

Matthew 26:57-75
Feilding Baptist
22.2.26

Call to Worship

Welcome to worship with Feilding Baptist Church!

This week I've taken by the great variety of people who follow Jesus.

Look at the Jesus' selection of the disciples - Jesus could have gone to the temple and done interviews with the religious elite. Instead, Jesus went into the countryside and selected, ordinary people.

What does this tell us? Ordinary people are who God relies on. We don't need PhD's to do God's work. God will get what God wants, through us. It's good news.

This great diversity of people are what John sees in his vision in Revelation. And all together they worship;
Revelation 7:9-12

9 After this I looked, and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. 10 And they cried out in a loud voice:

'Salvation belongs to our God,
who sits on the throne,
and to the Lamb.'

11 All the angels were standing round the throne and round the elders and the four living creatures. They fell down on their faces before the throne and worshipped God, 12 saying:

'Amen!
Praise and glory
and wisdom and thanks and honour
and power and strength
be to our God for ever and ever.
Amen!'

See in here a great multitude, huge diversity, visible worship, and victory, and protection. What a scene! What hope!

Father God, thank you for the magnificence of this view, this picture. Thank you for the hope of this time when the followers of Jesus from around the world gather and worship. There is no bickering over beliefs, or the way we do church, all are simply grateful and delighting in Jesus. May we all give praise and glory, thanks and honour as we worship this morning. Thank you for Jesus, for His life given for us.

Holy Spirit, please bless us, please bless this time, and this space, in Jesus' mighty name we pray. Amen.

Message - Get the Facts!

Despite the sin, evil, and injustice, these events point to the promised land of hope, forgiveness, the Holy Spirit, and life in all its fullness.

Have you ever hated someone so much, you wished they were dead? Maybe you still do? The Prodigal Son asked for the inheritance of his parents, he wished they were dead. Children can scream at their parents, I hate you! Like when they are told to go to bed instead of watching the Dukes of Hazzard. I was more into Bodie and Doyle of The Professionals. That would have boiled my hate.

Rugby referees get death threats. The English one that contributed to an All Black loss retired, such were the consistent threats to his life. At the start of the movie Good Bye Pork Pie, Gerry Austin hopes that Leslie Morris' dog dies. I remember my father saying, 'I hope they lose everything', after some incident of conspired injustice.

It's too easy to wish the worst on people. But to wish them dead, that's another level. And then to work carrying out their death, that's another level again. And this is what happens with Jesus. Such was the hatred. And the bizarre thing is, they have time to do this before Passover, when there are millions of visitors in the city! I know what Easter and Christmas are like! How did these guys have the time and head space to do what we read about today?

There are two parts to our reading, the trial of Jesus, and the trial of Peter. Only an outside wall separates them. What they are going through is happening at the same time. Actually, it's not really a trial for Jesus. He's been arrested, and now they've realised, heck, we haven't got anything on this guy. There is no charge! That's what this scene is about.

Let's read.

Matthew 26:57-75 (NIV - UK)
Jesus before the Sanhedrin

57 Those who had arrested Jesus took him to Caiaphas the high priest, where the teachers of the law and the elders had assembled. 58 But Peter followed him at a distance, right up to the courtyard of the high priest. He entered and sat down with the guards to see the outcome.

59 The chief priests and the whole Sanhedrin were looking for false evidence against Jesus so that they could put him to death. 60 But they did not find any, though many false witnesses came forward.

Finally two came forward 61 and declared, 'This fellow said, "I am able to destroy the temple of God and rebuild it in three days."' "

62 Then the high priest stood up and said to Jesus, 'Are you not going to answer? What is this testimony that these men are bringing against you?' 63 But Jesus remained silent.

The high priest said to him, 'I charge you under oath by the living God: Tell us if you are the Messiah, the Son of God.'

64 'You have said so,' Jesus replied. 'But I say to all of you: from now on you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven.' [a]

65 Then the high priest tore his clothes and said, 'He has spoken blasphemy! Why do we need any more witnesses? Look, now you have heard the blasphemy. 66 What do you think?'

'He is worthy of death,' they answered.

67 Then they spat in his face and struck him with their fists. Others slapped him 68 and said, 'Prophecy to us, Messiah. Who hit you?'

Peter disowns Jesus

69 Now Peter was sitting out in the courtyard, and a servant-girl came to him. 'You also were with Jesus of Galilee,' she said.

70 But he denied it before them all. 'I don't know what you're talking about,' he said.

71 Then he went out to the gateway, where another servant-girl saw him and said to the people there, 'This fellow was with Jesus of Nazareth.'

72 He denied it again, with an oath: 'I don't know the man!'

73 After a little while, those standing there went up to Peter and said, 'Surely you are one of them; your accent gives you away.'

74 Then he began to call down curses, and he swore to them, 'I don't know the man!'

Immediately a cock crowed. 75 Then Peter remembered the word Jesus had spoken: 'Before the cock crows, you will disown me three times.' And he went outside and wept bitterly.

Footnotes

Matthew 26:64 See Psalm 110:1; Daniel 7:13.

It's religious, and it's political. Politics have to be brought into it, because Jesus can't be executed by the Sanhedrin (Bock, 371). Only the Romans can do that. So they had to make it look like Jesus was a challenge to Caesar, trying to usurp Caesar. And overthrow the Temple. This got the Romans interested. They couldn't have that.

But, much like the news this week of the Palmerston North Hospital Emergency Department upgrade, there's a bit more going on behind the scenes. It's great that ED is getting an upgrade. But the real problem is, there are not enough beds in the hospital to cope with the people coming into ED. You can make ED as big as you like, it won't solve the problem. Only a new hospital will do that.

These verses we can skim over, not just because they are so familiar, we get what is going on. But some translations will have several footnotes, links to the Old Testament, that show that there is far more here, far more going on behind the scenes. And yes, it is utterly tragic, and appalling, and unjust. But if we look at the links to the Old Testament, there is an awful lot of hope.

By going back to these references and looking around, see what you find. They are revealing:

v60	two witnesses	Deuteronomy 19:15
v63	place you under oath	Leviticus 5:1
v64	at the right hand	Psalms 110:1
v64	coming on the clouds	Daniel 7:13
v65	tore his robes	Numbers 14:6
v66	deserves death	Leviticus 24:16
v67	spit in His face, beat Him	Isaiah 50:6

v60 two witnesses Deuteronomy 19:15

Well, when it comes to any trial, it is helpful to hear both sides of the story. Not here. But according to Deuteronomy 19:15 one witness is not enough to convict anyone. So it was very helpful to the chief priests that two witnesses could finally agree on their evidence, true or otherwise.

If you read on two more verses in Deuteronomy you'll see that verse 17 tells us that the two witnesses must stand before the Lord, priests, and judges. Which is what they were doing! Jesus as Lord. The judges are instructed in v18 to make a thorough investigation, and if the witness proves to be a liar, you are to purge the evil from among you. They must die. Lying witnesses, which is what the chief priests were hoping for, was a capital offence.

And also very interesting that verse 21 states that you are to show no pity; it is life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot. Whose life has Jesus taken? Oh, Jesus has given life. He has restored lives, hands and feet and eyes, and probably teeth! Jesus has taken none of these.

Ah, but for all that we've taken, all the wrong we have done, He dies. That we might live.

v63 place you under oath Leviticus 5:1

Oh, verse 63, being placed under oath. It was regarded as sin not to speak up, Leviticus 5:1. But the whole verse was about setting people free, and clearing a person's name. If you read the verses either side, you'll see that this is about unintentional sin. This is about how to be released from guilt and forgiven. Instead, Jesus is being condemned, yet, as the true Priest (4:27), makes atonement in His blood, for the wrongs of humanity.

v64 at the right hand Psalms 110:1

So being required to speak, Caiaphas asks, so are you really the Messiah, the Son of God? The reply that Jesus gives not only confirms that, but goes much further. The seven verse Psalm 110 that links to here is striking;

Psalm 110

Of David. A psalm.

1 The Lord says to my lord:[a]

'Sit at my right hand
until I make your enemies
a footstool for your feet.'

2 The Lord will extend your mighty sceptre from Zion, saying,
'Rule in the midst of your enemies!'

4 The Lord has sworn
and will not change his mind:

'You are a priest for ever,
in the order of Melchizedek.'

v64 coming on the clouds Daniel 7:13

And surely they didn't have time to think, to make the link to Daniel, or maybe they did, which drew such a great reaction from Caiaphas, as Jesus confirms His Kingship.

Daniel 7

13 'In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man,[a] coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. 14 He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all nations and peoples of every language worshipped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed.

Here, in this utterly tragic setting, is hope, is worship, is thanks! God wins! Not evil! Caiaphas might think that he is in control here, but these verses show clearly that it is God who is in control.

v65 tore his robes

Numbers 14:6

But Caiaphas sees in Jesus' words, blasphemy. A mere human trying to be God. And for that they should die.

Here, in the tearing of his robes, something that wasn't done lightly, for this action was a one off, rendered robes were not to be repaired, Caiaphas repeats many Old Testament incidents of robe tearing. Usually it was a sign of great grief. But the footnotes in our Bible's take us to an incident in Numbers. You can ask your neighbour in a moment, why you think this one is linked. Here's the background;

God has rescued Israel from Egypt. They have come through the Red Sea, and they have arrived at the Promised Land. Scouts go out in pairs/twos to see what the land is like. And they come back to report. Joshua and Caleb tell it like it is. This is a wonderful land of grapes and honey. This is indeed good! But the other scouts are not so positive. You should have seen the size of the people. We felt like grasshoppers. We will be annihilated! And the people buy the negative report, and turn their hearts to Egypt!

Joshua and Caleb are distraught, and tear their robes.

Numbers 14

5 Then Moses and Aaron fell face down in front of the whole Israelite assembly gathered there. 6 Joshua son of Nun and Caleb son of Jephunneh, who were among those who had explored the land, tore their clothes 7 and said to the entire Israelite assembly, 'The land we passed through and explored is exceedingly good. 8 If the Lord is pleased with us, he will lead us into that land, a land flowing with milk and honey, and will give it to us. 9 Only do not rebel against the Lord.

Spend a moment considering why you think Caiaphas' robe tearing has been linked to that of Joshua and Caleb.

Whether it's a big act or not, the high priest tears his robes in horror of blasphemy, a man says he is God. It's the very opposite reason for Joshua and Caleb's tearing of their robes - in frustration and sorrow. Caiaphas is preventing the people from seeing the promised land.

But both times God's plan won't be stopped. The people of Israel wandered the desert for 40 years, and indeed did enter the Promised Land. Jesus died and rose again. The wishes of the high priest were not granted. Jesus reigned, and became King. We now have the opportunity to choose the promised land.

See also

v66 deserves death

Leviticus 24:16

v67 spit in His face, beat Him

Isaiah 50:6

Ah, we better finish with Peter. The mention of Peter at the start of the verses, is interesting. Here is the one who has been up the Mount of Olives from Gethsemane with Jesus a few hours earlier. He was also up the mountain with Jesus for the transfiguration. Here is Peter, the closest of the disciples to Jesus on this night. Until he is asked to declare his allegiance. Suddenly he steps away (France, 1032). After his second denial, he moves further again from Jesus, he is now at the gate, and then he is gone, shocked at himself. He's come a long way down the mountain, to ground zero, to a place of humiliation.

But not rejection. For we know more of the story than is here. Peter is still with the disciples a few days later in Galilee. Not rejected by them. And after this, Jesus meets with the disciples, on the shore of the lake, and forgives, and accepts, and restores Peter.

Peter's example reminds us that Jesus takes everyday men and women. Jesus takes us with all of our strengths and weaknesses and all of our successes and failures, and transforms us into His kind of disciples (Wilkins, 880). How will we respond to that?