

## **THE GOSPEL: IT'S ALL ABOUT JESUS** **(Matthew 26:26-35)**

She was one of the most popular singer/songwriters of the 1970's. She won an Emmy for the Best New Artist in 1972. The next year she released what may be her most successful song. It made it to #1 on the Pop Charts in the U.S., Canada, Australia and New Zealand. The album and its title track are, "You're So Vain." The singer was Carly Simon who, by the way, turned 75 this year.

The song was about being heartbroken by a man who said he loved her, but then he left her. The chorus reads:

You're so vain  
You probably think this song is about you  
You're so vain (you're so vain)  
I'll bet you think this song is about you  
Don't you?  
Don't you?

For more than 40 years she refused to answer repeated efforts to get her to finger the man who inspired the song. Finally, in 2015, she said that verse two was about the actor Warren Beatty, but the other verses were a composite of two different people whom she did not name. At the time the song was written and released, she was married to the singer, James Taylor, but she said none of the song was about him.

In 2007, Warren Beatty said in an interview, "Let's be honest. That song was about me." Ironically, but aptly, he confirmed the truth of the song. He is so vain; he thinks the song is about him, all about him.

Likewise, we go through life thinking life is all about us. After all, in the movie of our lives, we are in every scene. Not only do we have the starring role, we attempt to act as the director of the production.

That is vain thinking. The word *vain* means, "overly proud; conceited."

Imagine yourself at a Thanksgiving feast in your home just over a month from now. You are seated at an elaborately decorated table. It has your best china and silverware. Your extended family is there to enjoy the feast with you. Just before returning thanks, you look about the room and say, "I just want you all to know how pleased I am that you are here and that we are having this dinner to honor me." Don't you think that statement would qualify as being vain?

Suppose you are Meadow Lake in the evening of July 4<sup>th</sup> next summer. You are there along with hundreds of other people. The Enid Symphony is on the east side of the lake. They play a free concert. When they finish the concert, fireworks are shot high into the sky from the west side and is accompanied by the orchestra on the east side. After the big ending, everyone gathers up their chairs and blankets. You get the attention of a complete stranger and say, "I am so glad that everyone came out and honored me tonight with all of this!" Wouldn't you consider that to be vain?

Today, we pick up where we left off in Matthew 26. Jesus and His disciples are observing the Passover meal. This commemorative meal has been celebrated yearly for

centuries and centuries. During the meal, Jesus says to His disciples, “This bread that we are eating, and this wine we are drinking, it’s all about Me.”

Now, was that vain? No. It was dead on. Jesus highlighted truth that had been hidden in the meal for centuries. The Passover meal was instituted to celebrate the deliverance that God brought to the Jewish people through Moses. But that event serves to point forward to a greater deliverance of a greater number from a far greater Moses who was yet to come. Whenever we gather to observe the Lord’s Supper, we are celebrating this new Savior and Deliverer.

Our text is Matthew 26:26-35. On the basis of this text, I want to make three statements as to how the gospel is all about Jesus. These three truths come right from our passage.

### **The Gospel Is All About Jesus and the Deliverance He Brings**

I said that Jesus is a new and better Moses. There are many ways in which Moses is a type or a foreshadowing of Jesus. There are too many to list, but let me suggest a few.

- Both had rulers who tried to kill them after their birth.
- Both spent time in the wilderness before undertaking their calling.
- Both fasted for 40 days.
- Both climbed mountains.
- Both were known for their meekness.
- Both were Law givers.
- Both were used by God to do miracles.
- Both fed hungry people in the wilderness.
- Both provided water to thirsty people.
- Both fought a war with outstretched arms. Moses’ arms were held up by Aaron and Hur. Jesus’ were held by Roman spikes driven through his hands or wrists into a wooden cross.
- Both brought liberation, one for the Jewish people and the other for people from every tribe, every language, every nation, every people group.

We call ourselves **Liberty**—Liberty Southern Baptist Church. The one word that needs to be emphasized is not Baptist or Southern or even Church. The word we should emphasize is **Liberty**.

A man named Mark Reed told the following story:

Eating lunch at a small cafe, I saw a sparrow hop through the open door and peck at the crumbs near my table. When the crumbs were gone, the sparrow hopped to the window ledge, spread its wings, and took flight. Brief flight. It crashed against the window pane and fell to the floor. The bird quickly recovered and tried again. Crash. And again. Crash.

I got up and attempted to shoo the sparrow out the door, but the closer I got the harder it threw itself against the pane. I nudged it with my hand. That sent the sparrow fluttering along the ledge, hammering its beak at the glass. Finally, I

reached out and gently caught the bird, folding my fingers around its wings and body. It weighed almost nothing. I thought of how powerless and vulnerable the sparrow must have felt. At the door I released it, and the sparrow sailed away. As I did with the sparrow, God takes us captive only to set us free.

What has closed in on you and is keeping you captive? Fear? Grief? Addiction? Envy? Worry? Unforgiveness? A certain sin? Let Jesus capture you with His love and grace. When He does, He will set you free, free to soar and free to become what you were meant to be and to do.

This freedom, however, comes at a cost, an enormous cost. There is always a cost to freedom because freedom is never free. It is always purchased by another at a dear price. The freedom we know and enjoy as a nation was paid for by the blood of patriots. We turn now to the price Jesus paid for our freedom and the freedom of all who will trust in Him.

### **The Gospel Is All About Jesus and the Sacrifice He Made**

Look at what Matthew tells us that Jesus did in v. 26. Jesus **took** the bread, **blessed** the bread, **broke** the bread, and **gave** the bread. It is interesting that those same four things are what Jesus did the feeding of the 5000 and the 4000. We Jesus fed the multitudes on those two occasions, He took, blessed, broke, and gave. Here again, Jesus takes, blesses, breaks, and gives the bread to His disciples.

In John's gospel account, He tells us that the day after Jesus fed the 5000, that the crowds came looking for Jesus, and they found Him. Jesus told them that the only reason that they sought Him out is that they viewed Him as a free lunch ticket. It was then that Jesus said to them in John 6:35, "I am the bread of life; whoever comes to Me shall not hunger." But Jesus wasn't talking about physical hunger.

Jesus satisfies eternally those who come to Him with a spiritual hunger for meaning and purpose and real life. In order for that to happen, God did with Jesus what Jesus did with bread. God **took** Jesus and **blessed** Jesus and **broke** Jesus and **gave** Jesus to a hungry and needy world.

In addition to telling us what Jesus did, Matthew also tells us what Jesus said. Jesus said that the bread before them symbolized His body that would be broken in His suffering and death. The wine symbolized His blood that would be shed on their behalf.

What did Jesus mean when He said, ". . . is My body" and ". . . is My blood." The Catholics say that Jesus meant that literally. They claim that the bread becomes the body of Jesus, and the wine becomes the blood of Jesus during communion.

The Lutherans claim that the bread remains bread, and the wine remains wine, but somehow, Jesus is present mystically in the elements that are used in the Lord's Supper.

Baptists, on the other hand, say that it is all symbolic. The the bread remains bread, and the wine, well, it becomes grape juice, but together they represent the body and blood of Christ.

The Bible doesn't go into gruesome detail as to how Jesus was crucified and what it looked like.

- Matthew simply says, “Two robbers were crucified with Him, one on the right and one on the left” (27:38).
- Mark tells us, “And they crucified Him and divided His garments among them, casting lots for them, to decide what each should take” (15:24).
- Luke adds, “And when they came to the place called The Skull, there they crucified Him” (23:33).
- John agrees. After mentioning The Place of the Skull, he writes, “There they crucified Him.”

The gospel writers spare us the details. There was no need to elaborate on crucifixion because their first century readers were all too aware of what crucifixion was all about. They had seen it far too often.

We have a word that comes from the Latin word for *crucifixion*. It is the word *excruciate*. It means, “to inflict or experience great pain.” It literally means, “out of or from the cross.” From the cross, one would undergo tortuous and unrelenting pain.

While the NT writers avoided a description of the Jesus’ crucifixion, many of them did go on to interpret what His death means. Early in the great chapter of 1 Corinthians 15, Paul writes, “For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures” (15:3). For Paul, the Scriptures were what we call the OT. Paul may have had in mind these words from Isaiah 53:

- Surely, He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows (v. 4).
- He was pierced for our transgressions; He was crushed for our iniquities; upon Him was the chastisement that brought us peace (v. 5).
- And the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all (v. 6).
- Who considered . . . that He was cut off out of the land of the living, stricken for the transgression of My people? (v.8).
- Yet it was the will of the LORD to crush Him . . . His soul makes an offering for guilt (v. 10).
- The righteous one, my servant, [will] make many to be accounted righteous, and He shall bear their iniquities (v. 11).
- He bore the sin of many, and makes intercession for the transgressors (v. 12).

Authors like Paul and John, and NT theologians use words that are unfamiliar to us because they are words that we do not use in everyday life. You are not going to read them in the newspaper. You are not going to hear them on television. Your friends are not going to refer to them.

One such word is *propitiation*. It shows up four times. It is found in Romans, Hebrews, and twice in 1 John. The word is used to teach us that Jesus pacified the wrath of God against sin by sacrificing Himself and taking upon Himself the penalty of sin.

Theologians use the term *substitutionary atonement*. Jesus is our substitute. Jesus took our place on the cross, and He bore the penalty of our sin. That is what the gospel is about. That is what this meal is about. It is all about Jesus and the sacrifice He made on our behalf.

Yesterday, I saw a Facebook post from a friend who is not a believer. Please pardon the language, but I am going to read to you word-for-word the post he wrote: “If Jesus was real he’d be a damn fool to die for y’all ass.” The man’s name is Joseph.

I couldn’t let it go, so I posted a response. I wrote:

Oh, Joseph, what the world calls lunacy, Jesus calls love: “For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son . . .” I wouldn’t give my son for you or anyone else I know, but my love is no match for God’s fierce and wonderful love. Paul agreed. “God shows His love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Jesus is real, and so is God’s love.

### **The Gospel is All About Jesus and the Forgiveness He Offers**

Jesus and the disciples ended their meal by singing a hymn. This hymn would not be anything with which you and I would be familiar. It might seem more like chanting than singing. They likely chanted a portion of Psalms 113-118, which was often done in connection with Passover. After singing or chanting, Jesus and the disciples (minus Judas) began making their way to the Mount of Olives.

On the way, Jesus gave a reality check to the disciples. Earlier, He announced that one of them would betray Him. Now, He says that all of them will desert Him. They will flee and abandon Him. Peter stands tall and says, “Well, they might do that, but not me. I’ll be faithful to the bitter end.”

Jesus says, “Oh, you think so? Peter, you are going to deny Me three times before morning light.”

Peter says, “No way,” and the other disciples also pledge their loyalty to Jesus.

Since we have a book instead of a video, we can’t hear Jesus’ tone of voice, and tone of voice speaks volumes. I feel confident that Jesus didn’t speak these words angrily or accusingly. I think He spoke them in a matter-of-fact manner. Jesus doesn’t grill them. He doesn’t deride them. Actually, Jesus speaks rather encouragingly. He tells them, “This isn’t going to end with My death. I’m going to rise to life, and after I do, we’ll meet up again in Galilee.

The disciples don’t know what to make of that statement. They pretty much ignore that and focus instead on His announcement that they are going to abandon Him. What they missed is that Jesus was forgiving them even before they failed Him. Why do you suppose that Jesus did that?

I think Jesus was saying to them, “I understand, and I want you to know I understand before you fall and fail, so that when you do, you won’t give up. You will know there is still hope. You and I still have a future to look forward to.”

Many people mistakenly believe that God would never be able to accept them because of what they have done. They think there is no hope for them, and that is exactly what the devil wants them and you to believe. But remember, the devil is a liar. He will do everything he can do to discourage you and deceive you.

Years ago, I read Philip Yancey’s wonderful book, *What’s So Amazing About Grace?* In that book, he gives a wonderful “definition,” so to speak, for the word *grace*. He says that *grace* means there is nothing you can do to make God love you less, and there is

nothing you do to make God love you more. Think about that for moment.

Don't answer out loud, but what is the worst thing you have ever done? God still loves you, and He doesn't love you any less because of it. What wonderful things are you wanting to for Him? By all means, with His help, do them, but don't expect those things will entice God to love you more. He will still love you with the same love regardless of whether you achieve those things or not.

I close with a quote from pastor and author Erwin Lutzer. He said, "There is more grace in God's heart than there is sin in your past." I would add, "There is more grace in God's heart than there is sin in your past or your future."

Remember that. That is what this word teaches. That is what God wants you to know.