**Calvary Fellowship 2.26.2023 Matthew 26:31-56 “The Judas Kiss”**

* **So about 8 years ago, I was driving to West Palm Beach for a meeting - it was pouring rain in a way that only South FL can provide**
* While I was driving up to my meeting in the HOV lane, the guy in front of me stops short, so I stop - then the car behind me rear ends my car
* I’m so frustrated at this point - I get out of the car & this lady comes out yelling about how someone hit her & then took off - which we never saw
* I call the cops - but it turns out the car isn’t hers - then she doesn’t have her insurance card & can’t quite remember the name of the insurance company
* She’s also covered in powder from the powdered donuts we was eating
* I also talk to her about why she’s in the HOV lane if there’s no 1 else in the car
* She says, “ Well, yeah that was a mistake, but I was getting off at the next exit, so it’s ok.” - No lady, not it’s not ok - but I just left that alone
* I had a 2 hour meeting scheduled & the person was from out of town & every minute I stayed there, I was missing out on this meeting
* But I hung out b/c I wanted justice - I wanted her to get a ticket - which the cop didn’t not give her - in fact, they were both laughing together as I drove away
* I said, “She was driving in the HOV lane, doesn’t have proof of insurance, & says isn’t her car, but you’re not giving her a ticket? Is this lady your cousin?”
* Then the cop told me to leave before she found a reason to give me a ticket
* **So I finally get to my meeting an hour late & I’m driving home still piping hot about the very mild scratch on my car**
* I’m thinking about these things when a cop turns on his lights behind me
* So I pull over - he walks up & asks, “Do U know why I pulled U over?”
* I said, “Sir, there’s only 1 reason why you’d pull me over. You’re going to say I was speeding.” - He says, “U were doing 40 in a 25. License & registration.”
* I said, “Sir, my car just got hit 2 hours ago by a woman covered in donut powder. So there is no way on this planet that I’m getting a ticket tonight if there is any justice in the world.” - He says, “Sir, are U ok?” - I say, “Yes.”
* He walks back to his car & takes what felt like 2 hours to come back
* He says, “Sorry it took so long, my computer was down. Please sign this.”
* I say, “Sir, U have to understand. I am not having a good night. I need your help on this.” - he says, “Sir, sign it. It’s a warning. Please relax & have a nice night.”
* **Anybody else ever had a really bad day? Ever struggled b/c nothing was going right? If you’ve lived in our planet for more than a weekend, U have**
* And the hard part is, when you’re going through a tough season, U don’t know when it’s going to end or if it’s going to end
* Listen - most of us have dealt w/ people letting us down, people not being there for us when we need them most, & people that we trusted betraying us
* The problem is, Jesus is going to experience all of that in 1 night
* **We’re in message #40 of our series in the Gospel of Matthew & we have arrived at the night before Jesus’ crucifixion**
* By the time this night is over, his closest friends are going to bail on Him & someone He trusted most is going to betray Him in the worst possible way
* Now there’s some important theological ideas that we’re going to explore as we go through these verse, but there’s another truth that I want us to carry as well
* That if you’ve struggled or people have let U down - if you’ve ever felt alone b/c the people who should have been there for U weren’t, Jesus understands
* And b/c He understands, He’s never going to bail on U
* “Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or terrified because of them, for the Lord your God goes with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you.” (Deuteronomy 31:6 NIV)
* So as read this, we’re treading on holy ground - this is a powerful moment in the ministry of Jesus b/c now everything is leading to the cross
* And there’s nothing that He did that deserved this - instead, He’s allowing all this to happen b/c He’s standing in our shoes to die on our behalf…

**———(v. 31-35)———**

**#1 - Jesus is With Me even when Others Stumble**

* **I use the word “Stumble” b/c that’s the word that Jesus employs to describe how the disciple will feel about Him tonight**
* Remember, things are goin to move pretty quickly - once Jesus is arrested, He’ll undergo 6 illegal trials & by 9:00AM, He’ll be crucified
* But that word “stumble” is the Greek word “Scandalize”, which is obviously where we get our English word “scandal” or “scandalous”
* Jesus would become a scandal & all of the disciples would stay away
* Then He quotes the book of Zechariah & a Messianic prophecy about this very night that when U strike the shepherd, the sheep will scatter
* But I love the promise that Jesus gives them - he says, “But when it’s all over, I’ll meet U in Galilee” - we’ll see that in chapter 28
* **So follow what’s happening here - Jesus says, “You’re all going to leave Me tonight. In fact, the Bible says that you’re going to do that.”**
* And their response is, “There’s no way that could happen” - Peter is so adamant that He will never fall away, he says, “Even if these chumps fall away, I never will” - he’s saying, “I am incapable of falling in this way”
* Listen - right now, it’s about 9PM - by 6AM he will have denied Jesus 3 times & will be calling down curses on himself to prove He doesn’t know Jesus
* “Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.” (1 Corinthians 10:12 NKJV)
* This is why we need God’s grace - b/c we aren’t perfect
* Grace is a word that we don’t really understand, even though it gets thrown around in our culture
* Grace is undeserved favor - it’s getting something good that we don’t deserve
* Mercy is not getting the consequence that U do deserve - If you’ve ever been stopped by a cop for speeding & he decides not to give U a ticket, that’s mercy
* Grace picks up where mercy leaves off b/c grace adds a blessing as well
* **A friend of mine used to be on the board of directors of a college - they were able to bring Mark Hamill as a speaker (pic)**
* My friend was the guy who picked Mark up from the airport - but they were running late, so my friend starts speeding to get Mark to the school on time
* But a cop catches him speeding & pulls him over - the cop pulls him & says, “License & registration” & Mark says, “U don’t need to see his identification”
* The cop freaks out & says, “Dude! You’re Luke Skywalker!”
* Mark says, “We’re trying to get to the college. Can U help us out?”
* The cop says, “Yeah I can help. I’m going to give U a police escort!”
* Not getting a ticket - That’s mercy - the police escort was grace - Luke Skywalker - well, that’s just pure awesome!
* **Most of us think of grace in terms of forgiveness - where God was gracious w/ us & forgave us through Jesus’ sacrifice - and that’s true**
* But that’s where grace begins, not ends - grace extends into every area of our lives & if U want a life that has joy, then grace has to be a big ingredient
* Listen - the only way to have friendships in this life is to be gracious b/c people are going to let U down & if U cut everyone off who messes up, you’ll be alone
* If U lack grace in your marriage, it isn’t going to last b/c the only way for marriage to work is for 2 people to be dedicated to grace
* When others stumble, we need to be gracious b/c God has been gracious to us

**———(v. 36-46)———**

**#2 - Jesus is with Me even when He Says No**

* **So let me set the scene here - The passover seder is done**
* Now Jesus is headed to Gethsemane to pray - It’s around 9PM on Thursday & Jesus is at Gethsemane for about 3 hours
* He takes all of the disciples w/ Him & says, “sit while I go pray over there”
* Remember, Jesus is very well known & in the past, people have found out where He was & a huge crowd would form
* Most scholars agree that Jesus probably asked the disciples to wait at the entrance of the garden to keep others from entering while He prayed
* Then He took Peter, James, & John w/ Him into the garden
* He goes further & falls on His face praying, “Father, if it’s possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not I will, but as U will”
* Now, the place is called Gethsemane, which is 2 hebrews words - Gat & Shemen - it’s means olive press - it’s a place where olive oil was produced
* This is a powerful moment b/c what Jesus described is Him being crushed
* B/c He’s asking if there’s any other way - any other way for what?
* For humanity to be saved & know God & spend eternity w/ Him
* **Listen - & this is really important - we live in a relativistic society**
* That is, we’ve bought into a philosophy that believes all points of view are equally valid & all truth is relative to the individual - so it’s true if it’s true to U
* And by the way, this is the facade of the ideology - but really, it’s “U can believe whatever U want as long as U agree w/ us”
* This is why U have men claiming to identify as women & women claiming to be men & in the UK there’s a whole movement of people identifying as dogs
* And to disagree w/ those lifestyle choices is hateful b/c that’s their truth
* **Listen - truth means that something corresponds to reality & if something is true, it’s true for everyone - not everyone will like it or agree w/ it**
* But that doesn’t make something less true b/c people dislike it
* But to say there’s no absolute truth that applies to everyone is in & of itself an absolute that does apply to everyone
* But here’s why I bring this up - b/c Jesus prays & doesn’t hear an alternative from heaven - He hears nothing - there’s no other way
* This is the moment where we see the exclusivity of Christianity - Jesus is showing that there’s no other way to God besides Him
* “Jesus said to him, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.” (John 14:6 NKJV)
* If there are other ways to God - if all roads lead to heaven - if U just have to be a good person - if U just need to be sincere & make sure U recycle
* If any of those are true, then Jesus died needlessly
* **1 of the the objections people have to Christianity is the belief that Jesus is the only way & many find that narrow**
* This is why someone people believe it’s wrong to do evangelism
* B/c they say, “It’s wrong to convert someone to your spiritual reality.” - but see, that idea itself is a spiritual reality that U want us to convert to - why?
* B/c everyone’s view is narrow - even those who say that no matter what faith U chose, that’s ok - that’s an exclusive position you’re taking
* B/c you’re saying that to believe otherwise is wrong
* B/c whatever your worldview is, U believe the world would be better if everyone adopted your view & that is a worldview that’s exclusive
* To believe that’s the best truth to embrace, you’re no less exclusive than the person who believes 1 way is the best truth to embrace
* Jesus is struggling in the garden of Gethsemane b/c there’s no other way
* U don’t have to believe that - but Jesus believed that - He believed that so much He died for every person on this planet
* **There’s 1 more thing I want to talk about before leaving this section & that is, what do we do when there’s a gap between God’s will & our will?**
* Jesus is asking if there’s another way - that’s b/c He was hoping there was another way - right after this prayer session Jesus is going to be arrested
* Then comes the interrogations, the beatings, the torture, & the cross
* **So what do U do when your will & God’s will are different? What do I do when I pray & nothing is happening?**
* **#1 - Commit Yourself to Pray More**
* That is, when you’re unsure about God’s will, commit yourself to praying more about it - too often, we pray once & then give up
* **We need to seek God like we seek out a late night snack**
* Here’s what we do - we open the fridge & there’s nothing there
* So we walk around & look in the pantry or the cupboards
* Then what do we do? We open the fridge again, hoping we might see something that we didn’t see the 1st time
* But there’s nothing different - so we start opening the oven or microwave, hoping food got left behind by some random person who used it last
* Then do U know what we do? We go back to the fridge hoping against hope that something will appear - then we see something! It’s salsa
* But it’s not - it’s a tomato that’s going bad that we saw through the lens of a storage container that had 1/4 of an onion
* Once I was looking for a snack & I found a piece of cake that I left in the fridge
* I was so happy, until I realized I put it in a plastic bin that had previously contained garlic - guess what? I could have killed a vampire w/ that garlic chocolate cake b/c it was ruined - I mean, I still ate it b/c U can’t waste it
* But don’t pray once & then just move on - when your will & God’s will aren’t in alignment, make a decision to pray more & watch what God does to your heart
* It will slowly start changing & God will begin revealing what He wants U to do
* **#2 - Learn what God has Said**
* **When U get God’s word into your heart & mind, it changes U**
* Here’s the thing that’s really important for U to know - there’s a bunch of stuff that U don’t even need to pay about - God has already spoken on it
* That is, if you’ll read the Bible, you’ll find guidance on a whole myriad of issues & U can be sure it’s God’s will b/c it’s in the Bible
* All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.” (2 Timothy 3:16-17)
* He says, “God inspired the Bible & it’s profitable for doctrine” - the word doctrine means teaching - it’s teaching that informs us & transforms us
* It informs us about who God is & what God’s plan for us is
* I want U to notice that in Paul’s order of what the Bible does is in our lives, the 1st thing he says it does is instruct us
* It gives us a picture of what life could look like if we followed God’s design
* And I’m so grateful that the Bible doesn’t just talk about ethereal spiritual issues, but is so wildly practical in matters that could derail us
* **When I was 21, I cosigned for someone to buy an apartment**
* This was a horrible decision, but I had just become a Christian & I didn’t want them to think I didn’t care about them b/c I was following Jesus
* So I signed on the dotted line for them & they promised that they would pay on time so matter what - do I need to tell U the end of the story?
* Well, the reason U need someone to sign this time is b/c U didn’t pay last time
* Well, they eventually sold the place, but had paid late a bunch of times
* But in the middle of all that, I read a passage that met me right where I was
* "It’s poor judgment to guarantee another person’s debt or put up security for a friend.” (Proverbs 17:18)
* Then the person came back to me & asked to do it again & swore that this time wasn’t going to be like last time & of course, “What would Jesus do?”
* I said no - that Proverb direct my steps & met me right where was & gave me wisdom I never would have come up w/ on my own at the age of 21
* This is what knowing the Bible does in our lives when we’re open to it
* It transforms how we make decisions - b/c following Jesus doesn’t just make your life better - following Jesus makes U better at life
* **#3 - Decide to Trust God’s Heart**
* **Ultimately, U have to decide to trust God beyond what your circumstances are telling U - b/c there’s so much U don’t see**
* Do U know what I love? That our heavenly Father knows better & cares for us
* “Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.” (Hebrews 12:2 NKJV)
* Listen - there was no joy in Gethsemane, but there was joy afterwards in what Gethsemane produced
* Sometimes what you’re going through feels like death - U think it can’t get worse, but then comes burial - but if you’ll hold on, resurrection is coming & joy

**———(v. 47-56)———**

**#3 - Jesus is with Me even when Friends Betray Me**

* **Now, the same reason the chief priests needed someone to find Jesus is same reason the disciples fell asleep - it was midnight**
* It was pitch black night & there are no lights other than a few torches
* I don’t know about U - but put me in a dark room & I’m out in seconds
* **The most common phrase in our house when we’re watching a show as a family is, “Is dad still awake?”**
* I don’t remember 90% of the movies I took my kids to when they were little
* I remember taking them to see the movie trolls - I told Mia - “Mama, that movie was really short. I remember seeing that main troll & he got into trouble. Then I closed my eyes for a second & they were all singing & the movie was over.”
* But verse 48 says Judas shows up w/ a great multitude - John’s Gospel is a little more descriptive - it says, “a detachment of troops”
* A detachment of troops was 600 soldiers, plus people who were send from the high priest - so there’s an overwhelming crowd here
* And Judas has to give a sign - “The 1 I kiss is the 1.” - that means Jesus looked very similar to this around Him - U couldn’t pick Him out of a crowd
* U couldn’t say, “That’s Jesus. He’s the 1 w/ the halo.” - “U can’t miss Jesus. He’s the 1 that’s glowing.” - no - He looked common - that’s by design
* “He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him.” (Isaiah 53:2 NIV)
* **There’s 1 other detail I want to mention - Matthew records that 1 of the disciples drew his sword & struck the servant of the high priest**
* Matthew, Mark, & Luke all record the same thing - 1 of the disciples
* “Then Simon Peter, having a sword, drew it and struck the high priest’s servant, and cut off his right ear. The servant’s name was Malchus.” (John 18:10 NKJV)
* Listen - if U know Peter, he wasn’t aiming for his ear - Peter was probably tryin to take his head off, but he was groggy from taking a nap
* **The part of this story that hurts me is the Judas kiss - why a kiss?**
* B/c the kiss was the greeting between a rabbi & his students
* **OK - let’s talk about betrayal - why would Judas betray Jesus?**
* There’s lots of reasons as to why - there’s only 2 that make sense to me
* 1st, Judas was disappointed Jesus was not the kind of Messiah he expected
* He wasn’t planning on overthrowing Rome or the religious elite in Israel
* Consequently, there was no positions of prestige or power for him to take
* 2nd, the betrayal could have been Judas’ way to force Jesus’ hand to establish His kingdom if He were forced into a confrontation w/ Rome
* “Then Satan entered Judas, surnamed Iscariot, who was numbered among the twelve. So he went his way and conferred with the chief priests and captains, how he might betray Him to them.” (Luke 22:3-4 NKJV)
* Now, we can’t be 100% sure, but when Jesus is beaten & tortured, Judas has a change of heart & returns the money
* Which leads me to believe that he was tricked by Satan into thinking He could force Jesus’ hand into started a military campaign against Rome
* When he realized his plan was a disaster, he killed himself
* **So what do U if you’ve been betrayed? How do U find healing & move forward**
* **#1 - Betrayal can Happen to Anyone**
* **Here’s how I know that - b/c it happened to Jesus & Jesus was the best judge of character known to man**
* Sometimes we beat ourselves up for allowing ourselves to be betrayed
* We think that if we were smarter or wiser or had more insight it wouldn’t have happened - listen, sometimes there’s no way of knowing
* Listen - I was betrayed by 1 of my best friends a few years ago & there was no way for me to have known it
* But for months I kept analyzing the situation trying to figure what I missed
* I wish I could tell U there’s an amazing God story here, but there’s isn’t 1 yet
* I’m praying there will be in the future, but as of yet, there’s none of that
* Listen, just like Judas had to kiss to recognize Him, U can’t pick a betrayer out of a line up b/c they look like everyone else
* But listen, U can’t live here - U have to more towards forgiveness & freedom
* **#2 - Recovering Begins with Forgiveness**
* **Whenever someone sins against U, the healthiest thing U can do for yourself is forgive - now, that does not mean U trust the person again**
* Forgiveness is something we are to give freely, but trust is earned
* But people who hold on to betrayal & never let it go, it kills their future
* U hav to decide to forgive & it will probably take forgiving them a 1,000 times for their betrayal to stop thinking about it all the time
* But if U don’t make the decision to forgive, it will destroy your future
* If U don’t believe me, ask someone who’s gone through a bitter divorce b/c of betrayal & never forgiven - it keeps them from healing & love in the future
* When U forgive, you’re letting yourself out of the prison & deciding to be free
* **#3 - Don’t let the Betrayal Change You**
* Let it make U wiser & more discerning, but don’t let what 1 person did impact your future - don’t let it make U a person who closes themselves off to others
* Sometimes that’s what we do - someone hurts us & then we think, “I’m not going to let anyone else hurt me again”
* The only problem is, it doesn’t work b/c by cutting yourself off, you’re hurting U
* The best thing U can do get a betrayer back is to live a joyful life
* B/c U didn’t do anything wrong - so don’t pay a penalty for something U didn’t do - b/c it never works out for betrayers
* Judas ended up hanging himself - Jesus rose again & had joy beyond the cross - listen, betrayers don’t live well - they’re not really living at all
* But when U walk w/ Jesus, U live w/ fulness of joy…