

One Alone

Luke 22:47-71

Series: The Climax of the Cross (Luke, Spring 2020)

Preaching Date: March 22, 2020

Worship: Christ Suffered for You

Key Sentence: We are never alone because Jesus suffered alone

Outline:

I. Betrayed (Luke 22:47-53)

II. Denied (Luke 22:54-62)

III. Abused (Luke 22:63-65)

IV. Condemned (Luke 22:66-71)

Luke 22:47-71 While he was still speaking, there came a crowd, and the man called Judas, one of the twelve, was leading them. He drew near to Jesus to kiss him, ⁴⁸but Jesus said to him, “Judas, would you betray the Son of Man with a kiss?” ⁴⁹And when those who were around him saw what would follow, they said, “Lord, shall we strike with the sword?” ⁵⁰And one of them struck the servant of the high priest and cut off his right ear. ⁵¹But Jesus said, “No more of this!” And he touched his ear and healed him. ⁵²Then Jesus said to the chief priests and officers of the temple and elders, who had come out against him, “Have you come out as against a robber, with swords and clubs? ⁵³When I was with you day after day in the temple, you did not lay hands on me. But this is your hour, and the power of darkness.”

⁵⁴Then they seized him and led him away, bringing him into the high priest’s house, and Peter was following at a distance. ⁵⁵And when they had kindled a fire in the middle of the courtyard and sat down together, Peter sat down among them.

⁵⁶Then a servant girl, seeing him as he sat in the light and looking closely at him, said, “This man also was with him.” ⁵⁷But he denied it, saying, “Woman, I do not know him.” ⁵⁸And a little later someone else saw him and said, “You also are one of them.” But Peter said, “Man, I am not.” ⁵⁹And after an interval of about an hour still another insisted, saying, “Certainly this man also was with him, for he too is a Galilean.” ⁶⁰But Peter said, “Man, I do not know what you are talking about.” And immediately, while he was still speaking, the rooster crowed. ⁶¹And the Lord turned and looked at Peter. And Peter remembered the saying of the Lord, how he had said to him, “Before the rooster crows today, you will deny me three times.”

⁶²And he went out and wept bitterly.

⁶³Now the men who were holding Jesus in custody were mocking him as they beat him. ⁶⁴They also blindfolded him and kept asking him, “Prophecy! Who is it that struck you?” ⁶⁵And they said many other things against him, blaspheming him.

⁶⁶When day came, the assembly of the elders of the people gathered together, both chief priests and scribes. And they led him away to their council, and they said, ⁶⁷“If you are the Christ, tell us.” But he said to them, “If I tell you, you will not believe, ⁶⁸and if I ask you, you will not answer. ⁶⁹But from now on the Son of Man shall be seated at the right hand of the power of God.” ⁷⁰So they all said, “Are you the Son of God, then?” And he said to them, “You say that I am.” ⁷¹Then they said, “What further testimony do we need? We have heard it ourselves from his own lips.”

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Last week we talked about stress, how Jesus and the disciples, on the night he was betrayed, were under tremendous stress, We also talked about our stress, and how the principles spoken and acted on by Jesus were principles we could apply to your stresses. Now, as we move further into Luke's Passion narrative, we move from stress to actual suffering. In our text for today, Luke 22:47-65, we see the beginning of suffering for Jesus, and we see how he is more and more left to suffer alone. But in his suffering he identified with us, so he's able to comfort us. Jesus understands perfectly what it feels like to stand alone. And as we see his perfect suffering, we can also experience his perfect comfort. We never really need to be alone.

The old saying is "Laugh and the world laughs with you, cry and you cry alone." In all suffering there is deep loneliness. The coronavirus isolation we are navigating has heightened that experience. Even if there are people around you who love and care for you there will to be times when you are alone with your thoughts, alone with your pain, alone with your need. Think of Martin Luther, defending the truth of salvation by grace before the council: "Here I stand. I can do no other." Dietrich Bonhoeffer, sentenced to death by Hitler for participation in a conspiracy stood before the gallows, and said: "The end of life? For me, the beginning of life." The Apostle Paul said to Timothy: "At my first defense, no one came to my support, but everyone deserted me. But the Lord stood at my side and gave me strength." Even as they stood alone they had the comfort and presence of Jesus. He comforts those in suffering, because he stood alone in his suffering. He knows what it's like.

In today's text we see Jesus standing alone: betrayed by Judas, deserted by the disciples, denied by Peter, abused by the soldiers. We begin with his betrayal, Luke 22:47-53 *While he was still speaking, there came a crowd, and the man called Judas, one of the twelve, was leading them. He drew near to Jesus to kiss him, ⁴⁸but Jesus said to him, "Judas, would you betray the Son of Man with a kiss?" ⁴⁹And when those who were around him saw what would follow, they said, "Lord, shall we strike with the sword?" ⁵⁰And one of them struck the servant of the high priest and cut off his right ear. ⁵¹But Jesus said, "No more of this!" And he touched his ear and healed him. ⁵²Then Jesus said to the chief priests and officers of the temple and elders, who had come out against him, "Have you come out as against a robber, with swords and clubs? ⁵³When I was with you day after day in the temple, you did not lay hands on me. But this is your hour, and the power of darkness."*

Jesus just finished praying in the Garden, “not my will but yours.” As he talks to his disciples, a crowd comes, led by Judas. The crowd consists of those who have actively opposed Jesus: the chief priests, officers of the temple guard, and the elders of the people. Judas brings the crowd to this quiet place where the arrest of Jesus wouldn’t cause a stir or a riot or any trouble with the people. He greets Jesus with a kiss, which, according to Matthew, was the signal to the soldiers to arrest him. A kiss was common in that culture, as in some cultures today. I saw footage of Soviet cosmonauts returning from space. They greet everyone with a kiss, from their families to Putin. Similarly, Paul instructed believers at Thessalonica to greet one another with a holy kiss, a kiss of friendship.

But this kiss Judas gives is neither holy nor friendly, and Jesus knows it. “Judas, are you betraying the Son of Man with a kiss?” Jesus knows his betrayal by men is inevitable. In Luke 9 he said “The Son of Man is going to be betrayed into the hands of men.” Yet I believe Jesus is still heartbroken. It’s tremendously painful when one who should’ve been a friend turns you over to your enemies. It wasn’t just Judas. The pain Jesus felt came from knowing how rebellious, sinful and fallen this whole human race was, which he had come to save. There was little faithfulness, justice or mercy. There was much scheming of men. Jesus began his suffering under the weight of this betrayal and this sinfulness.

If there is ever a time when the sinfulness of people around you weighs on your soul, when a friend lets you down, when those close to you show themselves to be weak, flawed and struggling, then the fact that Jesus suffered the same ways, only magnified, gives assurance he will comfort you. The book of Hebrews shows how he identified with us. “In bringing many sons to glory, it was fitting that God, for whom and through whom everything exists, should make the author of their salvation perfect through suffering. ¹¹Both the one who makes men holy and those who are made holy are of the same family. So Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers.” This is our Savior, one who purchased us through suffering. When you suffer, whether in temptation or rejection, or abuse or grievous loss, or just loneliness and isolation, he understands.

Now at this point the disciples do something that makes sense from a worldly viewpoint. They begin to wonder if this isn’t the time to take up their swords and fight. One of the disciples probably turns and asks “Lord, should we strike?” Another one - Peter, the Gospel of John tells us - simply takes a swing at one of the servants of the high priest, cutting off that servant’s ear.

But Jesus makes it clear that armed rebellion and resistance are not any part of his plan. He not only says, “No more of this” but he also reaches out and heals the man’s ear. To the very last, Jesus was compassionate and merciful.

Furthermore, having decided to go ahead with God's plan, Jesus would not now turn aside to mere human violence. "Am I leading a rebellion that you have come with swords and clubs?" He's pointing out that he hasn't instigated a rebellion, and even now has not allowed his followers to succeed in violence.

Then he says "I was with you every day in the temple courts and you didn't lay a hand on me. But this is your hour - the hour when darkness reigns." Jesus knows why they hadn't arrested him: they were afraid of his popularity. Theirs was the kind of courage that is only brave in a mob. It's ironic that Jesus has been waiting for his hour to come, yet when it does, it is not his, but theirs, the hour of darkness. This is the victory of darkness: the Son of Man, the only begotten of the Father, is betrayed, suffers, and is crucified. Can't you hear Satan chuckling? The dark lord loves the evil done in darkness.

Sometimes fiction is greater than fact in communicating this truth, movingly depicting the death of Christ through the vehicle of a fantasy world. You might want to read one of these between now and Easter with the folks you're hanging out with during the virus. "The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe" Classic, by C.S. Lewis. "Gaal the Conqueror" by John White. Also fantasy, aimed at an older audience. "Tales of the Resistance" by David and Karen Mains, in which the king is murdered by the Enchanter at burning place. These books depict the hour of darkness, this time when Jesus suffered for you. When you suffer loss, hurt or loneliness, fear or worry, you are not alone. The one who is with you has been there before. He knows what you're going through, he knows the cries of your heart. He is able and willing to comfort.

He's been through betrayal. The next section of the text shows us that he's also experienced denial. Verses 54 to 62: *Then they seized him and led him away, bringing him into the high priest's house, and Peter was following at a distance.* ⁵⁵*When they had kindled a fire in the middle of the courtyard and sat down together, Peter sat down among them.* ⁵⁶*Then a servant girl, seeing him as he sat in the light and looking closely at him, said, "This man also was with him."* ⁵⁷*But he denied it, saying, "Woman, I do not know him."* ⁵⁸*A little later someone else saw him and said, "You also are one of them." But Peter said, "Man, I am not."* ⁵⁹*After an interval of about an hour still another insisted, saying, "Certainly this man also was with him, for he too is a Galilean."* ⁶⁰*But Peter said, "Man, I do not know what you are talking about." Immediately, while he was still speaking, the rooster crowed.* ⁶¹*The Lord turned and looked at Peter, and Peter remembered the saying of the Lord, how he had said to him, "Before the rooster crows today, you will deny me three times."* ⁶²*And he went out and wept bitterly.*

Jesus is arrested and taken to the home of the high priest, or one of the high priests. You've probably noticed in these last several sections of Luke, that the high priests or chief priests were referred to in the plural. The office of chief priest was partially appointed, partially hereditary, and rotated each year. So, there were a number of past chief priests, like past presidents.. Annas was not high priest that year. Caiaphas was high priest. But Annas was the most influential of those who had been high priests. Jesus is taken to Annas and questioned by others as well, and then he is returned to the courtyard under guard.

Meanwhile, Peter has followed Jesus to that courtyard. He may have come with John, but none of the other disciples came. They were nowhere to be found. The Gospel of Mark tells us "everyone deserted him and fled." John, who apparently knew someone, went inside. The courtyard is apparently busy, maybe filled with the remnant of the crowd that had been gathered to arrest Jesus, waiting to see what would happen next. After some time they kindled a fire and sat down. Peter came and joined them. I'm sure you recognize that though Peter is about to deny any knowledge of Jesus, up to this point he and John have been the most courageous of the disciples. He is alone, an outsider.

But Jesus was even more alone as he stood before Annas. Again, let me emphasize that in suffering there are going to be times when you feel very much alone. During the hours in the hospital, the tedium of the job, the nights of lying awake, isolated even from your spouse, there is going to be loneliness. But Jesus has been there too. He knows what its like, and he wants to comfort you. That's why he calls the Spirit whom he sent, the Comforter. And all who have put their faith and trust in Jesus as Savior have this Comforter, to be with you in your moment of suffering, of aloneness, to help you, to hold you up.

But Peter is alone too and shows how not to respond to isolation. He's by the fire, trying to look anonymous, when the worst thing happens. He's recognized. A servant girl, saw him, looked twice and knew him to be one of the men who hung out with Jesus. "This man,' she says, "was with him." Peter denies it. "Woman I don't know him." As you search for an understanding of why Peter denied Jesus, remember first that Peter in the enemy camp. If you were sent someplace as a spy, your impulse wouldn't be to say "Yes, I'm a spy" to the first person who saw you. Remember, moreover, what has gone before. Jesus told Peter he would be tried by Satan, sifted like wheat, and that Jesus himself would pray for him. But Peter responded in egotism and self-sufficiency "I am ready to go with you to prison and death." That was the first step in his failure, thinking that he could remain faithful, alone, in his own strength. The second step occurred in the Garden, when instead of staying awake and praying that he would be protected from this temptation, Peter fell asleep.

The third step was probably the striking of the servant's ear in the Garden. Though Jesus healed the servant, he rebuked Peter. That probably made Peter all the more want to prove himself to Jesus. The fourth step was really coming to the courtyard at all. He's been warned. To come to the courtyard is like an alcoholic walking into a bar. So Peter set himself up, and we can learn from him. We can learn to depend on God not ourselves. We can learn to pray to avoid temptation. We can learn to flee circumstances that put us in temptation.

"Woman, I don't know him." It was the expedient thing for Peter to say. Have you ever done that, denying you know Jesus by words or by silence. In our culture where identifying with Jesus isn't really acceptable, we can easily add to his pain by denying. Peter, having denied Jesus once, is constrained to continue. A lie builds on itself. One old Veggietales was called "Larry Boy and the Fib from Outer Space." The fib starts as a tiny creature, a fig. But after it convinces someone to tell a lie, it grows. When the person tells another lie to cover the first, it grows more. It grows with each lie until it's a King Kong sized monster threatening a town but especially threatening the person who told the lies.

Peter is in that same cycle: his lie is growing and its threatening to destroy him. The text tells us someone else saw him and said: "You also are one of them." "Man, I am not!" Peter replied. Finally, about an hour later, another person spoke to those around the fire "Certainly this fellow was with him for he is a Galilean!" People from Galilee had a distinctive accent. Peter replies: "Man, I don't know what you're talking about!" He's vehement - in fact Matthew says he cursed when he said it. He was by this time responded in deep fear.

Now while this is going on the scene in the courtyard changes. Jesus had gone into the house and was questioned, but must have been brought out and guarded until the next steps were taken. Jesus seems to have been at one end of the courtyard while Peter was at the other end of the courtyard by the fire. Just when Peter spoke this third time, the rooster announced the day. Jesus turned, and across the courtyard he looked at Peter. Imagine yourself as Peter. You are already angry, fearful and on edge. Now you remember the word of the Lord, who predicted this denial. He looks at you, and your anger crumbles in a moment, to despair and bitterness and self-reproach and conviction.

But now stop imagining yourself as Peter and imagine instead the disappointment and pain of Jesus. Not only have the disciples disappeared, but Peter, his right hand man, the one present for more miracles and more teaching than any other, the one whom God had given special insight and special boldness, Peter, like a coward denies him with an oath before God. This also was the suffering of Jesus: He was betrayed, he was deserted and alone, he was denied.

Yet in his faithfulness he is not bitter against his enemies, but he sympathizes, he comforts, and even restores those who fail him. There is no better example than Peter. Jesus took him step-by-step to restoration. The process included, first, appearing to him alone shortly after the resurrection. We have no record of that appearance in Scripture, only references to it. The singer Don Francisco imagined it wonderfully: “He’s alive. He’s alive. He’s alive and I’m forgiven, heaven’s gate is opened wide.” The final step occurred by the Sea of Galilee as recorded by John. Jesus asked Peter to affirm his love and commanded him to feed his sheep, restoring him to ministry. My point is that the same care and concern Jesus showed to Peter in his failure, he will show you.

He loved you so much that he endured not just emotional and spiritual suffering, but he endured verbal and physical abuse. It begins in verses 63-65: *Now the men who were holding Jesus in custody were mocking him as they beat him. ⁶⁴They also blindfolded him and kept asking him, “Prophecy! Who is it that struck you?” ⁶⁵And they said many other things against him, blaspheming him.*

Imagine the absurdity of this situation. The people who are doing this beating and making these insults, are sinful, fallen, needy human beings whom Jesus had come to save. By any moral standard, they are petty tyrants, abusive, misusing the power they have been given by the state and their leaders, masochistically taking pleasure in the unjust pain of another. But these petty torturers, are not just beating some guilty prisoner. They are beating an innocent man, who moreover is the messiah, and who moreover is the Son of God, and who as God the Son, was their creator, and would be, if they had believed in Him, their redeemer. Let me put it more bluntly: God stands passively before vile sinners, and allows them to beat him, mock him, insult him, abuse him.

What’s happening at that moment is not as extreme as what happened on the cross, but it may be for that very reason, more painful, more demeaning. That, may be why Peter emphasizes this moment when he later writes about Christ. He says: “It is commendable if a man bears up under the pain of unjust suffering because he is conscious of God. . . . To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps. He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth. When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly.” This is the suffering of Christ. Yes, the cross, certainly the cross, but this sore abuse and scorn is also the suffering of Christ, and he did it for us, he did it because we deserved it, he did it so we would not have to suffer. It was through this suffering, and all that followed, that he paid the debt that we owed, paid the debt of our sin, so that in him we might find forgiveness, restoration, and eternal life.

When you are troubled by the sinfulness of those around you, remember that he was betrayed. When you are alone with your tortured thoughts, remember that he was deserted. When you are let down by the failures of others, remember that he was denied. When you are in pain, remember that he was abused.

Finally, he was unjustly condemned. Jesus understands perfectly what it feels like to stand alone. When we see his perfect suffering we can know his perfect comfort. Verses 66-71 *When day came, the assembly of the elders of the people gathered together, both chief priests and scribes. And they led him away to their council, and they said,* ⁶⁷*“If you are the Christ, tell us.” But he said to them, “If I tell you, you will not believe,* ⁶⁸*and if I ask you, you will not answer.* ⁶⁹*But from now on the Son of Man shall be seated at the right hand of the power of God.”* ⁷⁰*So they all said, “Are you the Son of God, then?” And he said to them, “You say that I am.”* ⁷¹*Then they said, “What further testimony do we need? We have heard it ourselves from his own lips.”*

It's now daybreak on Friday of Easter Week. By mid-afternoon, Christ will be dead. His first formal hearing is before the council of the Jews, the Sanhedrin. Their accusations, like all those in the Gospels, are unjust. Yet some of them, while unjust are at the same time true. The first charge by this group, is that Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah. The Jew had learned of the Messiah in Daniel, and in Psalms. There was tremendous expectation that Messiah would soon come. And the Jews expected that the one who came as Messiah would reign on David's throne. God had promised David “When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom.” This is not Solomon. The prophets repeat the promise centuries later. Isaiah 16:5 “then a throne will be established in steadfast love. On it will sit in faithfulness in the tent of David one who judges, seeks justice and is swift to do righteousness.”

They expected this coming king to have universal dominion. Daniel 7: “I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him. ¹⁴And to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed.” This is what they were looking for, and this is what they felt they had not seen in Jesus. He was not a conquering king. So, when they ask ‘Are you the Christ’ they expect him to say yes, but on that basis they expect to condemn him as a blasphemer and as a false prophet according to the law. It is unthinkable to them that an affirmative answer could be anything other than a lie or madness, because he so obviously fails to meet their expectations.

It is these expectations that cause Jesus to reply as he does: “If I tell you, you will not believe, and if I ask you, you will not answer.” They wouldn’t believe him, but if he asked them how he’d failed to meet their expectations, they wouldn’t be able to answer the question. Jesus, however, doesn’t really leave any ambiguity. He says: “From now on the Son of Man will be seated at the right hand of God.” It couldn’t be any more clear. He calls himself the Son of Man. It was the Son of Man, in Daniel 7, who was to be given authority, glory and sovereign power. He also claims that he will sit at God’s right hand. Back in Luke chapter 20 Jesus had pointed out to these very leaders that the Christ would sit at God’s right hand. “David himself declares in the Book of Psalms: “The Lord said to my Lord: "Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet." Jesus says “I’m the Son of Man, so I’m the Messiah.”

The Jewish leaders understand this inference. They say to him: “Are you then the Son of God?” He answers: “You say that I am.” That’s not as ambiguous as that translation makes it sound. You could translate this “You are right in saying that I am” with better clarity. They are right. That’s the incredible thing about this passage. He is the Son of God. He is the Messiah. The charge against him is true, and there is no reason he should be condemned for it. It is only their pride in their own position, and their false expectations that lead them to label him a madman and a liar. If they would accept as truth his claim to be Son of God and Messiah, they would confess him - not condemn him. And that’s the same choice we face. As C.S. Lewis has said, we can confess him as Lord, or condemn him as a liar or a lunatic. If we accept his claim to be the Son of God and the Messiah, then we will see in him not a lie, not madness, but love, the love of one who came to save and rescue.

So what have we seen? Jesus suffered alone, in every way a human being can suffer. He suffered betrayal, he suffered denial, he suffered physical humiliation and abuse, and he was condemned unjustly. All this was for us. It was part of the suffering that brought us peace. So now when we suffer, in any of these ways or in the lesser ways we sometimes classify as suffering, we can know that the one who stood alone now stands with us. The one who received no comfort comforts us. The one nobody spoke for speaks for us. The one no one suffered with suffers with us and for us. Praise God.