>>>>>>> Matthew – Lesson 52 <<<<<<<

1) We now arrive at the moment of betrayal and the final moments Jesus will be with His beloved disciples …

Matthew 26:47–56(ESV)

Betrayal and Arrest of Jesus

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.

2) Judas arrived late that evening. We do not know the exact time – probably before midnight.

3) And of course, he brings along with him a mob supplied by the chief priest and elders, including the temple guard.

4) John tells us …

John 18:3 (ESV)

3 So Judas, having procured a band of soldiers and some officers from the chief
priests and the Pharisees, went there with lanterns and torches and weapons.

5) Looking at Matthew's and/or John's description of what Judas does, ***what do you think Judas expected?***

   a) Again, we can only speculate as to what was really in Judas' heart.

      i) What we can know is that basically considering all that Judas knew about Jesus and the disciples, the crowd with weapons and clubs was an overkill.

6) I think it is also interesting that Jesus addresses the crowd just before the disciples leave.

   a) It makes me wonder if the disciples and the crowd dispersed together leaving only Judas and the soldiers and officers; those who actually had the authority to arrest Him.

1) We now see Jesus' first encounter after being arrested …

Matthew 26:57–68(ESV)

Jesus Before Caiaphas and the Council

[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, "Prophesy to us, you Christ! Who is it that struck you?"

2) As usual, there are some interesting subtilties to be considered here.

3) Caiaphas and the elders and scribes were gathered at his home.

   a) Normally a meeting of this importance would have been held in the temple proper in a large meeting room.

   b) According to one source, this would not have been possible in normal times but during Passover, the temple was opened at midnight rather than at sunup.

   c) So, we must consider the why's of this meeting place – two possibilities:

      i) Since the temple was open, there were people there and this was much more private and less prone to be the cause of a riot.

      ii) The assembly may have started before the temple was open.

         (1) After all, this was not a normal case to have this group meeting at this hour.

         (2) They had been summoned, likely by Caiaphas. in anticipation of this very "trial."

4) Of note here is that, even though ALL the disciples had fled at Jesus' arrest, obviously, Peter and one other disciple (likely John) had circled back and followed at a distance and then into the courtyard of the High Priest's palace.

   a) And here is the interesting part about that (at least from Matthew's perspective). He says that Peter had followed … and going inside he sat with the guards to see the end.

   b) It is almost like Matthew sees Peter as waiting for the end of everything – a true lack of any understanding of a resurrection and continued ministry.

   c) Even with all the miracles, healings, and resurrections, I am sure it was still hard for any normal human being to grasp a resurrection and a continued ministry without Jesus.

5) It is interesting that this group was soliciting testimony from witnesses at this time of night.

   a) I also think that even though the high priest knew the question to ask, he gave Jesus one chance to answer the one false charge that was brought against Him.

i) Caiaphas was probably frustrated by the lack of cohobated testimony against Jesus, so he decides to rip the band aide off.

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."

b) The answer given was the last thing this group needed to accomplish their purpose.

c) When Jesus answered as He did, there was not a single doubt in anyone's mind that he was indeed claiming to be the Son of God – the Messiah.

d) At this point, the decision has been made – Jesus deserves death for this blasphemy – the only remaining problem is how to accomplish it.

1) We will return to this group of leaders in a bit but for now, Matthew shifts the focus again, this time to Peter at probably one of the lowest points in his entire life …

Matthew 26:69–75(ESV)

Peter Denies Jesus

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.

2) Peter's first denial takes place while he is still sitting in the courtyard, presumably still warming himself with the others by the charcoal fire.

a) Notice, that when the first servant girl blows his cover, Peter makes his first denial and attempts to leave the courtyard – verse 71 says "And when he went out to the entrance …

3) At the entrance, the second servant girl sees him and makes the same claim "This man was with Jesus of Nazareth."

a) Notice here, she does not address Peter directly but those who are in hearing distance.

b) He denies Christ the second time vehemently with an oath (he invoked a curse upon himself if he were lying) and presumably continues to leave running into a crowd of bystanders, outside the courtyard.

4) Some of those perhaps who heard the second servant girl claim that Peter was with Jesus then came up to him and claimed that his accent gave him away.

a) At this point, Peter could simply have said yes, I'm from Galilee but I did not know him but instead, he is overwhelmed and denies with an oath again.

b) Bruce Barton says of this denial:

This was too much for Peter. They wouldn't leave him alone! So Peter decided to make the strongest denial he could think of by denying with an oath, *I do not know the man* (he was careful not even to use Jesus' name). This was the kind of swearing that a person does in a court of law. Peter was swearing that he did not know Jesus and was invoking a curse on himself if his words were untrue. He was saying, in effect, "May God strike me dead if I am lying." This was the third denial.

Peter's denial progressed in intensity. At first he pretended not to understand the question; then he denied being one of the disciples; finally he sealed his denial with an oath so there could be no doubt about it.[52]

c) Then the moment of reckoning – the rooster crowed.

d) It all came back to Peter – exactly what the Lord had told him.

e) At this point he is no longer overwhelmed by fear but by remorse and he goes away from the crowds and weeps bitterly.

5) As I said at the beginning of this passage, this was probably the lowest point in Peter's life.

a) He knew his friend, Lord, master, and teacher was going to be killed.

b) He would never see him again and all he had hoped for was apparently lost and gone forever.

c) He was alone and worst of all, he had just denied three times knowing the very man he said he would die for.

You need not share but, have you ever had a moment in your life when you felt massive despair – that feeling of total misery because of a bad decision, accident, or any other serious situation?

d) One commentator made this point, and I think it is so valid for not only Peter but for us …

No failure or mistake is beyond repair. Remorse need not be the final word. Jesus offers forgiveness, renewed strength, and power to live again. Jesus can work the miracle your life needs.

1) Ok, back to the chief priests and the elders as they take their next step to get Jesus crucified.

Matthew 27:1–2(ESV)
Jesus Delivered to Pilate

27 When morning came, all the chief priests and the elders of the people took counsel against Jesus to put him to death. **2** And they bound him and led him away and delivered him over to Pilate the governor.

2) At daybreak, the entire Sanhedrin (which included *the chief priests and the elders*) reached a decision.

3) Back in 26:66, they had actually reached the same decision, but they had to make the final decision at a meeting during the daytime in accordance with their law.

[52] Bruce B. Barton, *Matthew*, Life Application Bible Commentary (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1996), 539.

4) So, they had to wait until the sun rose (*early in the morning)* in order to make it official that Jesus was worthy of *death.*

5) The Jewish leaders had arrested Jesus on theological grounds—blasphemy; since this charge would be thrown out of a Roman court they had to come up with a political reason for Jesus' death.

6) Their strategy was to show Jesus as a rebel who claimed to be a king and thus a threat to Caesar. The charge against Jesus in the Roman court was treason.

7) Once this was decided, they marched him off to the Roman governor of the region, who of course was Pontius Pilot.

8) So, let's deal with some irony and some truth …

   a) Irony – they had to wait until sunup to make the false charge official so they could take Jesus to Pilate to have the Romans do the killing for them.

   b) Truth – Jesus was 100% correct in His assessment of these men – they were hypocrites of the purest kind.

      i) Claimed to be killing Jesus in the name of prophesy.

      ii) Lied and trumped-up charges against Him

      iii) When He told the truth about Himself – instead of believing they called it blasphemy.

      iv) Compounded the lie in that they could not use the lie of blasphemy to get the Romans to do the deed.

         (1) So, they lied again saying that Jesus claimed to be king of the Jews and was therefore a threat to Caesar so the charge would be treason and worthy of death by Rome.

1) Next, we deal with Judas for the last time …

   a) Matthew's placement of this event is I believe not in order with the timeline as we will see.

Matthew 27:3–10(ESV)

Judas Hangs Himself

3 Then when Judas, his betrayer, saw that Jesus was condemned, he changed his
mind and brought back the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and the elders,
4 saying, "I have sinned by betraying innocent blood." They said, "What is that to
us? See to it yourself." **5** And throwing down the pieces of silver into the temple, he
departed, and he went and hanged himself. **6** But the chief priests, taking the pieces
of silver, said, "It is not lawful to put them into the treasury, since it is blood money."
7 So they took counsel and bought with them the potter's field as a burial place for
strangers. **8** Therefore that field has been called the Field of Blood to this day. **9** 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, **10** and they gave them for the potter's field, as the Lord directed
me."

2) Looking at the situation, it seems that Judas' remorse and the return of the money may have taken place after Jesus had been condemned to crucifixion.

a) This scene takes place in the temple with the chief priests and elders there.

b) At this point in Matthew's narrative, as we will see, Jesus has not been condemned but it appears he chooses to fast forward to perhaps get Judas out of the way of the rest of the story.

c) Judas had seen that the disciples had all deserted Jesus.

d) He realized that the sentence passed on Jesus by Pilate was final and would result in death.

i) Again, only supposition but, if Judas had expected Jesus to assert His messianic authority in a way that would lead to an uprising, crowning Jesus as king, and start the revolution against Rome, it was not going to happen...."

e) And the most important thing here is his own confession that Jesus was innocent of wrongdoing and did not deserve death.

3) I find it interesting that Judas confesses his sin to the chief priests and elders and they could not have cared less.

a) They had what they wanted – Jesus condemned and, on His way, to be crucified.

b) Truth is that they could not in any way agree with Judas' confession without exposing their own crime against innocent blood.

c) This definitely speaks to the character of these men and reinforces Jesus' condemnation of this corrupt religious leadership.

4) And, here is another irony when it comes to these folks:

a) When Judas returns the money and confesses that he has betrayed innocent blood, their concern becomes whether the money can appropriately be placed in the temple treasury.

b) In other words, they recognize that the money is contaminated by its association with an innocent man's death, but they refuse to acknowledge their own participation in that death.

c) They are concerned about the purity of the treasury while ignoring the corruption of their own hearts.

5) At this point, there perhaps is another facet of this entire situation we should consider – the difference in the outcomes of remorse on the part of Peter vs. Judas.

a) Peter was remorseful because of his denials of Christ – his friend, teacher, and Lord who is now to be killed.

i) Peter's denial is followed by bitter weeping, and as we see in the rest of the New Testament especially in John's gospel, he is restored.

b) Judas was remorseful because of his action of betrayal of innocent blood.

i) Judas confesses his sin before the religious leaders who should have understood.

ii) The confession fell on more than deaf ears; it fell on ears of men who were as guilty as the one who was confessing.

iii) With the scattering of the disciples, Judas saw no path to them for forgiveness.

iv) He was obviously separated from Jesus and unable to seek forgiveness in that path so one assumes this led to total despair and suicide.

c) Two acts of contrition with totally different outcomes – one tragic resulting in suicide and one eventually resulting in forgiveness.