



Loving Jesus, Loving People, Plowing a Counter-Culture

SERMON TEXT: Matthew 26: 47-68

KEY POINT: Hope in Jesus is what guides us through life’s storms and darkest times.

FOR LEADERS

- **Digital Community!** *Community is more important now than ever. In the wake of all of the craziness and panic surrounding covid-19, we have seen hundreds, maybe thousands, of people in our local area turning to the Church for hope, leadership, community, reassurance and encouragement during these strange times. As a leader within our church, you are very much on the front lines of this, and we’re praying with you and for you. We’ve heard from many of our leaders who were at first intimidated about hosting their community digitally, only to later receive screen shots and pictures of everyone talking, laughing, and smiling on screen together! It’s truly awesome to witness God’s Church moving in the midst of all this, and we hope and pray that God would continue to use us all to further His Kingdom by loving one another well and sharing the hope we all have in Christ.*
- **Emergence Connect!** *At this point, everyone in our church is now migrated over to Emergence Connect, and there will no longer be any posts on Realm. If you would like any assistance navigating Connect, including group settings, adding/editing members, creating events, taking attendance, etc. our Communities Coordinators are here to help! Log into your profile on Connect and you’ll see the Communities Coordinator for your group listed under “Leadership” on the main group page!*

GETTING STARTED

- [1] Icebreaker:** What’s your personal favorite activity to do at home during the Covid Quarantine?
- [2] Opener:** What stood out to you from the sermon this week? Did you find anything particularly helpful or eye opening?

HOPE MISPLACED

So far in our study of Matthew, we have followed along with the disciples, learning about the Kingdom from Jesus, witnessing miracles, and looking to Jesus as the promised Messiah. Now, it seems like everything comes to an abrupt halt as Jesus is captured in the night, betrayed by the kiss of a friend, and handed over to wicked leaders for an illegal trial. In the sermon, Ryan reminded us that we must be careful in what, or who, we place our hope.

Ask for a volunteer to read Romans 8:18-25.

- [1]** Take a look around at the current state of things...what are some of the biggest false hopes that the current crisis has exposed? (Think about our communities, our country, and our world).
- [2]** What are some things we see from this passage about the nature of true hope held forth in Christ?
- [3]** How have you seen God working in this time to open people’s eyes to the Gospel?

THE POWER OF HOPE IN CHRIST

Ask for a volunteer to read Matthew 26:47-56.

In the sermon, Ryan observed how Judas greeted Jesus in a very formal and dignified way, and how this should remind us that it is possible to have all the right “exterior actions” while still betraying Jesus.



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[4] When in life have you found yourself doing this – going through all the motions, yet betraying Jesus in your heart?

In our passage, Jesus rebukes Peter for utilizing his sword and warns that all who “live by the sword, will perish by the sword.” Ryan unpacked this for us and explained how Jesus’ words here are symbolizing power, coercion and exertion of force. He contrasted this to the power of the cross – which is most exemplified in the power of Jesus to save lost sinners.

[5] What are some examples of the powers of the “sword”, and why is it so futile to trust in them?

[6] In what way(s) is the power of the cross antithetical to the power of the sword?

[7] Consider that the power of the cross lives in an ongoing, active way through all believers who are “Crucified with Christ.” (ref. Gal. 2:20, 5:24, 6:14). What does it mean to live this way?

[8] What does it look like to live this way, right *now*, with the whole world turned upside down by covid-19?

HOPE IN JESUS IN THE DARKEST SEASONS

Ask for a volunteer to read Matthew 26:57-68.

Jesus is about to enter the darkest moment of his life, and perhaps all of human history, yet he’s able to do so with confidence because he knows the cross will lead to his glorification and exaltation (ref. Eph. 1:20-21, Phil. 2:5-11). This is why Jesus “ups the ante” when Caiaphas asks him if he’s the “Christ, the son of God” by quoting Daniel 7. Jesus not only claims that he is the Christ, but the one who will reign at the right hand of the Father.

[7] When was a time where you saw boldness, rooted in Christ, in the face of darkness?

[8] Ryan pointed out some of the irony that Matthew includes in this scene. What are some points of irony that you observe from the passage here?

[9] Are there any places in your own life where you’re struggling to remain bold in this season? Where do you feel most challenged to grow in your faith in Christ?

[10] What’s one way where we could better encourage others with hope in Jesus this season? Share some ideas about how we can be the Church best in this time!

PRAYER

[1] Pray that the Lord would make your hope in him firm.

[2] Pray for opportunities to share this hope with others.

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LEADER'S COMMENTARY

- Ryan mentioned that the way Judas and Jesus refer to each other subtly suggests what is blatantly obvious in this scene, that Judas has stepped out of fellowship with him and has left the inner circle of the twelve. Judas calls him by the formal title “Rabbi,” which means “great one” or “teacher,” rather than Lord, which is what the other disciples call him. He spoke this way at the Last Supper as well (26:25). Jesus calls Judas “friend,” which is used by him in Matthew when a gentle rebuke is implied. We see this in the parable of the laborers, used by the employer to address his disgruntled hirelings in 20:13, and in the parable of the wedding feast, when the king speaks to the guest with no wedding garment in 22:12.
- In the sermon we were also cautioned against using verse 52 to justify full-blown pacifism. In other words, this passage cannot be used in isolation from other things the Bible has to teach about this, such as the legitimate use of governmental force in Romans 13:4. Though certainly not irrelevant to the debate over the appropriateness of physical force, we must be cautious to not abuse this verse by inferring things from it that do not follow. Jesus is here giving a parable—a short, pithy, and wise aphorism that describes something profound about the world. At best, he is revealing a painful liability inherent in the use of force, that the one with the biggest stick will likely win. Moreover, force often stands in stark contrast with both the values of the kingdom of God, and its objectives.
- The accusation that Jesus spoke of destroying the temple and raising it in three days is based somewhat on the event recorded in John 2:19, although John’s Gospel almost certainly was written after Matthew. But even here, in John, Jesus does not claim that he himself will destroy the temple, but rather it is “you”—the religious authorities—who will do it. Note also the repetition of this charge by those who derided him on the cross in 27:40. It is improbable that Jesus’ accusers here have in mind what he said about the temple’s destruction in chapter 24, since that was spoken privately to his disciples.
- Many writers have tried to show the various ways Jesus’ trial violates rules laid out in the Jewish Mishna. However, these rules were written down in the late second century, and Jesus’ trial does not seem to be an attempt to formally try him, but rather to figure out how best to get the Romans to execute him. This would account for the secrecy—that it is done at night and in the private residence of the high priest. Matthew tells us that they were actually seeking “false testimony” (psuedomarturia). At best, this is the formal Jewish repudiation of Jesus as a blasphemer (a charge that did not carry the death sentence in Roman law).
- The idea that Jesus thought of himself as the Christ is implied by the way he entered the city (Zech 9:9) and how he refused to reject the hosannas of the crowd. Earlier on, he accepted this confession from Peter as well (Matt 16:16), and in John’s Gospel he confesses this to the woman at the well (John 4:25–26). The addition of “Son of God” in some of these contexts is owing, both to the OT identification of the Messiah as God’s Son (2 Sam 7:14; Ps 2:7), but it may have been picked up by the Sanhedrin as an implication stemming from the parable of the vineyard.
- Later Jewish law restricts blasphemy to misuse of the divine name. It is likely that it was much broader in Jesus’ day. The claim to be the Christ, the Son of God, was probably not blasphemous. This was the verdict because Jesus took it a step further and claimed Daniel 7 for himself, saying that he would be seated at God’s right hand. Blasphemy is to be punished by death according to Lev 24:11–16.



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- Tearing of one's clothes was a cultural gesture that usually indicated mourning, but also as dissociating oneself with what has been heard (Num 14:6; 2 Kgs 18:37; 19:1).
- Question 10 asks us to look for points of irony in Jesus' trial. Here are a few of the more obvious ones:
 - The Sanhedrin is looking for witnesses to agree, probably so that they can fulfill the requirement for two or more witnesses from Deuteronomy 19:15. But the fact that they are seeking *false* witnesses seems to be lost on them.
 - It is Caiaphas who names Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God. This is the confession upon which Jesus will build his church (Matt 16:16-18).
 - In charging Jesus with blasphemy, his accusers are committing blasphemy.
 - When Jesus is assaulted at the end of the scene, they shout "prophesy!" at him, challenging them to tell which one was hitting him. This whole scene has been predicted by Jesus multiple times (16:21; 17:9, 23; 20:19).
 - By sending Jesus to the cross, Caiaphas and the other leaders are sending Jesus to his glorious fulfillment of Daniel 7.