

JESUS PREDICTS HIS BETRAYAL

Luke 9:37-45

Key Verse: 9:44

“Listen carefully to what I am about to tell you: The Son of Man is going to be betrayed into the hands of men.”

In the last passage we glimpsed the glorious transfigured Jesus. His face shone like the sun and his clothes became as bright as a flash of lightning. Jesus is holy God Almighty. His glorious image is so blazing bright that it melts all evil images. When we see glorious Jesus, we can live a life of holy mission daily. Shepherdess Tami was very sleepy spiritually. But she caught a glimpse of Jesus’ glory. Then her soul revived; she even had a vision to pioneer UIC medical school—filling three pews with Sunday worshipers—coworking with Sarah and Maria. In this adulterous and sinful generation, some people are ashamed of Jesus. But when Jesus’ glorious image comes into our hearts, we become proud of Jesus and willing to proclaim his words. May God help us to see Jesus’ glorious image and live as one-to-one Bible teachers.

In today’s passage Jesus comes down from the mountain and confronts the fallen world. Jesus heals a boy who was tortured by an evil spirit. In doing so, Jesus laments over the unbelief of the entire generation. Then Jesus predicts his betrayal to his disciples. Let’s listen carefully to Jesus’ words. He has something important to tell us.

First, Jesus comes down from the mountain (37-40).

Look at verse 37. “The next day, when they came down from the mountain, a large crowd met him.” Jesus, together with Peter, John and James, had been gone from the crowd of people for just one day. Yet the crowd of people already felt harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Jesus had been such a good shepherd for them. He had healed their sick one by one, driven out evil spirits and preached the good news of the kingdom of God. They wanted to see Jesus’ face. They wanted to hear Jesus’ voice. As they glimpsed Jesus coming down the mountain, they were so happy and ran to meet him. They felt free to come to Jesus. They felt free to bring their problems to Jesus. They did not give Jesus five minutes to rest. No sooner had Jesus returned than someone made an urgent request of him.

Look at verses 38-39. “A man in the crowd called out, ‘Teacher, I beg you to look at my son, for he is my only child. A spirit seizes him and he suddenly screams; it throws him into convulsions so that he foams at the mouth. It scarcely ever leaves him and is destroying him.’” This father was desperate. His only son was suffering from demon possession. When the demon came upon the boy, it “seized” him. The boy did not do what he wanted to do; he did exactly what the demon wanted him to do. To the boy, this was an ongoing nightmare. He never knew when the demon would seize him. In terrified apprehension, he could only scream when it happened. Then he began to have convulsions: his muscles contracted, his face contorted, and he rolled on the ground, foaming at the mouth. This boy was most loved by his father. His father must have wanted him to study well and be a great and influential man. Maybe his father made him a nice study room with a good desk, many reference materials, a library of classics and his own computer. But when the demon seized him, it made him crash into everything until he was bruised and bloodied and his new study room was ruined. In unutterable loneliness and helplessness, the boy would cry, “Daddy, I don’t want them to come back.” His father wanted to help, but was helpless before the demon. To both father and son, it was unbearable. And it was happening more and more often. To make matters worse, Jesus’ nine disciples failed to drive out the spirit; the demon had defeated them completely. How discouraged they must have been. What a pitiful scene for Jesus to find upon his return from the mountain.

Second, Jesus laments over the unbelieving generation (41).

What did Jesus do? Look at verse 41. “‘O unbelieving and perverse generation,’ Jesus replied, ‘how long shall I stay with you and put up with you? Bring your son here.’” Jesus’ first words were, “O unbelieving and perverse generation.” To Jesus’ eyes, such a thing should not have happened. To Jesus’ eyes, the terrible suffering of the demon-possessed child was the fault of the entire generation and was caused by its unbelief. Unbelief grieves Jesus and causes Jesus to lament. We must realize the seriousness of unbelief, not only personally, but on a national level as well.

Strangely, to many, unbelief does not seem to be a serious sin problem. Many agree that murder, adultery, stealing and lying are wrong, but regard unbelief as a personal preference under the guise of “human rights.” But from Jesus’ point of view, unbelief is a most grievous sin, for unbelief is at the root of all the sinsicknesses that pervert mankind. That is why the unbelieving are prominent on the list of those who go to hell (Rev 21:8). Some think that unbelief is the result of intellectual enlightenment. But it is not. Unbelief is a deliberate decision to cheat one’s conscience and ignore the existence of God. Romans 1:21 says, “For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him....” All men know in their consciences that God exists and that their highest duty is to God. But they deliberately suppress the knowledge of God to enjoy sinful perversion. After the events of September 11, 2001, suddenly Americans everywhere were calling on the name of God. Even television journalists, who never call on the name of God, began to call on the name of God. People know that God exists, but deliberately ignore God to pursue sinful perversion. This is unbelief.

When a society lives in unbelief, it forfeits the blessing and protection of God and becomes perverse (Ro 1:21-32). It degenerates day by day, in a rapid downward spiral until it is totally corrupted and beyond hope. Sodom and Gomorrah became such a society in which unspeakable sins against God were committed on a daily basis with no restraint (Gen 19:5). Finally God destroyed them with fire from heaven (Gen 19:24). In America, we have suffered in an unbelieving atmosphere for the last forty years. For example, there is the degeneration of the public schools. In 1963, the Supreme Court of the United States decided to forbid Bible reading and prayer in public schools. Before 1963, prayer and Bible reading were common in our schools and there was a “believing atmosphere.” Then, the worst disciplinary problems were chewing gum in class, passing notes behind the teacher’s back, and talking out of turn. But since the Supreme Court forbade public acknowledgment of God in our schools, an “unbelieving atmosphere” has developed. Now, to our tragic regret, the discipline problems in our schools include assault and battery, sexual immorality, organized drug running, murder and so on. The Columbine High School massacre may be the worst incident. We must realize that from God’s point of view, all these tragic events are the result of the unbelief of this generation in America. This unbelief grieves Jesus most. This unbelief makes Jesus lament, “O unbelieving generation....”

It is important for us to realize our national sin of unbelief and to take responsibility for it before God. We must fight against our national sin of unbelief that is at the root of rampant demon possession and all the other tragedies that have befallen us. How can we do this? We must repent on a national level until God gives us faith to overcome the unbelieving atmosphere. We must pray that God may make America a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. The other day, we gathered at O’Hare Airport to pray for our journey team going to Russia. We sang, “Onward Christian Soldiers” to express our faith in God and to encourage our journey team. In this way, we helped make a believing atmosphere at the airport. But one young man was reluctant to participate. He seemed to be ashamed. He is a candidate to be shamed by Jesus. On the other hand, there is a girl in high school who reveals her faith in God in an unbelieving atmosphere. When she eats lunch in the cafeteria, she prays to God very sincerely, even though many of her peers treat her with contempt. Surely, Jesus will honor her and bless her abundantly. We must remember that unbelief grieves our Lord Jesus Christ and is the root of all the tragedies that befall our nation. We must repent our national sin of unbelief and pray for America to restore a believing atmosphere to be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.

Third, Jesus heals the boy (42-43a).

After lamenting over the unbelief of the generation, Jesus called for the boy to be brought to him. Even while the boy was coming, the demon threw him to the ground in a convulsion. Probably the demon was overconfident after defeating the nine disciples. Anyway, demons never give up without a fight. But Jesus rebuked the evil spirit, healed the boy and gave him back to his father (42). To the boy, it was the most wonderful deliverance. His terrible torture was over. The demon was cast out, never to return. He was healed from demon possession and all of its consequences. Praise Jesus! To the father, to see his son happy and healthy was the best thing that could happen. This father must have wept with joy and gratitude. Jesus saved his son and gave him back to him. Praise Jesus! The people in the crowd witnessed this event. They had been greatly disappointed in Jesus’ disciples, thinking that demon power was stronger than the disciples’ faith. But when Jesus drove out the demon, they could see God’s victory over the power of evil spirits. And they were all amazed at the greatness of God. Once again we see that at Jesus’ rebuke, evil spirits must evacuate. We must have faith in Jesus, that Jesus can drive out evil spirits from the hearts of our sheep.

Fourth, the Son of Man is going to be betrayed (43b-45).

People in the crowd were marveling at all that Jesus did. The three top disciples must have said to the other disciples, "You guys are very fortunate that we came back." The nine disciples had to swallow their humiliation, but they were happy that Jesus had restored spiritual order and revealed God's glory. Jesus' popularity reached another all-time high. The disciples must have felt that days of prosperity and success, like those that had marked the Galilean ministry, were coming one after another. They looked forward to going around with Jesus and doing great work of God endlessly in the future. They might have been singing, "Happy days are here again...."

In the midst of the celebration, Jesus took his disciples aside and spoke to them personally. Look at verse 44. "Listen carefully to what I am about to tell you: The Son of Man is going to be betrayed into the hands of men." When Jesus came down the mountain, he really wanted to speak to his disciples. But he was diverted to heal the boy who had been demon possessed. As soon as he finished, Jesus took his disciples aside to speak to them seriously. Jesus was focused on his mission to give his life for the sin of the world. Jesus' decision to accept God's will had been made and it was confirmed on the mountain of transfiguration. Now Jesus wanted to help his disciples prepare for what was coming. Jesus did not allow them to enjoy the popularity of the crowd or the victory over the demon. To Jesus, it was very urgent for them to recognize that his Galilean ministry was over and that he was going to Jerusalem to die for the sin of the world.

Look at verse 44 again. "Listen carefully to what I am about to tell you: The Son of Man is going to be betrayed into the hands of men." Jesus did not talk in detail about his suffering, death and resurrection, as he had previously (9:21). Here, Jesus simply introduced the first element of his passion, his betrayal. He wanted them to digest the fact of his betrayal as the first step to accept his suffering, death and resurrection. Sill, it was not easy to talk about his betrayal. It meant that one of the Twelve, Judas Iscariot, who would betray him to the religious leaders. As we know, the pain of betrayal is the most difficult to overcome. In the movie, "Braveheart," William Wallace is portrayed as a very courageous man who can endure pain and continue to fight to the end. When he is being tortured to death, he shouts with all his remaining strength, "Freedom!" But there is one event that he could not endure. It was the betrayal of the prince of his own people. Betrayal broke his heart completely. Betrayal is the most difficult pain for any human being to endure. Betrayal is not the work of an enemy. Betrayal is the work of a loved one. Betrayal is only possible where there is love and trust. Jesus, the holy Son of God, was going to be betrayed by a most loved and trusted one.

Though Jesus is in very nature God, he came to this world as a man. He called twelve disciples and gave them the special privilege to be with him and be raised as apostles. He loved and trusted them intimately. Of course, he knew the weaknesses and sinful nature of each one. Yet he loved and trusted them unconditionally. Jesus knew he would be betrayed by one of them and abandoned by all of them. Yet he continued to love and trust them to the end. Jesus was willing to bear the pain of betrayal and even to die on the cross for their sins and ours.

It was time for Jesus' disciples to listen carefully to Jesus' words and to struggle spiritually with the meaning of Jesus' betrayal. It was time to open their spiritual eyes and see what Jesus was doing. It was time to make personal decisions of faith to follow Jesus. How did they respond? Verse 45 says, "But they did not understand what this meant. It was hidden from them, so that they did not grasp it, and they were afraid to ask him about it." It was hidden from them because they were afraid to think about Jesus' betrayal. They were afraid to let the truth of the gospel penetrate into their hearts. Ultimately, their fear came from the fear of death. Their fear came from reluctance to give up earthly glory. Jesus knew it would be hard for his disciples to accept. But Jesus predicted his betrayal clearly. Jesus teaches the truth even when his disciples cannot understand it and are afraid to ask about it.

Jesus wanted his disciples to examine their hearts on the way to Jerusalem and repent of their worldly dreams and accept his suffering, death and resurrection. Jesus wanted them to make personal and definite decisions of faith to commit their lives to him no matter what would happen. It was the only way for them to save their lives. A decision of faith is different than intellectual assent. A decision of faith is an act of the will to choose to obey God in detail though it involves suffering or even death. A decision of faith can be made only through much struggle in prayer. What Jesus' disciples really needed was to make a decision of faith on the road to Jerusalem.

Likewise, we really need to make decisions of faith to follow Jesus. We can follow Jesus as part of the crowd for a while. We can enjoy the spiritual atmosphere of Jesus' ministry and the wonderful work of God Jesus does with

amazement for the time being. But sooner or later, each of us must make a personal decision of faith to follow Jesus. Jesus said, "For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will save it" (9:24).

In this passage we learn that we must repent our national sin of unbelief and pray for America to be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. Most of all, Jesus wants us to accept his grace of being betrayed for us and to make personal decisions of faith to follow him.