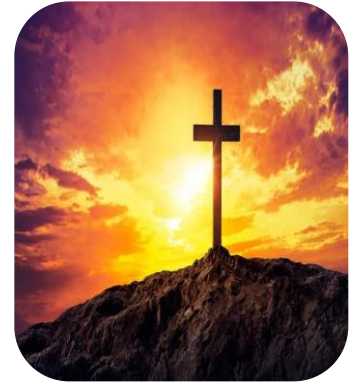




THE ROAD TO CALVARY



WEEK FOUR: IT WAS OUR SALVATION

To recap on our journey so far: we have seen how Jesus came at the right time, how he fulfilled the prophecies of the Scriptures, and how he was betrayed.

Read Mark 14:12-26

Matthew, Mark, and Luke all wrote an account of what we now call *The Last Supper*, what Jesus and the disciples would have called *The Passover, or the Feast of Unleavened Bread*. You will remember when we looked at how God brought the Children of Israel out of Egypt that he gave strict instructions (*Exodus 12*) to Moses and Aaron. That month, from then onwards, would be counted the first month of the year. On the tenth day each family had to choose a lamb or a young goat with no physical defects, for a sacrifice. On the fourteenth day of this (now) first month, every family must slaughter the animal and take some of its blood and smear it on the top and sides of the doorframe of every house where the sacrifice would be eaten. They were to wear their travelling clothes as they ate, and, as if prepared for a long journey, wear sandals and carry walking sticks in their hands. That night the angel of the Lord God would pass through the land of Egypt and kill all the firstborn sons and firstborn male animals in that land. However, the blood on the lintels would be a sign: ***“When I see the blood, I will pass over you.”*** They were to remember the day forever and celebrate it each year as a special festival to the Lord.

On this night of the Last Supper, Jesus and his disciples were therefore keeping the instruction of God given all those years long ago. It is important that we understand and remember because we now celebrate Communion as a consequence of this.

- Have you previously made the connections between these two events?

The account of how they found the room for their coming together was itself, remarkable. Prior to that, we read in *Luke 22* that Satan entered into Judas Iscariot and led to him going to the high priests and captains of the Temple Guard, to see what the best way was to betray Jesus to them. We learned last week of the terrible betrayals of that night. One might wonder what the disciples thought when Jesus said he would not eat and drink again until the Kingdom of God has come.

- What do we understand about the Kingdom of God?
- *Read John 13:1-15* What can we learn from this regarding Jesus and servanthood?

We looked last week, albeit briefly, how after the Last Supper they went to the Mount of Olives. They went to the lower slopes where the Garden of Gethsemane was located. It sits at the base of the Mount of Olives. The name literally means “oil press” and is another reference to the presence of olive trees in the area. This is where Jesus went through the terrible agony of facing his impending death. Although he was truly divine, he was also human, and it was in his humanity that he went through the terrible ordeal leading to his ultimate sacrifice on the cross.

- Do we ever consider what Jesus experienced in the time leading to his death?

Let's look at events as they unfolded:

- ❖ The last supper and washing of the disciples' feet.
- ❖ A new ordinance of the Lord's Supper.
- ❖ The walk towards Gethsemane with eleven disciples, Judas having gone to the High Priests at this point to arrange for the betrayal of Jesus.
- ❖ When they reached Gethsemane Jesus withdrew a short distance from his disciples, continuing in prayer for the events that he would soon experience. Jesus prayed for his own disciples and those who would someday believe in him. He also prayed for himself. (*John 17*).
- ❖ He moved a little further away to pray, then returning to the disciples, found them sleeping. *“Could you men not keep watch with me for one hour?”* he asks Peter. *“Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the body is weak.”*
- ❖ When he had finished praying, he woke up the disciples as he knew what was about to happen.
- ❖ Judas, the traitor, came with religious leaders and soldiers. Jesus asked why they thought it was necessary to bring so many people with them, as if he were some sort of criminal. Then he was arrested.
- ❖ During that night, Jesus appeared before the High Priest, the Sanhedrin, Pontius Pilate, Herod, and then he was sent back to Pilate.
- ❖ Pilate, not having the courage of his own convictions, gave way to the crowd when they demanded that Jesus should be crucified (*Read Mark 15:1-42*). How the cheers of the crowd have turned since his arrival on the donkey, the shouts of acclamation are now jeers.
- ❖ *Read Matthew 27:26-32* The cruelty of the governor's soldiers: they stripped him and put on a scarlet robe. Then they made a crown of sharp thorns and placed a stick in his right as a sceptre, and then they mocked him.
- ❖ Jesus was on the cross for six hours before he died. That was remarkably short as sometimes it could take more than a day. It was the cruellest form of death.

- ❖ *Read Psalm 22:14-19* David the Psalmist is foretelling for us exactly what did happen that day, that they would pierce Jesus with a sword, and that he could count the bones of his body. Also, they gambled for his garments.
- ❖ *Read Isaiah 53:7-12.* As the prophet foretold, Jesus was buried with the wealthy. *Mark 15:43* tells us that an honoured member of the high council, Joseph of Arimathea (who was waiting for the Kingdom of God to come), gathered his courage and went to Pilate to ask for the body of Jesus.

As we approach Easter, it would be good for each of us to read through these scriptures in order to remind ourselves of what Jesus went through.

Why did he do it? **IT WAS FOR OUR SALVATION.**

The words of the well-known Easter hymn: *There is a Green Hill Far Away* tells us:

There was no other good enough to pay the price of sin;

He only could unlock the gate of heav'n and let us in.

- How have these scriptures we've read, impacted you?
- It is important to remind ourselves exactly what our salvation cost Jesus and his father.
- The last two verses of another beautiful Easter hymn say:

See from His head His hands His feet, Sorrow and love flow mingled down
Did ever such love and sorrow meet, Or thorns compose so rich a crown

Were the whole realm of nature mine, That were an offering far too small

Love so amazing so divine, Demands my soul my life my all.

- Are we prepared to say 'yes' to the words of that last line? It's lovely to sing but hard to live out.



Prayer:

Father, thank you that just as you saved those in Egypt who had put the blood on the doorposts, you save us from our sins, when we ask to be forgiven through the blood of Jesus. Amen