

THE DOUBLE TRANSFER, MT26:36-46

Palm Sunday

◆**Intro:** Palm Sunday is a day of strange dynamics, don't you think? Jesus is fulfilling prophecy, he's riding in on a donkey just like the prophet Zechariah said. That's note worthy in itself since this donkey is specifically said to never have been ridden. Have you ever tried to be the first person on a donkey, or a horse? The people raise an uproar of praise and sing Hosanna. And Jesus lets them. He lets them because he really is their king, but they don't know what kind of king he actually is.

◆They don't know that when he gets into town, he will not attack the Roman soldiers and throw all pagan elements out of the temple, like the famous Judas Maccabeus/ The Hammer, did in 167BC against their Greek overlords, securing for the first time in almost 500 years a Jewish ruled Jerusalem. (They've been celebrating Hanukah every year since.) Now the Romans are their overlords, and Jesus will go to the temple too, but he will make quite a mess of the *Jews* and their dealings going on there. It's all very strange. It's not what we were expecting, Jesus!

◆They also don't know that he will forever change their most sacred of ceremonies, the Passover, into the Lord's Supper. They don't know at this point that one of his closest twelve followers will betray him. They don't realize that he will, before the week is over, not be showered with confetti, but dripping with blood while nailed to something like a telephone pole along the main road. They don't know that their own praises will become jeers in a few days because he didn't wind up doing what they wanted him to

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do. So there's this odd, triumphal entry, as we call it today. Cheering for a dead man walking.

◆ I want us to appreciate today what Jesus gave us by riding into Jerusalem that first Palm Sunday, because we mostly don't, not really. And to do that we will jump right to Maundy Thursday night, and the Garden of Gathsemane, The Place of Pressing.

◆ First a distinction: Often at that fuel pump the screen will ask you "Is this a debit card or a credit card?" I think they're just trying to confuse me. I do have both cards. The debit card represents all my money in my account at the bank. So when I present my debit card, I'm handing over, or sending away money I already have.

◆ Credit cards are different. When I present a credit card, I am handing over money that is not mine at all. It's someone else's money who, in reality, probably owns several islands, and most of the property we call our neighborhood. They are letting me use their money as though it is actually mine! So credit is money coming in to my account, and debit is money going out of my account. At least that is what they tell me. I want to use two sides of finance to describe the uniqueness of Jesus Death.

◆ **1. Jesus death pays my overdrawn account charges, or my debt.** To understand our situation we can simply look at what Jesus began to endure in Gathsemane. The text says he began to be greatly troubled. We're told his sweat was like drops of blood! He feels like he is at the point of expiring altogether! He

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has begun the darkest part of his suffering which will culminate on the cross the next day. He asks God the Father if there is any way around this. He wants the "cup" taken away.

◆A. Before we talk about what that cup is, does it strike you as odd that Jesus here is facing death in great agony? Think about it now. In years, and centuries to come, thousands of Jesus's followers would face death in *serenity*. We have accounts of how they would sing hymns, and encourage mourners. They would pray for their killers in the process of being killed, and beg them to believe in Christ. Even now Christians have a certain amount of rejoicing at a funeral. In the first church I served a 19 son died from head injuries in a car accident. It was heart breaking. For the funeral the family wanted the graveside service first which was in a graveyard on the other side of the church parking lot. As that part of the service concluded the father stunned me as he turned toward me and said, "Pastor, now let's go to the church and praise God." Now how is it that Jesus' followers can be like this, but their leader is so overcome by death?

◆A. Simple answer: Jesus faced death in agony because his death was different from any other death before or after. This is where the cup comes in. "This cup" is a figure for death and hell.

Remember Socrates the great teacher who was sentenced to death by drinking poison? Have you read in Ezekiel's prophecy we must drink the cup of ruin and desolation? Do you recall that Isaiah 51 tells us that rebellion against God leads to the cup of

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God's wrath and the bowl of staggering? This cup is the weight of God's wrath against the sin of the human race. This cup is a picture of what we call Hell.

◆What is hell? In a phrase Hell is complete separation from God and all the goodness that accompanies him. None of us have ever come close to experiencing anything like the separation of Hell. We take a lot for granted, don't we. It's been said *for a believer in Jesus, Earth is as far away from God as we will ever be. For an unbeliever, Earth is as close to God as we will ever be.* See, regular life, laws of nature, sunrise and clean water, the absence of cancer or the ability to taste -these are all present only because to some degree God is present even here with us in our sinful world. But take God's presence out of the picture and all light fades to dark, and all triple chocolate chip fads to the taste of cardboard, because all goodness depends on the presence of a good God.

◆Hebrews 1:3 tells us that Jesus power is sustaining creation moment by moment.

◆Paul tells the Athenian pagans that even their ability to live and move and have being comes from the one true God (Acts17).

◆Were God's presence to be removed from creation even for a second all that we know would dissolve like the people in the Avengers Infinity Wars after Thanos snaps his finger.

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◆ This Hell, this separation from God is what Jesus endured. Tim Keller suggests we think of it like this. If you were to lose the love of a friend that would be painful. If you were to lose the love of your child or your spouse, that would be more painful. “The longer and deeper and more intimate the love relationship, the more searing the pain when it is severed.” Jesus’ love relationship with the Father is a mystery far beyond any that we might experience. Jesus was pre-existent with the Father! They are bound in the eternal relationship of the Trinity. Listen to how Jesus talks in his prayer to the Father just after Judas leaves the Last Supper meal and just before they go to the Garden of Gathsemane!

◆ John 17:5 And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began... 24 “Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, and to see my glory, the glory you have given me because you loved me before the creation of the world.

◆ Jesus’ death is taking on far and away more than any other death could even come close to. He was giving up the one most perfect love relationship possible, for people who didn’t love him. Jonathan Edwards wrote that Jesus could have said, “Why should I, who have been living from all eternity in the enjoyment of the Father’s love, go to cast myself into such a furnace for them that never can [repay] me for it? Why should I yield myself to be thus crushed by the weight of divine wrath, for them who have no love

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for me, and are my enemies? They do not deserve any union with me, and never did, and never will do any thing to recommend themselves to me.”

◆ *1 John 2:2. He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.*

◆ B. How much do I owe? Here’s how it goes. God’s word tells me that all my sinful acts, and thoughts, and desires are debits on my account. In fact, any one sin alone wipes out my account and puts me in debt.

◆ *For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it. For he who said, “Do not commit adultery,” also said, “Do not murder.” If you do not commit adultery but do commit murder, you have become a lawbreaker. James 2:10-11*

◆ In other words, before a holy God, I’ve spent everything I had, and even what I didn’t have.

◆ I can remember third-grade in Our Redeemer Lutheran, Honolulu HA. Teacher had a demerit chart. Someone spoke out of turn, someone bothers someone else or ate the eraser -and you a demerit check. Three demerits meant no recess. Now you could do everything right all day long, but that didn’t erase your demerits! You were still someone who did wrong and that was that.

◆ Spiritually speaking we have demerits stacking up day after day all life long. No amount of niceness to the neighbor changes that

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fact that we are a person who got demerits. Our account was over drawn from the beginning. Paul tells the Ephesians that we are sinful by nature.

◆ *Eph. 2:3. All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath.*

◆ So now the perfectly just Bank of Heaven is supposed to take my house and my life back, so to speak. (The Bible says the payment for any sin at all is death.) Not only that, I'm going to jail for the rest of my existence. (Not an American jail, with TV, internet, libraries, and regular meals. A real jail with nothing, a dungeon where I will suffer and die for a long time, without the possibility of parole. I'll be just enough alive, to know that I'm dying. That's what we call hell.)

◆ This is what I owe God. And this is what Jesus takes for me, so we begin to see just how serious it is in the Garden of Pressing, where olives are crushed under heavy stones until all the oil in the flesh of the fruit is squeezed out of it. This crushing is represented by the "cup" in verse 39.

◆ C. We should also point out that Jesus began his suffering for us from the moment the Father dispatched him from heaven on our behalf. Jesus suffered on our behalf from the moment his unimaginable glory was encapsulated in a fetus of a human child. The Almighty One had limitations of skin and muscle. The Eternal

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One had to live within time. The Righteous One was surrounded by the crud and dirt in the imaginations of men. He suffered all the way to the cross and then especially at the end when completely separated from the Father.

◆ HC 44

◆ **2. Jesus Life credits my account with riches beyond number.** Jesus death on the cross took the separation we deserve in our sin. Ie, God is not longer angry with us. He will no longer punish us. But then, are there not many fathers who are not angry with their children, and do not punish them? Yet this does not necessarily mean they delight in their children, or cherish their existence. It does not mean their hearts are attached to their children, that they ponder and delight in the thought of them. So, if all you know about Jesus in his sacrificial death for you, then you might know that you are off the hook for your sin. But you do NOT know for sure that you are loved and wanted. Here comes the second part of divine exchange.

◆ *2 Corinthians 5:21 God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.*

◆ A. Did you see it. Jesus became our sin, and we became his righteousness. He got our demerits and we were given his merits! He died on the battlefield of Earth saving us, and we get Medals of Honor and parades welcoming us home! Not only are we released from prison of Hell, we are adopted and welcomed

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into the all-inclusive resort of Heaven! It's a double transfer of accounts! Our debts are forgiven and then our bank accounts are loaded with someone else's resources! It's grace piled on top of mercy!

◆ You see, not only did Jesus suffer his whole life and especially on the cross, but he also lived perfectly according to God's will his whole life. We see it right to the end, don't we? "If possible take this cup from me." Hebrews 12 tells us Jesus "despised the shame of the cross!" But ... "nevertheless, not my will, but your will be done."

◆ B. Now what if 1) my sins were forgiven, but God's positive regard for me otherwise is completely dependent upon how well I live? Well I'll tell you what if! I'd give up in discouragement right now, because who am I to keep up with the perfect race runner of all time? How on earth am I supposed to now do all that Jesus did? You can't and you won't. Our attempts at stumbling after Christ is are merely our gratitude for what we already have.

◆ **Conclusion:**

◆ The only reason is love. Divine love. Intentional and driven. Jesus rode into Jerusalem as a savior all right. But now we comprehend much more than the palm waving people could imagine. He rode in to bring us a double transfer. We need not scramble for recognition, reputation or approval. We don't have to live a life of proving ourselves, creating our significance. We are free to live in response to significance placed on us. If we

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really understood how God regards us in Christ, we could take disapproval and failure in stride, we could return good for evil. We could go to our deaths even in serenity only because Jesus went to his without it!