

Hopelessly Flawed People

Matthew 26

Introduction: Matthew 26 records the events leading up to the trial and crucifixion of Jesus. If there is one theme that stands out in this chapter it is the complete failure of the disciples. Though they had spent three years following Jesus, sitting under his teachings, and seeing his power and authority, when it came to this most critical time in Jesus' life and ministry, they failed at every turn. They were hopelessly flawed in every way. Before we get too hard on them, however, we need to recognize that what we see in the disciples in Matthew 26 is really a revelation into the human heart - theirs AND ours. We too are flawed. But there is hope for hopelessly flawed people. That hope is found in Christ's work on the cross.

Opening Discussion: Do you have any Holy Week traditions that help you prepare for celebrating Easter?

Read Matthew 26:6-56

1. In what ways do the disciples fail in this chapter?
2. When you consider the life experience the disciples had with Jesus do their failures surprise you? Why or why not?
3. How does Jesus respond to the various ways that the disciples failed?

Steve said (regarding Matt. 26:30-35)

Perhaps our spiritual pride isn't quite as dramatic as Peter's, but it's there nonetheless. We don't typically go around making pronouncements about how loyal and righteous we are. But we very easily look down on others for their sinful attitudes and actions. We're shocked at the depravity we see in others, and we feel fully justified in talking about it. In effect we're saying, "I am so much more spiritually mature than you." That's just a variation of Peter's spiritual pride. That's why Jesus said that before we pass judgment on others, we should first take the log out of our own eye, then we'll see clearly to take the speck out of our brother's eye.

4. How do you see spiritual pride creeping into your life at times?

Steve said (regarding Matt. 26:36-46)

After Jesus' exhortation, were the disciples spiritually alert and prayerful? No, twice more Jesus goes a short distance away to pray alone and comes back and finds them sleeping. In Jesus' hour of deepest distress, they were spiritually slothful. Their flesh was weak. They didn't have the spiritual stamina to watch and pray.

How often are we spiritually slothful? We want to do the right thing. We have the best of intentions. But so often we fail to be spiritually vigilant in the lives of the people we care about – praying for them and caring for them.

5. Why do you think the disciples found it so difficult to stay spiritually alert and prayerful at such a critical time?

6. In what ways do you find yourself failing to be spiritually vigilant at times?

Read Matt. 26:26-29

Steve said:

The Passover meal celebrated God's deliverance of the children of Israel from slavery in Egypt. The Lord's Supper celebrates how Jesus' body and blood have delivered us from slavery to sin. Situated where it is in the middle of Matthew 26 Jesus is saying that he would give His body and blood to pay for the sins of people whose spiritual instincts are exactly wrong. Jesus would die for people who are spiritually ignorant, who are full of spiritual pride, who are spiritually slothful, whose spiritual zeal is very misguided. Jesus would even die for people like Judas who actively oppose the purposes of God.

Perhaps as we've looked at Matthew 26 you have recognized yourself in the disciples. You have recognized that you are hopelessly flawed. Understand that Jesus' body and blood was given for you. He died on the cross to pay for the sins of people just like you. Jesus understood the heart of His disciples, and Jesus understands your heart as well. You will never find anybody who understands your condition like Jesus. You will never find anybody who can address your condition like Jesus.

7. How have you recognized yourself in the disciples?

8. How **did** Jesus address our condition on the cross?

9. How **does** Jesus continue to address our flawed condition?