



Sermon Notes: Brendan Leighton,
“Good Friday”

18 April 2025

Readings: Mark 14:10-15:47

Good Friday - Part 1

Today on Good Friday we have a chance to slow down, to reflect and dwell on the story, as it unfolds. Here is my request for you, to get us in the mind frame, if you know the story of Jesus, let's not jump ahead, but dwell where Jesus and his disciples are in the moment.

And so, to begin, we start in the garden. This might be my favourite gospel story about Jesus. We come to the garden and Jesus lays out the reality of what he is about to do. He comes to the garden to pray, and he asks his three closest friends Peter, James and John, Keep watch over me while I pray because (verse 34) *My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow*. This is the same Jesus that we have seen calm the storms, heal the sick, raise the dead. But here, here we see the weight of his purpose.

Overwhelmed he goes further ahead by himself; he falls to the ground and prays *if there is any other way, take this cup from me*. Now what is this cup? The cup is biblical language for God's Judgment, the punishment due for sin. And Jesus is here on the cusp, the edge of going to the cross and receiving the judgment in full and he is about to drink that bitter poison. The Judgment meant for every single human, the punishment for billions and trillions of sins, the punishment meant for me and for you and for every single human; all those who have rejected God, that judgment, is about to be given to Jesus.

God the Son, who has existed for eternity, in perfect relationship with the Father, in perfect unity, is preparing, for the first time in eternity, to receive, not love from the Father, but to receive wrath. Jesus says, *if there is any other way, take this cup*.

YET, and this is a big yet, *not my will, but yours*, Jesus says despite the fear and burden, the overwhelming sorrow, what matters most, is the unity the Father and Son share, the Father's plan to redeem humanity, and the Son's obedience to carry the cross. That's what we see in the garden, it's not hopelessness, it's overwhelming sorrow at what must be done. And Jesus as he gets up he says *Father, Your will be done*.

And even when his friends fail to support him, he tells them, the hour has come, it's time, get up, let's go. My betrayer approaches.

We will continue through the story, but first we are going to sing of these gospel truths. Jesus came as a king, but as a servant, a servant king and this song sings of the sorrow in the garden, but in obedience he goes to the cross despite that sorrow.

So let's stand and sing to our great God who bore the weight of all our sins to save us from ourselves. This is the Servant King.

Good Friday Part 2

After Jesus is arrested, they took him for questioning, but they had their own motives. They wanted to kill him, thinking that will get rid of Jesus and remove any political power he had and so the chief priests, the religious leaders question him trying to find some evidence of guilt, but they can't find any. So, they bring false witnesses. Eventually the high priest demands *are you not going to defend yourself?* Jesus remains silent until they asked *Are you the Messiah?* And Jesus gives an answer; *I am*. Now if you have been with us at church over the last few weeks you will know this shouldn't be surprising. Peter called him the Messiah, the crowds welcomed him in as the messiah praising Him and calling out Hosanna, which means save us. And so this answer isn't surprising, but Jesus adds to it. And he adds something significant:

He says:

you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven.

Which is significant for two reasons, first he is quoting from the book of Daniel in the Old Testament, which is about the Messiah, but second he makes clear, the significance of that passage, the Messiah, the Son of Man (another title for the Messiah) will sit at the right hand of God. He will sit on the heavenly throne He is saying, *I am the Messiah, and I am enthroned next to the Father* therefore elevating himself to being the will of the Father. This is a claim to being God. And this is where we see two things are happening. What's really happening, behind the scenes, and what the people think is happening.

What's really happening is what Jesus said in the garden, He is obedient to the Father and He will go to the cross to save people from sins. He is fulfilling God's commands.

But the Pharisees want to kill Him to consolidate their own political power; Jesus says I am the Messiah and I will come back on the throne of God. The pharisees say we have to kill this guy to get rid of his power. Because Jesus has elevated himself to God's level, they think that this is a good excuse, so they accuse Him of blasphemy and so they declare the death sentence.

They beat him, spit on him, mock him and on the human level it looks like they win. They have him dead to rights. Even Peter, the most faithful of his friends, thinks it's over and in shame he denies knowing Jesus. The crowds have turned on him, the guard beat him, the priests mock him and it seems like he has lost. But he hasn't.

In the garden, he knows where he is going, to death. To face the judgment meant for me and you.

He tells the Pharisees *I am the Messiah and I will come back on the throne*. He is talking about after he has died. Even if they don't understand.

It is a dark day, but it is the only way for the light to overcome the darkness.

We will pause here again, to take some time to pray for the hope that comes beyond the cross.

Good Friday part 3

And so, Jesus went to the cross, He hung there, nails piercing his hands and feet, a sign above his head mocking and yet it is a true acknowledgment His kingship. The people continued to mock Him, *he can't even save himself*, and there's a deep truth to that, He didn't come to save himself, but to save others. While he has the ability to save himself, and wields the power to save himself, but he chooses instead, to suffer in our place. As we look at the cross, as we see Christ hanging there, we are supposed to realise, He has taken our place. And so He hangs there innocent, and yet bearing our guilt. From a human perspective he is in shame, but in the heavenly realms He is glorious in obedience to God.

As the afternoon draws towards close, He calls out *Eloi Eloi lama Sabachthani* which is actually a quote from Psalm 22 which is a Psalm about God's Chosen One being surrounded by enemies, and despite being surrounded by these enemies, God's Chosen One declares the praises of God and in the Psalm, people from everywhere turn back to God Because of this Chosen One. His last breath is a call for us to hear God and turn back to Him.

And He dies.

As we reach this point in the story, if this was a novel, something else would happen; someone would rescue Him, He would overcome the cross and step down, but no! Here, truly the hero, the king, the saviour dies. And let me remind you, although you know what happens next, He doesn't stay dead, but dwells in the moment, the promised saviour has come, but now He is dead. A corpse on a cross. Truly the darkest moment hope seems dead.

People watching, followers of Jesus, watch as He breathes his last breath. And dies.

From a human perspective, the point of the story here is a tragedy.

But from the heavenly perspective, something incredible has been done. Because sin; sin that we have all done, the sin we have done in secret and think no one knows about, the sin we might even be proud of; there was wrath coming for it, there was judgment due for it. And the truth is, the man on the cross being judged was supposed to be me, and you, us, we are the guilty ones.

But Jesus took our place. He took that wrath, he bore the guilt, so that we can be forgiven by God. In the Matthew account Jesus cries out:

It is finished.

Once and for all, payment for sin has been made, He doesn't have to do it again, it is done. And you and I are beneficiaries, if we trust Jesus. That is why it is Good Friday. Good, because the greatest barrier that separated us from God is gone, like the curtain in the temple, which was a barrier between the presence of God and his people. The temple is now Christ, and we can access God through Him. We can be forgiven through Him, this is the Good News, and this is why we celebrate Easter. Yes, we mourn the price paid, but we praise God because we were supposed to pay it, but God paid it on our behalf. It's why we sing in church, because we have hope, a sure hope that doesn't rely on me or you but on Jesus and His finished work here on the cross.

And so, we are going to sing now. My song is Love Unknown, which is about the love of a Saviour, Jesus, who would give up everything to love us.