



LESSONS for LIFE

GOOD FRIDAY, April 10th 2009 7:00 p.m.

**8 Life Changing Messages from Jesus:
FROM LOSS TO TRUST**

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It was almost Passover. The chief priests and the scribes were looking for a way to put Jesus to death for they were afraid of his influence on the people. Darkness entered into Judas called Iscariot – who was one of the twelve. He conferred with the chief priests and the temple police about how he might betray Jesus to them. They were greatly pleased and they agreed to give Judas money; and so he consented and began to look for an opportunity to betray Jesus. And then came the day of unleavened bread on which the Passover lamb had to be sacrificed. Jesus said to Peter and John, “Go, and prepare the Passover meal for us that we might all share in the celebration. When you enter the city a man carrying a jar of water will meet you. Follow him into the house and say to the owner, ‘The Teacher told us to ask you, where is the guest house where I shall eat the Passover with my disciples?’ And he will show you a large upper room furnished and made ready for us. Make preparations there.” Peter and John went and found everything that Jesus had said it would be and they prepared the Passover meal. Jesus took his place at the table and everyone joined him: men, women, children, his family and friends. Together they shared in the celebration. During the meal Jesus got up from the table, took off his outer robe and tied a towel around himself, poured water into a basin, and began to wash the disciples’ feet and to wipe them with the towel. After the meal was over Jesus took a loaf of bread and after giving thanks he broke it and gave it to all who were there and gave it to all who were there and said, “This is my body which is given for you and whenever you eat it remember me. This cup is to be shared by all of you. It is my very life essence. Tonight one of you will betray me – one that is here and has shared this meal with me.” The disciples began to ask each other and to wonder which one of them could do this. An argument also arose among them as to which one of them was to be regarded as the greatest among them but Jesus said to them, “The rulers and officials of the gentiles lord their power over people and it is not to be so among you; rather the greatest among you should be like the least and the youngest and a leader like one who serves. You have stood by me in my trials and I give to you as it has been given to me a community so that you may eat and drink at my table and my community. Simon Peter listen! The darkness demands to sift all of you all like wheat but I have prayed for you that your own faith may not fail and that you strengthen your friends as well.” And Simon Peter said, “Teacher, I am ready to go with you to prison and to death!” Jesus said, “I tell you, Peter, the cock will not crow this day until you have denied three times that you know me.” When they had sung a hymn they went out to the Mount of Olives, to the Garden of Gethsemane and the disciples followed him. He took Peter, James and John on further with him and left them on watch, and then continued a bit further alone. There he fell on his face in anguished prayer, “Abba, if it is possible, remove this cup; and yet - not my will but yours be done.” In his anguish he prayed more earnestly and his sweat became great drops of blood falling on the ground. And an angel from heaven appeared before him and gave him strength. When he got up from prayer he went over to the disciples and found them asleep, and he said, “Why are you sleeping? Get up and pray that you may not come to this time of trial; the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.” While he was still speaking, suddenly a crowd came, led by his friend Judas. Judas had already made a pact with the authorities to identify Jesus for money, saying, “The one I will kiss is the man; arrest him.” Judas came up to Jesus and said, “Greetings, Rabbi!” and kissed him. Jesus looked at him and said, “Judas, is it with a kiss that you betray the son of humanity?” Jesus’ friend saw the soldiers grab him and put his hand on his sword,



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drew it, and struck the slave of the high priest, cutting off his ear. Then Jesus said to him, “No more of this.” Then Jesus touched the servant’s ear and healed him. And then he said, “Those of you who draw the sword will perish by the sword. Have you come out with swords and clubs as though I were a criminal? When I was with you day after day in the temple you did not lay a hand on me, but this is your hour and the power of darkness. Your actions are fulfilling the words of the prophets.” Then they seized him and led him away, bringing him to the house of Caiaphas, the high priest, in whose house the scribes and the elders had gathered. Peter followed at a distance, as far as the courtyard of the high priest; and going inside, he sat with the guards.

A servant girl saw Peter sitting outside in the courtyard and said, “This man was also with the Nazarene.” But Peter denied it before all of them, saying, “I do not know him.” When he went out to the porch, another servant girl saw him, and said to the bystanders, “This man was with Jesus of Nazareth.” Again he denied it with an oath, “I do not know the man.” After a little while the bystanders came to Peter and said, “Certainly you are also one of them for you are a Galilean, for your accent betrays you.” Then Peter began to curse and he swore an oath, “I do not know the man!” At that moment the cock crowed. Then Peter remembered what Jesus had said, and he went out and wept bitterly.

When morning came, all the chief priests and elders of the people conferred together against Jesus. Now they began to mock him: “If you are the Messiah, tell us.” “If I tell you, you will not believe me and if I question you, you will not answer.” “Just tell us – are you indeed the son of God?” “You say that I am.” “What further testimony do we need? We have heard it ourselves from his own lips. Pilate, we found this man perverting our nation, forbidding us to pay taxes to the emperor and saying that he himself is the Messiah, a king.” “Are you the king of the Jews?” asked Pilate. “Have you no answer to give? Look how many accusations they make against you?” Jesus gave him no answer. “I find no basis for an accusation against this man.” “He stirs up the people by teaching throughout all Judea where he began, even to this place.” When Pilate learned that Jesus was under Herod’s jurisdiction he sent him off to Herod. Herod was glad, for he had been wanting to see Jesus for a long time and was hoping to see some sign. He questioned Jesus at length but Jesus gave him no answers. The chief priests and scribes stood by making vehement accusations. That day Pilate and Herod became friends with each other. Before that day they had been enemies.

Now it was the custom at these festivals to release a prisoner for the crowd, anyone whom they wanted. At that time they had a notorious prisoner called Barabbas, who was their choice for release. “You brought me this man as one who was perverting the people. I have examined him in your presence and have not found him guilty of any of the charges that you bring against him. Herod also found him innocent and sent him back to us. He has done nothing to deserve death. I’ll have him flogged and release him.” “No, that’s not enough. We want him off the streets. Kill him and release Barabbas for us. We want Barabbas. We want Barabbas.” Barabbas was a dangerous man. He had been put in prison for mutiny, rebellion and murder. Pilate, preferring to release Jesus addressed the people again, but they kept shouting, “Crucify him. Crucify him.” “What has he done?” asked Pilate. “I find no grounds for the sentence of death. I will have him flogged and release him.” But they kept shouting and demanding and in time their voices prevailed so when Pilate saw that he could do nothing he took some water and washed his hands before the crowd, saying, “I am innocent of this man’s blood; see to it yourselves.” He then released Barabbas and the soldiers took Jesus away. They stripped him naked and put a royal purple robe on him and a crown of thorns upon his head and laughed at him and spat on him and then they brought him out to crucify him. “Forgive them, for they don’t know what they’re doing,” said Jesus.



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As they went out, they came upon a man from Cyrene named Simon; they compelled this man to carry his cross. There were two criminals to be crucified with Jesus and when they came to a place called Golgotha (which means Place of Skull), they hung Jesus up to die there with the other criminals, one to his left; one to his right. "Let him save himself, if he's really the son of God, the chosen one. If you're the king of the Jews, then save yourself." The soldiers also continued to mock him and offered him wine to drink, mixed with gall, but when he tasted it he would not drink it. Isn't it true, if you are the Messiah then save yourself. The two bandits also taunted him along with the soldiers. "We're getting what we deserve, but this man, has done nothing wrong. Jesus, remember me when you come into your glory." "Today, you will be with me in Paradise." It was now about noon and a strange darkness began to cover the land until about three in the afternoon. At three the sunlight suddenly failed. The sky became completely dark and the curtain of the temple was torn in half from the top to the bottom. "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Into your hands I commend my spirit." Having said this Jesus breathed his last.

The Roman centurion who was standing guard had seen everything that had taken place and he said, "Without a doubt this man was the son of God." The crowds returned home. Jesus' friends, including his mother Mary, Mary of Magdala and the beloved disciple stood at a distance, watching things. There was a good man named Joseph, a member of the council, and though he had not agreed to their plans and action he went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. He took the body down and wrapped it in a clean linen cloth and laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn in the rock. He then rolled a great stone to the door of the tomb and went away. It was the day of preparation and the Sabbath was beginning. The women who had traveled with Jesus from Galilee followed Joseph and they saw the tomb and saw exactly how Joseph laid his body there.

Imagine what it must have been like for Jesus at all of the losses he experienced in his last few days. In the Garden of Gethsemane he simply asked his disciples to stay awake and they fell asleep. When they were challenged by the soldiers Peter resorted to violence – contradicting all of the teachings of Jesus about peace. The religious system let him down. The political system let him down. Pilate found him innocent and yet condemned him to death. The legal system – meant to protect individuals from the mob and from injustice let him down. The crowd that were with him on Palm Sunday in just a few days turned, changing cries of 'Hosanna' to 'Crucify.' And the disciples – no one spoke up at his trial; no one helped to carry his cross except for a stranger who was compelled to do so. Scholars say the purpose of the long walk to Calvary and a sign carried over the head of someone to be crucified was meant to be the last chance for anyone to stand up for them – sort of the last appeal process, if you will; and if anyone did defend the person condemned the procession stopped and the person was re-tried there. All along the way no one stood up; all the people he healed – no one. All the people he fed with the feeding of the five thousand – no one. All of the people he baptized – no one. At the crucifixion itself, only his mother, John the beloved disciple and a few of his female friends even came near. All of those disappointments; all of those losses; and they led Jesus to the point of despair! In despair he said, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" The gospels of Matthew and Mark record these as the only words spoken by him from the cross. Both gospels say that minutes later – after he had said these words – he cried out something with a very loud voice, but neither of these gospels say what those words were. Later in the book of Hebrews we are told that Jesus was tempted in every way that we are tempted, so it's no wonder he despaired. All those losses! The gospel of Luke records words of forgiveness: *Forgive them for they know not what they do.* It records words spoken to another person crucified beside him: *Today you will be with me in Paradise.* Then the author of Luke tells us for the first



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time what Jesus cried out in a loud voice: "*Abba, into your hands I commend my spirit.*" The gospel of John addresses none of these words at all. It adds Jesus said, "*Woman, behold your son*" to his mother and John, and to John, "*John behold your mother.*" After this, when he knew that all was now finished he said, "*I am thirsty,*" and then he said, "*It is finished.*"

And so, as we put these four gospels together and try to get a piece of the picture of what Jesus said, we are left with this question: What happened between the anguish of, *My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?* What happened after those words leading up to the trusting words, *Abba, into your hands I commit my spirit.* And also in a real sense he was saying to Mary and to John and to the group of women friends: *Into your hands I commit my spirit* – to be his spiritual heirs and to carry on his spiritual work.

Amen