

Session 6

INTO YOUR HANDS I COMMIT MY SPIRIT

Luke 23:46; Psalm 31

Memory Verse

²³ *Love the Lord, all his faithful ones.*

*The Lord protects the loyal,
but fully repays the arrogant.*

²⁴ *Be strong, and let your heart be courageous,
all you who put your hope in the Lord.*

– PSALM 31:23-24, CSB



Into Your Hands I Commit My Spirit

THEOLOGICAL THEME: God is faithful to those who trust Him with their lives.

In the celebration of Palm Sunday, the church marks the remembrance of the day Jesus rode into Jerusalem on the foal of a donkey. Even as He fulfilled one Messianic prophecy after the other, Jesus knew what the week that lay before Him would entail. This week was the very reason He came to earth in the first place. He knew of the suffering that awaited Him. He knew of the betrayal that He was sure to face. He knew of the confrontations with religious leaders and scribes. He knew of the physical pain, the personal rejection, and the absolute loneliness of what was coming. Still He rode.

Even as the palm branches were laid on the ground for Him to ride into Jerusalem, He knew that the very voices rejoicing and shouting “Hosanna!” would be the same voices shouting with equal passion “Crucify Him!” in a few days. As thick as the crowd around Him was as He traversed the road to Jerusalem, He knew how abandoned He would be—even by His closest friends and family. Still He rode.

Palm Sunday reveals how thoroughly Jesus entrusted His physical life into the hands of His Father. No one was asked to do something so difficult. No one could pay a sacrifice so great. It was impossible for anyone other than Jesus to give as much as He did because no one else was or is worthy to do so. That slow ride into Jerusalem with all the fanfare resounded with the trust Jesus had in His Father to do exactly what He promised. Into the Father’s hands, Jesus committed everything.

? If you were going on an extended trip by yourself, what would be the most difficult thing to leave in someone else's care? Why? What about that item makes it so special?

? How well do you function when you know you have no control over a situation? What brings you peace of mind in moments like that? How much effort do you exert to learn about the person who is in charge?

? When you ponder the events of Palm Sunday, what are the elements that grab your attention the most? What adjectives would you use to describe them?

Session Summary

In this week's session, we read about when Jesus uttered His sixth saying from the cross in the waning moments of His life. Even as He died, He confirmed His trust in His Father for deliverance from death. The saying is a quote from Psalm 31:5, which also underscored the psalmist's fervent belief in God's faithfulness, even in life's most trying seasons. Christians today also have access to the faithfulness of God, which fills them with courage in the face of life's unpredictable seasons.

1. God is Trustworthy and Faithful (Luke 23:46; Ps. 31:5)

When Luke recorded Jesus' final moments on the cross, he had already recounted the miraculous events that set the eternal stage for Jesus' death. For three hours, as Luke described it, "the sun's light failed." This miraculous darkness occurred from noon to

three, the period of the day which should have been the brightest. Luke's readers would have already known that the darkness lasted for three hours. However, for those experiencing the darkness as it happened, three hours of complete darkness must have been terrifying. As the sun failed, the curtain of the sanctuary tore from top to bottom. These two events pointed to the completion of Jesus', the Great High Priest's, sacrifice as the perfect atonement so that God's plan for redemption was fulfilled in Him.

In the midst of this crushing darkness, Jesus cried out, "Father, into your hands I entrust my spirit." Even in the midst of the bewildering, maddening hush of darkness, God was present and listening. Joel Green notes, calling out to His Father, even as He bore the weight of the totality of humanity's sin on Himself, "Jesus manifests His own faith in the sovereign God whom, He believes, will rescue Him from the hands of His enemies. In light of the coupling of death and resurrection in Jesus' passion predictions, we may hear in Jesus' prayer His faith in the God who raises Him from the dead."¹ In the subsequent verses, Luke wrote of the impact the manner of Jesus' suffering had on those who witnessed it. Conviction and clarity were at work in the hearts of those who observed how the Suffering Servant endured the cross.

? What impact does suffering usually have on your faith—particularly when you view it as undeserved? What conclusions do you think those who witness how you handle difficult seasons would make about your view of God?

? Application: Who are you praying for that is struggling with a particularly hard situation or burden of some sort? How does the model of Jesus on the cross give you words for your next gospel conversation with that person?

The psalm that Jesus quoted as He proclaimed His sixth saying from the cross was penned as the psalmist himself experienced incredible distress—even for fear of life. At the beginning of the psalm, the psalmist asserted that he was in desperate need of rescue and protection. He spoke of not being allowed to be disgraced, which referred to the disgrace of discovering one put his or her hope in a source that was incapable or unwilling to offer deliverance. Calling on his own experience with God’s faithfulness, the psalmist remembered that God led him and guided him “for your name’s sake” (Ps. 31:3). God acting for His name’s sake meant that God’s leadership and guidance of the psalmist was understood to be according to God’s redemptive work in the world.

According to Allen Ross, when the psalmist wrote in verse 5, “into your hand I entrust my spirit, you have redeemed me, LORD, God of truth,” he was mindful that “the faithful can give their lives, body and spirit, over to the LORD for his care, in this life, and in the life to come.”²² The redemption the psalmist longed for was informed by the redemption(s) he had already experienced from God’s gracious hand. Addressing his plea to the LORD invoked the covenant name of God, “Yahweh,” and all of the covenantal faithfulness affixed to that divine name.

2. God is Present in Hardship (Ps. 31:7-8)

After an aside in verse 6 in which the psalmist compared the futility of devotion to manmade idols with the supreme confidence of trusting in God, the psalmist ascribed glory to the faithful love of God. His qualifier that God’s love is “faithful” was full of meaning. Of the numerous ways the Psalms describe God’s love, the intentional use of “faithful” here testified to a love with history to it. Love cannot be described as faithful if there has not been a prior experience in which faithfulness was proven. God’s love, then, was described as faithful because the psalmist had seen difficulty and the dire need for His love previously. On a grander scale, the psalmist knew also of the innumerable times in which God had demonstrated the faithfulness of His love to His covenant people, though their faithfulness waned.

No wonder, then, that the psalmist rejoiced in the memory of such faithful love, because he was afflicted once again. A common human response to suffering and affliction is the notion that God must not be paying attention. To the contrary, the psalmist proclaimed that God had seen his affliction. Indeed, God knew the

very troubles of his soul. Espousing God's awareness of his plight bore witness to the incredible intimacy the psalmist had experienced with God. There was no sense that God was a distant deity, content to execute His dominion from afar. No! God knew that with which he struggled, the names of those who persecuted him, the lengths to which he could last, and the manner in which God would deliver him.

? How have you experienced God's faithful love carrying you through hardship or trials? When was the last time you had a conversation with someone about that?

? Application: With whom in your life do you share the afflictions you face? How do you ask them to pray for you? How do the prayers of others minister to you in hardship? How does it make you feel to know that Jesus does that for His people ceaselessly?


The psalmist's description of his own deliverance from affliction and trouble as God setting his "feet in a spacious place," recalled the shepherding language of Psalm 23. The psalmist viewed his deliverance as so certain that he spoke of it as if it had already happened, with perfect tense verbs emphasizing completion. The experience of the times in which God had delivered him in the past and the knowledge that God never changes nor grows weary comforted the psalmist, even while still in the midst of the struggle.

3. God Gives Courage to Those Who Trust Him (Ps. 31:23-24)

The psalmist progressed through Psalm 31 to describe the elements of his suffering, which made it easy to understand why Jesus quoted this psalm from the cross. The psalmist spoke of his life being consumed with grief, his bones wasting away, being ridiculed by his adversaries, and being conspired against with death plots to take his life. Reading through Psalm 31 stimulates the reader to remember those episodes in Jesus' life that matched the description exactly.

Even after depicting the treachery he endured, however, the psalmist returned to the resolute hope anchored in the person and character of God. Precisely because of God's faithfulness and omnipotence, the psalmist continued to plead for God's action and mercy. Instead of his own suffering, he prayed that God would visit the affliction he experienced back on the heads of those who were initiating it. All the while, the psalmist continued to extol God for His great and merciful love and the history of delivering him throughout his life.

As he closed out the psalm, the psalmist wrote of God's ability to simultaneously deliver those who were faithful to Him and judge those who arrogantly opposed Him. It was in God's divine justice that the psalmist found rest, understanding that God would not let those who afflicted him continue forever. Rather than understanding that the psalmist viewed himself as perfect and deserving no divine wrath, it would be better to understand these verses as covenantal in nature. Because the psalmist enjoyed the grace of being in covenant with God at God's gracious initiation, he knew that God would faithfully deliver him. Those who came against God's covenant people would pay a steep price.

 How would you describe your worship habits in seasons of hardship and suffering? What thoughts of God do you tend to have in those seasons?

 Application: How does reading of the psalmist's resolve and courage in the face of horrific affliction challenge your heart?

Psalm 31:24 echoed the oft-repeated direction from God to Joshua as he undertook the leadership of the Israelite people from Moses (Josh. 1:9 and following). So often in the journey with His people, God directed them to be strong and courageous. The reason for such resolve was never because of a particular attribute or gifting that the people possessed—either personally or collectively. The reason for such resolve was always that God was with them. So it was with the psalmist in Psalm 31.

Conclusion

The sixth saying of Jesus on the cross proclaimed His faith in the Father to deliver Him from death and the grave. Acknowledging that He had accomplished all that had been required for the redemptive plan of God to be fulfilled, Jesus gave up His life knowing that His Father would resurrect Him as the Scriptures had prophesied. Ross notes, “These words have also been used for centuries by saints who have given up their lives for the faith, for entrusting one’s life into God’s care does not last for a moment or for a time, but for all eternity.”³ Here are some application points for the church today.

First, for those who would seek to follow after Jesus, times of difficulty and suffering will come. While that is not a particularly enjoyable thought, Jesus Himself promised that it would be so. Therefore, it is critical that the church serve as a place where the conversation of difficulty and struggle can be shared so that the hope of the gospel can also be applied. The family nature of the church as it is intended offers support, encouragement, and prayer that cannot be counterfeited.

Second, the church can trust the nearness of God in times when sin, temptation, or affliction creep in. One of the gifts of having “refrigerator rights” with others is that the depth of transparency in those relationships serves as an avenue through which encouragement, accountability, and reminders of God’s goodness can be offered. It is often true that the difficulty of a situation can bring about a sort of tunnel vision in which a person can only see the situation. When the nearness and faithfulness of God in past seasons of hardship is obscured by the present situation, the gift of others reminding a person of God’s nearness, intimacy, and knowledge of struggle is invaluable.

Third, the uncertainty of the world and the seasons of hardship are not peculiar to the church. Others who do not know Jesus experience hopelessness, fear, anxiety, and struggle daily. For that reason the church must not only be a hospital for its body, but must also actively go after those who desperately need the hope and joy of knowing Jesus. Providing the party, reaching out in practical ways, and investing in relationships with those God brings into daily pathways are indispensable tools for changing the community with the gospel, one conversation at a time.

? Who is God placing on your heart as a person you need to extend “refrigerator rights” to? Who do you know who would benefit from knowing how God has proven Himself faithful to you? Whose story has been the most encouraging to you in a difficult season?

? Considering the testimony of the psalmist, why is Bible engagement so important for growing in one’s ability to trust in and anchor themselves in God? What would you say if someone asked where in the Bible they should start reading for the first time? Why?

? How would you rate your current level of boldness and courage in facing affliction or hardship? How would you like that to change this year? What are some steps you can take even this week to move in that direction?

CHRIST CONNECTION: Even as He was dying on the cross, Jesus confirmed His trust in His Father for His deliverance.

MISSIONAL APPLICATION: Acknowledging both the certainty of difficulty and the unpredictable nature of life, Christians have the opportunity to bear witness to Jesus—the One who gives courage and provision in all seasons of life.



FOR NEXT WEEK

It is Finished

Main Passages

- John 19:30; 1 Corinthians 15

Session Outline

1. "It Is Finished" – The Beginning of Life (John 19:30; 1 Cor. 15:3-8)
2. The Dead Made Alive (1 Cor. 15:20-27)
3. Victory Forever! (1 Cor. 15:50-58)

Memorize

²³ *Love the Lord, all his faithful ones.*

*The Lord protects the loyal,
but fully repays the arrogant.*

²⁴ *Be strong, and let your heart be courageous,
all you who put your hope in the Lord.*

- Psalm 31:23-24, CSB

Daily Readings

- Monday - Ephesians 2:8-9
- Tuesday - Titus 3:5
- Wednesday - Acts 4:12
- Thursday - John 14:6
- Friday - 2 Corinthians 5:21
- Saturday - Colossians 2:13-15

References

¹Green, Joel B. *The Gospel of Luke*. NICNT. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1997.

²Ross, Allen P. *A Commentary on the Psalms*, vol. 1. Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2011.

³Ibid.