

The Day God Proved His Trustworthiness

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Date: 20 April 2025

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[0 : 0 0] Well, friends, sorry to interrupt your conversations. It's lovely to hear Christians enjoying fellowship together.! Please do turn back to Matthew chapter 26.

! That first reading that Daryl read first, Matthew chapter 26, verse 30.! Let me add my welcome to what Dave's already said as well. It's lovely to have new people with us always and people visiting. We're so glad you could join us on Easter. If I say Christ is risen, do you know what to say? Okay, okay, so you jump the gun, but Christ is risen. He is risen.

Exactly, that's wonderful news, isn't it? And I love singing that song with you about, yes, he is alive. Okay, so we're going to have a little look at that passage together.

We'll dive into Matthew 28 a little bit as well at the end. And there are a few, because there are lots of Old Testament allusions, I'll put them up on the screen for you as well as we work our way through it.

[1 : 0 0] And you'll find an outline of my talk as well inside your bulletins if you want to follow along. It's a great place to make notes and things like that. And you'll see I want to start with as controversial a title as I could think of.

The day God got it wrong. So I wonder if you've ever had a day where God got it wrong. Perhaps the day you got diagnosed with some illness.

Perhaps the day you lost your job. The day you had an accident. The day your partner walked out on you. Whatever it might be. Sometimes we are all tempted, aren't we, to think, what is going on up there?

You know, what is God doing? I sort of imagine a heavenly Centrelink desk with a long line of people going up to the clerk and saying, you know, surely there must be some mistake.

You don't know what I'm up against. Isn't there someone in charge? Well, in our passage this morning, that first one in Matthew 26, that's exactly what Peter thought, isn't it?

[2 : 0 2] And he thought that Jesus had got it wrong. Now, I'm not sure if at this point in his life, Peter knew that he was talking to God in the flesh. So we know he's talking to God.

Perhaps he had an inkling. He has been with Jesus for some time now. He's seen some remarkable God-like things. But whether or not he knew that, we know that's what he's doing. Jesus is warning his disciples that they will all fall away.

And in verse 33, Peter says, No way. They all fall away because of you. I will never fall away. Not ever.

He used a very strong language. Jesus said to him, Truly I tell you, this very night, before the rooster crows, you will deny me three times. Peter said to him, Even if I must die with you, I will not deny you.

And all the disciples said the same. Yeah, all of them. So Peter is disagreeing with God. And if you know your gospel stories, if you read the gospels, you know this is not for the first time actually.

[3 : 0 5] We won't go into it now. But in Matthew's gospel, it's in chapter 16, where we read about how Peter was trying to correct and contradict Jesus again or before.

You can look up Matthew 16 another time if you like. But on that occasion, Jesus was saying that he would have to die. And Peter was saying, No, you won't die.

So it's funny how Peter thinks that Jesus won't have to die for him. But he thinks that he will be able to die for Jesus. Oh, how badly wrong he turned out to be both times.

But I want to begin this way, as I say, because I'm sure that we've all had days, like Peter, they're perhaps not as blatant, where we thought that God was getting things wrong.

Where we found it particularly difficult to trust God or to see the sense in God's plans or his provenance. And this provides the backdrop, you see, to the story of Easter.

[4 : 05] See, Jesus makes lots of promises in this passage. But he makes those promises in the context of human unbelief, of doubt, of confusion, of ignorance, and arrogance.

So Peter serves as a warning to us to believe the promises Jesus makes, to humble ourselves and listen, and in fact, to entrust our whole lives to God, to his plans and purposes, to his promises, perhaps especially when things seem hopeless and confusing.

Now, there are four promises that I want to highlight this morning. For the first one, I actually just want to dip back into the passage that we looked at on Good Friday. So it's there in verse 29.

This is the last thing that Jesus said to his disciples as they celebrated the Last Supper. It was a promise about drinking wine. He said, I tell you, I will not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom.

So the first promise this morning is about the Father's kingdom and the promise of wine. Jesus and his disciples are about to be separated. They have been enjoying the Passover meal together, and in fact, they've been able to celebrate lots of meals together over the last few years.

[5 : 33] It's been a time of feasting and fellowship. Jesus talks about himself as the bridegroom, putting on these great banquets for everybody. Everyone's been drinking delicious wine together. In fact, in Matthew chapter 11, Jesus mentions how his opponents criticized him for this.

The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, look at him, a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners. So there's an important misconception to clear up here about Jesus.

I think Jesus was no austere, severe, religious ascetic. You know, some people like to portray him. Monastic. I don't know who came up with Lent, but it wasn't Jesus.

Jesus was a party goer. He was a magnificent host. Now in Matthew 26, he's saying to his disciples that this time of fasting will briefly have to come to an end.

He's not going to be able to drink wine with his disciples again until the kingdom comes. That is on Resurrection Sunday.

[6 : 39] He's talking about the cross. Jesus and his disciples are about to be separated. They're about to be grieved. It will be a time of fasting, not feasting. But then he promises there will come a day when the time of feasting, when the kingdom is restored, when their fellowship can be restored, they'll get to enjoy wine and feasting together again.

Dave mentioned Exodus 24 on Good Friday, how the elders got to feast with God on Mount Sinai after the giving of the law and how that foreshadows what Jesus is promising here.

And there are yet more great Old Testament prophecies that point people towards this great banquet. So let me give you another one. In one of the most famous ones, in Isaiah 25, Isaiah puts it like this.

On this mountain, now he's talking about Mount Zion on this occasion, the mountain in Jerusalem. On this mountain, the Lord of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wine, of rich food full of marrow, of aged wine, well-refined.

And he will swallow up on this mountain the covering that is cast over all peoples, the veil that is spread over all nations. He will swallow up death forever. And the Lord God will wipe away tears from all faces.

[7 : 56] And the reproach of his people he will take away from all the earth. For the Lord has spoken. It will be said on that day, Behold, this is our God. We have waited for him that he might save us.

This is the Lord. We've waited for him. Let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation. See, that is the kind of kingdom that all of God's people have been looking forward to a kingdom of wine and feasting on rich meat of joy and life.

And Jesus is promising his disciples that that kingdom, after a momentary time of fasting, that that kingdom is just around the corner. Now, in verse 30, the next two promises are fairly subtle and easy to miss.

So let me point them out to you. But first, the question is, why does Matthew tell us that Jesus and his disciples finished their meal with a hymn?

You see verse 30? And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives. Well, it's almost certainly because they sung one of the Psalms.

[9 : 07] Psalm 115 through to 118. It was customary to sing some of these Psalms at the end of the Passover meal. And they are all about the promise of the resurrection.

The promise of the Messiah's resurrection. So for instance, in Psalm 116, I'll pick it up in verse 8, the psalmist writes, For you have delivered my soul from death, my eyes from tears, my feet from stumbling.

I will walk before the Lord in the land of the living. Or again in Psalm 118, pick it up in verse 17. I shall not die, but I shall live and recount the deeds of the Lord.

The Lord has disciplined me severely, but he has not given me over to death. Open to me the gates of righteousness that I may enter through them and give thanks to the Lord. This is the gate of the Lord.

The righteous shall enter through it. I thank you that you have answered me and have become my salvation. The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone. This is what Jesus is singing about on the night he was betrayed.

[10:16] On the night he was arrested and put on trial and handed over to be crucified, the night he was rejected by the builders, he's singing about the fact that the Lord is going to make him the cornerstone.

And he knew that he was about to die, but he also knew that his father would not give him over to death, would not leave him, lying, rotting in the grave, but that he would be delivered. He would walk again in the land of the living.

He would feast again with his disciples. In Matthew's gospel, Jesus has already foretold his death and resurrection on a number of occasions. Here again, this is the promise at the heart of the Passover hymns, the promise of resurrection.

Now Matthew also tells us that Jesus went out with his disciples to the Mount of Olives. The significance of that, I suspect, is probably lost on most of us. I had a friend who as a child thought that Jesus must have climbed a mountain of olives.

That's not what's happening, I assure you. But even so, what is the significance of the Mount of Olives? I mean, I suspect that if I'd said to you that Jesus and his disciples went out and they climbed Mount Sinai on that day, that that would probably ring lots of bells for us, wouldn't it?

[11:33] Because we know the significance of Mount Sinai. That's where Moses was given the Ten Commandments. Or if I said that Jesus and his disciples went up Mount Carmel, perhaps that might ring bells for you too if you know the story in 1 Kings 18.

That's where Elijah and the prophets of Baal had that great showdown on Mount Carmel about who is the true God. But as I say, I suspect that the Mount of Olives is a little bit more obscure for most of us.

It only comes up a couple of times in the Old Testament. The most important occasion is in the book of Zechariah. So Zechariah was a prophet who lived hundreds of years before Jesus.

And in the last chapter of Zechariah, in chapter 14, he foretold the end of the world. And he said, Behold, a day is coming when the spoil taken from you as Jerusalem will be divided in your midst. For I will gather all the nations against Jerusalem to battle and the city shall be taken and the houses plundered and the women raped. Half of the city shall go out into exile, but the rest of the people shall not be cut off from the city.

[12:43] Then the Lord will go out and fight against those nations as when he fights on a day of battle. On that day, his feet shall stand on the Mount of Olives that lies before Jerusalem on the east.

And the Mount of Olives shall be split in two from east to west by a very wide valley so that one half of the mount shall move northward and the other half southward. And you shall flee to the valley of my mountains, for the valley of the mountains shall reach to Azal.

And you shall flee as you fled from the earthquake in the days of Uzziah, king of Judah. Then the Lord my God will come and all the holy ones with him. Now, we're not going to go through all the details here and it is really tricky to get your head around the kind of symbolic style that Zechariah is using.

We're going to start a series in Zechariah next week and going to work our way through so we will come back to Zechariah 14 and look at it in some detail in a couple of months. But in short here, Zechariah is looking forward to the last day, the day of judgment and salvation, the day that will signal the end of this broken and corrupt world order and the beginning of the new order under the perfect rule of God.

Now, on that day, Zechariah says, first God will gather the nations against his people, against Jerusalem, and they will be allowed to hurt his people. It will be a day of pain and defeat for God's

people, a terrible day.

[14:13] And yet, on that day, God will then win a mighty victory over all his enemies. And all the people, all the enemies will be destroyed and all his people will be allowed to miraculously escape to safety.

Now, the reason for the mention of the Mount of Olives in verse 4 is because on that day, God is going to come and fight for his people by standing on the Mount of Olives and then the Mount of Olives will split apart and the allusion is to the parting of the Red Sea.

Okay, the Mount of Olives is going to split apart like the parting of the Red Sea and God's people will be allowed to walk through the valley that has been created out of danger and to safety just like they did in the time of Moses when they walked out of Egypt.

And where they will walk to is the place where Israel was, where Israel began as a nation. And so that the point being that the nation of Israel is going to be reborn, is going to start again after this new Exodus, beginning with this remnant of survivors.

Now back in Matthew 26 then, you see when Jesus and his disciples go out and stand on the Mount of Olives, we should be thinking about Zechariah 14 and the momentous significance of this.

[15:30] Could it be that Jesus is Yahweh himself, the Lord, come to fight for his people? Yes. And now, he's standing on the Mount of Olives.

Does that mean that it's the end of the world that Zechariah foretold? Yes. See, Jesus is about to embark on his own Exodus of sorts, representing all of God's people.

He is going to walk out of the land of darkness and enter into the new world, the promised land. The nations are going to gather around him and torture him and treat him brutally.

But then he's going to overcome them and win a great victory and lead all of us in that victory. Lead all of us, all of his people in a triumphant procession after him.

Now, to add to the drama of the night and confirm the cosmic significance of the Mount of Olives, Jesus then quotes from Zechariah in verse 31. He says, You will all fall away because of me this night for it is written in Zechariah chapter 13, verse 7, it is written, I will strike the shepherd and the sheep of the flock will be scattered.

[16:43] And in the original context, the shepherd is God's chosen king, the Messiah, and it is God himself doing the striking. So again, Jesus is predicting his own death, that he will suffer under the wrath of God.

And when that happens, he says, the disciples will flee in terror, leaderless, vulnerable, they will run for their lives. And of course, this is what Peter is going to take such offense at.

But notice promise number 4 in verse 32. Jesus says, But after I am raised up, I will go before you to Galilee. Galilee. Why did Jesus decide to meet his disciples in Galilee?

Again, it is because this location is another location laden with Old Testament significance. See, Galilee was the downtrodden, dark, and dingy backwater of the nation.

I would love to think of some Australian analogy, but I dare not. Galilee was the deepest, darkest pit of the nation of Israel. I get you to call out suggestions. The reason Galilee was such a terrible place was because it was always the first place to suffer when Israel was invaded.

[17:58] So it was a land of violence and bloodshed. It was called Galilee of the nations. That is, the Galilee that belongs to the nations, belongs to everyone else. Which is why God was determined to bring light and hope to the world starting in Galilee.

We often read Isaiah chapter 9 at Christmas time, but listen to it again here. But there will be no gloom for her who was in anguish. In the former time, he brought into contempt the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the latter time, he has made glorious the way of the sea, the land beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the nations.

The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light. Those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shone. You have multiplied the nation, you have increased its joy. They rejoice before you as with joy at the harvest, as they are glad when they divide the spoil. For the yoke of his burden and the staff for his shoulder, the rod of his oppressor, you have broken as on the day of Midian.

For every boot of the tramping warrior in battle tumult and every garment rolled in blood will be burned as fuel for the fire. For to us a child is born, to us a son is given and the government shall be upon his shoulder and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

[19 : 23] Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end. On the throne of David and over his kingdom to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore.

The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this. So Galilee is the land of deep darkness and it's the land of bloodshed and oppression. According to Isaiah this is to be the place where God will graciously send his light into the world.

Where God will bring peace and joy through the Prince of Peace the Davidic King. And you see that didn't just happen when Jesus was born or when he began his ministry or when he rose from the or when he began his ministry but when he rose from the dead too.

Which is why we need to read Matthew 28 again and look out for all the references to Galilee. So flick over to Matthew 28 verse 5.

The angel said to the women do not be afraid I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified he is not here for he has risen as he said come see the place where he lay then go quickly and tell his disciples that he has risen from the dead and behold he is going before you to Galilee there you will see him see I have told you.

[20 : 54] So they departed quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy and ran to tell his disciples and behold Jesus met them and said greetings and they came up and took hold of his feet and worshipped him and Jesus said to them do not be afraid go and tell my brothers go to Galilee and there they will see me.

Skip down to verse 16 and the eleven disciples went to Galilee to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them and when they saw him they worshipped him but some doubted and Jesus came and said to them all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me go therefore and make disciples of all nations baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you and behold I am with you always to the end of the age.

So brothers and sisters this is the point of Easter Day this is what we celebrate today the conquest of light over darkness the conquest of hope over despair all because Jesus died and rose again to be the wonderful counselor the mighty God the everlasting father the prince of peace that Isaiah promised of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end Jesus is the king who will sit on the throne of his father David forever and ever and uphold justice and righteousness notice in Matthew 28 he says all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me in other words his kingdom has begun on that first good Friday Jesus died to pay for our sins so that his kingdom might be established not on turning a blind eye to wickedness or on corruption lies conquest violence but so that his kingdom might be established on justice and righteousness on that first Easter day he rose from the dead and appeared to his disciples and he told them to meet him in Galilee because Galilee was the deepest darkest dingiest backwater of the nation what better place for Jesus to announce the end of darkness the dawning of the new age a new kind of kingdom you can join now and that will last forever today Christians all over the world are celebrating the reign of King Jesus for since that first Easter day

Jesus has brought billions of people out of darkness and into light since that first Easter day many people have embraced Jesus promise of deliverance and walked out as it were on our own exodus from our own lives of darkness from our own lives of slavery and death to new lives of joy and peace and forgiveness where we live in the kingdom of God's beloved son we have been transferred as the apostle Paul puts it transferred from the domain of darkness into the kingdom of the beloved son so friends I want to return as we close to address that question we began with I wonder if you've ever had a day where God got it wrong or perhaps you thought that God had got it wrong see Peter did in fact all of Jesus' disciples thought he was wrong when he said they would fall away they thought he was wrong when he said he would have to die for them and when it actually came to pass the disciples were not just scattered but they were shattered they were broken all their hopes and dreams they had pinned on this man they hadn't understood his promises he was supposed to be the long awaited

Messiah the king the Christ and now he was dead sometimes life is hard and God's plans are confusing to say the least we can feel in the dark and tempted to despair but the resurrection on Easter day proves once and for all doesn't it that God is trustworthy that God never makes mistakes that God and his plans and purposes can never be defeated all the promises of old have come to their fulfillment all the promises Jesus made to his disciples turned out to be true God can always

be trusted God should always be trusted so I don't know what life has thrown at you or what the future holds for you there may be dark days ahead but the message of Easter is one of solid hope and lasting joy and eternal light that cannot be crushed or quenched that can survive even the darkest and dingiest parts of our lives in fact

[25 : 42] I believe that the resurrection of Jesus is the only hope for humanity it's the only hope for you and me without it we know that no matter how many good days we have they're all going to end in a bad day in tragedy the significance of the resurrection is not just that one man rose from the dead and that's good for him the significance of the resurrection is that God himself came to plumb the depths of our darkness and tragedy and then he rose again to lead us out of darkness into new heights of triumph Jesus rose again to host the great feast that Isaiah promised of vintage wine and rich meat in a world of no more death and no more tears he rose again to walk before God in the land of the living in a new resurrected body and for all of us to join him in resurrection bodies too he rose again to lead us out of judgment and into a new promised land he rose again to offer light and hope to a world languishing in darkness let's pray gracious father we thank you for his precious book your word the bible thank you for teaching us these wonderful truths about the resurrection we pray father that you would be at work in our hearts by your word help us to trust you no matter how hard and dark life gets and sometimes we are confused we know that you're in control but we don't know what's happening we pray father you'd help us to trust you and to hold on to all of these promises of the resurrection now king jesus will one day establish his kingdom fully and finally and we will get to feast in the joyful banquet that he puts on we pray these things in jesus name amen