

The Journey is Threatened

5. The Ministry of Jesus Christ



"Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Blessed is the king of Israel" John 12:12-14

When Jesus was in Bethany at the home of Simon the Leper, a woman poured expensive perfume on his head as a blessing. People were indignant. The response of Jesus told much to them, but they didn't understand. He said *"When she poured this perfume on my body, she did it to prepare me for burial. Truly I tell you, wherever this gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told, in memory of her."* Matthew 26:12-13

We are told this was at the beginning of what we call Holy Week and Jesus was trying to prepare people for what was going to happen.

Jesus continued to do things that seemed fine for many, but also disturbed many.

He went into the temple in Jerusalem and drove out all who were buying and selling. He turned the tables over and upset the people who were selling. He told them, *"My house will be called a 'house of prayer,' but you are making it 'a den of robbers.'"* Matthew 21:12-13 He accused the Temple authorities of taking advantage of people, especially the widows. He really disrupted the commerce that was the main source of income for some.

He continued healing people. The chief priests were getting upset, children were shouting *"Hosanna to the Son of David"* Some asked him if he heard what the children were shouting. He answered *"From the lips of children and infants you, Lord, have called forth your praise?"*

The authorities felt threatened. One day Jesus was teaching at the temple they tried to trick him. They asked *"Tell us by what authority you are doing these things? Who gave you this authority?"* He answered with the rhetorical question and they were unable to answer it.

The Pharisees plotted again and asked *"Teacher, we know you have integrity, teach the way of God accurately, are indifferent to popular opinion, and don't pander to your students. So tell us honestly: Is it right to pay taxes to Caesar or not?"* Jesus responded *"Why are you playing these games with me? Why are you trying to trap me? Do you have a coin? Let me see it." They handed him a silver piece. 'This engraving—who does*

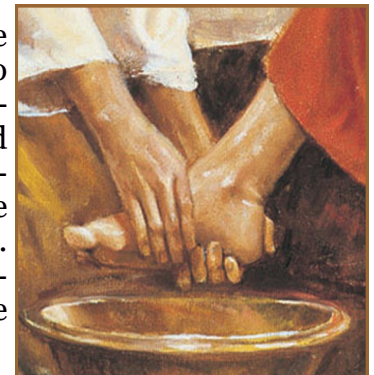
it look like? And whose name is on it?' They said, Caesar." Then give Caesar what is his, and give God what is his.' The Pharisees were speechless. They went off shaking their heads." Matthew 22:15-22

The entry of Christ on the donkey to Jerusalem was disturbing in many ways, but Christ was ready for the challenge. Even at the beginning of the week the rulers were disturbed and some of the Pharisees asked Christ to tell the people shouting to stop and he answered *"If they keep quiet, the stones will cry out"* Luke 19:40. They responded to each other, *"See, this is getting us nowhere. Look how the whole world has gone after him!"*

Many miracles and teaching continued, and the number of people following Christ was growing daily. Even some of the Scribes and Pharisees had decided to follow him. They didn't know what else to do.

One of the disciples saw this as an opportunity for him. Judas Iscariot went to the chief priests and asked *"What are you willing to give me if I deliver him over to you?"* They willingly counted out thirty pieces of silver and Judas promised he would turn Christ over to them. Matthew 26:14-16 As the late Paul Harvey would say *"you know the rest of the story."*

It didn't take long for Judas to fulfill his promise. Jesus and the disciples prepared for the Passover dinner. As he was washing the feet of the disciples



Peter protested, but after Jesus explained Peter responded *“not just my feet but my hands and my head as well!”* But the dinner was also a time for Jesus to recognize what was happening with Judas. As they were eating, Jesus offered a blessing of the food and said *“Take and eat; this is my body. Then he took a cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, saying, “Drink from it, all of you. This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. I tell you, I will not drink from this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father’s kingdom.”*

After the blessing as they were eating, Jesus said to them *“Very truly I tell you, one of you is going to betray me.”* When asked which one Christ responded *“It is the one to whom I will give this piece of bread when I have dipped it in the dish.”* Then, dipping the piece of bread, he gave it to Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot. As soon as Judas took the bread, Satan entered into him.” *John 13:25*

Judas led the authorities to Christ as he was praying in the Garden and Peter responded with anger and cut the ear of Malchus, a servant of the high priest, but even then Christ healed it immediately. Then Peter denied knowing him later for fear of his own life.

Nicodemus, a Pharisee and member of the Sanhedrin realized that Jesus was really the Messiah and believed. Nicodemus didn’t totally comprehend, but he accepted what Christ said on faith, the same childlike faith we must have.

Pilate who sentenced him to death on the cross, washes his hands of it and many feel that he knew in his heart that Jesus was the King of the Jews as was written above his head on the cross.

God never said that the journey would be easy, but He did say that the arrival would be worthwhile.

A man named Simon of Cyrene offered to carry the cross to Golgotha. Even one of the centurion guarding Jesus realized what was happening and said *“Surely he was the Son of God!”* Matthew 27:54.

The civil authorities had won the battle, but as we say, they lost the war. Joseph of Arimathea, a rich man, and Nicodemus, a Pharisee buried the body of Jesus and Pilate made sure it is secure *“Take a guard,” Pilate answered. “Go, make the tomb as secure as you know how.”* *“So they went and made the tomb secure by putting a seal on the stone and posting the guard.”* Matthew 27:65-66

No amount of guards or seals could keep Christ in the tomb. Nothing can keep you from accepting him into your heart and life. In Romans we read *“I’m absolutely convinced that nothing-nothing living or dead, angelic or demonic, today or tomorrow, high or low, thinkable or unthinkable-absolutely nothing can get between us and God’s love because of the way that Jesus our Master has embraced us.”* Romans 8:38-39. The Message

“Faith doesn’t always mean that God changes your situation. Sometimes it means He changes you.”
Steven Furtick

The well-known song “Bridge Over Troubled Waters” is often thought of as friend to friend, but Paul Simon indicated that friend as Jesus, who laid down His life as our bridge. It is there ready for us to cross troubled waters.

Prayer. Lord God, Thank you for coming to this earth and dying for our sins. Thank you for taking the abuse and also for your willingness to stand up to the authorities and to the false accusations. Help us to be strong, not to hide in the shadows, and to openly reveal your love through our words and actions Amen

1. Do we willingly shout “Hosanna” when we are in a precarious situation with others who don’t share our beliefs?
2. Is our faith strong enough to defend against people who may want to trick us or make us doubt when things are not going as we think they should?
3. Some people think that Judas was “ordained” to deny Christ. Think about this for a little bit. Is there a little bit of Judas in each of us?
4. Could we be as strong as Simon of Cyrene and offer to carry the cross among many protestors?
5. Are we ever asked to carry the cross?

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