

## 15 April 2022 "Good Friday" (Matt. 26:26-27:26)

Hello my "Walking with Jesus" friends,

Today is... you know, of course, don't you? *All around the world today Christians REMEMBER. We remember what Jesus experienced and accomplished on a Friday like today about 2000 years ago.* Because it is so significant, I'm going to use our time together both today and tomorrow, Saturday, helping us look at the crucifixion of Jesus, for what happened that day has changed the course of our lives and our eternal destiny, for millions of us!

That Thursday evening had begun with such hope, such wonderful anticipation for those Jewish men who had 'walked with Jesus' for several months. They gathered in an 'upper room' fully expecting a memorable Passover meal together *with Jesus Himself as their host.* But oh, it was so much more. John the beloved disciple, perhaps Jesus' closest human friend, gives us a lengthy and detailed account of what Jesus said and did in that upper room that Thursday evening... 5 chapters found in John 13-17. Over these past four days we've looked at several parts of that evening. *During that Passover meal Jesus had shocked His friends by personalizing the Passover bread and the cup.* As He tore the bread, He said to His disciples: **"Take and eat, this is My body."** (Matt. 26:26) And as He poured out the Passover cup of Redemption, Jesus said: **"Drink from it all of you. This is My blood of the new covenant which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins..."** (Matt. 26:27,28)

It wasn't until after the resurrection of Jesus that they began to understand. Jesus' body, which He had acquired in the miraculous incarnation of God, was beaten, torn, and pierced as He was crucified. It was just as the Holy Spirit had led Isaiah to write 700 years before: **"He was pierced for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on Him and by His wounds we are healed... The LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all... Though he had done no violence nor was any deceit in His mouth, yet it was the LORD's will to crush Him and cause Him to suffer... the LORD made His life an offering for sin..."** (Isaiah 53:5-10) These disciples eventually understood. *In His crucifixion Jesus had become the Passover Lamb for all people, making it possible that "PERISH" would not be their destiny, as they trusted in Jesus' atonement death as payment in full for their sin!* (2 Peter 3:9)

*They also came to understand Jesus' shed blood brings repentant people who believe in Jesus into a covenant relationship with Holy God.* This is Jesus' new covenant available to all people, replacing the first covenant God had established with His rescued Hebrew slaves at mount Sinai. (Exodus 24) John was so moved by what he witnessed that Thursday evening in the upper room and Friday as he stood at the cross of Jesus, that John wrote: **"This is how God showed HIS love among us: He sent His one and only Son into the world that we might live through Him.**

***This is love: not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins... If anyone sins, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous One. He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins and also for the sins of the whole world.*** (1 John 4:9,10; 2:1,2) *Do you fully understand this my friends, and is Jesus your atonement Savior?*

When that Passover evening in the upper room was complete, Jesus then led those men He deeply loved from the upper room, down through the winding streets of Jerusalem, out through one of the large city gates, across the Kidron valley, to the Garden of Gethsemane on the Mount of Olives. It was night now. This was a familiar place for them. *Jesus was in agony. The intensity of the spiritual battle was raging.* I believe Satan was attacking Jesus, as he had for those 40 days in the desert after Jesus was baptized, but this time Satan was challenging Jesus to abort the Redemption plan. Human beings were certainly NOT worth the horrificness of what was ahead for Jesus. Jesus asked the disciples to pray while He took Peter, James, and John further into the garden and asked them to earnestly pray for HIM, as He agonized. Then Jesus went apart from them to meet with His Father, as He had done so often before. Oh, how Jesus needed reassurance and strength from His heavenly Father in this dark hour. Dr. Luke writes: ***"and being in anguish Jesus prayed more earnestly and His sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground."*** (Luke 22:44)

Upon His return to His disciples Jesus found them sleeping. I wonder if in that moment Satan attacked again with thoughts such as *"do you see Jesus? These undependable, apathetic, in fact pathetic humans are not worth Your agony, Your love, Your sacrificial death to earn their redemption. Forget them Jesus, they will fail you consistently."* But instead, Jesus awakened His sleepy disciples saying ***"Are you still sleeping? Look the hour has come, and the Son of Man is delivered into the hands of sinners. Rise! Let us go. Here comes My betrayer!"*** (Matt. 26:45,46) And even as Jesus was speaking a noisy crowd with torches, clubs and swords arrived in the garden looking for Jesus. Judas was in the lead of this group. For a moment they stood there, face to face. Judas and an armed, angry mob. Jesus and an unarmed, sleepy group of disciples... *and the fate of humanity hung in the balance.*

John writes: ***"Simon Peter, who had a knife drew it, and struck the High Priest's servant, cutting off his right ear."*** (John 18:10) The man screamed and grabbed the side of his face, blood spurting through his fingers. For an instant time stood still, everyone froze. If this armed mob used their weapons Jesus and His unarmed disciples could be dead in a matter of moments. If Jesus used His miraculous powers, Judas and the mob could suddenly be blinded or have leprosy or be dead. Instead, Jesus said to Peter: ***"Put your sword away...do you think I cannot call on My Father and He will at once put at My disposal more than 12 legions of angels? But then how would the Scriptures be fulfilled that say it must happen this way?"*** (Matt. 26:52-54)

*Do you hear Jesus' determination to accomplish His Redemption mission for the ransom of humanity?*

Dr. Luke records that even in this desperate situation Jesus poured out God's love: **"Jesus said: 'No more of this! And He touched the man's severed ear and healed him!'"** (Luke 22:51) Now look around at the crowd. Anger has turned to disbelief and awe. How did Jesus reattach a man's severed ear as though nothing had happened? WHY would He do that to those who had come to harm Him? Right here, in the dim torch light the life purpose, and the power of Jesus was seen. *Never once did Jesus use His miraculous power to harm anyone or do any evil. Only and always, Jesus was good and helpful to a broken world which did not receive Him, didn't respect Him, and finally rejected Him.* Is that a picture of our world today, my friends?

The mob quickly regained their nighttime courage. Judas identified Jesus with a betrayer's kiss, the mob grabbed Jesus and led Him roughly out of the garden. And the disciples? The men who'd been with Jesus for months? *They fled into the shadows.* (Matt. 26:56) Only John and Peter followed the mob and Jesus from a distance. The mob took Jesus to the home of Annas, the former Jewish High Priest, who had recently been replaced by Caiaphas, by Roman appointment. Still Annas was greatly respected and his voice of condemnation of Jesus would be desired for the Sanhedrin, the religious leaders, to take formal action against Jesus. Evidently John was known to some at the home of the High Priest, thus John and Peter followed the mob right into the courtyard and sat down near a fire where others were warming themselves.

A servant girl was walking by the fire and looked closely at Peter, then said as she pointed, **"This man was with Him.' But Peter denied it. 'I don't know what you are talking about.'** (Matt. 26:69) Peter got up from that fire and found another place in the courtyard to sit, but within moments someone else said, **'This fellow was with Jesus... and again Peter denied it. Soon someone else said to Peter, 'Surely you are one of them, your accent is Galilean.' Peter shouted, 'I don't know this man!' As Peter said this a rooster crowed. Jesus turned and looked straight at Peter. Then Peter remembered the words Jesus had spoken to him and he rushed out weeping bitterly.'** (Luke 22:58-62) Evidently from where Jesus had been standing, being questioned by Annas and others, He could hear Peter. As their eyes met, can you imagine what both Peter and Jesus felt in that moment? May I ask... *have you felt that shame and guilt when you've denied that you know Jesus... either in words or attitudes or actions?*

Through that Thursday night and Friday early morning Jesus was mocked, beaten, harassed, maligned, and slandered by religious leaders, the High Priests, and even the ruling Jewish council, the Sanhedrin. *Finally, they declared Jesus guilty of blasphemy for acknowledging that He was the Messiah.* This outrageous claim was punishable by death, and they took Jesus to the Roman Governor Pilate seeking his approval of their execution of Jesus. Pilate interrogated Jesus and found no crime. Having heard King Herod, who had jurisdiction in the Galilee region, was in Jerusalem,

Pilate sent Jesus to Herod, for Jesus had grown up in Nazareth in Galilee. Herod was anxious to question Jesus having heard amazing things about Him. But Herod too found no wrongdoing in Jesus, so Herod sent Jesus back to Pilate. *Neither man had the courage to do what was right. Jesus did not insist on justice.*

Pilate was stuck. As Roman Governor he needed to keep peace in the region and the radical Jews were threatening a riot. Pilate ordered Jesus flogged, mercilessly, in hopes that would satisfy the cries for Jesus' blood. It didn't, so Pilate tried another ploy. To seek the good favor of the people Pilate sometimes offered to give a Roman pardon to a Jewish prisoner. Pilate had Barabbas, a well-known, convicted criminal brought up from the dungeon and Pilate presented Jesus and Barabbas to the people with this appeal: ***"Which man do you want me to release to you?' 'Barabbas' the crowd shouted. 'And what then shall I do with Jesus who is called the Messiah', Pilate asked them? 'Crucify Him' 'Why, what crime has He committed' Pilate asked? 'Crucify Him' the crowd shouted all the louder. Seeing the crowd was getting into an uproar, Pilate asked for a basin of water and washed his hands in front of the crowd saying, 'I am innocent of this man's blood, it is your responsibility!' The people shouted, 'His blood is on us and our children! Crucify Him!' And Pilate handed Jesus over to be crucified."*** (Matt. 27:15-26)

Let's pause right here, in the midst of this riotous mob. Look at bloodied Jesus and grinning Barabbas. As we've followed Jesus through the night, what have you seen and heard? What does it mean for you and me today? Tomorrow we'll rejoin this historic moment right here, for today, here's a song to help us reflect on this horrible event, Good Friday...

**Today's Scripture is Matthew 26:26-27:26.**