

Do Not Weep - Prepare

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[0 : 00] Thanks again to Grant for reading the passage this morning. It's a difficult passage not only to read but a difficult passage to take in terms of everything that is in it.

! I'm going through Luke chapter 23 looking at the sayings of Jesus in that passage when he was before Pilate. We looked at that the other week and we're now on the road to the cross.

If I was to ask you this morning, what's the one thing that brings you the most joy and pride in life? Guys, it's not the motorbike, it's not the football team, it's not the car. But at the same time brings you the most pain, the most worry and sometimes the most hurt.

The answer is family, our loved ones. They bring us joy but at the same time can bring us pain and can bring us worry.

[1 : 29] And as we gather here this morning, we come as different families but as we come together this morning, we come as a church family.

And why do I emphasize that this morning? Well, as we come, I hope as we read the passage that we are going to look at, you'll see that there is a theme of family running through the passage.

Well, when we were here two weeks ago, we were able to glean from the gospel writers to help us in our study.

And I would hope that as we go through the passage that we have this morning, we'll learn something more, not just from the passage that we're going to read in Luke, but also from the other gospel writers.

And we'll see what the impact of meeting Jesus was on Simon of Cyrene and on his family, following him carrying the cross and following behind Jesus.

[2 : 37] And finally, we'll look at the prophecy that there is within the word that we read this morning. And a proverb that will have a warning to us, not just in the passage, but for future generations.

Two weeks ago, we looked at Jesus before Pilate. We learned that Jesus had been up all night. He'd been treated as a form of entertainment for the night shift guard.

They had tortured him. They had mocked him. They had slapped him. And they had spar upon him. And we further learn that after Pilate was finished with him, that he was put out and tortured further and mocked and scourged by the Roman soldiers.

And we'll look at this morning as we read the passage. I want you to think about the passerby that we come across in Simon.

I want you to think of the prophecy that Jesus speaks to the people and to the proverb. And hopefully this will help us as we seek to understand this passage and give us some clarity around it.

[4 : 01] But before we read that, I'm just going to pray one more time. Dear Heavenly Father, we thank you again for your word. And we recognize at times that your word can be difficult for us.

And it can be hard to understand. And we pray for wisdom. And we pray, Heavenly Father, for understanding. That as we look at your word this morning, that it would indeed speak to the hearts of each and every one of us.

And through it, that we may indeed know you clearer. And know you better. And seek to love you more each and every day. Amen. So the passage that we have this morning is in Luke 23, verse 26 to 31.

And as they led him away, they seized one, Simon of Cyrene, who was coming in from the country and laid on him the cross to carry it behind Jesus.

And there followed him a great multitude of the people and of women who were mourning and lamenting for him. But turning to them, Jesus said, Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children.

[5 : 17] For behold, the days are coming when they will say, Blessed are the barren and the wombs that never bore and the breasts that never nursed. Then they will begin to say to the mountains, fall on us and to the hills, cover us.

For if they do these things when the wood is green, what will happen when it is dry? Amen. And may God bless that reading to us.

So here at the start, in verse 26, we're introduced to the passerby, Simon of Cyrene, who was coming in from the country.

Now to say he was coming in from the country, maybe if we were in Stornoway, we might say that somebody coming in from Barvis or coming in from Ness was coming in from the country. But if we were to look at a map, Cyrene is almost 800 miles from Jerusalem.

It's based in Libya. So why was Simon coming in from Libya to Jerusalem? He was coming to celebrate the Passover, which tells us that Simon was obviously a religious man and he was devoted to the worship of God because he had travelled a fair distance just to attend this feast.

[6 : 46] Travelling in a car at 60 miles an hour would have taken the best part of 13 and a half hours to travel that distance. We didn't have cars in those days.

We'd have travelled by boat and then by foot from Libya to the port outside Jerusalem. Simon travelled that distance because he wanted to come to the Passover and he wanted to worship God. We learn in Mark's Gospel in Mark 15 and 21 that Simon had two sons, Alexander and Rufus. It's unclear if they were with them on the journey.

They're not mentioned as having been there in any of the Gospels. But they may have been there if they'd been 12 years old. We'd remember that when Jesus was 12 years old, he travelled with his family before to the temple to celebrate.

Whether they were there or not, what we do know is that they were amongst the believers that Mark was writing to. And while giving credibility to the story and identifying who Simon of Serene was, it is fair to deduce that Alexander and Rufus had become Christians.

[8 : 09] Whether they had witnessed firsthand or having been told by their father, they were Christians. Simon was a passerby, but he was laid upon for him to carry Jesus' cross.

What do we learn from Simon before we move on to the words that Jesus actually spoke? Well, Luke, in an earlier passage, records three times that Pilate had found Jesus not guilty.

The Roman practice was that those who were guilty and condemned to be crucified carried their own cross as they went to the place of the skull.

Jesus wasn't guilty. So it was only right that he didn't carry a cross. Matthew 16 and 24, then Jesus told his disciples, if anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.

Here we see Simon fulfill this. While he was laid on to carry the cross, here we see him quite literally carrying the cross and following Jesus.

[9 : 34] If his family were with him, he's now left his family in order to carry the cross and follow Jesus. Simon didn't know what the outcome of that act was going to be.

When he reached Golgotha, were the soldiers there going to be aware that he wasn't the one that was to be hanged on the cross? What we do know is that this one encounter changed Simon's life forever.

And not only Simon's life, but as we learn, it changed the life and lives of his sons. Simon had come to celebrate the Passover, but on his way there, he had an encounter with the one who was the spotless Lamb of God.

the circumstances in which she met Jesus were not of Simon's choosing, but it was life-changing.

Even now, God still uses unexpected situations and difficult situations to bring people to him.

Are you facing trials and difficulties? is Jesus asking you to come and look to him? Simon's life was changed that day.

[11 : 02] And following behind Jesus, he saw the scars. He saw the crown of thorns. He heard the insults that the people at the side of the road cried and they heard them shout, crucify him.

He also heard the mourning and the weeping of the multitude that had gathered there. And he may have heard what Jesus said to the crowd and it couldn't but change him.

He followed Jesus to the cross and then chose to follow him for the rest of his life. And what he received that day, he shared with his sons.

Simon came in as a passerby. He then became a follower and he then became a passer-on. And the question each one of us has to think about this morning is, are we passing by?

Are we following Jesus? Are we passing Jesus on to others? Simon was there at the side of the road. He was chosen from the crowd to carry Jesus' cross.

[12:19] And none of that was by chance. And in the same way, it's not by chance that any one of us is here this morning as this message is preached to each and every one of us.

You'd be right to say that Simon didn't have a choice to follow Jesus. He didn't have a choice to take the cross because it was laid upon him by the soldiers.

But he did have a choice as to whether he was going to follow Jesus for the rest of his life and then to pass that message on to his sons.

There were many others there that day. We don't read of them the same way that we read about Simon. They heard the mourning. They heard the weeping.

They maybe even heard the words that Jesus spoke. And while their senses may have been stirred, we don't read that their hearts were changed.

[13:24] As Jesus has presented to you this morning, are you going to allow him to pass by or are you going to follow him? Oh, that everybody here this morning would indeed follow Jesus.

He wouldn't just be a passerby. He wouldn't just be sitting thinking there's more time. This is what he's called each and every one of us to do.

To look to him and to be saved. While it's great to be here to think I'll maybe leave it for another day.

Not one of us is promised tomorrow. We read it in Scripture. We know that here we have no continuing city. We've heard it many times before.

Please don't be a passerby this morning. Come and follow Jesus. And if you are a follower this morning, please think about what's the next step that you're going to take in following Jesus.

[14:39] Simon shared his faith with his sons Alexander and Rufus. Who are you sharing your faith with? Who are you desiring to see coming to know Jesus as Lord and as Savior?

which brings us to our next point. The words of Jesus, the prophecy that he spoke to the people on that day.

Verse 27 and there followed with him a great multitude of the people and the women who were mourning and lamenting for him. As Simon followed carrying the cross, we read that there was a great multitude that followed Jesus.

Many had come to see the spectacle but there were also many women that were there lamenting and weeping what was happening. many of them had maybe followed Jesus while he was doing his ministry for the past three years and they were there witnessing the death of an innocent man and it caused them to mourn and to weep.

A man who had done nothing wrong but preach a message of salvation. A man who had shown compassion, healed the sick and welcomed children and here Jesus addresses them and encourages them not to weep for him but to weep for themselves.

[16:18] What he is doing had to be done. Him going to the cross was necessary. He knew that but the people round about still didn't understand.

Although he had preached the message they were there weeping as they saw this man that they had cared for, that they had loved, that they had enjoyed his ministry but they failed to fully understand that Jesus had come with one purpose.

He goes on to issue a warning. He's here on the road to the cross. He knew what was before him. He had prayed about it, yet out of compassion he turns to the women.

And he tells them not to weep for themselves but for their children. And he then goes on to say something that we would probably find totally contrary to anything that we would have expected. As we read these words this morning and may have read them in past, we acknowledge that they are indeed hard words. hard words to read, hard words to comprehend and to apply.

[17:36] Blessed are the barren. You can read the stories, and we've read them time and time again about Sarah, about Rachel and Hannah in the Old Testament.

The details of their personal struggles and even in the mocking that they experienced as a result of being barren. and how in any way could their experience similar to many even today be one that could be described or felt to be a blessing.

But here Jesus states there would come a time when it would be seen as a blessing to have never given birth or never nursed a child. He does not finish there though, going on to describe how mothers would call out to the mountains and the hills to fall on them, suggesting that even being buried alive would be a better option than to face what was going to come.

What Jesus spoke to the people here was indeed a prophecy. And as we heard earlier in the reading, it's not the first time that this prophecy had been given.

Luke 21 records that same warning and the nature of the struggles that would take place. Those that know their history will know that 40 years later this prophecy was fulfilled.

[19 : 11] And many of those that would have been there mourning on that day would have been mothers and grandmothers when this prophecy was fulfilled. history records that in 70 AD the city of Jerusalem endured a brutal Roman siege which lasted for four months.

The situation was compounded due to internal fighting within the Jewish leadership groups and the timing of the siege coincided with an increase in the population because people were there to celebrate the feast of Passover.

Food supplies quickly ran out. There was disease and mass starvation within the city. It's reported that the famine was so severe that there were even acts of cannibalism taking place within the city. Mothers seeking to protect their children from such acts now looking for the mountains to cover them. people. A prophecy given out of compassion for a people that were lost in the spectacle of the moment, failing to recognize the significance of what was unfolding before them that day.

A prophecy of judgment on a people that were ultimately separated from God because of sin and failed to see the significance of the sacrifice of the spotless, innocent Lamb of God that was being made for them that very day.

[20 : 53] And in time a prophecy fulfilled in the most desperate of ways. Jerusalem with its fortified walls, the place where the people thought that they were safe from all their enemies, ultimately became the place of destruction and demise.

And sadly, the legacy of what happened in 70 AD is still evident today as we see what unfolds on our television screens and the news in Israel and Gaza.

These words, as we reflected early, are hard words. But what we see is that they are spoken as a warning of love. we acknowledge at the start that family can cause us joy and they can cause us pain, but it doesn't stop us loving them.

And when, from our own experience, we see them on a path that may cause them harm or hurt, we try and warn them.

And as hard as this message was for Jesus to deliver, out of love, he warned the people, warned them of the danger that was to come, and as we see, warned them of what really became a reality in Jerusalem in 70 AD.

[22 : 25] The Bible teaches us that the Bible is the true living word of God. And as Jesus warned the woman then, we are through the pages of the Bible, still being warned today of what will happen if we fail to heed the warning.

As said, the impact of the siege and all that happened in 70 AD still affects the children of Israel to this day.

Our failure to heed the warnings of the Bible will impact us right into eternity. the passerby, the prophecy, and then the proverb.

I do promise you that this point will be shorter than the other two. Verse 31 says, for if they do these things when the wood is green, what will happen when it is dry?

what does this passage mean for us? How do we interpret it this morning? As with other difficult passages, we look to Scripture to try and help us interpret and understand what the passage has to say.

[23 : 52] In your Bible, you may have a cross reference to the book of Proverbs. Proverbs 11 and verse 31 says, if the righteous is repaid on earth, how much more the wicked and the sinner?

Putting it simply, if this is the way the world treated Jesus, the only one who was righteous, the spotless Lamb of God, who was right there with them, who they had witnessed healing the sick, driving out demons, and even raising Lazarus, they'd heard him preach on numerous occasions a message of salvation, a man that was declared innocent by Pilate.

What will then happen to guilty sinners on the day of judgment? one commentator writes, the nation of Israel was like a green tree during the years when Jesus was on earth.

It was a time of blessing and an opportunity, and it should have been a great time of fruitfulness. But the nation rejected him and became like a dry tree, fit only for the fire. Jesus often would have gathered his own people together, but they would not. In condemning him, they only condemn themselves.

[25 : 27] Another cross reference that we have attached to verse 31 takes us, this proverb, in a different direction for us and turns it into a further warning.

In the New Testament, 1 Peter 4, 17 to 18, for it is time for judgment to begin at the household of God. And if it begins with us, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God?

And if the righteous scarcely saved, what will become of the ungodly sinner? What is the gospel? Romans 1, 16 tells us, it's the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes. And we have God's word available to us this morning.

It's a life-giving word. And we can receive eternal life if we come to him now and believe. The question to you is, do you believe this morning?

[26 : 38] And are you prepared to come and believe in Jesus? And finally, we have the passerby, we have the prophecy, we have the proverb.

We asked earlier on, are you the passerby? You've come because you always come. Simon always went to celebrate the Passover, but on this occasion he was laid upon and he saw Jesus and he followed him.

Have you seen Jesus for the first time this morning? Are you going to choose to follow him? Or, like those that wept at the side of the road, are you moved at the death of an innocent man but failed to recognize that it was for you that he died?

Jesus spoke to those that wept at the side of the road. Why did he speak to them? He spoke to them because he wanted to warn them of what was coming.

He spoke directly to them, a message that as we have seen was a hard message, but one that was a direct warning. Why?

[28 : 02] He spoke it out of love. We reflected at the start that family can bring us love, can bring us joy, but it can also bring us pain and bring us worry and bring us hurt.

We try and warn our loved ones in the strongest of terms when we see them doing something that they shouldn't be doing. Jesus knew what lay ahead for these people and in love he sought to warn them.

Their trust was in the wrong things and in the wrong people. Their focus was on the death of an innocent man and the injustice of it. They were not seeing as John the Baptist had previously testified in John 1 29, as to what the purpose of Jesus' death would be.

And John said, Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. Why? John 3 16, a passage that we've all known and probably could all recite.

For God so loved the world that he gave his only son and whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

[29 : 30] Jesus warned the people of condemnation that was coming upon them unless they changed their ways. We've looked previously here at Jonah and how Jonah went with a message of repentance to the people of Nineveh.

What was that message? Repent and believe. John goes on in chapter 3 and verse 17 and 18. God did not send his son into the world to condemn the world but in order that the world might be saved through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned but whoever does not believe is condemned already because he has not believed in the name of the only son of God.

A message of love spoken by Jesus on the way to the cross to warn a people of future condemnation. A message that while he was alive he had repeatedly shared with the people around about him.

A message that is the same today for each and every one of us. Whether we're here in the church or whether we're listening online. And one that we must act upon.

[30 : 50] And simply put it believe in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ the only son of God and you will be saved.

So what's our message? It's the same message that Jesus gave. Do not weep. Prepare.

How do we prepare? We believe. Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved. Let's pray. Amen. Amen. Amen.