

Twelve Hours Before the Cross

What kind of a relationship do you have with Jesus? What kind do you want to have? What kind of a person do you imagine that He was when he was walking this earth? Let's pray...

"Lord, in our Scripture today, show us who you really are by helping us to see what you were actually trying to accomplish. Help us to be as honest with you as you are with us. Amen."

Sometimes we get so caught up in the details of a story, or we get to know a story so well, that we miss the big picture. It's kind of like walking with someone in the snow. If you just focus on following his every step...

[Show "Snow Art - photo #1"]

you might think that he (and you!) are just wandering aimlessly, when in reality there's purpose in every step - like this...

[Show "Snow Art - photo #2"]

The story of Jesus can be so familiar to us that we miss how every step He took was a critically important part of a much larger picture. Before we celebrate the meal that Jesus instituted, I want us to study the 12 hours that came after the meal that Thursday night. Those twelve hours can be divided into four parts, each described by a single word of prophecy from the prophet Isaiah. The first word is...

I. Crushed

Isaiah 53 is the most specific description of why the prophesied Messiah could not come only as a conquering King, but instead as a Suffering Servant. Twice the prophet said that He would be crushed. The second time, in verse 10, he makes it clear that it was the Father's will that He be crushed. It says: (Is. 53:10)

Yet it was the LORD's will to crush him and cause him to suffer...

Why would the Father want that for His Son? Verse 5 makes it clear that this crushing was for our benefit:

**...he was crushed for our iniquities;
the punishment that brought us peace was upon him,
and by his wounds we are healed. (Is. 53:5)**

Mark records that the crushing of Jesus was not only a physical crushing. It was also an emotional and even a spiritual crushing. Jesus explained it that way to the disciples with Him in the "Olive Press" Garden (That's what Gethsemane means: olive press). He said:

My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death. (Mk. 14:34)

Have you ever been "crushed" like that? You were so overwhelmed by some problem or issue that you just couldn't see any hope for the future. Maybe someone here feels that way right now. Know this: Jesus has been in your shoes. He knows exactly how you feel. He was crushed; He was devastated. Secondly, Jesus was...

II. Rejected

In fact, what Isaiah says is that:

**He was despised and rejected by men,
A man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering.
Like one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we
esteemed him not. (Is. 53:3)**

It's one thing to be rejected or disrespected because you've done something to bring it on yourself – like Alice Pike. Alice is the woman who tried to buy stuff at Walmart with a counterfeit million-dollar bill. Yeah, she walked in and gathered a bunch of stuff that all together was worth about \$1,600 and then handed the cashier a bill that had lots and lots of zeroes on it. I mean, what was she thinking? Did she think the cashier was actually going to give her \$998,000 in change? I'm sorry but you shouldn't expect to be respected when you try a bonehead move like that. ⁱ

But if you've lived an exemplary life, doing only honorable, helpful and even heroic things, then it would really hurt to be rejected, wouldn't it? Can you imagine what that would feel like? Jesus went through the humiliation of being arrested for no reason. On top of that, it was one of His own disciples that betrayed Him. Have you ever been double-crossed by a friend? On top of that, the rest of His disciples deserted Him. Listen to it again:

“Am I leading a rebellion,” said Jesus, “that you have come out with swords and clubs to capture me? Every day I was with you, teaching in the temple courts, and you did not arrest me. But the Scriptures must be fulfilled.” Then everyone deserted him and fled. (Mark 14:48-50)

Have you ever been betrayed like this – betrayed by a friend? Or when you were falsely accused, did your friends stand by and let it happen, refusing to speak up because they “didn't want to get involved”? Or maybe, behind your back, someone was unfaithful to you. You need to understand something: Jesus knows exactly how that feels. Exactly. The third word from Isaiah describing part of this 12-hour period is the word...

III. Oppressed

Isaiah 53:7 and 8 says:

**He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth;
he was led like a lamb to the slaughter,
and as a sheep before her shearers is silent,
so he did not open his mouth.**

By oppression and judgment he was taken away.

Mark describes the details of Jesus' oppression: (Mk. 14:55-56, 60-61)

The chief priests and the whole Sanhedrin were looking for evidence against Jesus so that they could put him to death, but they did not find any. Many testified falsely against him, but their statements did not agree. Then the high priest stood up before them and asked Jesus, “Are you not going to answer? What is this testimony that these men are bringing against you?” But Jesus remained silent and gave no answer.

Why was He silent? Why didn't Jesus defend Himself? Technically, Jesus hadn't been charged yet. Under Jewish law, there must be two witnesses who AGREE upon what law was broken in order for there to be a legal charge. But the witnesses didn't agree, so there was nothing for Jesus to respond to.

But then, the high priest put Jesus under oath by asking Him:

...Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed One? (Mk. 14:61)

The High Priest is making a bold move here, but it wasn't guaranteed to succeed. It doesn't appear from Jewish law that Jesus HAD to answer him. If He had remained silent, they legally would've had to declare a mistrial. But Jesus did not remain silent. He responded:

I am... And you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven. (Mk. 14:62)

In responding as He did, Jesus was quoting two of the classic Old Testament passages that describe the attributes of the Messiah, Dan. 7:13 and Ps. 110:1. Of course, Jesus was telling the truth about Himself, but the High Priest and the Sanhedrin wrongly accused Him of blasphemy, because they didn't believe that He was the Christ. So, by telling the truth, Jesus was sentenced to death. That's not only oppression – that's a cosmic injustice.

Crushed, rejected, disrespected, oppressed, falsely found guilty and unjustly sentenced to pay a very high price – has anything like this ever happened to you? The first thing you must take away from these twelve hours in Jesus' life is this: He knows the dark side of life. He knows how you feel because he's been through the worst that life has to offer. You can talk to Him about your crushing rejection because He "gets it." You can call out to Him about the unjust oppressions in your life because He's been there. Jesus understands.

But there's one more important word from Isaiah that relates to these twelve hours in Jesus' life. It's the word...

IV. Anointed

When Jesus responded to the High Priest's question by saying, "I am," He was saying, "I am the Christ." "Christ" is the Greek word that translates the Hebrew word "Messiah." Both words mean, "The Anointed One." What is the significance of this word?

In the Old Testament, people and things were anointed with a special oil. The ingredients of that oil could not be used for anything else except anointing. To anoint someone or something was to announce that it or they were separated from common use to be used only for God's purposes. So, all the utensils in the Temple were anointed. The Priests were anointed as were their special clothes used only in the Temple. But what about, 'The Anointed One'? What is that person's mission?

In Isaiah 61 we find the Messiah's mission statement. It reads:

**The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me,
because the LORD has anointed me to preach good news to the poor.
He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted,
to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners,**

To proclaim the year of the LORD's favor... (Is. 61:1-2a)

After Jesus successfully endured the three temptations of Satan in the wilderness, what was the very next thing He did? He went to Nazareth and on the Sabbath He went into the synagogue. He took the scroll of Isaiah and turned to Is. 61 and read these exact words. Luke 4:20 and 21 then say:

**...he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down.
The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him, and he**

began by saying to them, “Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.”

What, if any, relevance does this have for us today? First, Jesus declares that He is the Messiah, the One Anointed by God. Secondly, the three actions taken against Jesus in those twelve hours on Thursday night/Friday morning: being crushed, rejected and oppressed (actions that Isaiah said in chapter 53 would all be done to the Messiah), in chapter 61, the prophet says that only the Anointed One will provide the remedy for those three evils. Look at it. The Anointed One will:

...preach good news to the poor... Who needs to hear good news? Those who have been CRUSHED by the weight of this world.

...bind up the brokenhearted... Who needs their hearts mended? Those who have been REJECTED by the world.

...proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners... Who needs freedom and release? Those who have been OPPRESSED.

Crushed, rejected, oppressed – who can fix that? Only the Anointed One.

And now we come to the central issue. Now we zoom back from the details of this story and look in amazement at the artistry of the big picture. How will the Anointed One accomplish this mission? Look at it! Do you see it yet? Look!! He brings “good news,” He “binds the broken heart,” He gives “freedom” and “release” for the prisoner by CHANGING PLACES WITH THEM. This is what Paul is describing in Romans, chapter 5. If you’re keeping up with your reading through the New Testament, you read it this week. Did you see the Big Picture, or were you just plodding along looking at your feet? Theologically, it’s called, “Substitutionary Atonement.” It means, “One person taking the punishment that another has earned so that the guilty may be found innocent and the innocent found guilty.” Let me read it to you, Romans 5:18, 19:

Consequently, just as the result of one trespass was condemnation for all men, (Adam’s sin in the garden) so also the result of one act of righteousness was justification that brings life for all men (The Anointed One’s work on the cross). For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous. (Rom. 5:18-19)

If you only look at the minute-by-minute details of these twelve hours before the cross, it looks like nothing good was accomplished. An innocent man was found guilty by a kangaroo court and He was put to death. What a waste!!

But if you climb to higher ground and look at the Big Picture, you see something completely different. The innocent man voluntarily took my place, so that I, the guilty one, could be found innocent and He, the innocent One, could carry my guilt. Oh, do you see the beauty of the suffering of Christ? Listen to Is. 53:10-12 from The Message:

Still, it’s what GOD had in mind all along, to crush him with pain.

The plan was that he give himself as an offering for sin so that he’d see life come from it – life, life, and more life.

And GOD’s plan will deeply prosper through him.

Out of that terrible travail of soul,

*he'll see that it's worth it and be glad he did it.
Through what he experienced, my righteous one, my servant,
will make many "righteous ones,"
as he himself carries the burden of their sins.
Therefore I'll reward him extravagantly –
the best of everything, the highest honors –
Because he looked death in the face and didn't flinch,
because he embraced the company of the lowest.
He took on his own shoulders the sin of the many,
he took up the cause of all the black sheep.*

Twelve hours before the cross, Jesus put on your sins like a coat and it killed Him. His death was absolutely necessary. If He hadn't died, your debt wouldn't have been paid. But He did die. Thankfully, that's not the end of this story. Let's pray...

ⁱ "Sin is like Shopping with a \$1 Million Bill," PreachingToday.com