

Our Saviour On The Road To The Mount Of Olives.

Text: Matt 26:30-35

Suggested Hymns:
526, 59, 148, 292, 508

- 1) A brief overview of the text
- 2) Jesus Reveals To His Disciples His Impending Death And Its Effect Upon Them.
- 3) Jesus comforts them

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is Matthew 26:30–35, ³⁰ *And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.* ³¹ *Then Jesus said to them, “All of you will be made to stumble because of Me this night, for it is written: ‘I will strike the Shepherd, And the sheep of the flock will be scattered.’* ³² *But after I have been raised, I will go before you to Galilee.”*

³³ *Peter answered and said to Him, “Even if all are made to stumble because of You, I will never be made to stumble.”* ³⁴ *Jesus said to him, “Assuredly, I say to you that this night, before the rooster crows, you will deny Me three times.”* ³⁵ *Peter said to Him, “Even if I have to die with You, I will not deny You!” And so said all the disciples. (NKJV)*

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

The motto of every true Lutheran preacher is ***“We preach Christ crucified.”***¹ “Christ” is the one great theme expounded during the entire church-year. Sunday after Sunday the hearers are directed to Jesus as the only Saviour and Redeemer of sinful mankind.

It must be this way, because as we read in Acts 4:12, ¹² *Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”* The preacher who preaches a Christless sermon is not true to his trust. On the part of the preacher a Christless sermon is wasted energy, and on the part of the hearer it is wasted time.

It is during the Lenten season especially that our hearts and minds are directed to this Christ. It is during this season that we assemble under the cross of Calvary and see there this Christ working out the salvation of man, by

suffering and dying as all people's Substitute, appeasing the wrath of an offended God, and rendering a full and complete satisfaction for the sins of mankind.

This coming Wednesday is Ash Wednesday. The purpose of our Services during Lent are not merely to open the fountain of compassionate tears by picturing the tortures and pains, the cruelties and agonies, inflicted upon the Saviour.

To achieve this purpose would be a simple matter. The hymnist writes:²

*Tell me, ye, who hear Him groaning,
Was there ever grief like His?*

No, the twofold purpose of our Services during Lent is in the first place that we are to be brought to the knowledge that we are the cause of all such woe, and, in the second place that we are to realise and accept the redemption in Christ in true faith.

With this purpose in view, let us accompany our blessed Saviour at least part of the way of His great Passion.

Today our text presents — *Our Saviour on the Road to the Mount of Olives*. May the Lord bless our meditation.

1. A Brief Overview Of The Text

While Jesus and His Eleven disciples were walking through the city, out the city gate, down into the Kidron Valley, across the Brook Kidron, and up the Mount of Olives to Gethsemane, Jesus kept on talking to them. He quoted the prophecy of Zechariah 13:7 and applied it to Himself and to His disciples. His own death was now less than 24 hours away.

When Jesus was arrested in Gethsemane several hours after this, "***all the disciples forsook Him and fled.***"³ And in a way it was good that they did. Not only was it necessary that the Scriptures be fulfilled; Jesus also told the men who had come out to arrest him, "***If you seek Me, let these go their way.***"⁴

Furthermore, Jesus had to suffer and die alone. The disciples could not help Him bear the weight of the sin of the world. If they had taken a heroic stand with Jesus and suffered and died together with Him, we might be deceived into believing they had a part in the atonement. It simply would not have been the same if the Roman soldiers had crucified the Eleven with Jesus on Good Friday.

It did not take long for some of them to find one another again. Peter and John went together to the palace of the high priest to see what was going to happen to Jesus. But then they evidently separated again after Peter's third denial, because John was there at the cross but Peter was not, so far as we know.

Nevertheless, by Sunday ten of the Eleven were gathered behind locked doors when Jesus appeared to them. And even though Thomas was not there, they were able to find him and tell him that they had seen the risen Lord.

Divide and conquer is an old tactic, and it works well. Jesus knew that Satan would take advantage of the fact that the disciples were isolated from one another. Satan wanted to sift Peter like wheat.⁵ So Jesus tried to warn Peter ahead of time, *“Assuredly, I say to you that this night, before the rooster crows, you will deny Me three times.”*⁶

Peter had plenty of courage and the best of intentions, so long as he was surrounded by the other ten disciples, who echoed his brave words. But, of course, Jesus' prediction came true. And because Jesus knew all along that it would, it seems clear that His warning was not merely a last desperate attempt to prevent the inevitable. No, Jesus was planting a thought in Peter's memory that would serve him well.

For even though he seems to have forgotten Jesus' warning by the time he made his way to the high priest's courtyard, the crowing rooster jolted his memory and moved him to bitter tears of repentance.

There is more than one lesson in this for us. Certainly we can learn something about humility before the words of Jesus and something about repentance. We ought also to be impressed by the value of being together with other believers. We need one another.

Especially in view of Satan's desire to divide and conquer, we listen once again to the familiar exhortation, written in Hebrews 10:23–25, ²³ *Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful.* ²⁴ *And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works,* ²⁵ *not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.*

2. Jesus Reveals To His Disciples His Impending Death And Its Effect Upon Them.

Our text begins, ³⁰ *And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.* Having eaten the Passover with His disciples and having instituted the Lord's Supper, Jesus and His disciples sang a hymn of praise. It was customary among the Jews to sing Psalms 113 to 118 at the close of the Passover, a hymn known as "*the great Hallel.*"

We have no reason to assume that it was some other hymn of praise than the customary one. Had it been a different one, the evangelist surely would have recorded it.

Having concluded this hymn, Jesus left for the Mount of Olives with His disciples. It was an important walk, for it ended in death.

While wending their way through dingy streets, Jesus reveals to His disciples His impending death. Jesus had often spoken of His suffering and death, even in detail. We heard in the Gospel before, in Luke 18:31-33, ³¹ *Then He took the twelve aside and said to them, "Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of Man will be accomplished. ³² For He will be delivered to the Gentiles and will be mocked and insulted and spit upon. ³³ They will scourge Him and kill Him. And the third day He will rise again."*

To allay any doubt in the minds of the disciples, Jesus always, when speaking of His impending suffering and death, referred to the writings of the prophets. Psalm 22 and Isaiah 53.

Likewise here. Jesus refers them to the prophecy in Zechariah 13:7, ⁷ *"Awake, O sword, against My Shepherd, Against the Man who is My Companion," Says the LORD of hosts. "Strike the Shepherd, And the sheep will be scattered.* This prophecy was to be literally fulfilled this very night.

Prophecy is the revelation of God's will. The suffering of Jesus was in conformity with God's will and decreed by God. We read of the prophecy in Zechariah 13:1, ¹ *"In that day a fountain shall be opened for the house of David and for the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for uncleanness.* Compare this with the fulfilment written in Acts 2:23, ²³ *Him, being delivered by the*

determined purpose and foreknowledge of God, you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death.

God awakens the sword of His wrath against the Son of His love. A brief presentation of God's counsel is expressed by the hymnist:⁷

A Lamb goes uncomplaining forth
The guilt of all men bearing;
'Tis laden with the sins of earth,
None else the burden sharing.
It goes its way, grows weak and faint,
To slaughter led without complaint,
Its spotless life to offer;
Bears shame, and stripes, and wounds, and death,
Anguish, and mockery, and saith:
All this I gladly suffer.

This Lamb is Christ, the soul's great friend,
The Lamb of God, our Saviour;
Him God the Father chose to send,
To gain for us His favour.
He bids His Son go forth to share
The lot of children doomed to bear
His wrath and condemnation;
Though great the punishment, and dread,
God wills that He His blood shall shed
To purchase man's salvation.

Let us look at the effect of this revelation upon the disciples. Our text says, ³¹ *Then Jesus said to them, "All of you will be made to stumble because of Me this night.* The plan of salvation cannot be understood by man. Natural man, instead of singing a hymn of praise as a token of gratitude for such counsel of love, as we learn from John 3:16, ¹⁶ *For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life,* is affected in an altogether different way.

What was the effect of such revelation upon the disciples? The all-seeing eyes of the Saviour looked into the innermost recesses of the hearts of the disciples, and there He read: *All of you will be made to stumble because of Me this night* because of the things which will come to pass. Jesus will be bound, falsely accused, smitten, scourged, condemned, and finally put to death by crucifixion.

Because they followed their own reason, they did not have the correct conception of the Messiah nor of His purpose. Such offence is identical with unbelief.

Another effect of Christ's suffering and death was *'I will strike the Shepherd, And the sheep of the flock will be scattered.'* Fear that they would meet the same fate as their Master prompted them to flee and desert Jesus.

Following our own human reason, the message of Christ's suffering and death, and the whole Gospel is foolishness unto us. Satan is always on the alert and ready to sow the seed of doubt and unbelief.

Christians need to be warned against this offence, and many will prove to be Peters and be presumptuous. Our text says ³³ *Peter answered and said to Him, "Even if all are made to stumble because of You, I will never be made to stumble."* ³⁴ *Jesus said to him, "Assuredly, I say to you that this night, before the rooster crows, you will deny Me three times."* ³⁵ *Peter said to Him, "Even if I have to die with You, I will not deny You!" And so said all the disciples.*

Finally, they will flee from Jesus and desert Him.

3. Jesus Comforts Them.

Our text tells us, ³² *But after I have been raised, I will go before you to Galilee.* When we see and hear of the damnableness of sin, we, too, are tempted to flee, if it were possible, from our conscience and from the wrath of God.

But thanks be to God, for Jesus tells us ³² *But after I have been raised, I will go before you to Galilee.* Why does Jesus always, when speaking of His suffering and death, call our attention to His resurrection?

The answer is in our text. ³² ***But after I have been raised, I will go before you to Galilee.***” And likewise in Luke 18:33, ³³ ***They will scourge Him and kill Him. And the third day He will rise again.***”

It is because the climax of the whole work of redemption is the resurrection. It is only in the light of the resurrection of Christ that we have the blessedness of Christ’s suffering and death. Without the resurrection there is no redemption.

Scripture says in 1 Corinthians 15:17–19, ¹⁷ ***And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins!*** ¹⁸ ***Then also those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished.*** ¹⁹ ***If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable.***

And in we read in Rom. 4:25 that ***Jesus was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification.*** The resurrection is the seal of divine approval on the entire work of redemption.

Although they will be scattered, Jesus will go before them. Jesus assures them of His love and His care: ***I will go before you to Galilee.*** Here Jesus is telling His disciples that although you forsake Me, I will not forsake you; even though you fall, I will raise you up again; you shall not perish, I will go before you as a shepherd goes before his flock; I will lead you through all the perils of life to the gates of paradise.

So in conclusion, let us not only view the Passion of Christ because that would drive us to despair. Let us rather look beyond Calvary, into Joseph’s garden, and there see the Risen One, who was raised for our justification. Look to Jesus who has gone before us, not only risen from the dead, but ascended into heaven, there to prepare a dwelling-place for us. Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

¹ 1 Corinthians 1:23

² Hymn 70 v2

³ Matt 26:56

⁴ John 18:8

⁵ see Luke 22:31

⁶ Matthew 26:34

⁷ Hymn 57 v1-2, likewise hymn 70, “Stricken, smitten, and afflicted”