

“24 HOURS THAT CHANGED THE WORLD”

(Matthew 26:1-4)

[PROP NEEDED: Video Montage for #2, below]

[East Cobb U.M.C.; 3-16-08]

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1. Read Text Matthew 26:1-4 and Pray.

[MEDITATION #1: Intro and The Upper Room]

2. [WATCH CRUCIAL MOMENTS OF 20th-CENTURY VIDEO MONTAGE (Time: 1:30)]

A—As we’ve just seen, whether it’s Pearl Harbor, Hiroshima, the assassination of JFK, or the events of September 11, 2001, twenty-four hours can and has changed the course of world history. ¹

B—And yet, while most of us are familiar with how the events of the *last century* have (for better or worse) shaped us into who we are today,...

1—...The words of today’s Matthew 26 scripture set in motion *another* set of events in what we now call “Holy Week” that changed the world so drastically that its effects still reverberate with us today, 2000 years later.

2—Now, those who’ve grown up in the church have probably heard these stories many, many times. But you know the old saying that “*familiarity breeds contempt.*”

3—And in today’s world, many people have *never* heard or understood these stories even once!

C—That’s why in today’s message, we’re going to walk through the events of those crucial 24 hours, and be reminded briefly of their significance for life today.

3. Now, while Jesus did some teaching during the week of Passover in the Jerusalem Temple and around the city, the most crucial events began Thursday night, when Jesus had dinner together with his disciples in a borrowed upper room of a follower’s house.

A—There, he established the tool of remembrance that we today call “Holy Communion” ²; he taught them how it was more important to *serve* others than to *be served* ³; he reminded them that “*loving one another*” was more important than whether one was “right” or “wrong” ⁴; and finally, he *prayed* for them, reminding them that prayer is not so much for *God* as it is for *us*. ⁵

B—So here’s some questions for us today: ...What “tools of faith” do you use on regular basis to remember Jesus? (worship? Bible study? prayer? a small group?) ...What are you doing to *serve* Him by serving your fellow human beings? ...And how are you, like Jesus, finding ways to pray for the needs of others?

4. MUSIC: “*Take Time To Be Holy*” (UMH#395, Verse 1 ONLY) OR “*In Remembrance of Me*”
5. MORNING PRAYER (and “The Lord’s Prayer”)

“*O God, as Jesus prayed for his disciples, so we pray today both for ourselves and for the world around us, not because YOU need to hear our words, but because WE need to pray them, so that we would become more LOVING by being more willing to SERVE....*”

[MEDITATION #2: The Garden of Gethsemane]

6. Following the supper, about 10:00 or 11:00pm, Jesus took his disciples out of the city across the Kidron Valley to a grove of olive trees called the “Garden of Gethsemane.” There he told them to wait while he went to pray alone, by himself.

A—And in that prayer, he agonized and wrestled with God about giving himself up to the suffering and death that he knew awaited him in God’s plan.

B—But eventually his soul came to a place of surrender and peace where he was able to pray
 “*Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me; yet, not MY will but YOURS be done.*”⁶

[C—9:45 ONLY: Listen as Alan tells us about this experience... (MUSIC: “*Gethsemane*”, Solo)]

D—So here’s the question for us today: ...What are WE willing to sacrifice and surrender so that God’s will be done in both our life and in our world? ...Our time? ...Our talents? ...Our reputation? ...Our money? What will *our* OFFERING to God be so that God’s will can be done?

7. OFFERING INVITATION AND PRAYER
8. OFFERING MUSIC: “*Thy Will Be Done*” (Choir) OR “*Lord, I Give You My Heart*” (All)

[MEDITATION #3: Jesus’ Trial]

9. Jesus was arrested in the Garden about midnight, and led away to face trumped up charges first before the “Sanhedrin” (the Jewish religious council), then before the Jewish puppet King Herod, and finally before the Roman Procurator, Pilate.

A—At all three trials during that night, he was falsely accused, and his words were twisted and misrepresented. And by sunrise, Pilate had sentenced him to death by crucifixion.⁷

B—Now, throughout this experience, Jesus could have saved himself by giving up and giving in to their lies and twisted charges. Instead, he stood firm and persistent in the truth about who he was, and the message God gave him to deliver.

C—The words of the poem “*Thoughts to Ponder*” capture well his experience:

“People are unreasonable, illogical, self-centered. ...Love them anyway.
 If you do good, people will accuse you of selfish motives. ...Do good anyway.
 If you are successful, you will win false friends and real enemies.
 ...Try to be successful anyway.
 The good you do today will be forgotten tomorrow. ...Do it anyway.
 Honesty and frankness will make you vulnerable. ...Be honest and frank anyway.
 People favor the underdog, but they chum up to the top dog.
 ...Fight for the underdog anyway.
 What you spend years building can be destroyed overnight. ...Build anyway.
 Give the world the best you have and chances are you will get kicked in the teeth.
 ...Give it anyway.”⁸

D-So here’s the question: When you and I face people and situations in which we are misunderstood, misrepresented, and even falsely accused, do we give up? Or, like Jesus, do we persevere through it, continuing to do what we know is right?

10. MUSIC: “*Be Still, My Soul*” (UMH#534, Vs. 1 ONLY) OR “*To the Ends of the Earth*”

[MEDITATION #4: Jesus’ Scourging and Via Dolorosa]

11. On Friday around 8:00am, Roman soldiers took Jesus and beat and scourged him within an inch of his life, as an example to others of the futility of defying Rome.

A-Then as further gesture of humiliation, he was made to carry the heavy beam of his cross through the streets of Jerusalem towards his execution place outside the city.⁹ And to this day, that journey has been called the “*Via Dolorosa*” – “*the way of suffering.*”

B-And the question both it and Jesus’ scourging raises is: ...how much are you and I willing to *suffer* for our Christian faith? Not just physically, but even in terms of our reputation?

1-For example, are we willing to risk ridicule and teasing from others when we don’t laugh at their racial or prejudicial jokes? Or refuse their drink? Or when we don’t join in their inappropriate actions and behaviors?

2-What about when your boss asks you to do something you *know* is wrong? Are you willing to risk your career and your livelihood to do what you know is right?

C-How far down the “*Via Dolorosa*” are YOU willing to walk in order to truly follow Jesus?

12. MUSIC: “*Via Dolorosa*” (Special/Solo)

[MEDITATION #5: Jesus’ Crucifixion and Death]

13. It was about 9:00am when the entourage reached the hill called “Golgotha.” Jesus’ clothes were torn off, he was thrown to the ground, his wrists and feet nailed into the wooden beams, and his cross was lifted into a hole so that it could stand on its own.

A—He was then left hanging there to die of blood loss and asphyxiation, as onlookers watched, gaped, and tossed derision and ridicule his way.

B—Never before had Jesus felt so alone or abandoned, to the point where at one time he cried out “*Eli, Eli, lama-sabbach-tani!*”—“*My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?*”

C—And then about 12 Noon – 18 hours after it all started – Jesus offered his spirit up to God ...and died.¹⁰

D—I’m curious: Have you ever felt abandoned by God? – wondering why you were going through the “hell” that you were experiencing?

1—Well, you need to know that Jesus has been there already, and the experience of his crucifixion and death teaches us that God IS with us *even in* our feelings of “abandonment” – that though the clouds and rain and storms of life cover the sky, the sun is still there, even when we can’t see it!

2—And in those times, we need to remember that God says, “*I will be with you always; I will not fail you or forsake you. Be strong and courageous.*”¹¹

14. MUSIC: “*In Just Five Days*” (Choir) OR ...
 “*My God, Why Have You Forsaken Me?*” (Solo) & “*Come Mourn With Me Awhile*” (All)

[SUMMARY / WRAP-UP]

15. Now, as Christians we say that Jesus’ death was NOT the end of the story, but that Easter and his resurrection is still to come three days later.

A—And yet, the events of that 24 hours (between Thursday night and Friday afternoon of Holy Week) set in motion a spiritual revolution that has continued for over 2000 years.

B—And the good news *today* is that you and I can be transformed *forever* because of what happened *then* during those most pivotal “*24 Hours That Changed The World.*”

C—Because of those 24 hours, you and I can sing (Brian sings *a capella*)...

“*What wondrous love is this O my soul... that caused the Lord of bliss to bear the dreadful curse for my soul...*”

“*What wondrous love is this O my soul... that caused the Lord of life to lay aside his crown for my soul...*” (UMH#292, “*What Wondrous Love Is This,*” Vss.1&2)

16. To honor the sacredness of what happened those days, I invite us to please leave in silence. May God bless us as we remember Holy Week and prepare for Easter!

17. [ALL LEAVE IN SILENCE...]

ENDNOTES:

1. The crucial events of any one 24 hour period can potentially alter national and global priorities and policies, change perspectives and attitudes, and cause the entire world to rethink itself.
2. Also called “The Lord’s Supper” or the “Eucharist.” Read Matthew 26:17-29, Mark 14:12-25, and Luke 22:14-22.
3. And he demonstrated this by becoming a servant himself and washing their feet (Read John 13:1-20).
4. Read John 13:34-35.
5. Read John 17:1-26.
6. Luke 22:42. For the full story, read Matthew 26:36-56, Mark 14:32-52, Luke 22:39-53, & John 18:1-11.
7. Read Matthew 26:57-27:26, Mark 14:53-15:15, Luke 22:66-23:24, and John 18:12-40.
8. Though the author is actually unknown, this poem has often be attributed to Mother Teresa. Vocal artist Martina McBride wrote a popular song called “*Anyway*” based on this poem that can heard today on many radio stations (See www.sing365.com for lyrics). As scriptural affirmation of this poem, consider also the words of Galatians 6:9-10, “*Let us not grow weary in doing what is right, for in due season we shall reap if we don’t lose heart.*”
9. Read Matthew 27:27-32, Mark 15:16-21, Luke 22:63-65 & 23:26-32, and John 19:1-16.
10. Read Matthew 27:33-61, Mark 15:22-47, Luke 23:33-56, and John 19:17-42.
11. Read Joshua 1:5-6.