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The Gospel of Matthew

The Sheep Abandon the Shepherd

July 26, 2020

Sermon Text: Matthew 26:30-75

Scripture Reading: Isaiah 52:7 – 53:12

One of the major themes of this Gospel of Matthew is that Jesus is God’s anointed King, the Messiah, and that it is through Him that the Kingdom of God will be established. Matthew repeatedly shows us that it is in Christ that the Old Testament prophets’ words are fulfilled, and thus we know that Jesus is in fact the Son of God, the King of kings.

Matthew 2:17 ESV Then was fulfilled what was spoken by the prophet Jeremiah:

Matthew 2:23 ESV And he went and

lived in a city called Nazareth, so that what was spoken by the prophets might be fulfilled, that he would be called a Nazarene.

Matthew 13:14 ESV Indeed, in their case the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled that says: ““You will indeed hear but never understand, and you will indeed see but never perceive.”

Matthew 27:9 ESV Then was fulfilled what had been spoken by the prophet Jeremiah, saying, “And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of him on whom a price had been set by some of the sons of Israel,

And you have it here:

Matthew 26:31 ESV Then Jesus said to them, “You will all fall away because of me this night. **For it is written**, ‘I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered.’

We need to take the time to read through the rest of chapter 26, beginning at verse 30, and then I want to show you how even Peter’s and the

rest of the disciples' desertion of Jesus upon His arrest was all part of God's plan from eternity past to give us this perfect salvation we now enjoy. *When everything looks as if it is out of control, it isn't.*"

Matthew 26:30-75 ESV And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives. (31) Then Jesus said to them, "You will all fall away because of me this night. **For it is written, 'I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered.'** (32) But after I am raised up, I will go before you to Galilee."

(33) Peter answered him, "Though they all fall away because of you, I will never fall away." (34) Jesus said to him, "Truly, I tell you, this very night, before the rooster crows, you will deny me three times." (35) Peter said to him, "Even if I must die with you, I will not deny you!" **And all the disciples said the same.**

(36) Then Jesus went with them to a place called Gethsemane, and he said to his disciples, "Sit here, while I go over there and pray." (37) And taking with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, he began to be sorrowful and troubled. (38) Then he said to them, "My soul is very sorrowful, even to death; remain here, and watch with

me." (39) And going a little farther he fell on his face and prayed, saying, "My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will." (40) And he came to the disciples and found them sleeping. And he said to Peter, "So, could you not watch with me one hour? (41) **Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation.** The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."

(42) Again, for the second time, he went away and prayed, "My Father, if this cannot pass unless I drink it, your will be done." (43) And again he came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were heavy. (44) So, leaving them again, he went away and prayed for the third time, saying the same words again.

(45) Then he came to the disciples and said to them, "Sleep and take your rest later on. See, the hour is at hand, and the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. (46) Rise, let us be going; see, my betrayer is at hand."

(47) While he was still speaking, Judas came, one of the twelve, and with him a great crowd with swords and clubs, from the chief priests and the elders of the people. (48) Now the betrayer had given them a sign, saying, "The one I will kiss is the man; seize

him.” (49) And he came up to Jesus at once and said, “Greetings, Rabbi!” And he kissed him. (50) Jesus said to him, “Friend, do what you came to do.” Then they came up and laid hands on Jesus and seized him.

(51) And behold, one of those who were with Jesus stretched out his hand and drew his sword and struck the servant of the high priest and cut off his ear. (52) Then Jesus said to him, “Put your sword back into its place. For all who take the sword will perish by the sword. (53) Do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father, and he will at once send me more than twelve legions of angels? (54) **But how then should the Scriptures be fulfilled**, that it must be so?”

(55) At that hour Jesus said to the crowds, “Have you come out as against a robber, with swords and clubs to capture me? Day after day I sat in the temple teaching, and you did not seize me. (56) **But all this has taken place that the Scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled.**” Then all the disciples left him and fled.

(57) Then those who had seized Jesus led him to Caiaphas the high priest, where the scribes and the elders had gathered. (58) And Peter was following him at a distance, as far as the

courtyard of the high priest, and going inside he sat with the guards to see the end.

(59) Now the chief priests and the whole council were seeking false testimony against Jesus that they might put him to death, (60) but they found none, though many false witnesses came forward. At last two came forward (61) and said, “This man said, ‘I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to rebuild it in three days.’” (62) And the high priest stood up and said, “Have you no answer to make? What is it that these men testify against you?” (63) But Jesus remained silent. And the high priest said to him, “I adjure you by the living God, tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God.” (64) Jesus said to him, “You have said so. But I tell you, from now on you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power and coming on the clouds of heaven.”

(65) Then the high priest tore his robes and said, “He has uttered blasphemy. What further witnesses do we need? You have now heard his blasphemy. (66) What is your judgment?” They answered, “He deserves death.” (67) Then they spit in his face and struck him. And some slapped him, (68) saying, “Prophecy to us, you Christ! Who is it that struck

you?”

(69) Now Peter was sitting outside in the courtyard. And a servant girl came up to him and said, “You also were with Jesus the Galilean.” (70) But he denied it before them all, saying, “I do not know what you mean.” (71) And when he went out to the entrance, another servant girl saw him, and she said to the bystanders, “This man was with Jesus of Nazareth.” (72) And again he denied it with an oath: “I do not know the man.” (73) After a little while the bystanders came up and said to Peter, “Certainly you too are one of them, for your accent betrays you.” (74) Then he began to invoke a curse on himself and to swear, “I do not know the man.” And immediately the rooster crowed. (75) And Peter remembered the saying of Jesus, “Before the rooster crows, you will deny me three times.” And he went out and wept bitterly.

I am not going to have time to elaborate on this important application, but I encourage all of us to mark it down well – listen to it again:

When everything looks like it is out of control, it isn't.

The disciples thought everything had gone wrong – it hadn't. In fact, even

their desertion of Jesus at this time was a part of God's plan for Jesus to go to the cross. All of Satan's strategies and attacks through Judas and his sifting of Peter – all of it was under the perfect direction of God. And this is true today as it was then. God is sovereign. He decrees everything that comes to pass. Covid viruses don't take Him by surprise. Evil rulers are used by Him for His purposes – they can do nothing unless He grants it. Just as all of these events so long ago moved toward the cross for our redemption, so everything at this present time is working in God's hand to bring about the culmination of His kingdom and the completion of our redemption in Christ. Every false teacher, every wolf in sheep's clothing, every wickedness in high places, every betrayal, every scheme and plot planned in dark places – all of it is marching toward Christ's final return to judge all men and establish His kingdom.

The Sheep Abandon the Shepherd

What I wanted us to look at now is what Jesus said to His disciples shortly before His arrest:

(26:31) Then Jesus said to them, “You will all fall away because of me this night. **For it is written, ‘I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep of the**

flock will be scattered.’ (32) But after I am raised up, I will go before you to Galilee.”

Jesus was quoting from Zechariah 13:7 but as is almost always the case when the OT is cited in the New Testament, we are meant to remember the larger context in which the words quoted appear. That is the message Jesus wanted the disciples to understand. Let me show you:

Zechariah 12:10-14 ESV “And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and pleas for mercy, so that, when they look on me, on him whom they have pierced, they shall mourn for him, as one mourns for an only child, and weep bitterly over him, as one weeps over a firstborn.

(11) On that day the mourning in Jerusalem will be as great as the mourning for Hadad-rimmon in the plain of Megiddo. (12) The land shall mourn, each family by itself: the family of the house of David by itself, and their wives by themselves; the family of the house of Nathan by itself, and their wives by themselves; (13) the family of the house of Levi by itself, and their wives by themselves; the family of the Shimeites by itself, and their wives by

themselves; (14) and all the families that are left, each by itself, and their wives by themselves.

Zechariah 13:1-9 ESV “On that day there shall be a fountain opened for the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, to cleanse them from sin and uncleanness.

(2) “And on that day, declares the LORD of hosts, I will cut off the names of the idols from the land, so that they shall be remembered no more. And also I will remove from the land the prophets and the spirit of uncleanness.

(3) And if anyone again prophesies, his father and mother who bore him will say to him, ‘You shall not live, for you speak lies in the name of the LORD.’ And his father and mother who bore him shall pierce him through when he prophesies. (4) “On that day every prophet will be ashamed of his vision when he prophesies. He will not put on a hairy cloak in order to deceive, (5) but he will say, ‘I am no prophet, I am a worker of the soil, for a man sold me in my youth.’

(6) And if one asks him, ‘What are these wounds on your back?’ he will say, ‘**The wounds I received in the house of my friends.**’ (7) “**Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, against**

the man who stands next to me,” declares the LORD of hosts. “Strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered; I will turn my hand against the little ones.

(8) In the whole land, declares the LORD, two thirds shall be cut off and perish, and one third shall be left alive. (9) And I will put this third into the fire, and refine them as one refines silver, and test them as gold is tested. **They will call upon my name, and I will answer them. I will say, ‘They are my people’; and they will say, ‘The LORD is my God.’”**

Now certainly there is more here that I do not understand, but we can definitely get the big picture which Jesus was pointing the disciples to when He quoted from this passage.

Here is this prophesy of the shepherd being struck and the sheep scattered. Of His betrayal in the “house of his friends.” But what is the main message that is bound up in these verses with all of this description of the Messiah’s betrayal and death? *Salvation. Repentance. Cleansing from sin. The end of false prophets and idolatry.* And particularly – “*I will say, ‘They are my people,’ and they will say, ‘The Lord is my God.’”*

*When it all looks out of control, it isn’t. When the Shepherd is abandoned, when He is betrayed and wounded in the house of His friends, when Jesus goes to the cross, the result is the salvation of the true Israel, the elect of God. The achievement of that theme that we can trace from Genesis to Revelation, “*they shall be my people, and I shall be their God. And I will dwell among them.*”*

Do you see this in Zechariah’s words?

- Zechariah 12:10 ESV “And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and pleas for mercy, so that, when they look on me, on him whom they have pierced, they shall mourn for him, as one mourns for an only child, and weep bitterly over him, as one weeps over a firstborn.
- Zechariah 13:1 ESV “On that day there shall be a fountain opened for the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, to cleanse them from sin and uncleanness.
- Zechariah 13:2 ESV “And on that day, declares the LORD of hosts, I will cut off the names of the idols from the land, so that they shall be remembered no

more. And also I will remove from the land the prophets and the spirit of uncleanness.

- Zechariah 13:9 ESV And I will put this third into the fire, and refine them as one refines silver, and test them as gold is tested. They will call upon my name, and I will answer them. I will say, ‘They are my people’; and they will say, ‘The LORD is my God.’”

This is nothing less than the new creation, the new covenant, the salvation of the true Israel that Jeremiah promised:

Jeremiah 31:33 ESV For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

But for all of this to come about, what was going to be required? The very thing that the disciples still did not see – the Shepherd had to be struck. Christ had to go to the cross to satisfy the perfect justice of God for our sins. Apart from that, there would never be salvation.

In those darkest of days as the cross loomed closer and closer, as Jesus sweat drops of blood while the disciples carelessly slept, as all of them fled when Jesus was arrested and Peter flat out denied Him, *nothing happened that surprised God. In fact, it was all ordained by God for our good.*

People very often cite these words when discouraging and fearful times come upon them – but listen to them again only this time with the cross in mind:

Romans 8:28-30 ESV And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. (29) For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. (30) And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.

Do you see it? All things work together for the good of Christ’s people – *and that includes especially the cross and all of those seemingly defeatist events that took place just before it.* What is the ”good” it was all working together

toward? And who was “working it together”? It is the Lord Himself orchestrating and directing every detail, decreeing everything that comes to pass, for our calling, our justification, and our coming glorification.

Christ would restore Peter. The disciples would return to Him – He prayed for them. And He will see us through every dark day as well to bring each of us safely home.