

Let this Cup Pass from Me

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- [0 : 0 0] This is the AM service on March 15, 1998. The preacher is Phil Muleman. His sermon is entitled, Let This Cup Pass From Me, and is from Matthew 26, verses 31 to 46.
- You are indeed worthy, Lord, of our praise. You are holy. We thank you for seeing you on Jesus. We pray that you would help us and focus our hearts and minds on what you would have to say to us now.
- In Jesus' precious name we pray. Amen. Well, there are many amazing people around us in this world that we might aspire to be like. And there's the Australia Tour skipper, John Bertrand.
- He was a hero of mine, because he did what I was never able to achieve, and that is he skippered Australia too. Take the America's Cup off the Americans in 1982.
- It was a great moment. Watching that on TV in the early 80s. And I admired, and I looked up to John Bertrand. And if you know anything about sailing, you would agree that John was an amazing sailor.
- [1 : 0 9] He had a brilliant tactical mind, and he just was able to pick it all the time. But there are other amazing people. Greg Norman is similar. He's well-loved by many people, and the media has realised just how amazing he is.
- And they have cashed in on him. And he's marketing golf balls through the Holden card. And so on, because this guy was just so brilliant at his career. And Princess Diana, it seems.
- Amazing people's memories as a heroine for many people. She had such an amazing following. It's hard to believe how much impact she made on people's lives.
- Well, so Jesus is an amazing person too. His amazing abilities are seen, however, on the golf course or out in the ocean, or even at charity functions or fundraisings or the benefit conference.
- It's not seen there. Rather, I am seen in the way in which he leads and speaks to people, and in the way he is able to tell future events. As I read more about his life, I learn more and more about his uniqueness.
- [2 : 1 3] If you know anything about his life, if you have ever read anything, if you've ever read the Bible accounts about his life in an ordered fashion, as you would say read a novel or anything like that, you can only conclude that his life, Jesus' life, is an amazing sequence of events.
- The Bible reading that was read to us this morning from Matthew 26 is no exception. Those few verses tell us about some amazing qualities of Jesus, and in it we see again his ability to foretell coming events.
- We also see the amazing relationship that he has with his Father. And the first thing that we read is that Jesus is someone who is not afraid to speak his mind.
- Jesus has just predicted prior to this occasion, the story that we read this morning, that one of the twelve disciples who has spent the last few years following him around, he predicts, Jesus predicts, that someone will betray him.

And now after this meal that they've had together has finished, the disciples and Jesus then go out into a place called the Mount of Olives. And then he says to his disciples, Jesus is able to see into the future, and he is able to foretell what is going to happen.

[3 : 31] But wouldn't we all like to have that gift? Wouldn't we all like to be able to see into the future and foretell what's going to happen? I wonder how we would behave if we could do such a thing. Perhaps we'd be down at a crown casino, setting ourselves up for life, sitting in the wheel and winning all the time, perhaps go out and buy a test, a lotto ticket, knowing the numbers are going to come out.

Well, if we could tell the future, there would also be many of us who would avoid situations that would lead to any type of suffering that directly affected me or us or whatever.

But Jesus doesn't do that. He wouldn't do that. Jesus couldn't, and Jesus didn't. His concern is to tell what will happen so that his disciples and other people will truly understand who he is and who he is when he is no longer with them in person.

So why does Jesus predict that his disciples will all become deserters of him? Why did he do that? Although their eventual desertion of Jesus is tragic and irresponsible, which is what the disciples did, they deserted Jesus, we also see that it is in the sovereign plan of God for his chosen people.

It's in the sovereign plan of God for this to happen. Jesus says in this Bible passage, It is written, I will strike the shepherd and the sheep of the flock will be scattered. Jesus quotes here from the Hebrew Scriptures, from our Old Testament, to show that God's sovereign plan will come about.

[4 : 56] Jesus isn't predicting any petty thing that will happen. But what God has said will happen. He's predicting that what God has said will happen. And although this passage from the Old Testament, from Zechariah, can be interpreted in a broad context to refer to the scattering of the nations, its immediate use here in this passage is referring to the scattering of the disciples, the close people living with Jesus at that time.

And God is doing the talking through this prophet called Zechariah. Jesus is the shepherd and the disciple of the sheep. And in God's sovereign plan, it's God's plan. He hands over his son Jesus.

He strikes the shepherd and hands Jesus over to the religious authorities, the religious and the civil authorities of that day. And we know the story. They nail Jesus to a cross. They nail him to death on a cross.

And when Jesus, the shepherd, is handed over to these authorities, we also see how his closest followers, the sheep of the flock, his disciples, we see how they abandon him too.

They are shattered. Well, eventually, we read on further in Matthew's Gospel that Jesus is arrested and he is handed over for trial. And just as he said will happen, we read that all the disciples deserted him and fled.

[6 : 12] The prophetic power of Jesus' word here are shown to ring true. And Jesus then goes on with another prophetic promise in this chapter. He promises his disciples that he will go ahead of them to Galilee after he is risen.

Straight after he predicted that the disciples would desert him. He then goes on and he says that he will go ahead of them to Galilee after he is risen. Jesus will meet them there. And we read again, a couple of chapters later on, that this also comes true.

The disciples, the angels, after Jesus' risen, appear to the women near the tomb. And they say, Jesus is risen and he is gone ahead of you to Galilee.

Go and tell the disciples and so on. So God's word is reliable. Jesus' word also is reliable. And let's look now at the other characters in this story. And that is the disciples.

Are the disciples' words reliable? One of the disciples that is named here is Peter. And though Peter and the disciples' intentions are honourable to the point where they would never abandon Jesus, even to death, to learn that their talk is cheap.

[7 : 17] And we've already discovered that the disciples abandon Jesus very soon after he tells them from Scripture that it will happen that way. And we also read not too much further on that Peter, one of Jesus' closest disciples, denies Jesus just as Jesus said it would happen as we read this morning.

Peter denies having travelled with Jesus and he even denies any knowledge of Jesus three times to the crowd outside. And this gospel records that the cock crowed immediately after Peter's third denial which is one of the things Jesus told Peter would happen.

So we see that Jesus' words are words of truth and authority. How often though are words are more like Peter's? How often do we vow to do something and yet fail to follow through with our actions?

Fellowship with other Christians reading the Scriptures and learning from them. And let the promises that you make at baptism be just words. Turn them into action and the rewards are out of this world.

Well as humans our words can sometimes be meaningless just as the disciples' words were in this situation. But Jesus' words never were. He speaks with great authority.

[8 : 32] But as we look at the next few verses in this passage we see part of the agony that Jesus goes through in order to be true to his word and his father's will. Up to this point as we've read Matthew's gospel Jesus is seen to be as strong in character.

He is mighty in power. We've read stories where he calms storms where he heals people miraculous healings are going on. And we also read stories where he warns and challenges those in authority who have abused their position etc.

And now here we see Jesus in agony and he goes with his disciples to this place called Gethsemane. It's a place that is well known to him and his followers.

And by now Judas the person who's going to betray Jesus has gone to the religious authorities to tell them to come and arrest Jesus to tell them where Jesus is going to be.

And this place where Jesus has gone to be with the disciples is a quiet place and it would have been a good opportunity because it was quiet. It was away from the crowds thus avoiding any confrontations with them which is what the authorities were afraid of.

[9 : 40] The authorities were afraid of the crowd and they didn't want to incite a riot by arresting Jesus. They wanted to find a quiet place and Jesus has gone to this quiet place. And Jesus asks when he's in this Gethsemane the Garden of Gethsemane he asks some of his disciples to sit here and pray while he goes and prays with Peter and two other people the two sons of Zebedee.

So he takes three people with him and the three that he takes with him have explicitly declared their readiness to share Jesus' fate when he's travelling with him.

Peter has just declared it here in verse 35 he says Peter says to Jesus Even though I must die with you I will not deny you. And the others the two sons of Zebedee have also expressed this similar sort of thing on another occasion.

And Jesus now here calls on the three to share in the preparation of the fate about to become of him and in his grief and his agitation even to the point of death which we've thought about here he then asks them to remain here and stay awake with him which as we discover in verse 40 they fail at they fail at even staying awake.

Jesus shares his deepest emotions with these people his closest disciples a sorrow so deep that it has him almost to the point of death. he said that with his friends but his friends are unable to stay awake and pray for him knowing this.

[11 : 02] Jesus must have felt totally abandoned when he saw that when he came back and he sees his disciples as sick. So how does Jesus deal with this immense sense of abandonment and sorrow? Well we read on and we see that Jesus throws himself to the ground he lies prostrate on the ground and he prays to his father with a request he says my father my father if it is possible let this cup pass from me just as Jesus is able to tell to tell us that the disciples will abandon him he also knows what it is that is about to come his way it's a metaphorical cup of suffering and it's this cup of suffering which he asks his father to take away if it is possible and here Jesus is praying these words how there is possible to take this cup of suffering away if it is possible here we see the humanity of Jesus see Jesus through humanity haven't we all known times where we felt like saying to God I've had enough please get me out of this situation in effect it's kind of what Jesus is doing but Jesus' prayer doesn't finish there his prayer is also that he will do the will of the father he says yet not what I want but what you want and the Lord's prayer

Jesus teaches his disciples a similar model of praying we pray in the Lord's prayer our father in heaven hallowed be your name your kingdom come your will be done your will be done Jesus' prayer is that this cup of suffering might be taken away from him but he also says your will be done Jesus could have decided not to go the way he did he could have decided not to go that way the choice was there for him to make but his will was to do the will of his father and so he did not his will be done but your will be done but Jesus is able to look beyond his own immediate suffering because he knows his father's will is the best option and indeed through Jesus' death on the cross the way he's made open for people to come into a relationship with the father having the penalty for their sin paid for already by Jesus' death on the cross where we read on in this passage that Jesus returns to pray to his father a few more times praying the same sorts of words each time and each time praying your will be done and each time he prays he seems to be strengthened in some way to continue on but he knows that this is the will of his father and he is now ready to do his will and that is to take the path that leads to suffering the path that leads to abandonment by his own father so that we might have the opportunity so that we might have the opportunity to be in a relationship with God

Jesus doesn't skirt the issue now that he has prayed to his father he gets up knowing what's about to become of him and he faces it head on and just as Jesus has taken charge throughout the gospel we see him again take charge here in the last two verses of this passage he goes back and he says to his sleeping disciples see the hour is at hand and the son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners get up let us be going see my betrayer is at hand probably very close to him now but this Jesus this Jesus is an amazing person he was willing to face death head on he was willing to take on the cup of suffering and of God's wrath his people his life so amazing wasn't glamorous by any means he ends up dying a most horrible death with two criminals either side of him and Jesus himself is treated as a criminal though he's done nothing wrong by human standards there was no glory no glory whatsoever in any of this but it is by his death on the cross and subsequent resurrection that Jesus has become the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him even Peter the character who we read about who denies Jesus he came back to obedience to him and as a result he lives eternally with our Lord Jesus Christ let me conclude by asking how are we living out our lives do we live our lives denying Jesus or is he present with you now well if we know that we've been denying

Jesus in our lives and we want to ask him back into our lives perhaps ask him into our lives for the first time and I want to give you the opportunity to do that now and I'm going to pray a prayer which I want you to pray with me and I'll read it to you first and then I'll pray it to you again slowly phrase by phrase and if you feel that this is your prayer then I invite you to pray it in your heart to God after me the prayer goes like this let me read this prayer and then I'll read it slowly to you dear God I know that I am not worthy to be accepted by you I don't deserve your gift of eternal life I am guilty of rebelling against you and ignoring you I need forgiveness thank you for sending your son to die for me that I may be forgiven thank you that he rose from the dead to give me new life please forgive me and change me that I may live with Jesus as my ruler Amen I'm going to pray that prayer phrase by phrase and if you'd like to pray that in your heart then I encourage you to do so let's pray dear God

I know that I am not worthy to be accepted by you I don't deserve your gift of eternal life I am guilty of rebelling against you and ignoring you I need forgiveness thank you for sending your son to die for me that I may be forgiven thank you that he rose from the dead to give me new life please forgive me and change me that I may live with Jesus as my ruler Amen Well friends if you prayed that prayer if you have asked God to come into your heart and live in your life then can I encourage you to tell someone about that Paul will be at that end and I'll be at that end at the end of the service please tell us and let us know so we can help you with the next step what it means to be living in a friendship with Jesus Amen