

Christ Community Covenant Church
Unexpected stops on the journey to the cross: Jesus all alone
Pastor Dave Scherrer - April 13, 2014

We are wrapping up our series on Unpacking the Holy Week

Jesus at church: The Authority of Christ – the cleansing of the temple
Jesus at dinner: The Humility of Christ – his anointing at Bethany

Today is Palm Sunday and we dealt with this gospel account three weeks ago where we spoke of Christ's authority. I know we jumped the gun on that a bit. But so that we do not lose track of this day it is good to remember that day of celebration and worship, when the whole town turns out to celebrate the King coming into His city. I like to think of all our worship in this age as rehearsal for the age to come. One day we, who by God's grace have been faithful to the Lord, are going to stand with innumerable millions of believers from Bangladesh, Poland, Egypt, Australia, Iceland, Cameroon, China, Ecuador, Canada, Burma, Borneo, Japan, and Nebraska - thousands of tribes and peoples and languages who have been saved by Christ, with palms of praise in our hand. And when we raise them in salute to Christ, he will see an almost endless field of green, shimmering with life and pulsating with praise. And then like the sound of a thousand Russian choruses, we will sing our song of salvation, "Crown Him with Many Crowns!" while the mighty Christ, with heartfelt love, looks out over those whom he bought with his own blood.

Had Jesus settled for an earthly throne on that first Palm Sunday, none of us would ever be robed in white or waving palms of praise in the age to come. There had to be the cross, and that is what the disciples had not yet understood. Back in Mark 10, as Jesus prepared to set out for Jerusalem from Galilee, he tried to explain this to his disciples:

Mark 10:32-34

³² And they were on the road, going up to Jerusalem, and Jesus was walking ahead of them. And they were amazed, and those who followed were afraid. And taking the twelve again, he began to tell them what was to happen to him, ³³ saying, "See, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests and the scribes, and they will condemn him to death and deliver him over to the Gentiles. ³⁴ And they will mock him and spit on him, and flog him and kill him. And after three days he will rise."

I have been re-reading the gospel accounts of the last free hours of Christ and I must say that this Easter season has been a very meaningful and troubling season for me. I see the intensity and focus as Jesus enters the city. I can be focused at times, just before a big event or speaking engagement, a wedding or memorial service. My attention is on my task and few things can distract me. This is Jesus - determined to spend one last hour with his heavenly Father and to ask him one last question.

Therefore, the disciple's understanding of Jesus' last journey to Jerusalem was confused. They saw him as a king moving in to take control. And he was. But they could not grasp that the victory Jesus would win in Jerusalem over sin and Satan and death and all the enemies of righteousness and joy—that this victory would be won through his own horrible suffering and death; and that the kingdom which they thought would be established immediately would, in fact, be thousands of years in coming. And their misunderstanding of Jesus' journey to Jerusalem results in a misunderstanding of the meaning of discipleship. This misunderstanding is what led to Jesus' darkest night of loneliness and betrayal. Our last unexpected stop on the journey to the cross is the last hour of freedom for our savior, Jesus all alone in the garden of Gethsemane where once again his humanity was on display.

Jesus all alone: Humanity of Christ: A prayer of agony

Images of Gethsemane



Italian Andrea Mantegna's *Agony in the Garden*, circa 1460,



Italian Giacinto Brandi, - Christ in the Garden of Gethsemane - c. 1650

Mark 14:32-42

³² And they went to a place called Gethsemane. And he said to his disciples, "Sit here while I pray." ³³ And he took with him Peter and James and John, and began to be greatly distressed and troubled. ³⁴ And he said to them, "My soul is very sorrowful, even to death. Remain here and watch." ³⁵ And going a little farther, he fell on the ground and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him. ³⁶ And he said, "Abba, Father, all things are possible for you. Remove this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will." ³⁷ And he came and found them sleeping, and he said to Peter, "Simon, are you asleep? Could you not watch one hour? ³⁸ Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." ³⁹ And again he went away and prayed, saying the same words. ⁴⁰ And again he came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were very heavy, and they did not know what to answer him. ⁴¹ And he came the third time and said to them, "Are you still sleeping and taking your rest? It

is enough; the hour has come. The Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. ⁴² Rise, let us be going; see, my betrayer is at hand.”

What's happening here?

This Sorrow and Betrayal

“My soul is very sorrowful, even to death.” v34

“Remain here and watch.” V34

“And he came and found them sleeping, and he said to Peter, ‘Simon, are you asleep? Could you not watch one hour? Watch and pray.’” vs37-38

Loneliness

“And again he came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were very heavy, and they did not know what to answer him.” V40

The Cup

³⁵ And going a little farther, he fell on the ground and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him. ³⁶ And he said, “Abba, Father, all things are possible for you. Remove this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will.”

What is happening here is that Jesus is showing his humanity. While Jesus was fully God he was also fully human, and in this moment, the human inclinations are all on display – body, heart and soul.

Jesus' Human Body

It is clear enough from the New Testament that Jesus has a human body although as crazy as it seems you will remember that was at the heart of the heresy docetism was that Jesus didn't really have a real body. John 1:14 means at least this, and more:

John 1:14

¹⁴ And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

“The Word became flesh.” Jesus' humanity is one of the first tests of orthodoxy. Jesus was born of a virgin, made pregnant by the Holy Spirit. He grew; we have stories of him teaching at age 12. We know he grew tired and got thirsty and hungry. Now in the garden, he became physically weak - exhausted by the ordeals of the week and the weight of the hours just to come. We know he is human because he died. The frailties of stubbed toes, sprained ankles, toothache and flu – are all his experiences too. He was fully human. But there were the human emotions too.

Jesus' Human Emotions

Throughout the Gospels, Jesus clearly displays human emotions. When Jesus heard the centurion's words of faith, he marveled (Matthew 8:10). In John 11:33–35 we read about Jesus as he comes to Bethany to find his cousin dead;

John 11:33-35

³³ When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in his spirit and greatly troubled. ³⁴ And he said, “Where have you laid him?” They said to him, “Lord, come and see.” ³⁵ Jesus wept.

The author to the Hebrews writes that “Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears” (Hebrews 5:7) John Calvin memorably summed it up: “Christ has put on our feelings along with our flesh.”

The Bible calls him a Man of Sorrow from the great prophetic passage of Isaiah 53;

Isaiah 53:3-4

He was despised and rejected by men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces, he was despised, and we esteemed him not.⁴ Surely he has borne our grief and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted.
⁵ But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed.

In the garden he was sorrowful to the point of death. I know some in this room have been nearly that sad due to personal loss. But Jesus' sadness was a grief of the deep spiritual kind. Christ came to earth to save us and so few responded.

John 1:9-11

⁹ The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. ¹⁰ He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. ¹¹ He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him.

His own people did not receive him. I've heard it said that Jesus was crucified on a cross but that he died of a broken heart.

Luke 13:34

Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing!

We cannot know the depth of sadness over this unrequited love of His own people. The sadness he suffered over this profound reality was killing him. Finally there was his human will:

Jesus' Human Will

- John 6:38: “I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me.”
- Matthew 26:39: “Not as I will, but as you will.”

Jesus has an infinite, divine will that he shares with his Father. And he has a finite, human will that, while being an authentic human will, was perfectly in sync with and submissive to the divine will.

John 6:38

³⁸ For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me.

Approaching the garden, the 'human' Jesus was intent on doing the will of the Father. Nonetheless in this hour of aloneness and darkness Jesus faced the most compelling temptation of His life. He is hoping against hope that there might be another way than to suffer this terrible judgment of separation from the Father as the world's weight of sin falls upon his shoulders. He was to be judged and condemned to suffer the punishment of hell in our place.

Mark 14:35-36

³⁵ And going a little farther, he fell on the ground and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him. ³⁶ And he said, "Abba, Father, all things are possible for you. Remove this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will."

"Jesus came to the garden to pray seeking the Father's face and comfort and instead saw the gates of hell open before Him." William Barclay

Like us in every human way – yet without sin

Hebrews 4:15

¹⁵ For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.

How amazing that the divine Son of God would not just take on part of our humanity but all of it—and then take that true humanity all the way to the cross for us. Jesus took a human body to save our bodies. Without becoming man in his emotions, he could not have saved our emotions. And without taking a human will, he could not save our will. In the words of Gregory of Nazianzus, *"That which he has not assumed he has not healed."*

He became man in full so that he might save us in full. What a marvelous Savior!

2 Corinthians 5:21

²¹ For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

How are we to respond?

Perhaps you will face your own garden of gethsemane someday. I hope that this humanity of Jesus will strengthen your faith in that moment so that . . .

- When you're not sure he understands you - remember Gethsemane
- When you are not sure he remembers you – remember Gethsemane
- When you're not sure he values you - remember Gethsemane
- When you doubt his good intentions - remember Gethsemane
- When you think you are suffering - remember Gethsemane
- When you are all alone - remember Gethsemane
- When you are not sure you are loved - remember Gethsemane

***Man of Sorrows! What a name
For the Son of God, who came.
Ruined sinners to reclaim.
Hallelujah! What a Savior!***

Prayer