

## **The Courage of Conviction**

Matthew 26:36-46

April 7, 2019

Pastor E. David Streets

Well friends we are on Day 5 of our series of messages called “Seven Days and Counting”. We are using the Sundays of Lent to focus on each of the Days of Holy Week. We chose to do that for two reasons actually.

First, in many instances those who regularly attend worship will come to worship on Palm Sunday where we celebrate Jesus being publically acknowledged for who he is for the very first time. Then we go home, resume our activities and because we are so busy we miss the special services on Maundy Thursday and Good Friday only to return on Easter when we celebrate the resurrection of our risen Lord. We never focus on his suffering and betrayal.

Second, this series of messages enables us to focus on the most important week of Jesus’ life. You see, Holy Week is the week when Jesus achieves our salvation, forgiveness for our sin and the promise of eternal life. That’s why we call it Holy Week.

Let’s review. On week #1 we remembered the triumphal entry of Jesus into Jerusalem. The people were so excited to finally see Jesus they climbed palm trees, tearing off branches to throw into his path. Others threw their coats and capes on the roadway. He was received as if he was a king because many thought he was a king and we now know he was.

On week #2 we reflected when Jesus entered the Temple and turned over the tables of the merchants and moneychangers. People coming to give and make a sacrifice were being cheated as they headed for worship. Jesus said,

“My house will be a house of prayer but you have made it into a den of robbers.”

And the chief priests and elders of the people wanted to be rid of Jesus.

Week #3 began with the authority of Jesus being questioned by the Temple officials. Then he told the parable of the Tenants. The moral of the parable is that the prophets are ignored, the son of the owner (who represents Jesus) is killed, then the message of Jesus is rejected so the message will be and is taken to those who will receive it. And that includes you and me.

Week #4 was last Sunday. We addressed the plot to betray Jesus. The chief priests and teachers of the law were desperate to kill Jesus but they were afraid of the people. They needed a plan. Then all of a sudden Satan enters Judas and he goes to the priests and offers to betray Jesus.

As we reflect on those 4 weeks of messages, have you learned anything about yourself, about how you relate to Jesus? Many who received Jesus as a king on Palm Sunday drifted away from him 5 or 6 days later. Do you remember how excited you were when you first met Jesus, when you really understood who he is? When you accepted him as your Lord? Have you lost your passion for him? Have you drifted away from Jesus?

We come together each Sunday to worship and praise God. We come to unite our hearts and voices to glorify God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit. We come to encourage, develop and support each other. Are there times when that's not our focus, when we may have another agenda? When we come, is worship our priority?

When the authority of Jesus was questioned as he taught, do we also ever question the authority of Jesus and what he has to say? Do you ever ignore what Jesus has to say?

And last week as we considered Judas' plan to betray Jesus, are their behaviors in our own life that might cause us to betray Jesus? Are we more concerned with what we want or what we think than with what he wants and what he thinks? Are we willing to listen to Jesus? Are we willing to listen for Jesus? Are we willing to talk with Jesus before we do what we think is best?

Today we are addressing the events of Day 5, Thursday during Holy Week. We are in the Garden of Gethsemane. Jesus has shared the Passover meal with his Disciples. He also has had communion with his Disciples for the first and last time before his death.

He has gone to the Garden to pray. The disciples are with him. He asks them to wait while he prays alone although he asks Peter, James and John to come and pray with him.

This is an excruciatingly difficult time for Jesus. He knows everything that is about to happen, and he's the only one who knows. Jesus is sorrowful and troubled. He is full of sorrow. He says to them,

My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch with me. Mt. 26:38

Jesus is overwhelmed with sorrow.

Do you ever think about that word, overwhelmed? It means buried or drowned beneath a huge mass; defeated completely; given too much of something; overpowered; too strong for. Jesus said, "My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow."

Has your soul ever been overwhelmed with sorrow?"

If you've lost a loved one it has. Mine was when my dad died and when my mother died.

My soul was overwhelmed with sorrow on April 30, 1995 when I received a phone call from a leader in my church who called to give me bad news.

"David, this is Lee Coleman. Are you sitting down?"

"Yes" I said, but I wasn't.

"I have some bad news. Steve Decker died today at Asbury Seminary. He fell while he was hiking." I sat down.

Steve was going to join our church staff in two weeks, He was 26 years old. My soul was overwhelmed with sorrow.

Jesus' soul was overwhelmed with sorrow. He wanted Peter, James and John to be near him. He didn't want to be alone. He wanted them by his side. Maybe he wanted to hold onto them or lean on them.

Going on a little farther, he fell with his face to the ground and prayed, “My Father if it’s possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will. Mt. 36:39

Here we see Jesus is wrestling with his humanity. Again, he knows what’s ahead for him and he’s asking if there’s another way to bring about the salvation of humanity.

Jesus is in anguished prayer. He is struggling with his human nature. He is fearful of what’s ahead for him. Satan has returned to distract him from his purpose, to get him to abandon his mission. “God isn’t there some other way?” Jesus asked. But there is silence.

Luke mentions at the conclusion of Jesus’ temptation in the wilderness, as Jesus ministry was beginning....

When the devil had finished all this tempting, he left him (Jesus) until an opportune time. Lk. 4:13

This is that opportune time. Jesus is being tempted to give up. He’s hoping for another way.

The temptation of Jesus by Satan in Gethsemane is portrayed in an eerie fashion in the movie “The Passion of the Christ”. The role of Satan is played by a woman who is bald and looks and sounds like a man. Satan is a frightening figure. His/her look is frightening.

Speaking in a soft, deep voice, she says, “No one man can take away the sins of the world.” Jesus continues his struggle, his confusion, his uncertainty, his fear.

He went away a second time and prayed, “My Father, if it is not possible for this cup to be taken away unless I drink it, may your will be done.” Mt 26:42

Jesus has yielded his will to the will of his Heavenly Father. He has resisted the devil and the temptation to give up. He has accepted his destiny to be the Savior of the world. He will save us from sin. He has passed his point of no return. He will be fully and perfectly submitted to the Father; fully and perfectly obedient.

Jesus returns to the disciples.

“Are you still sleeping and resting? Look, the hour is near, and the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise, let us go! Here comes my betrayer.”  
Mt. 26:45-46

There's no turning back now. Next, he will be arrested. The rest is history.

Of course you and I are grateful that Jesus yielded to the will of his Heavenly Father. He resisted the temptation to rework God's plan, God's approach to provide for our salvation. There was no other way. This time, God did not provide a ram in the bushes as he did for Abraham.

The words of Jesus continue to resonate in my mind.

“Yet not as I will, but as you will.”...”May your will be done.”

Jesus conceded that God knew better than he did what was best for the salvation of all of his creation. Jesus knew that God knows and does what is best for humanity.

In doing what he did, in planning the way he planned God provided a way to overcome the impact of our sin that separates us from God. He provided a way to forgive us for all our sins, past, present, future. He provided us with the hope and promise of life after death, eternal life.

God also provided us with an example of love and obedience through the life, death, and resurrection of his Son, Jesus.

We are invited encouraged to follow the example that Jesus modeled during his life on earth. He loved his neighbor as he loved himself. We should do the same. He forgave those who sinned against him and turned the other cheek. We should do the same. He accepted people where they were, as they were, and then he spoke life into them so that they might become what God created them to be. He loved all people, even sinners, and we all are sinners, and then he encouraged them to sin no more, to leave their life of sin. We should do that as well.

He struggled with the Father's will for his life, but eventually he yielded to his Father's will for him. We should do the same.

I believe that God knows each of us by name, loves us unconditionally and knows what's best for us, for each and every one of us. He knows better than we know what's best for us.

We get to have what's best for us when we yield to what God wants for us. We experience what's best when we imitate Jesus, and when we yield to the Father's will.

We have a hard time giving up what we want, right? We have a difficult time deferring to God.

Do you ever stop and wonder what is God's will for your life? What does God want for you? How does he want you to think and behave? Who does he want you to be? What does he want you to do?

Jesus modeled love and obedience. We should do the same.