

Series: Independent (Main Service)

Message Title: the final hours of Jesus life

Date: April 14, 2019

Intro:

- In September we began a 31 week journey through the redemptive story of Jesus from Genesis to Revelation.
- Over our first 21 weeks we covered enormous chunks of history in the Old Testament
- 4 weeks ago we began the New Testament covering...
 - The birth of Jesus
 - Jesus public ministry
 - Jesus teachings
 - Jesus is the Messiah

Transition:

This morning we arrive at the final moments of Jesus life on earth.

While there are numerous moments in Jesus final hours that we could dig in too – there just isn't enough time in a single morning to cover them all.

So... we are going to look at three moments that shape our pursuit of Jesus

Jesus' Prayer:

In the final hours before His arrest Jesus has dinner with His disciples to celebrate Passover and then withdraws to pray – which we have seen is a normal rhythm of His ministry.

He takes his disciples with him to the Garden of Gethsemane and instructs them to wait while he goes to pray

As He leaves the 12 he takes Peter, John and James further down the path and then instructs them to keep watch while He prays.

As Jesus kneels to have his last conversation with God as a free man, he says...

Matthew 26:39b

“My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will.”

- “The Cup” was an Old Testament symbol for suffering and death under the wrath of God
- In this moment as Jesus fell on his face to pray, he understood what was coming
 - He knew that he was going to hang on a cross because He had to become the curse of sin for us – Galatians 3:13 “Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree” (ref Duet 21:23)

- He knew there was unimaginable pain coming as he took on the sin of mankind – becoming sin for us – which would separate him from God for the first time
- He knew that the “game of the King” was a brutal game that Roman soldiers often played with criminals sentenced to death – and that many did not survive the game
 - He most likely knew he would face the brutality of this game
 - He also knew he would survive it – even it just barely – because He had to be hung on a tree

When we grasp some of what was on Jesus heart as he prayed these words in the Garden there are two beautiful pictures that unfold...

1. **Jesus' love for all people is unconditional**

- In *John 15:13* Jesus said... ¹³ **There is no greater love than to lay down one's life for one's friends**
- In His agonizing prayer in the Garden we see that Jesus is willing to do whatever is required so that you, I, and everyone may be rescued from our sin

2. **God's plan is actually better than our plan**

- Knowing what was coming Jesus cried out to God... “if there is another way – let's do that” – and then said but your plan is better than my plan – painting a beautiful picture for us of SURRENDER
- God's plan is always better than our plan
 - Surrendering to God's plan requires TRUST – which is earned through time and shared experience
 - Surrendering to God's plan doesn't always make sense in the Lower Story
 - Surrendering to God's plan isn't always pain free
 - **Surrendering to God's plan always results in what is best for us!**

Peter's Denial:

John 18:15-18

¹⁵ Simon Peter and another disciple were following Jesus. Because this disciple was known to the high priest, he went with Jesus into the high priest's courtyard, ¹⁶ but Peter had to wait outside at the door. The other disciple, who was known to the high priest, came back, spoke to the servant girl on duty there and brought Peter in.

¹⁷ “You aren't one of this man's disciples too, are you?” she asked Peter.

He replied, “I am not.”

¹⁸ It was cold, and the servants and officials stood around a fire they had made to keep warm. Peter also was standing with them, warming himself.

John 18:25-27

²⁵ Meanwhile, Simon Peter was still standing there warming himself. So they asked him, “You aren't one of his disciples too, are you?”

He denied it, saying, "I am not."

²⁶ One of the high priest's servants, a relative of the man whose ear Peter had cut off, challenged him, "Didn't I see you with him in the garden?" ²⁷ Again Peter denied it, and at that moment a rooster began to crow.

- Just hours before this moment Peter has declared to Jesus that he loves him more than anyone else
- Now in the face of opposition, fear grips Peter and he does exactly as Jesus said he would
- Peter who over the past 3 years has probably been the most vocal in his belief in Jesus as Messiah is now denying that he is one of Jesus disciples

- Two years ago I did a study on FEAR and here is what I discovered...
- **FEAR is the ANTIDOTE to FEAR**
 - Our fear of one thing actually diminishes our fear of another thing
 - EX: fear of sharks vs fear of harm to loved ones
- The FEAR of the Lord is the fear that diminishes all other FEARS

FEAR of the Lord defined:

- **What does it mean to FEAR the Lord?**
 - Put plainly the FEAR of the Lord is a – Constant awareness of your Creator

- What does it mean to have a constant awareness of your Creator? It means you understand...
 - He has always been and will always be
 - He created you – and everything that exists – including your enemy, Satan
 - Nothing happens without his authority
 - He is in control of everything – including your eternity

 - Our constant awareness of our Creator produces a...
 - desire to obey His commands
 - pursuit of purity
 - humble acceptance of His Love and Grace

- In this moment when Peter is presented with the opportunity to stand for Jesus for the first time without Jesus by his side – his fear of people overshadows his fear of God.

- From a humanistic standpoint it is very easy for us to look at Peter in this moment as a coward full of nothing but hot air.
- How could you see all that Peter saw, hear all that he heard, experience all that he did, and say all that he said – for 3 years - and then crumble at the first sign of resistance?

- If Peter lived in 2019 he would have been systematically dismantled in brutal fashion by every troll on Social Media

- It is easy to look at Peter in this moment and say... "Peter, how could you? What were you thinking, you wimp?"
- The problem is that if we are going to criticize Peter then we are also going to have to criticize ourselves, because far more often than we prefer to acknowledge we are just like Peter in this moment.
 - Most of us are very comfortable living for Jesus around others who believe like we do

- We are comfortable living for and speaking much about Jesus when we are in the safety of our friend circles or church circles.
- BUT - Most of us become very UNCOMFORTABLE living for and speaking about Jesus when we are in environments like...
 - School
 - Work
 - Social circles
- AND – we are UNCOMFORTABLE for the very same reasons as Peter – our FEAR of PEOPLE is greater than our FEAR of the LORD
- Don't get me wrong it's a valid fear
 - We live in a world where every word we say is put under a microscope
 - We live in a world where everything we say and everything we do is judged by literally the world
 - In many ways, you and I live in the most difficult time in history to live boldly for Jesus
- The reality that we have to confront is... **When & Where we live does not excuse us from FEARING GOD more than we FEAR PEOPLE**

Jesus Last Words from the Cross:

During Jesus' last moments on the cross the Roman soldiers overseeing his execution dipped a sponge in wine vinegar and raised it to Jesus mouth.

While the sponge of wine vinegar would not have given Jesus relief of thirst, it did provide moisture to his mouth enabling him to speak his final words...

John 19:30

³⁰ When Jesus had tasted it, he said, "It is finished!" Then he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.

- The Greek word Jesus spoke was "Tetelestai" which is accurately translated "It is finished"
- BUT – when you dig a little deeper into the 1st century culture what you will find is that tetelestai was a word commonly used on bank notes to signify that a debt had been "paid in full"
- In the 1st century the note for unpaid debts were often posted on the doorframe of persons who owed the debt – much like an eviction notice in our present day.
- At times a benevolent neighbor or friend would see the note and choose to pay the debt on behalf of their friend, family member, or neighbor.
- They would write "tetelestai" on the note to signify to the authorities that the debt had been paid in full.

When Jesus said "tetelestai" from the cross it communicated two things to those who heard His words and to those who later heard the story of His words...

1. **For the Gentiles it communicated** – I am who I said I am and I have completed what I came to do.
2. **For the Jews is communicated** – I am who I said I am and I have completed what I came to do – specifically what I said in...

Matthew 5:17

“Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them.

- The law was a black and white outline of the redemptive story of Jesus
- When Jesus arrived he took the black and white outline into HD Color

One of the greatest examples of Jesus coming to fulfill the Law is in how he died

Leviticus 16

The LORD spoke to Moses after the death of the two sons of Aaron who died when they approached the LORD. ² The LORD said to Moses: “Tell your brother Aaron that he is not to come whenever he chooses into the Most Holy Place behind the curtain in front of the atonement cover on the ark, or else he will die. For I will appear in the cloud over the atonement cover.

³ “This is how Aaron is to enter the Most Holy Place: He must first bring a young bull for a sin offering and a ram for a burnt offering. ⁴ He is to put on the sacred linen tunic, with linen undergarments next to his body; he is to tie the linen sash around him and put on the linen turban. These are sacred garments; so he must bathe himself with water before he puts them on. ⁵ From the Israelite community he is to take two male goats for a sin offering and a ram for a burnt offering.

⁶ “Aaron is to offer the bull for his own sin offering to make atonement for himself and his household. ⁷ Then he is to take the two goats and present them before the LORD at the entrance to the tent of meeting. ⁸ He is to cast lots for the two goats—one lot for the LORD and the other for the scapegoat. ⁹ Aaron shall bring the goat whose lot falls to the LORD and sacrifice it for a sin offering. ¹⁰ But the goat chosen by lot as the scapegoat shall be presented alive before the LORD to be used for making atonement by sending it into the wilderness as a scapegoat.

¹⁵ “He shall then slaughter the goat for the sin offering for the people and take its blood behind the curtain and do with it as he did with the bull’s blood: He shall sprinkle it on the atonement cover and in front of it. ¹⁶ In this way he will make atonement for the Most Holy Place because of the uncleanness and rebellion of the Israelites, whatever their sins have been.

²⁰ “When Aaron has finished making atonement for the Most Holy Place, the tent of meeting and the altar, he shall bring forward the live goat. ²¹ He is to lay both hands on the head of the live goat and confess over it all the wickedness and rebellion of the Israelites—all their sins—and put them on the goat’s head. He shall send the goat away into the wilderness in the care of someone appointed for the task. ²² The goat will carry on itself all their sins to a remote place; and the man shall release it in the wilderness.

- This chapter gives the detailed instructions for what is to happen once a year on the Day of Atonement or Yom Kippur.

PART 1:

- Before anything else happened Aaron (chief priest) had to intercede for his own sin
- For his own atonement Aaron had bring a Bull and a Ram
- Before he started the ritual, he was supposed to take a bath and dress in a very specific way – which was actually much more basic than how he would normally dress as a priest
- He was then to offer the bull as a blood sacrifice for his sin and the sin of his family
- He had to take some burning coals and incense into the Holy of Holies and place them on the fire so that the smoke would shield his eyes from looking upon the Holy Presence
 - It was also a prayer offering the God would mercifully accept the atonement offerings
- Aaron was offer the Ram as a burnt offering and the bull as a blood offering
 - He was to sprinkle blood from the Bull on the front of the mercy seat
 - Then sprinkle blood 7 times in front of the mercy seat

PART 2:

- After making atonement offerings for his sins and the sins of his family he would move to the offering for the nation.
 - He was to collect 2 goats from the people
 - He cast lots to determine which goat was to be sacrificed and which was to be spared
 - He would then kill the one goat and sprinkle its blood on the mercy seat
- The blood of the sacrificed goat stood between the imperfection of humanity and the perfection of God
 - As sinful people we deserve death but God in his mercy provided a way we wouldn't have to pay that price
 - However something had to die – and on the Day of Atonement it was a goat
 - Its blood took our place on the mercy seat.

PART 3:

- So what about the goat that got to live?? Well if you have ever heard the term scapegoat – this is where it comes from.
- The goat that was sacrificed had paid the price of the people's sins
- Now those sins were placed on the 2nd goat
- This second goat was then taking out of the city into the wilderness and released
- In essence the 2nd goat became sin for the people and carried their sin far away

PART 4:

- Someone had to lead the scapegoat out into the wilderness
- Before that person could return to the camp they had to bathe
- Someone had to take the animals killed in the sacrifice outside of the city and burned up
- Before that person could return to the camp they had to bathe

Connecting the Dots:

Hebrews 13:11-15

¹¹ The high priest carries the blood of animals into the Most Holy Place as a sin offering, but the bodies are burned outside the camp. ¹² And so Jesus also suffered outside the city gate to make the people holy through his own blood. ¹³ Let us, then, go to him outside the camp, bearing the disgrace he bore. ¹⁴ For here we do not have an enduring city, but we are looking for the city that is to come.

¹⁵ Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise—the fruit of lips that openly profess his name.

- This passage is one of the most clear examples of what Jesus said in Matthew 5:17
- I want you to notice the connections between the Day of Atonement we see in Leviticus 16 and the Sacrifice of Jesus – from this passage and a few others
 - **Day of Atonement** – Aaron had to intercede for personal sin first (Lev 16:3,6,11)
 - **Jesus Sacrifice** – Jesus was sinless. He did not need someone to atone for him (2 Cor. 5:21)

 - **Day of Atonement** – Aaron had to rid himself of his priestly robes (Lev 16:4)
 - **Jesus Sacrifice** – Jesus came to earth in the likeness of a man – He took off His Heavenly attire and put on the flesh suit that you and I wear (Phil 2:6-8)

 - **Day of Atonement** – The veil – curtain – in the temple kept sinful people apart from God’s presence (Lev 16:12-13)
 - **Jesus Sacrifice** – Jesus sacrifice tore the veil – curtain – in the temple, opening God’s presence to all people covered by Jesus’ blood (Matt 27:15)

 - **Day of Atonement** – Sacrificial blood came between human’s imperfection and God’s perfection (Lev 16:14)
 - **Jesus Sacrifice** – Jesus’ sacrificial blood stands between imperfect people and perfect God – once for all (Heb 10:10)

 - **Day of Atonement** – The sins of the people were put on a goat, which symbolically became sin for the people (Lev 16:21)
 - **Jesus Sacrifice** – Jesus BECAME sin for all people (2 Cor 5:21)

 - **Day of Atonement** – The goat that bore the sins of the people was taken outside the camp (Lev 16:22)
 - **Jesus Sacrifice** – Jesus who bore the sins of all mankind was crucified outside the walls of Jerusalem (Hebrews 13:12)

- **Day of Atonement** – The bodies of the Bull and Goat used in the blood sacrifice were taken outside the camp and burned (Lev 16:27)
 - **Jesus Sacrifice** – The body of Jesus was laid in a tomb outside of the city walls (Gospels)
 - **Day of Atonement** – The person who took the scapegoat and the person who burned the bodies of the animals had to bathe before reentering the camp (Lev 16:26, 28)
 - **Jesus Sacrifice** – After three days Jesus rose from the dead having conquered sin, and returned to be seen again in Jerusalem (Gospels)
- How Jesus was crucified
 - The locations of the different stages of His crucifixion
 - The location of his burial
 - The fact that he appeared in Jerusalem after His resurrection
- None of these things happened simply because it is how or where things like this happened in 1st century Rome
 - They all happened exactly as they did because of what Jesus said in **Matthew 5:17**...
 - “Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them.
- **The atonement sacrifice of the Law provided only temporary atonement for sin and was insufficient to provide salvation**
 - **Jesus’ sacrifice provided eternal atonement for sin and provided salvation for all by paying in full the debt that separated us from God.**
- In the context in which you and I live – we have become very comfortable ranking and quantifying sin
 - Some sin such as bending the truth (lying), gossip, disrespecting our parents – we view as small sin - not that big a deal - because it’s just stuff that happens in our fallen world.
 - Others like getting drunk, using drugs, sleeping around, porn, stealing – we view as bigger
 - Then others like cheating on our spouse, sexual abuse, and murder – we view as huge
 - The reality is that all sin is rebellion against God
 - All sin is a defiance against His rule and is punishable by death
 - The scope and gruesomeness of the ritual of the Day of Atonement & the brutality of Jesus journey to the cross, should serve as a reminder of the seriousness of Sin
 - At the end of the day SIN is SIN – and ALL OF IT is a BIG DEAL
 - Doing all we can to eradicate all sin from our lives should be a BIG DEAL for all of us
 - If we get nothing else this morning – I hope we leave with a new determination...
 - Not to justify our sin

- Not to be comfortable in or with our sin

Conclusion:

- Jesus' love for you is unconditional
- God's plan for you is actually better than your plan
- The FEAR of God is the antidote to all other FEARS
- ALL SIN is a BIG DEAL