

WEDNESDAY 06 April 2022 "To Jerusalem, why?"

Luke 18:31-34

Good Wednesday morning my "Walking with Jesus" friends,

Anticipation is something all of us live with all the time, right? These days we're on a journey to Easter with Jesus and those men He has selected to be His 'apostles'. Of course, they had no idea what was ahead of them, awaiting them on Easter weekend... *but Jesus knew!* Today we'll see what happened when Jesus first tried to tell them, graphically, what they should anticipate. They were stunned, unable to grasp the shocking news, just as you and I would have been had we been among them that day.

Did you know there were other dear friends who often traveled with them as they went from place to place, especially some women? Luke 8:1-3 tells us: ***"Jesus traveled about from one town and village to another, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom of God. The Twelve [apostles] were with Him, and also some women who had been cured of evil spirits and diseases: Mary (called Magdalene) from whom seven demons had come out. Joanna the wife of Chuza, the manager of Herod's household; Susanna; and many others. These women were helping to support them out of their own means."*** I wonder what you see here my friends. I see Jesus had made such a big difference in several people that they wanted to travel with Him and help Him in any way they could. I celebrate these 'behind the scenes' folks and I assume it means they shopped for food and cooked and maybe even washed Jesus' clothes from time to time! Maybe that's one reason Mary Magdalene, who is named here, had a very personal and special encounter with the risen Jesus on Easter morning? We'll look at that event in the days after Easter.

One day, as this group was walking along from one town to another, Jesus made a remarkable, bold, frightening prediction to them. I think Jesus said this about 2 weeks or so BEFORE His Easter weekend. Luke records it this way: ***"Jesus took the Twelve aside and told them: 'We are going up to Jerusalem, and everything that is written by the prophets about the Son of Man will be fulfilled. He will be delivered over to the Gentiles. They will mock Him, insult Him and spit on Him; they will flog Him and kill Him. On the third day He will rise again.'" (Luke 18:31-33)***

I don't often do this but look carefully at the difference in how Matthew records this moment: ***"...Jesus said to them: 'We are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests and the teachers of the law. They will condemn Him to death and hand Him over to the Gentiles to be mocked and flogged and crucified. On the third day He will be raised to life.'" (Matt. 20:17-19)*** Matthew, of course, was an eyewitness to this moment, Luke was not, although Luke had interviewed many of those who were present when it happened. *The Holy Spirit led both Matthew and Luke to write a record of this powerful statement and yet they are somewhat different. Can you see why?*

Matthew wrote His account of Jesus from the perspective of a Jewish tax collector whose life had been changed by Jesus. Mathew wrote to the Jewish people for the purpose of challenging them to recognize Jesus was their God promised Jewish Messiah... whom they rejected! Luke was a Gentile who wrote his account of Jesus primarily to the non-Jewish people of the world, and his purpose was to challenge us to see Jesus as the Son of God, Savior of the world. *Can you see those perspectives in the differences of their description of this powerful, shocking statement Jesus made to His friends?*

Dr. Luke then adds a summary statement which Matthew does not add: ***"The disciples did not understand any of this. Its meaning was hidden from them, and they did not know what Jesus was talking about."*** (Luke 18:34) That's very important and helps us understand their confusion as in this moment their faces are contorted with disbelief. To a person, they were all following Jesus because they believed Him to be the great leader who would finally bring peace at least to their region of the world. *Because of all the miracles they'd seen, they couldn't imagine any situation too difficult for Him, nor any enemy or illness or even opposition that could succeed against Him.* Oh, they had often seen the religious leaders get angry with Jesus or challenge the people to not believe Jesus, but Jesus was predicting His arrest and trial and condemnation to death! And then His public mockery and humiliation and beating and finally crucifixion!!

Their minds simply could not comprehend how this could be. If Jesus can heal sick people, give blind people sight, raise dead people to life, walk on the water, feed 5000 people with a young boys' lunch... then there simply could not be a way to understand what He had just described!? Jesus watched them as they wrestled with what He had just predicted. *They each now faced an important choice, the same choice you and I face with anything significant in the future which we 'anticipate'.* Seems to me they had these options:

1. They could simply disregard Jesus' prediction as something inconceivable, something they refused to consider. They could simply chalk it up to something Jesus had said that must have spiritual or theoretical meaning that someday might make sense, but surely not today. Since it makes no sense, it is irrelevant to us today so forget it, let's move on. Where are we going today, Jesus?

2. Or they could accept it as a shocking, horrific prediction, but push it off as something which surely must be so far into the future it would never happen in their lifetime, so don't worry about it.

3. Or they could reluctantly receive it as something they needed to understand, but that would require many questions for Jesus to answer. Is now the time for those questions? It would also require God helping them at least be open to this terrible reality as they wrestled with understanding the why, and how, and when all this would happen?

4. Finally, they could begin wringing their hands in worry and start making a plan. A plan to either abandon Jesus and let Him fight this battle on His own with all His miraculous power OR consider how they could arm themselves as a tiny militia ready to fight for His defense. Of course, if they thought about this option very long, they would quickly conclude it would be certain death for all of them.

Now let's pause here a moment and join them in their contemplation. This was very serious. What had Jesus said, exactly and what did it mean, for Him and for them? And what does it mean for us, 2000 years later? Jesus had linked the ancient writings of the prophets to the days ahead of them. These were all Jewish men. They scrambled to remember their boyhood studies with the Rabbi's in their towns. What writings could possibly match the horrificness of what Jesus had described... the words were graphic and painful: ***"They will mock Him, insult Him, spit on Him; they will flog Him and kill Him."??***

Since Luke tells us none of the disciples understood, it seems that at least for this moment, they chose to disregard it rather than to deeply consider Jesus' horrible prediction. As Jesus said it, however, I believe Jesus' mind and heart turned to the prophet Isaiah's words, written 700 years before: ***"Surely He took up our pain and bore our suffering... He was pierced for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; and the punishment that brought us peace was on Him and by His wounds we are healed. We all like sheep have gone astray, each of us has turned our own way; and the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed and afflicted yet He did not open His mouth; He was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so He did not open His mouth."*** (Isaiah 53:4-7) Look at Jesus, as He looks at His friends. They've moved on, talking about other things, unwilling to seriously consider the horrific prediction Jesus had just given them. *Yet Jesus knows it will happen, all of it and much more... and within less than two weeks!!*

Friends, I urge us to NOT do as those friends of Jesus did that day. Let's not ignore it, disregard it, pretend it isn't important. Let's embrace those terrible words of Jesus and let's watch and listen very closely as Jesus leads His disciples, the women, and us, toward Jerusalem. Let's ask the hard questions. Let's prepare our hearts for what we know will be happening to Jesus in only a few days as we approach Easter. Here's a song to help us in our anticipation...

Today's Scripture is Luke 18:31-34.