

# SERMON NOTES - Easter 2023 - The Valley of the shadow of Death

These notes are designed to be read along with the associated audio / video message

*Matthew 26:17–28; Mark 14:22–16; Luke 22:14–24; John 13–21*

## Jesus' Valley of the shadow of Death -

All of us have gone through difficult times, when we felt we could not cope and that it would overwhelm us. One of the best descriptions of this type of experience is "The valley of the shadow of Death". Psalm 23 says we will go through this, and the Good Shepherd goes through with us to keep us safe and to bring us out the other side.

The last 24 hours of Jesus' life on earth were excruciating.

1. First He had a final, farewell supper with His closest disciples and friends. They prayed, sang, ate, talked and He washed His disciples' feet.

2. Then He went to the Mount of Olives and the garden of Gethsemane where He prayed for several hours:

Luk 22:43-44 NKJV - "43 Then an angel appeared to Him from heaven, strengthening Him. 44 And being in agony, He prayed more earnestly. Then His sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground."

3. He was arrested and tortured, both physically and emotionally for several hours and, having not eaten or drunk or slept at all He was crucified and after 6 hours on the cross He died at 3pm and was buried. But on the third day He rose again and lives forever as Lord of all creation.

## Hard times will happen

Jhn 16:33 NKJV - "33 "These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.""

## Lessons from Jesus' Hard time

- Fellowship, family, friends and food will help
  - Practically - Eat. Rest. Have fun. Take time to look after yourself.
  - Relationships are key - especially Christian relationships. Praying with others. Sharing with others. Communion is a picture of this.
  - But even Judas was there - there can be pain in these too until we get to Heaven
  - Get into fellowship.
- Pray
  - Pray one hour
  - Avoid temptation and get strength
  - Be honest and real - compare David, Psa 58:6 NKJV - "6 Break their teeth in their mouth, O God! Break out the fangs of the young lions, O LORD!"
  - Jesus, the Son of God, needed to pray -
    - Often - Luk 5:16 NKJV - "16 So He Himself often withdrew into the wilderness and prayed."
    - He prayed to Make Decisions - Luk 6:12-13
    - He prayed when Troubled - Mat 14:13, 23, 25
    - He prayed with His Close Friends - and He had supernatural encounters there - Mat 17:1-2 NKJV - "1 Now after six days Jesus took Peter, James, and John his brother, led them up on a high mountain by themselves; 2 and He was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and His clothes became as white as the light."
  - Mat 26:36-46 NKJV - "36 Then Jesus came with them to a place called Gethsemane, and said to the disciples, "Sit here while I go and pray over there." 37 And He took with Him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and He began to be sorrowful and deeply distressed. 38 Then He said to them, "My soul is

exceedingly sorrowful, even to death. Stay here and watch with Me." 39 He went a little farther and fell on His face, and prayed, saying, "O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will." 40 Then He came to the disciples and found them sleeping, and said to Peter, "What? Could you not watch with Me one hour? 41 "Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." 42 Again, a second time, He went away and prayed, saying, "O My Father, if this cup cannot pass away from Me unless I drink it, Your will be done." 43 And He came and found them asleep again, for their eyes were heavy. 44 So He left them, went away again, and prayed the third time, saying the same words. 45 Then He came to His disciples and said to them, "Are you still sleeping and resting? Behold, the hour is at hand, and the Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of sinners. 46 "Rise, let us be going. See, My betrayer is at hand.""

- God works all things for Good - it will result in glory in the end  
Heb 12:2 NKJV - "2 looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God."

Jesus' death - the harshest defeat - became the greatest victory ever.

He can and does use all things for good in us and through us.

We must rely on Him and give it all to Him. He will lead us through and make it beautiful.

Some other verses referred to in this talk:

Luk 6:22-23 NKJV - "22 Blessed are you when men hate you, And when they exclude you, And revile you, and cast out your name as evil, For the Son of Man's sake. 23 Rejoice in that day and leap for joy! For indeed your reward is great in heaven, For in like manner their fathers did to the prophets."

Mat 10:22, 24-26 NKJV - "22 "And you will be hated by all for My name's sake. But he who endures to the end will be saved." 24 "A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master. 25 "It is enough for a disciple that he be like his teacher, and a servant like his master. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more will they call those of his household! 26 "Therefore do not fear them. For there is nothing covered that will not be revealed, and hidden that will not be known."

Mat 24:9, 12-13 NKJV - "9 "Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for My name's sake. ... 12 "And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold. 13 "But he who endures to the end shall be saved."

Job 42:12 NKJV - "12 Now the LORD blessed the latter days of Job more than his beginning; for he had fourteen thousand sheep, six thousand camels, one thousand yoke of oxen, and one thousand female donkeys."

Psa 23:1-6 NKJV - "1 A Psalm of David. The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. 2 He makes me to lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside the still waters. 3 He restores my soul; He leads me in the paths of righteousness For His name's sake. 4 Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; For You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me. 5 You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; You anoint my head with oil; My cup runs over. 6 Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me All the days of my life; And I will dwell in the house of the LORD Forever."

Isa 53:5 NKJV - "5 But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, And by His stripes we are healed."

Phi 2:5-8 ESV - "5 Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, 6 who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, 7 but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. 8 And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross."

# Small group discussion guidelines

Remember that the aim of the small group is to foster discussion and community, rather than for the leader or one individual to preach to everyone.

**1** - Often an **Icebreaker question** is a great way to start discussion. You could ask a question like:

- What were the highs or lows of your week?
- What is your earliest memory?
- If you had to describe yourself as one animal, what would it be and why?
- What is your favourite type of holiday destination?

**2** - Next, **read the passage**. You can ask various people in the group to help by each reading a portion of the passage.

**3** - These are the **main questions** to ask to understand the passage:

- What is the main message of this talk / passage?  
Allow discussion and even diverging from the main topic if it is helpful.
- What did you find particularly helpful or challenging?
- What did you not fully understand?
- What can we do PRACTICALLY in response to this teaching?

**4** - Close by offering **prayer** for each person.

- Ask, "how can we pray for you / each other now?"
- Ask each person to pray or you, as leader, pray for each person's need

**The blessing** and opportunity in Small Groups is the possibility for...

- Each person to contribute and/or ask questions,
- People to pray for each other and to ask for prayer,
- People to learn to use and grow in their gifts,
- Community, friendship and intimacy in relationships.

God Bless you in this very important ministry.