

How Jesus Processed Suffering

Luke 22:21-23

January 19, 2025

Well, the last time we were in the Gospel of Luke, we were joining the Lord and his apostles in the upper room, an intimate time of believing fellowship for the Twelve and Jesus, one of them, those 12, being false. And so when he departed, it was the Eleven and Jesus. And so those men, sharing that intimate believing fellowship. And our Lord's desire in this Upper Room Discourse, this time with his disciples, is to teach and prepare them for the very near future. Not only the near future, what would eventuate after his crucifixion, but then the far future of, really, what is what we call Christianity; how they would live in the Christian Church from then on.

Like to start by reading what we've already covered back in Luke 22:14 and following. You can follow along as I read. "When the hour had come, Jesus reclined at the table, and the apostles with him. And he said to them, 'I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. For I say to you, I

shall never again eat it until it is fulfilled in the Kingdom of God.' And when he had taken a cup and given thanks, he said, 'Take this and share it among yourselves. For I say to you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine from now on until the Kingdom of God comes.' When he had taken some bread and given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, 'This is my body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.' And in the same way he took the cup after they'd eaten, saying, 'This cup which is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood.'"

Luke covers the Passover meal and the institution of the Lord's Supper in this section right here. He's not precisely following a chronological account as he moves onward from here, verses 21-38, which is the rest of what is covered in the Upper Room Discourse. In fact, he doesn't cover everything in the Upper Room Discourse. We can compare John 13-17 and see that there's a whole lot more that Jesus taught and said on this occasion, and this evening. But Luke has a particular purpose in mind. He wants to start with this intimate fellowship meal, the one shared by the Eleven and the Lord Jesus himself; this intimate fellowship meal, this Communion meal, the Lord's

Supper, because it shows the theological basis for their fellowship. And from there, Luke goes on in verses 21-38 to cover what Jesus wants to instruct his men. These men of his fellowship, these men who share his table, this is what he wants them to know. This is Luke's purpose in writing, is to explain this to us, and unpack this for us.

Matthew, Mark, each have their purposes in writing and how they deal with the details and the facts of everything that happened on this night. And John also has his purpose in writing, and his intention. But this is Luke's. He covers first the Passover meal and the institution of the Lord's Supper as the theological basis for this new fellowship called the Church. The apostles at this point don't perceive it, but everything is about to change for them; radically change, practically change how they live their lives socially, politically, literally everything for them is going to change. Radically, politically, superficially, deeply, everything is gonna change. I mean, if the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ at the midpoint of all human history is going to reset the calendar to BC and AD, it's bound to cause some disruption for them as well in practical life.

This is why Jesus earnestly desired to eat this Passover with his disciples, and to do it before he suffered. He wanted to prepare them for his crucifixion. He wanted to do that so that he could show how that would bring a radical change, and introduce a, a brand new society, a new institution called The Church of Jesus Christ. This is something new. This is New Covenant participation, and it's creating a whole new covenant community. Members of this church, according to this ordinance of fellowship, would be joined together in partakers of the substitutionary atonement of Jesus Christ, partakers of his body and his blood, as Jesus gives the symbology for that in Luke 22:19-20. Members of this church would follow the Lord, enduring some measure of the suffering that he endured at the hands of sinners under the sovereign design of God, as we're gonna see in Luke 21, or, 22:21-23.

Members of this church would follow the Lord's pattern of self-sacrifice modeled first by its leaders in verses 24-27, the greatest of the leaders becoming as the youngest and becoming the servants of all. Members of this church, as we see in verses 28-30, are destined for greatness and honor in the Kingdom of

God, but not because they've earned or merited, merited that for themselves, as we see from their failures in verses 31-34.

Members of this church are gonna live out the faith, showing how to live a New Covenant life with holy wisdom in the midst of a hostile world, as we kinda see indicated in verses 35-38. That's just a survey of the things that we're gonna cover, the things that Jesus wants to teach us in this section, starting in verse 21, all the way through verse 38.

Added to these lessons that our Lord wanted to teach his men are those that are recorded for us in John's gospel, what's known as the Upper Room Discourse, John 13-17. All of this is to get his apostles ready for the church that they would be part of building; that, they were the foundation stones of, being guiding off of the chief cornerstone himself, Jesus Christ. He's preparing them for the suffering that they're gonna endure at the hands of sinners. He's preparing them for the glory to follow for all those who endure, faithful to the end. And this is why Jesus says, "When the hour had come," verse 14, as he's reclining at the table with his apostles and getting ready to eat, he says, "I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you men before I suffer." It's before the suffering that he

wanted to help his men interpret the suffering. He wanted to help them to understand how to process suffering so that they could understand God's goodness in suffering, so they could learn how to endure it, so they could walk faithfully to the end. Because there is nothing like suffering that upsets and brings anxiety and confusion and bewilderment.

Pain is its own kind of trial. Suffering is its own kinda trial, whether it's financial, whether it's physical, whether it's chronic pain, whether it's disease, illness. But it's particularly here, what Jesus is referring to in verses 21-23, it's relational suffering. And sometimes there is no deeper suffering than a relational suffering. The break of a friendship, the coolness or the coldness in a family member; even for some, the death of a family member, losing someone who's very dear to them, there is no coming back from that. There's no way to repair what's been broken.

Beloved, I don't know what you have suffered in your life as a Christian, what kind of pains, disappointments, sorrows you've endured for the sake of Christ, may still be enduring for

the sake of Christ or for the sake of righteousness, for a stand that you take that's unpopular. Maybe you've chosen to stand for the truth in a place where that is not rewarded at all, but punished. You've decided to keep a clear conscience before the Lord, knowing you're gonna answer to him, and render your life an account in stewardship to him.

And although I may not know, and others around you may not be able to relate; even though your most intimate friends, even your spouse and your family does not understand the suffering that you've experienced. Proverbs 14:10 says, "The heart knows its own bitterness," and the implication is there that others don't, but God knows it. Christ knows that suffering, that pain. He stands ready to minister to our sorrows by his Spirit and by his Word. And that is what we're gonna see this morning in this text: How Jesus processed suffering, how he processed his own grief, how he thought through the very deep pain that he felt in drinking the bitter cup. We want to learn from him. For after all, it was Jesus who endured the deepest pain. And it's the pain of betrayal, disloyalty, and deceit, and treachery that comes not from a known enemy, no, but it gets underneath the



armor. It's a knife stab from a close friend, the bitterest taste in the cup of sorrows that he drank for our sake.

Now we're gonna cover just three verses this morning, verses 21-23, and turn each of those verses into a point. Okay, so 21, 22, 23 each one its own point. First of all, the pain of betrayal. The pain of betrayal in verse 21. What we covered last time in Luke 22:14 and 20, as I just said, it ended with the institution of the Lord's Supper, what we know as the fellowship ordinance of the church. This is an ordinance that's shared by all those who know and love Christ Jesus. I'd like to say, "All those and only those who know and love Christ Jesus," but we know that's not true. There are people who enter into our fellowship and partake of the Lord's table and may not be Christians at all. There can be church members who don't really know the Lord Jesus Christ, and it's not gonna be known until they stand before God one day and say, Lord, Lord, did I not take Communion at Grace Church in Greeley? And he'll say, And your name again? "Depart from me, you worker of iniquity."

That is, that, for a pastor, for us elders, that's the deepest concern we have, is to make sure that we are clear enough Sunday by Sunday, week after week after week with the Gospel and the truth, that those who don't know him will come to see that they don't know him, and either walk away, or they'll embrace the truth and bow before Jesus Christ to receive his mercy and salvation. There are people in faithful churches all over the country, all over the world, who really do not know God, who really have not been converted, who really have not been regenerated by his grace, born again by the Spirit, joined to Christ, to love and worship and obey him and repent of their sins and walk in newness of life. And yet they take of the Communion table every single Sunday, or every single month, when it's offered.

On this occasion, this fellowship ordinance that Jesus institutes is shared by Jesus and the Eleven; Judas having departed. It's shared by those who know and love Christ. They're partakers of his life because they've been joined to him in his death. And right after Jesus introduced the symbol of the cup in verse 20, "This cup which is poured out for you," that is, the cup of suffering that Jesus is going to drink down to the dregs

for the sake of his people, "Luke connects that then to verse 21, as Jesus identifies the deepest pain of his suffering, which is the betrayal of a friend.

Remember, Jesus is the host of this gathering. He's officiating, as it were, the Passover meal. He's done all the preparations. He's, and, and, and you have an indication of that in verses 7 and following, Jesus sends Peter and John to go and get the Passover ready. So, go purchase the lamb, get the lamb butchered and prepared and its blood let out, and the blessings at the Temple. He sends them to do all that work. But we know that prior to that he had made arrangements with this house owner, this homeowner, to use his upper room. He is the host of this Passover celebration, officiating the meal. Even though it's in another man's home, he is the host, and he leads these men through the elements of the meal.

And as we saw last time, the, the apostles are acting in typical fashion. They're seemingly oblivious to the significance of this particular Passover meal on this night and this hour, just right before he's betrayed. They came to the meal that

night, found their places around the table, gettin' ready to eat. No one took up the task, it seems, of providing the most basic hospitality at a meal like this, which is to make sure everyone's feet are washed. They ate a meal like this, as we've said, in a reclined position. They're lying on dining couches on their left side, with their upper bodies toward the table, toward the food. Seems to make good sense to me. Right hand free to pick up the food and feed their mouths, lower bodies and feet extended behind them, away from the table. Still, their feet ought to be washed. The smell of unwashed feet could spoil a meal like this or any meal, distract from the pleasantness of the occasion. All about commemorating God's faithfulness at the Passover, and then that kinda waft of, like the processing plant comes through the town, and you smell that, and you're like, what in the world? These men walking around in the dirty streets of Jerusalem, same kinda thing. No one took up the task of providing the most basic hospitality, taking up the role of a servant to serve their fellow disciples, to serve the Lord himself. No, it's the host that has to do that. What's up with that?

Jesus uses the oversight, not as taking personal offense; he uses the oversight as an opportunity to teach his men. I love that about him, don't you? That he uses even their sins and their failures and their weaknesses and their stupidity and their pride, not as an occasion to feel personally offended, but just to set it aside and say, okay, let me teach 'em through this. Let me teach 'em through this. Parents, put a, put a pin in that one for later use, that your kids, whatever age they are, all different ages and stages, for them to show weakness and stupidity and pride and, and sin, but just use this as an opportunity to teach. Don't become personally offended, don't take it personally, just move through the moment. Use it as an opportunity to teach. That's what Jesus did, and we find that recorded in the beginning of John 13 verses 1-20, as he loved his men, John says, "to the uttermost."

And John tells us that Jesus knew during supper, he knew right then, that the devil had put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot to betray him. He also knew not only his betrayer, now, how he was gonna be handed over, and how he's gonna go out. He knew that at the end of this, the father has given all things into his hands, and that he'd come forth from God, and was going

back to God. So he gets it. He is not worried about the betrayer. He's not even worried ultimately about the cross. He's come forth from God. He's going back to God. This has a good and glorious end. Full awareness of his deity, of his humanity, of the successful completion of his messianic mission which is nearly accomplished. And intending to love His men to the uttermost, "Jesus got up from supper," John 13 says, "laid aside his garments, and taking a towel, he tied it around himself. Then he poured water into the wash basin, began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel with which he had tied around himself." He's preparing them all, including Judas Iscariot at this point, he's preparing them to partake of the meal that he's prepared for them.

As we've said, four cups were shared of the Passover meal, patterned after the four blessings that're outlined in Exodus 6:6-7: the Cup of Sanctification, Cup of Deliverance, Cup of Redemption, Cup of Praise. And in this meal, he recasts the remembrance of Passover, as we see in verses 17-18, he recasts it as an expectation of hope for the future. He essentially takes a Nazarite vow, says "I'm not gonna drink of the fruit of the vine until we do this again together in my Father's

Kingdom.” So he's got hope. He knows what's coming. He knows the glory to follow. He knows the Kingdom is coming, that God's will is going to descend and be done on earth just as it is in heaven. His love for his friends, his hope for the future, all this secured the fellowship that has been symbolized in the bread and the cup. Bread of Remembrance, of his body given for them, and cup of the suffering poured out for them. This cup of suffering poured out, that's ratified by his blood, the ultimate im, indication and symbol of his suffering as he dies for them. That's the blood that ratified the New Covenant and secured its promises.

And so now, as we come to verse 21, we see that Luke interrupts the flow of this narrative, of this fellowship, of this, this, this joy of Jesus with his men, with his true disciples. Luke, you don't see it as well in the English; you just see it kind of run, the paragraph just runs together here, but it's loud and clear in the original Greek, Luke puts a sharp break after Jesus institutes the Lord's Supper. And using Jesus' own words, he puts a sharp break there, using a, a strong adversitive conjunction followed by an exclamatory particle. So it reads, “But behold,” and I'm saying it loudly like that

because you need to hear three or four exclamation marks and surprise emojis, or however you put emphasis in your texts or emails or whatever you wanna do, you need to put that right there after those words in verse 21, "But behold".

If you look back to verse 19, get a running start, we see Jesus' emphasis on union and communion, and on the closeness, the intimacy of fellowship. He breaks one bread, and then passes that around so that each one of them can have, can b, can break a piece off of it; one bread that they share. He lifts up one cup, and then passes that around so that each one can drink from the single cup. All this indicating a unity and union and communion and oneness. Fellowship. In each explanation, first of the bread, then of the cup, Jesus says, "This bread is my body," verse 19, "which is given for you." And then, it so, "For you" being "on your behalf," *huper humon*, "on your behalf." Then in verse 20, "This cup is poured out for you," again, "on your behalf," for your sake.

Then in verse 21, "But behold," that is to say, "There's one for whom my body is not this bread. There is one for whom my

cup was not poured out. That is the hand of the one betraying me." That verb there, "the one betraying me," it's a present tense participle. And the present tense there, by that present tense, Jesus is indicating this is an ongoing action here. It's, this is currently happening. He is currently betraying me. As we go back to chapter 22 verses 1-6, we see he's already plotted it before he even comes into the upper room. He's just trying to think about, when do I spring the trap? How do I get out of here and go inform my guys and bring 'em back? This betrayal is ongoing. It's in Judas's mind. It's an ongoing action; he is betraying me, even though the betraying hand has shared our table. Jesus is saying, even though he's feigned fellowship with us, even though he's faked friendship with me, as it turns out, he's not a friend. He's a false friend. He's the very worst of enemies.

And so, as one commentator puts it, we go from the meaning of Jesus' death in verses 19-20, and he passes into the manner of it in verses 21 and following. We go from the meaning of it to the manner of it. Luke takes us to the most immediate, pressing matter that's troubling these men at this point, namely, What? Betrayal? Hand of the one betraying you? Whuh,

whuh, whuh, whuh, what did, what did he just say? Adding insult here, as I've already alluded to, it's William Hendrickson, the commentator who says, "Jesus himself here is the host. All the others were eating his food." He goes on and says this, "That very fact, especially in the Near East, a region where accepting someone's hospitality and then injuring him was considered most reprehensible. And that should have tied the hands of all."

In an interview with Sean Langan, who's a British journalist and documentary filmmaker, Sean Langan was captured by the Taliban and taken into the Peshawar prov, province of Pakistan, and held in a dark room for months, and wondering if he would live or die. They kept threatening him with a gun to his head, shooting AK rounds in the room that he was in. They threatened to cut off his head. He has children, two boys back home in Britain, a wife. Mr. Hangan, Langan was wondering every single day if he'd live or die. He said he made a human connection, though, with the Pashtun owner of the home that the Taliban used to hold him. In fact, one of his two sons is named Gabriel; Gabriel being the one who revealed the Quran in, in Muslim, you know, false religion, that's what they believe. And so this homeowner paused. "Your son's named Gabriel." All of a

sudden there's a human connection. This man isn't just an enemy. He's a human being. He's a father. He's got children like I do.

This brought Mr. Langan under the hospitality of that man, who was not Taliban. Because of hospitality customs, known as Pashtuwan, uh, Pashtunwali, I'm probably pronouncing that incorrectly, but because of Pashtunwali, though he was a prisoner, he came under that man's protection. Even the Taliban knew, because of hospitality customs, they were duty-bound, according to this law and custom, not to touch this man. He was eventually released, so that I could watch the interview. I just want to make sure you knew that part of it, so I don't leave you hanging. Judas has violated a rather long standing tradition of hospitality custom, wouldn't you say? One that even the Taliban, even a, ev, evil as they are, but even the Taliban respects hospitality customs to this very day; those customs that have been in the mih, Middle East for millennia. And Judas doesn't have the good sense, or the care, or the love, in fact, what he has in his heart toward Jesus, though he's been with him for three years, what he has in his heart toward Jesus, is resentment and hatred and bitterness, he's faked friendship on the face. He's been anything but.

Hendrickson goes on to say, "It should have made it impossible for any of the Twelve," this hospitality custom, "should have made it impossible for any of the Twelve to take action against their host. And in addition to what Jesus did for the Twelve this night, and how many, in fact very many other favors had not the Lord bestowed on them, including Judas, during all these months of their association with Him?" End Quote. So how is it that this man, Judas Iscariot, one of the most respected and trusted of the apostles, he sat at Jesus' left at this meal, in the place of honor, in the seat of honor at the Passover in the upper room. Judas was entrusted with the money bag for the, all the apostles. He's trusted as their treasurer. In fact, in verse 23, you can see that they begin to argue among themselves which one of them it might be who was gonna do this thing. They're confused. What? Judas? They could not entertain Judas.

Mark 14:18 we read that, "as they were reclining at the table and eating, Jesus said, 'Truly, I say to you that one of you will betray me, the one who is eating with me.' And they began to be grieved." Matthew says they were "deeply grieved."

They began to say to him, one by one, "Surely not I, surely not I." Listen to their sensitive consciences. "Sh, Lord, me? Is it, is it me?" In other words, the rest of the apostles are incredulous. They're totally caught off guard by this revelation. They cannot for the life of them figure out who could do such a thing, especially as he is one of their small number. I mean one of the inner circle, the intimate company of the twelve apostles.

And Jesus told them in Matthew 26:24, "Son of Man is to go, just as it is written of him. But woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed. It would have been good for," him, "that man if he had not been born." Remarkably, right after hearing that warning, which is really a gracious word spoken in the presence of his betrayer, Judas. It's a warning; knowing his betrayer is sitting before him. It's a warning to him, like, snap out of it, Judas. But Matthew 26:25 says, "Judas, who was betraying him, answered and said, 'Oh, surely it is not I, Rabbi.'" He plays like all the others play around him. He parrots their conscience, though he doesn't share their conscience. Jesus said to him, "You have said it yourself."

Gives insight, doesn't it, into the dark soul of Judas Iscariot? He looks straight into the Savior's eyes, lies to his face. Makes your blood boil, go cold, doesn't it? Never underestimate the capacity of the sinful heart to commit such terrible, terrible sin, to excuse and minimize sin, to tell a bold-faced lie about it straight to your face and then justify himself or herself, and then to find a way to blame and condemn the righteous. Never underestimate the power of sin in a sinner's heart. How is it that Judas could fool them all? What does this say about the legitimacy of Jesus in his Messiahship? I mean, Jesus is the one who chose him, isn't he? What about the future of this fellowship, the ongoing vulnerability that they're gonna have to feeling like they're gonna be infiltrated at any time by the false. They're susceptible to embracing as friends those who are not true friends? Are they that gullible? What about having to face, yet again, the pain of this kind of betrayal? Makes the mind anxious, worried, fearful, gun shy.

And this brings us to a second point. I think our Lord wants his men to see, and Luke and the Holy Spirit wants us to see. Helps us see more clearly how Jesus processed his suffering, how he processed the deepest suffering, which is the

pain of betrayal. Number two: The purpose of betrayal. The purpose of betrayal. I'm not talking about the purpose of betrayal for the man Judas Iscariot. I mean his purpose, what, financial prestige, fame, you know, preparing for his future, whatever. That's not what we're talking about here. I'm talking about, what is God's purpose in betrayal? Jesus processed the pain of this betrayal by his friend, Judas, by affirming two truths in verse 22. And these two truths may seem paradoxical, may seem contradictory at first glance, but they are indeed entirely consistent with each other. On the one hand, Jesus affirms the absolute sovereignty of God, and on the other, he affirms the full responsibility of man. If you want to shorthand that, put divine sovereignty, human responsibility. Divine sovereignty, human responsibility.

Yes, verse 21, he sees "the hand of the one betraying me is with me on the table." He knows John 13:18 that "The Scripture must be fulfilled;" that is, the Scripture that says, "He who eats my bread has lifted up his heel against me." That comes from Psalm 41:5, where David is the author, and David says in, in a sense of pain and sorrow, of knowing this kind of betrayal, he understands what it means to be betrayed by false friends,

and to be condemned by them, and maligned by them, and misrepresented by them. He writes this in Psalm 41, "My enemies speak maliciously about me. 'When will he die and be forgotten?' When one of them comes to visit, he speaks deceitfully. He stores up evil in his heart," like, he's getting dirt on me. "Then he goes out and he talks." In modern day, we'd say, He records my conversations and then he goes and plays them for other people, completely out of context, and tries to make me look as bad as possible. David says, "All who hate me whisper together about me, and they plan to harm me. 'Lethal poison has been poured into him and he won't rise again from where he lies.' Even my friend," David says, "in whom I trusted, the one who ate my bread, he's raised his heel against me."

So of course, Jesus quoting from Psalm 41, of course this hurts him as a man. There's a real sadness in our Lord's words in Luke 22:48 when he says, "Judas," and in the garden of the Gethsemane, he's just prayed, "Judas, are you betraying the Son of man with a kiss?" That is, are you gonna, you really gonna, gonna, g do this? You gonna go through with this? Are you gonna feign friendship while you stab me in the back and hand me over to death? Judas, we shared food together. We shared

experiences together. We shared life together. Would you do this to me, your friend?

Yeah, there's pain, but how did Jesus handle it? What did his men fail to learn in the moment that they needed to learn later for life? What is it that we need to learn from how Jesus processed his suffering? Look at verse 22. "For indeed, the Son of Man is going as it has been determined, but woe to that man by whom he is betrayed." There it is, twin truths: divine sovereignty, human responsibility; those two truths by which we can weather any storm, and deal with any disappointment, and nurse every wound and every sorrow, and heal every sting, and pass any trial that is sent by the good, loving, wise hand of our God.

The verb translated there, as it has been determined, *horizo*, it's where we get our word for horizon. Horizon, a boundary line, right? The word means to establish a boundary or a framework, as A.T. Robertson says, "It's to limit or define or mark off a border, but also to do that through a deliberate decision." That's the idea in this word *horizo*. And in this

context, and in really all the contexts where you, Luke uses this verb as he's kinda talking about these things, it refers to making a definite plan, appointing, deciding, or determining. But in theological shorthand it refers to the divine decree. It refers to what God has foreordained from before the foundation of the world.

Acts 2:23, "Christ was delivered up by the predetermined plan," there's the word, "and foreknowledge of God." Acts 10:42 another of Luke's writing, "Christ has been appointed by God as the judge of the living and the dead." Appointed. Decreed. Acts 17:26, "God made from one man every nation, having determined," there it is, *horizo*, "having determined their appointed times and the boundaries of their habitation." Acts 17:31, "God has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness through a man whom he has *horizo*," appointed, decreed, "having furnished proof to all men by raising him from the dead." Jesus can handle the disappointment and the sorrow and suffering of Judas Iscariot, though Judas is one of his disciples, though chosen for an even higher and special privilege to be named as one of the Lord's apostles. Jesus mitigated the pain of that

betrayal, by falling back on the goodness and the wisdom of God in his perfect and sovereign will.

And yet the pain remains. It still hurts, and we hear the cry of pity and sorrow when he says, "But woe to that man by whom he's betrayed." That's not a triumphant woe. It's not calloused, hard-hearted at all. The woe is mournful, pained, deeply saddened by the great height from which Judas Iscariot has fallen to the depths where he is in league with Satan himself. So close in proximity to the truth, seeing all the miracles, eating a miraculous fish and bread lunch, even being granted, himself, the gift of wielding divine power to heal and cast out demons along with the other apostles, now only to depart in this terrible betrayal. How tragic. A truer and sadder word could not have been spoken about Judas Iscariot than this, "For indeed the Son of Man is going as it has been determined. But woe to that man by whom he is betrayed."

So listen, if God has determined this divine sovereignty, why is Judas blamed? Human responsibility? What makes him responsible? I mean didn't Jesus choose him? Wouldn't it be

Jesus' fault? How can Judas be held responsible for this treachery? Can't we get him off the hook? No, because Judas had every reason not to betray him. He had every evidence that Jesus is righteous, and sinless, and perfect, and worthy of worship and praise. He had every reason, to the contrary, to why he should not betray this man into the hands of evil men. And he did it anyway. He used his will. He chose according to his nature to do what is evil. As we've said before, the Jewish leaders, Judas Iscariot, all these are the proximate causes of Jesus' suffering and death. They're not the ultimate cause; they're the proximate causes. The ultimate cause of all things that come to pass is God. He brings everything, even the evil that men plan and do, he brings everything into the conformity to his perfect will, to accomplish all that he has decreed.

The go-to text if you'd like to see this is in Acts 2:23. This is what illustrates it perfectly. Acts 2:23, where Peter says, and he's preaching the gospel to the Jews at Pentecost, and he says, "This Jesus was delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God. And yet," remember, he's evangelizing, "and yet you nailed him to a cross by the hands of lawless men and put him to death." Try to factor that into your

evangelism. Don't try to be liked by people. Try to be truthful with people. Peter's telling his own people, lookin' at 'em eyeball to eyeball, you're sinners. You've committed a grave sin. You've handed over the Lord of Life to death. Do you see what wickedness you've done? Do you see your need for salvation, to be rescued from the hand of God? Anyway, that's another sermon for another time on evangelism. This one says, is about how we understand ultimate, proximate and immediate causes. Peter cites God as the ultimate cause of the crucifixion. God takes ownership, doesn't he? He accepts full responsibility, personal responsibility, as an outworking of his free, uncoerced choice, the predetermined plan, the foreknowledge of God. Again, that's the same verb that Jesus uses in Luke two 22:22, "The Son of Man is going as it has been determined." Decreed. *Horizo*.

The efficient cause of Jesus' crucifixion, Peter cites that in Acts 2:23 as, "The hands of lawless men." Whose hands are those? Those are the Roman soldiers who literally use their hands to nail Jesus' hands and his feet to the cross beams, who erected the cross in its stand, and put him there. They literally did that. These men may or may not have been guilty for their actions, because part of their job involved working

the execution detail. Not one that I'd personally want to work as a soldier, but if I'm assigned to work the execution detail, I'm gonna work the execution detail. I'm just gonna accept the judgement of the judge who handed this person over, and I'm gonna pull the lever, or whatever I have to do. God knows whether each one of these soldiers is guilty or not guilty. Depends on what each soldier knows in his heart.

Paul says in Romans 2:14, "For when Gentiles who do not have the law naturally do the things of the law, these, not having law, are a law to themselves, in that they demonstrate the work of the law written on their hearts, their conscience bearing witness and their thoughts ultimately accusing or else defending them, on the day when," according to my gospel, "God will judge the secrets of men through Christ Jesus." These soldiers, nailing Jesus' hands and feet on the cross, particularly those ones who mocked him, spat on him, beat him, slapped him in the face with his, with a hood on him, and slapped him in the face, said, "Prophecy, who hit you?" God's gonna judge all their secrets. He knows the truth. He's got knowledge of the truth. He knows who is adhered or obeyed to the truth by the testimony of their conscience, their conscience

ultimately accusing or excusing them on the day when God judges their secrets. Only God knows for sure. He's gonna bring everyone to account before his perfect justice.

So those are the efficient causes, God being the ultimate cause, these Roman soldiers the efficient cause. Peter, though, lays the blame for crucifying Christ not in the ultimate cause, God, not in the efficient cause, the Roman soldiers who nailed his hands and his feet. He lays the blame on the proximate causes, those who acted in full knowledge, those who were informed, those who knew exactly what it was that they were doing. Peter indicts his fellow Jews as if it was, they themselves, and not the Roman soldiers who hammered the nails. You, you nailed him to a cross. You nailed him to a cross. They used the hands of lawless men. It was as if the Jews took the hands of the Roman soldiers, hammer in hand, and they took their hands and nailed them. This is the category that Judas Iscariot is in. He is a proximate cause of Jesus's betrayal. He is the one who kicked off a chain of events, as Jesus said in Luke 9:44, "For the Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men." Judas did that. He knew what he was doing, and so, yeah, woe to him.

But again, it was God who chose to crucify his son as the Lamb of God, slain from before the foundation of the world, Revelation 13:8. God is the one who caused the iniquity of his people to fall upon Christ, Isaiah 53:5. According to Isaiah 53:10, he was pleased; God was pleased to crush him as an atoning sacrifice. And so though God is the ultimate cause of the crucifixion, he is the one who has done it out of good intent, out of, for wise and perfect ends to accomplish all his glory, to redeem all of his people. Everything that God has done in, in planning this and determining this and decreeing this is righteous. Though God is the ultimate cause of the crucifixion, starting way back in the murderous intent of the Jewish leadership, uniting then in purpose, in common purpose with Judas and his betrayal; all the culpability morally, ethically sinnly is with the proximate causes like Judas Iscariot. Perfect, good, all-wise God bears no guilt for the sins men committed in crucifying the innocent Son of God.

Jesus, in choosing Judas for the twelve apostles, bears no culpability for Judas's actions. His actions are his own, his culpability is his own. Jesus chose him for good and righteous

intent. It was God's intention, determined in his decree before time began, to slay his one and only son, so sinners could be reconciled to him. And that is a good, righteous, gracious intention in which there is not a shred of wrongdoing, no ill intent, no unrighteous thought.

Now, what happens when we don't embrace these twin truths of the absolute sovereignty of God on the one hand, and the full responsibility of man on the other hand? What happens when we don't embrace these twin truths that Jesus himself held to? Well then we're left in the state of these apostles in verse 23, which takes us to a third point in our outline: The perplexity of betrayal. The perplexity of betrayal. Now, verse 23 says, "They began to argue among themselves which one of them it might be." Truth is, this started not as an argument, but as an intense discussion. The verb that's used there, *syzeteo*. It joins *zeteo*, which is a word that means to seek or to look for or try to find, and it joins that verb with the prefix *syn-*, which means together. So they're trying to seek together, look for together, trying to find out together. The idea is these apostles are starting to engage in serious conversation about this whole issue of betrayal. What's going on here? Who's gonna

do this? Surely not I Lord, surely not he. They, they want to get to the bottom of this. So they're discussing this dilemma.

But because of the emotion and grief, without really the understanding that Jesus has, easy to see how the discussion became a bit heated, turned into a debate, then a dispute, then an all-out argument is what we see showing up at verse 24, interestingly, about who's the greatest, who's the one who's really, really far from being a betrayer because he's great. The point though, here, not so much about any contention among these men, but rather about how puzzled they were, how perplexed they are, how bewildered. Well, that's what sin does in a fellowship, doesn't it? It perplexes, bewilders, troubles, makes anxious, causes fear, anxiety. What they didn't understand, what they hadn't been able to process because they didn't own Jesus' theology well enough to really think it through, caused great anxiety in their hearts; feelings of fear and doubt, a sense of foreboding about the future and not the hope that Jesus wanted to pervade this, this whole Passover institution of the Lord's Supper time together. It oughta been about hope. It turned into fear and anxiety, foreboding.

Had they listened carefully to what Jesus said in verse 22, had they learned from him, had they affirmed those twin truths of divine sah, sovereignty and human responsibility, there'd be no reason to write verse 23. It wouldn't exist. They would've embraced what we just read in verse 22. They would've seen how Jesus handled Judas' betrayal. They would've learned from how he handled the problem of false fellowship, and their hearts would've been at rest. Their minds would've been at peace. But they didn't, and so they didn't enjoy that peace and rest and hope.

Believe me folks, this is the same problem that's plagued the church ever since, which is why Jesus continued to try to prepare his men. It's later that same night, as they're walking out to the Garden of Gethsemane, John 15:4 says that Jesus told them, "Abide in me," you guys. "Abide in me." Stick with me, continue in me, remain in me. The verb *meno*, abide in me, stay with me, and I in you. I'm there, I'm all in, Jesus says, "but you abide in me." Jesus says that later that same night, as they're walking down to the Garden of G'scemane, Gethsemane, and he says, "If you do abide in me and I in you, listen, here's what's gonna happen. You're going to bear much fruit, verse 8,

John 15, "and you're gonna prove to be my disciples." It's by the fruit bearing, abundant fruit bearing, that you prove to be my disciples. Very little fruit, very little proof you're a disciple.

And he's got a category for that in John 15:6, because he also told them there would be branches that appear to be connected to him, but they don't, in fact, have any sign of a vital, living connection at all. They're fruitless branches, false disciples. He says in John 15:6, "If anyone does not abide in me, he's thrown away as a branch. It dries up, they gather them, they cast them into the fire, and they're burned." All those burned branches, they once looked like they belonged on the vine. Judas Iscariot, case in point, is just such a branch.

Listen, it's not that it doesn't hurt when Judas leaves the room, when he walks away, when he joins the side of Jesus' opponents. It's just that Jesus has a category for Judas Iscariot. His theology has taught him about all those who are not truly his disciples. And fundamentally, at the bottom of this, Jesus trusted the goodness and the wisdom of his father,

the one who orders all things, even bad things, even evil things, to accomplish all his purposes, to accomplish all his good pleasure. Jesus gets that. He lives by that. He's consistent with that. He's at peace and rest, even in the midst of trouble. Those who fail to embrace what Jesus embraced, to think as he thought, to reason as he reasoned, are left just as these eleven disciples are left, at this point anyway, left this way at this point, though later on they correct it, later on they learn. But here they're perplexed, anxious, confused, vulnerable to doubt, susceptible to falling into temptation and that is, by the way, going to happen shortly, as "I strike the shepherd and the sheep scatter."

Some lessons to learn for us. First, you just wanna jot these down, I got, think, five of them. Five lessons. Lessons to learn: First, embrace the twin truths of divine sovereignty and human responsibility. I mean, if for no other reason, embrace them because Jesus did. But, but further, admit that learning sound theology helps us and others, as we help others, helps us to endure suffering well, to process grief righteously, to learn to trust God in the process of our processing. So first, embrace those twin truths.

Second lesson to learn: When you go through suffering, or when you're helping others go through suffering, people need more than a kind word and a warm hug. They need to know, nothin' against kind words and warm hugs. Just keep 'em coming. But they need to know God, don't they? The kind word needs to be a theological word. There needs to be a theology and a doctrine to understand who God is and what he's like. Deep within the sin nature, there is a proclivity to distrust God, to question him, doubt him, to entertain audacious ideas about calling God to account. I mean, look, if that didn't work out for righteous Job, it's not gonna fly with the likes of us. Can't condemn God as if he's done wrong. It's the abiding presence of evil in the world, a world that's governed by an all-good, all-powerful God. And sinful men heap scorn on such a God who permits evil to exist. He's either not all-good because he allows evil, or he's not all-powerful because he cannot prevent evil from happening. And sinful men scorn him like that all the time.

What they fail to realize, indeed, what sinners refuse to recognize, what they, the concept that they refuse to admit, refuse to confess, is that this all-good, all-powerful God, he

is also, and at the same time, all-wise. He's infinitely wise. He's perfectly wise. And so as we see in Luke 22:22, and as we learn from Acts 2:23, the abiding presence and, of evil in the world is not evidence that God lacks goodness, or that he lacks any power, it means he has a good reason for evil to pervade and continue. He's wisely using sin and evil in the outworking of his good and wise and perfect plan. So the question at this point is, will you bow the knee and trust him, knowing he's wise and he's got things figured out, that you in your finiteness cannot figure out? Will you just trust that he's bigger than you, smarter than you, more powerful than you? Or will you refuse in stubborn pride? So first, embrace those twin truths: divine sovereignty, human responsibility.

Second, when you do go through suffering, when you're helping others through suffering, go beyond the kind word, warm hug or the, really, a very legitimate ministry of just being there with somebody and not saying a word. That's very legitimate. But at some point people are gonna need words, and they're gonna need words of doctrine, sound theology, truth. God is all-powerful, all-good, he's all-wise. Factor that into your thinking.

Third: Put the blame for pain, suffering, betrayal, and all grief where it truly belongs, on the sinfulness of mankind. How dare anyone should blame God for the presence of sin and evil in the world? Isn't the Bible abundantly clear about where sin began? So I guess the question is, do you believe the Bible? Because it tells us in Genesis 3 exactly where sin came from. There is sin and evil. The consequence of sin and evil is pain, sorrow, sadness, grief, because mankind chose to distrust God, rebel against his goodness and his wisdom, disobey his very clear commands. God is all-good, he's all-powerful, he's all-wise, so of course he hates evil. But evil exists and continues because God has a good and, wide, wise reason for it in his plan. And as we can see, it's Judas Iscariot conspiring with the chief priests and Jewish elders to hand Jesus over to death. And that death was a death for our sins. His suffering for our sins, for our sake, where he paid that penalty for us, full on the Cross.

Which just brings us to another lesson. Fourth: Humble yourself. Humble yourself. Put your faith in Jesus Christ. Trust that his substitutionary atonement on the c, on the cross is the



all-sufficient payment to forgive all your sins. Repent of all your sins. Put your faith in Christ as your Savior and then follow him, worshiping him as your wise and loving Lord. Obey him, trust him.

And then finally, fifth: Come to Jesus Christ. Come often to him, come daily, come even to him hour by hour, and minute by minute, if need be, to partake of his high priestly ministry. The writer to the Hebrews encourages us this way. He says, "Since then we have a great high priest who's passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who's been tempted in all things as we are, and yet without sin. Let us therefore draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy, and may find grace to help in time of need." So, Christian, come partake of his high priestly ministry to you.

Non-Christian, these promises are held out for you too, if you'll simply repent and believe, which you can do right now in your seat, just between you and God doing business. Beloved,

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this is the one through whom God administers his mercy and compassion. This is the one through whom God shows us sympathy in our sorrows and sadnesses. After all, Jesus is called a man of sorrows, and he's acquainted with grief. He's acquainted with all grief, deep grief, deep sorrow, and he's acquainted with yours, and he's acquainted with mine. Come to him. Come to him as your great High Priest. The deepest griefs are the relational griefs, the bitterest portion of his cup of suffering. If he knew the pain of a friend who betrayed him, well, he can sympathize with you, my friend. He can turn you away from sinful processing to help you suffer righteously, giving you grace for help in your time of need.