

September 2022 Communion - Friday Evening

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Date: 16 September 2022

Preacher: Rev. Hugh Ferrier

[0 : 00] Well, friends, would you turn with me, please, to the words that we read in Luke's Gospel in chapter 22. Luke chapter 22, we're going to be looking at verses 39 to 46 this evening, and focusing especially on verse 39.

We read, And he, that is Jesus, came out and went, as was his custom, to the Mount of Olives. And the disciples followed him.

In his commentary on Luke 22, Philip Ryken writes, Think of the darkest place you have ever been. Think of the place of anguish and pain and discouragement and despair.

Think of the place where you were alone in your suffering and all your worst fears were about to come true. Think of the place where the one thing you wanted was the one thing that God determined you could not have.

Think of the place where you were trapped and there seemed to be no way out. Think of the place where you wished to God that you could go be anywhere else in the universe except in the place where you were.

[1 : 14] Think of the place where things got so bad that you almost thought you were going to die, and maybe you almost did. Think of the place where you wanted to live.

Think of the place where you went or you took the place where you were. Consider Luke's presentation and portrait of Jesus as we prepare our minds and our hearts for coming to his table this Lord's Day.

Now, I know that there are some in this building who do not like alliteration. And I know that there is a man behind me who loves alliteration. And they say, when in Rome, do as the Romans do.

And so we're going to divide this passage under three headings. We're going to focus on the command, the commitment, and the compassion. First, we have the command.

Look at verses 39 down to 40. Here, Luke presents us with the command of Jesus. Now, before going any further, let's take a tour of Luke 22. In verses 1 and 2, we find the chief priests and scribes plotting the death of Jesus.

[2 : 26] Then in verses 3 to 6, we find Satan entering Judas. And he meets with the chief priests and arranges how he will betray Jesus. Then in verses 7 to 23, we find Jesus instituting his holy supper that will point to his death and all that that death will accomplish.

In verses 24 to 30, we find the disciples arguing among themselves about which one of them was the greatest. And then in verses 31 to 38, we find Jesus warning those same disciples that Satan is wanting to sift them as wheat.

But he also assures them that he has prayed for them. In verse 39, we see the place where Jesus now goes. Luke tells us that he went to the Mount of Olives.

This was a hill that overlooked the city of Jerusalem. It was a place where Jesus would often teach the disciples. A place where Jesus would frequently commune with his father in prayer.

A place where Jesus would regularly lodge at night. Luke highlights here that it was his custom to go to this place. If you were in Jerusalem and you were looking for Jesus, you would start off here.

[3 : 35] You would go to the Mount of Olives. And Luke tells us that the disciples followed him. That is what disciples do. They follow Jesus. In Luke chapter 5, we read that Peter and James and John left their boats, left their nets and followed Jesus.

And later in that same chapter, we read that Levi left his tax booth and went and followed Jesus. And here again, we find the disciples following Jesus. And they are following him up the slopes of the Mount of Olives.

And in verse 40, we hear the command that Jesus gives. Luke tells us that they came to the place. Matthew and Mark fill in the gaps and tell us that the place that they came to was called Gethsemane.

This was a garden on the Mount of Olives that contained an oil press. And upon coming to this place, Jesus commands the disciples to pray that they will not enter into temptation.

They're about to enter into a great storm. They're about to enter into a very dark, a very demonic hour. And the disciples will find themselves being tried and tested as they find themselves in the storm.

[4 : 44] They will find themselves being tossed about, thrown about in such a way that they will be in danger of falling away from Jesus completely. And so Jesus urges them to pray so that they will not fall into Satan's temptation to abandon him and make a shipwreck of their faith.

It is an incredible insight really into the pastoral heart, the shepherd heart of the Lord Jesus. Here is Jesus and he is quite literally carrying the weight of the world on his shoulders.

And the same Jesus is concerned about the spiritual well-being, the spiritual welfare of his fragile followers. Now friends, as we consider these verses, we can hear the Lord's command to pray in times of trouble and testing.

The Lord's command to pray in times of trouble and testing. As we go through the Old Testament, we see that God's people would often pray in times of trouble and testing. When Hannah found herself desolate over her childlessness, she prayed.

When Asa found himself in the day of trouble, he prayed. When Hezekiah and Jehoshaphat found themselves being threatened by foreign invaders, they prayed. And now Jesus exhorts his disciples to pray in this hour of trouble and testing.

[6 : 04] He knows that Satan is going to come at them and will tempt them to doubt him. He knows that Satan is going to come at them and will tempt them to deny him. He knows that Satan is going to come at them and will tempt them to disown him entirely.

He knows what a ferocious enemy the devil is. How the devil will come at them in the areas where they think that they are weak. And the devil will come at them in the areas where they think that they're strong.

The areas that they might not even know about. He knows that Satan is going to come at them. He is going to seek to sift them in every way possible, every way imaginable.

And Jesus is saying here, pray that you will not enter that temptation. Pray that you will not succumb to that great temptation to doubt me, to deny me, and to disown me.

And today, friends, we have a Savior who continues to command us to pray. Because like these disciples, we all face times of trouble and testing.

[7 : 07] And in the times of trouble and in the times of testing, the devil loves to come at us and loves to try tempting us to deny our Jesus, doubt our Jesus, disown our Jesus.

And the Lord says to us, pray that you will not enter that temptation. Pray that you will not succumb to that temptation to doubt me and deny me and disown me.

Well, as we consider the Lord's command, friends, I want to ask, are you putting it into practice? Are you praying, friend, that you will not succumb to the devil's tempting words?

Because I can assure you, there will be people in this building tonight who have heard the devil tempting them to doubt, deny, and disown their Jesus even the night before, even the day of a communion service.

Are you watching and praying? Are you hearing and heeding his command? But we move from the command to the commitment.

[8 : 19] Look at verses 41 to 44. Luke now presents us with the commitment of Jesus. In verses 41 and 42, we hear the appeal that Jesus makes. Luke tells us what Jesus did in verse 41.

He withdraws from the disciples so that there is now a short distance, just as stones throw between them. They will be able to hear him in prayer. They will be able to see him in prayer.

But at the same time, there will be this distance. There will be this infinite chasm between them and him. And then he kneels down. If you remember in 1 Kings 18, Elijah prays for rain.

And as he prays for rain, he kneels down. Then in the letter to the Ephesians, Paul tells the Ephesians that he is kneeling in prayer for them. And here we find Jesus kneeling to pray.

Matthew and Mark add that he fell on his face. And Luke goes on to tell us what Jesus said. Look at verse 42. He prays to the Father, just as he had taught the disciples to pray.

[9 : 16] You remember in Luke chapter 11, the disciples say, teach us to pray like John taught his disciples to pray. And Jesus says, this is how you should pray. Our Father.

And he prays to the Father here about the cup. In Psalm 75, Asaph speaks about the cup of foaming wine, which the Lord will make the wicked drink down to the bitter dregs.

Then in Isaiah 51, Isaiah speaks about the cup of God's wrath that causes men to stagger. In Jeremiah 25, Jeremiah speaks about the cup of the wine of the Lord's wrath that makes people a desolation.

This cup is the cup of God's judgment. The cup of God's wrath. The cup of God's damnation. The cup that God makes every sinner drink.

It is the cup that Jesus now knows that he must drink on behalf of his people if he is to be their saviour. If he is to secure their salvation. And he sees the full reality of that cup.

[10 : 18] Sees the full content of that cup. Sees the full horror of that cup in a way that he had never seen it before. And so he prays to the Father to remove the cup.

To take the cup away. Every fibre of his being is now recoiling and shrinking back from taking the cup. He's saying, Father, I don't know if my mind can cope with this.

I don't know if my body can cope with this. I don't know if my soul can cope with this. He's pleading, Father, if there be any other way by which my people might be saved, then please let this cup pass from me.

He's crying out, Father, I wish, I pray that things would be different. It is very much the crisis moment in the life of Jesus.

The salvation of the world now appears to hang in the balance. Jesus is willing to give almost anything not to drink this cup.

[11 : 19] Not to tread this path. Not to die this death. But the prayer isn't finished. As Jesus continues and whispers, Nevertheless, not my will, but yours be done.

And in verses 43 and 44, we see the answer that the appeal of Jesus receives. There's no audible voice from heaven, but an angel appears in the scene in verse 43.

Jesus has prayed to the Father, appealed to the Father to take the cup from him. And the Father sends an angel. And the angel is sent not to take the cup, but to strengthen Jesus to take the cup.

John Rabbi Duncan, who was a professor in the Free Church College in the 19th century, used to call this angel his favorite angel. And on one occasion he said, This angel is the one who came down in Gethsemane and strengthened my Lord to go through his agony for me.

And that he might go forward to cross and finish my redemption there. I have extraordinary love for that angel. Not because the angel saved him, but because that angel strengthened Jesus to save him.

[12 : 42] And following the appearing of that angel, Luke records the anguish of Jesus. Look at verse 44. He tells us that Jesus was in agony. The prospect of drinking this cup causes him indescribable pain.

He goes on to tell us that Jesus prayed even more earnestly. And finally he tells us that Jesus' sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground.

Some writers suggest that the pressure was so great, so intense that Jesus literally sweated drops of blood. I don't go with that approach.

I think it makes better sense to see it as that the pressure was so intense, and Jesus was now sweating so profusely, that his sweat fell to the ground like great heavy drops of blood.

Maybe some of you have known that too. You've been under so much pressure, and you've just had those huge beads of sweat coming down your brow, running down your face onto the ground.

[13 : 48] Luke is making it clear here that Jesus didn't view the cross with cold, clinical, calculated detachment. It disturbed him. It unnerved him.

It unsettled him. Now, friends, as we consider these verses, we can see the commitment of Jesus to obeying his Father and saving his people. Throughout the Old and New Testaments, we see this emphasis on an eternal arrangement between the Father and the Son, where the Son agrees to save his people.

It's what the theologians call the covenant, the binding oath of redemption. John Flavel, and I know that your minister loves John Flavel's illustration of this, but I don't think anybody puts it better than John Flavel when he pictures the scene in this way, and I'm sure you've heard it before, but you have the Father saying, My Son, here is a poor, miserable company of souls that have utterly undone themselves, and now lie open to my justice.

What shall be done for them? And the Son says, O my Father, such is my love and pity for them, that rather than that they shall perish eternally, I will be responsible for them.

Bring all your bills that I may see what they owe you. Bring them all in that there may be no after-reconings for them. At my hand you will require it. I would rather to choose to suffer your wrath than they suffer it.

[15 : 12] Upon me be all their debt. And the Father says, But my Son, if you undertake for them, you must pay that last penny. If I spare them, I cannot, I will not spare you.

And the Son says, I am willing, Father, let it be so. Charge it all to me. I am able to pay their debt. And though it will undo me, though it will impoverish my riches, empty my accounts, I am content to undertake it.

That is the covenant. That is the binding oath of redemption. And now let's move to the Mount of Olives. Let's move to the Garden of Gethsemane. And here's Jesus.

And he's kneeling just a stone's throw from the disciples. And he's thinking about that cross. And he's thinking about all that it will involve. And he prays, Father, if it is possible, let this cup, let this cross, let this death pass from me.

Father, is it possible? And his father says, no, my son, it isn't possible. And he says, why, Father? Why isn't it possible? And he says, because we promised.

[16 : 24] We promised. We made that covenant. We made that binding oath. And you gave your word.

And Jesus says, but they hate me. And they misunderstand me. And look at Peter there. He's going to deny with curses that he even knows me. And the father says, I know, my son, I know, but we promised.

And Jesus says, how far then do you want me to go, father? How far? And the father says, to the end, my well-beloved son, to the very end, to the end point where you will be left screaming, my God, my God, why have you forsaken me as you drink the very last drop of that cup?

You have to go to that end, my son. You have to go to the place where you will have nothing more to say, nothing left to say, but to hold out an empty cup, saying, it is finished.

And the son says, thy will be done. He takes the words of the psalmist on his lips, and he says, behold, I have come in the scroll, in the book, it is written of me, I delight to do your will, O God, your law is within my heart.

[17 : 47] You know, brothers and sisters, this is our confidence tonight. This is the basis for all our joy in the present. This is the basis for all our hope for the future.

The commitment of Jesus to doing his Father's will, saving his people, no matter the cost to himself. On Sunday, we are coming to the Lord's table, and we are coming to that table, not celebrating our faithfulness, not celebrating our commitment.

We are coming to that table, celebrating the faithfulness, the commitment of Jesus. And I hope you see the difference.

I hope you are not thinking of going to that table, patting yourself on the back, like little Jack Horner, saying, what a good boy, or what a good girl am I. But rather saying, how great is my Jesus.

How amazing his commitment. How incredible his faithfulness, that he would go all the way to that cross, and covenant love for me.

[18 : 58] But we move from the commitment to the compassion. Look at verses 45 and 46. Here Luke presents us now with the compassion of Jesus. In verse 45, we see his return.

Remember where he's been. He's entered this garden, urged his disciples to pray, so that they will not enter into temptation, and the hour of darkness. He has then gone a short distance from them.

They can now see him. They can hear him. And he has prayed that this cup of wrath, that he must drink for them, and for all his people, might be taken from him. He feels unable to go through with all of this.

And he's concluded that prayer with the words, your will be done. And Jesus now returns to the disciples, and he's met with a very disappointing scene. Look at verse 45.

The disciples are sleeping. And Luke adds that they were sleeping for sorrow. They have heard Jesus speaking about his body being broken. Heard him speaking about his blood being poured out.

[19 : 57] They have heard Jesus speaking about being betrayed by one of their own number, and it's weighing so heavily on them that they fall asleep. Now, I don't know about you, friends, but I can fully empathize with these men at this point.

Have you ever been so upset, so broken by grief, that it just left you exhausted? I remember one occasion as something had happened in a very close family personal situation, and I came back home from it, and I put on the TV, and there was a football match on, and I love football.

I can watch any amount of football matches, but I just fell asleep. There's nothing more I could do. And that's these disciples sleeping for sorrow.

And in verse 46, we hear Jesus reiterating that original command to the disciples. He begins by gently rebuking them. Why are you sleeping, he asks. The disciples have been given one very simple task, the command to pray, and that command was for their own benefit, and they have responded by falling asleep.

And Jesus gently rebukes them. But he's not finished, as he repeats the original command that he had previously given. He doesn't lose his temper, doesn't shout at them, doesn't tell them to get their act together, doesn't say that he's washing his hands off them.

[21 : 22] Instead, he says, rise and pray that you may not enter into temptation. And you know, friends, as we consider these verses, we can see this incredible compassion of Jesus.

Look at Jesus' compassion toward these disciples. These men have listened to all that Jesus said at the Last Supper, and all they've been asked to do in this most solemn night, this unique moment in history, is to pray that they will not succumb to temptation in the dark hours that lie ahead.

And they all fail. They all fall asleep. Not one of these men is able to stay awake. Not Peter, not James, not even John.

But Jesus doesn't see their failure as being final. And this compassionate Savior now approaches them, and he appeals to them once again to pray.

He's not finished with them. And that is the same compassionate Savior that you and I have today. I want you for a moment to cast your mind back to your last communion weekend.

[22 : 35] How have you fared as a Christian since then? How have you fared as a follower, a disciple of Jesus, since the last time you took the bread and wine to your lips?

Maybe some of you can look back and you can see how much you've grown, how much you've flourished, how much you've gone on with the Lord since then. But I'm sure that there are those of us who can look back and we can see the various ways that we've failed our Lord since then.

Times when we were spiritually sleeping instead of praying. We look at the past year and we see failure. We look at the past month and we see failure.

And we look at the past few hours even and we see failure. And to quote a Bruce Springsteen song, we find the devil snapping at our heels.

He's in our faces, telling us we may as well give up, telling us we may abandon our calling of being followers of Jesus. He's coming up with every reason why we shouldn't go to the Lord's table.

[23 : 48] He's giving us every reason why we should deliberately absent ourselves from fellowship, koinonia, with the Lord's people. And tonight, the gospel presents us with a compassionate Savior who approaches his people with the assurance that their failure doesn't need to be final.

The gospel presents us with a compassionate Savior who specializes in restoring spiritual car crashes rather than writing them off.

I'm a terrible driver. And I remember on one occasion crashed a car and you get the phone call from the insurance company and they say, it's a write-off.

Nothing more we can do for your car. It was quite good actually because I got a fair amount for it and got an even better car so every cloud has a silver lining but it was a write-off.

But you know, when we make a spiritual car crash, Jesus is the compassionate Savior who doesn't seek to write his people off.

[25 : 07] but rather specializes in lovingly, carefully, painstakingly restoring them. And so this evening, friends, let's fix our minds and our hearts on this compassionate Jesus, his grace, his kindness, his pity toward those who fail.

and let's go to his table on Sunday looking to him and leaning on him.

Let's pray. Lord in heaven, we thank you for your word and we thank you that your word can bring us such comfort even in the dark passages.

we thank you for this passage, a passage that speaks of the horror of human sin, that speaks of the fact that humans can fail and yet it presents us with a Savior who is so committed to saving his people, a Savior who is full of such compassion toward his people.

and we pray that each and every one of us here tonight would know this Savior, that we would know that commitment, that we would know that compassion that he has and that all of our confidence would be on him and him alone.

[26 : 34] You know the way the devil will be snapping around at us over these days, throwing every sin and shortcoming in our faces, telling us every reason why we can't possibly be followers of Jesus, every reason why we should absent ourselves from fellowship with communion with the Lord's people.

But we pray that we would be given the grace to look afresh to Jesus and that even when we are so convicted by all that the devil may tell us, that it would simply result in us leaning on Jesus even more.

and all this we pray in his name. Amen. Well friends, let's conclude this time of worship by saying Psalm 68.

Psalm 68 singing verses 18 down to 20. Again, the Scottish Psalter version. Psalm 68 verses 18 to 20.

Thou hast, O Lord, most glorious, ascended up on high and in triumph victorious led captive, captivity. Thou hast received gifts for men for such as did rebel, yea, even for them that God the Lord in midst of them might dwell.

[27 : 53] Blessed be the Lord who is to us of our salvation God, who daily with his benefits us plenteously doth load. He of salvation is the God who is our God most strong and unto God the Lord from death the issues do belong.

Psalm 68 verses 18 to 20 to God's praise. Thou hast, O Lord, most glorious, ascended up on high and in triumph victorious led captive, captive is he.

Thou hast, receive, and gifts for men for such as did rebel, yea, yea, yea, yea, for them that God the Lord in midst of them might dwell.

Let be the Lord who is to us of our salvation God, who daily with his benefits thus plenteously doth load.

He of salvation is the God who is our God most strong and unto God the Lord from death the issues to be all.

[30 : 08] Now may grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, one God be with us now and for all time as we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

done. Amen. . Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. LOL. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.