Herod and Pilate, who became friends on that day.

**Jesus Before the Roman Governor, Pilate (#2) (23:13-25)**

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<sup>19</sup> The Jews didn't have the authority to carry out a sentence of capital punishment. Clearly, they don't just want Jesus punished. They don't just want to send a message. They want Him dead.

With Jesus standing before him, again, Pilate told the rulers of the Jews, again, that there was no basis for the charges they had brought against Jesus.

He told them that rather than put Jesus to death, he would punish Him (that is, scourge Him) and then release Him.<sup>20</sup>

Pilate's plan for release was to follow a custom of releasing one Jewish prisoner at Passover, to placate the Jews. He wanted to release Jesus. The Jews demanded that he release, instead, a notorious criminal, Barabbas.

The more Pilate advocated for Jesus, the louder the Jews' voices became. ***"Crucify, crucify Him!"***

***[23] But they were insistent, with loud voices, demanding that He be crucified. And their voices began to prevail. [24] And so Pilate decided to have their demand carried out. [25] And he released the man for whom they were asking, who had been thrown into prison for a revolt and murder; but he handed Jesus over to their will.***

In all these scenes, there are contrasts between the towering strength and courage of Jesus to follow His Father's will and to give His life as a sacrifice for lost sinners AND the weakness and vacillation and compromise and hypocrisy of the Sanhedrin, Herod, and Pilate.

## **Conclusion:**

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<sup>20</sup> John tells us that Pilate had Jesus "scourged." "Scourging" was a brutal beating, so brutal, in fact, that Roman citizens were exempt. Scourging frequently resulted in death for the victim. In scourging, a prisoner was flogged by a soldier with a whip made of leather thongs imbedded with metal tips. And the flogging lasted as long as the soldier had the strength or the will to continue. This beating was usually reserved as a pre-crucifixion punishment to weaken a prisoner so that he would die more quickly on the cross. In that respect, it was a merciful precursor to crucifixion, for in those cases in which a victim was not scourged, a condemned man might live on for days while on the cross! After the scourging, Jesus remained in the custody of the soldiers, who added insult to injury.

I have read that travelers in the northern lanes of ocean traffic frequently observe an interesting phenomenon.

They will see icebergs traveling in one direction in spite of the fact that strong winds are blowing in the opposite direction. The icebergs move against the winds. How so?

The explanation lies in the fact that the icebergs, with 8/9ths of their bulk under the waters, are caught in the grip of mighty currents that carry them forward, no matter which way the winds blow.

Jesus was carried along by the twin currents of His own commitment to His Father's will and His own deep love for you and me. He moved steadily forward toward the cross, despite the howling winds blowing against Him.

He was completely committed to doing God's will, committed to bringing salvation to us, committed to dying the agonizing death of crucifixion.

Nothing, not betrayal, denials, abandonment, and unjust sentencing could blow Him off course.

Seeing the Jesus we have just seen drives us to faith, to worship, and into whatever next step He might lead us.