



JESUS SWEATS BLOOD

Part 93 of Luke's Gospel: Investigating the Man Who Is God

Pastor Mark Driscoll | Luke 22:39-46 | October 09, 2011

Luke 22:39–46

³⁹ And he came out and went, as was his custom, to the Mount of Olives, and the disciples followed him. ⁴⁰ And when he came to the place, he said to them, “Pray that you may not enter into temptation.” ⁴¹ And he withdrew from them about a stone’s throw, and knelt down and prayed, ⁴² saying, “Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but yours, be done.” ⁴³ And there appeared to him an angel from heaven, strengthening him. ⁴⁴ And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly; and his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground. ⁴⁵ And when he rose from prayer, he came to the disciples and found them sleeping for sorrow, ⁴⁶ and he said to them, “Why are you sleeping? Rise and pray that you may not enter into temptation.”

THE GARDEN OF GETHSEMANE

Pastor Mark here in Jerusalem. Just over my shoulder, you’ll see the wall of Jerusalem. And on the other side of what is presently that wall, in the days of Jesus, would have been the temple. The centerpiece of the temple was the Holy of Holies, the place where God literally dwelt amongst his people. It was the place where the high priest would go one day a year to atone for the sins of the people. They called it Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement. Many simply referred to it as “The Day.” It was the central day for God’s old covenant people. And what you will see behind me is actually a two-thousand-year-old tree from the time of Jesus, in a place called the Garden of Gethsemane.

I will read for you exactly what happened at this very place, beginning in Luke 22:39. “And he,” that is Jesus, “came out and went, as was his custom, to the Mount of Olives,” which we are at the base of, “and the disciples followed him. And when he came to the place,” that would be this place, the Garden of Gethsemane, “he said to them, ‘Pray that you may not enter into temptation.’ And he withdrew from them about a stone’s throw,” to here, to this place, the place that the other gospels will call the Garden of Gethsemane. “‘And he prayed.’” So, Jesus came here. He knelt down among these now-two-thousand-year-old trees, and he prayed, saying, “‘Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but yours, be done.’ And there appeared to him an angel from heaven, strengthening him. And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly; and his sweat became like drops of blood falling to the ground,” this ground. “And when he rose from prayer, he came to the disciples and found them sleeping for sorrow, and he said to them, ‘Why are you sleeping? Rise and pray that you may not enter into temptation.’”

JESUS PRAYS

The first man brought sin into the world; Jesus Christ, the God-man, atoned for the sin of the world. The first man turned from God the Father in a garden; Jesus Christ, the God-man, turned to the Father in a garden. The first man brought us thorns; the God-man wore a crown of thorns. The first man was naked and unashamed; Jesus Christ was stripped naked and bore our shame. And the first man sinned at a tree; the God-man bore our sins on a tree.

All of human history and all of Scripture has been culminating to the place where Jesus is going to shed his blood. We find ourselves in this place today, in Luke 22:39–46, where Jesus sweats blood. This is where his bloodshed begins. It’s our ninety-third sermon in Luke, and the scene has gotten very dark, as we are within hours of the execution, the crucifixion of Jesus Christ.

Luke picks up the story in Luke 22:39–41. “And he came out,” that is Jesus, “and went, as was his custom, to the Mount of Olives, and the disciples followed him. And when he came to the place, he said to them, ‘Pray that you may not enter into temptation.’ And he withdrew from them about a stone’s throw, and knelt down and prayed.”

Jesus has, at this point, been betrayed by Judas Iscariot, who has gone to get the soldiers to arrest Jesus. Jesus knows that his death is imminent, that Judas will be returning, that he will be arrested, and flogged, and beaten, and crucified. And so what Jesus doesn’t do is what many of us do under duress and in stress. He doesn’t hate God. He doesn’t run from God. He doesn’t argue with God.

He doesn’t permit himself to sin. “If I’m going to suffer, then I have the right to sin.” Some of you will do that with drugs, or alcohol, or sex, or food, or shopping, or whatever it is. “If I’m going to have to suffer, then God owes me a bit of sin,” which is untrue.

Instead, what Jesus does is he prays. He prays. And so we have the record, which we will read in just a moment, of a prayer that Jesus uttered in his

darkest hour, his most difficult day. And I want to say a few things about prayer.

Prayer is communication with God. Right? God speaks to us through Scripture; we speak to God in prayer. That's how the relationship with the living God of the Bible—he is alive, he is a person. He can hear, and he can speak, and he speaks through his Word, and he hears us in prayer. That's how a relationship with God is cultivated. God is not a person like we are, but he thinks, and feels, and acts, and he's alive. He's not just an impersonal force.

When we pray to God, we're not just delivering information, but we're building the relationship, because when we pray, we're not telling God anything he doesn't already know. "God, I had a very hard day." "I had no idea." God never is surprised at what we tell him, because he knows exactly what is happening. Instead, prayer is about building the relationship with God.

Jesus' prayer is perfect prayer, and Jesus' prayer is model prayer, and Jesus' prayer is in the midst of great trial, and trouble, and tragedy; which means, when life gets hard, it's helpful to run to God.

As we pray, a few things happen. Number one, who we truly are is revealed. Right? I can almost tell you with a great degree of certainty who is and who is not a Christian by just hearing them pray. People who know the Lord, they talk to him like they know him. People who don't know the Lord, they speak to him differently. It reveals who we are. What you talk to God about, that's probably what you care about. What you're constantly begging God for, that's probably what matters most to you. So, in prayer, who we are is revealed.

Number two, sometimes prayer does move the hand of God. God does hear and answer all prayer, and sometimes his answer is yes. God answers all prayer in one of three ways: yes, no, or later. Just like a parent. A child comes to a parent. The parent says yes, no, or later. We are like children. We come to God as a Father. God answers our prayers: yes, no, and later. Prayer sometimes moves the hand of God and he says, "Yes."

Number three, prayer changes us. It brings us into alignment with God's will. It brings us into agreement with God's plan. So, a lot is happening as we pray. And as we hear the prayer of Jesus, we see that who he is is revealed, and we see that he and the Father's will become perfectly aligned through prayer.

HIS PLACE OF PRAYER

We read, as well, that there are some aspects to Jesus' prayer. There's a place of prayer. It says he goes to this garden, the other gospels speaking of the same event, call it the Garden of Gethsemane, which means olive press. And it says, "As was his custom," meaning Jesus often went to this place to pray.

Here's my question to you. Do you have a place to pray, a place that is not distracting, and not filled with hurry, worry, and busy, the gods of this world? Jesus went to this place frequently. It's important for you to have that kind of place in your home or near your home. Maybe on a day of silence and solitude, you get away to be with the Lord, you have another place that you go to. This is one of Jesus' places of prayer.

HIS PARTNERS IN PRAYER

Number two, he has partners in prayer. He tells his disciples, "Please pray for me." And Jesus doesn't ask this a lot, and so when he does, it's important. Two questions for you. Who are your partners in prayer? Number one: Are you failing them? Jesus' partners in prayer fail him. He tells them to pray, and they fall asleep. They're not there when he needs them.

Who are you failing in prayer? People that you said you would pray for, you're not praying for them. Or you pray for them, but you're not following up with them. "How's it going?" Text, e-mail, phone call, a cup of coffee. "Let's sit down. How can I pray for you? What's going on?" How many of you, you tell people you'll pray, but you don't? You don't have a list. You don't put it in your phone. You don't write it down. You don't put it in your journal. And as a result, you see them, and you feel like, "I failed you. I said I'd pray, and I didn't." Who are you failing in prayer?

Number two: Who's failing you in prayer? Some of you say, "I have the worst Christian friends." No, you just have Christian friends. Christian friends don't pray well. Jesus' Christian friends didn't pray well.

HIS POSTURE OF PRAYER

He had a place of prayer, he had partners in prayer, and then he had a posture of prayer, right? Luke records that he knelt, and this is a statement, correct? Is this not a statement? See, in that day, God's people typically stood to pray. I generally stand to pray. I'm not a guy who sits in a chair for hours while praying. I like to prayer walk, some fresh air, sunshine, go for a walk. I have places that I like to go to pray, and I tend to pray walking.

Well, in that day, most of God's people, they prayed likewise while standing. But in this occasion, Jesus kneels in prayer, and that's significant, because, again, in prayer, who we are is revealed. If you were to see someone kneeling, that tells you maybe they're a soldier who has surrendered to a greater authority; or maybe they are someone who is a guilty criminal, who has acknowledged that and is now before legal authority, submitting themselves to whatever they deserve; or they're a Christian who belongs to God and knows that they are surrendering, and they are guilty, and that's what they're demonstrating in their bodily posture. There's humility, there's submission, there's surrender in the posture of Jesus, which tells us a lot about how he views God the Father and how he comes to God the Father in prayer.

When's the last time you knelt in prayer? It's interesting, sometimes, as kids, we do that; and as we become adults, we don't. And sometimes it's good; it's good to have our bodies prepare our souls for a conversation with God that is yielding and humble, and that's exactly what Jesus is going to have.

JESUS PRAYS TO GOD THE FATHER

He's got a place in prayer, partners in prayer. He's got a posture in prayer, and then he prays. He actually does pray. And as Jesus is praying—I want to explain this to you—he is talking to God the Father. So, this is the second member of the Trinity, the Son of God, speaking to the first member of the Trinity, God the Father.

The teaching of the Bible is and the history of the church is there's one God, three persons: Father, Son, and Spirit. They're coequal, coeternal. They share all the divine attributes, and they live together with communication in community. So, before you and I existed, the God of the Bible was loving, in relationship, in community, friends. When we're made in the image and likeness of God, that's why we communicate, and we have community, and we want friends, because we're made in the image and likeness of that God. And so the Father, Son, and Spirit have been talking to one another for eternity.

As Jesus, the second member of the Trinity, enters into human history, he takes upon flesh. He becomes a human being. So, now God becomes a man. And as he is praying, we have this eavesdropping opportunity to listen in. What does it look like when God has a conversation within his own Trinitarian community of friendship? And so we're eavesdropping today. This is a sacred moment. This is a significant and special moment in the history of the world where we get to listen in on God conversing in Trinitarian community.

And Jesus tells us elsewhere to pray to God as Father. And here he begins his prayer—and you'll read it with me in just a moment—to God as Father. And this is really important. In the history of God's people in the Old Testament, over the course of more than a millennium, they rarely refer to God as Father—perhaps just over a dozen times in more than a thousand years—and every single time, it is speaking of the people of God, nationally and corporately, never individually. So, when Jesus, as one person, refers to God as a personal Father, that's revolutionary for prayer.

John Calvin says, rightly, that sometimes when God teaches us, he does so in what Calvin calls baby talk. If you're a parent, you've got kids, and they're little, you're trying to explain or teach them something that's complicated, you talk baby talk. You try and find language that they can relate to, so that the difficult concepts become accessible to them, right? And so when God reveals himself as a Father, that's baby talk. And when Jesus Christ is revealed as the Son of God, that's language that he's the firstborn. He's preeminent. He's our big brother. He comes on behalf of the Father. He says and does what the Father asks him to say and do. He represents the kingdom of the Father. He is in every way in loving relationship with the Father like a father and son, but a perfect Father and Son.

Some of you will really struggle in prayer. Let me tell you this. The key to growing in prayer is not to focus on prayer. That's actually the way to be someone who struggles with prayer. Have you ever noticed that when you're driving, if you say, "I don't want to cross the yellow line," and you keep looking at it, guess where you're going to drive? Right over the yellow line. The key is to look down the road. So it is with prayer. If you just look at prayer, you're going to get off course. Instead, you look at God, and you get to know him as a Father, a loving, gracious, available Father. And as you get to know God as Father, you will find yourself talking to him.

Let me say, for example, there was a child who was in a foster care system or something of that nature, never had a father. And all of a sudden, they were adopted by a father into a family. Their father was amazing, and loved them, and available to them, and would be interrupted at any point to hear anything they wanted to talk about, and always answered every request, and was present, and loving, and available. The more that child gets to know that father, the more they're going to talk to them. About the good days: "Dad, you'll never guess what happened." Those are prayers of rejoicing. As well as the hard days: "Dad, it was really hard today, and I need your counsel," or "I need your help," or "I need your comfort. I don't know what to do here." The key to prayer is not to focus on prayer, but to get to know the Father.

Jesus, here, is going to pray to the Father, and we're going to read it for ourselves, as we eavesdrop on the conversation that the Trinity has. Here's how it reads. Luke 22:42–46: "‘Father, if you are willing—’" There's the word "Father." "‘If you are willing, remove this cup from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but yours, be done.’ And there appeared to him an angel from heaven, strengthening him. And being in agony he prayed more earnestly; and his sweat became like great drops of blood falling to the ground. And when he rose from prayer, he came to the disciples and found them sleeping for sorrow, and he said to them, ‘Why are you sleeping? Rise and pray that you may not enter into temptation.’"

So, here's Jesus praying to God the Father. He has his prayer partners, who are failing him, and also an angel who is comforting him. We'll look at everyone who is involved here. First of all, there are Jesus' friends. They are to be partners in prayer, and they fail him in his most difficult, arduous season, moment of life.

I know that for some of you, this is where church is difficult, or Christian friendships are difficult, or signing up for a Community Group is difficult, because perhaps in the past, you've extended yourself, and God's people have failed you. Let me say that on behalf of Jesus, I'm sorry. We're sorry. And I know that there are people who would say that about me. "Mark failed me." And so I'm not without guilt, as well. But one thing I do love is, though Jesus' friends failed him, you'll see later on in Luke, Jesus remains friends with them. He continues to love, pursue, forgive, and to work on the friendship, to work on the friendship.

How many of you, right now, are really failing somebody who needs you? They're in a season of real trouble and trial. It's a dark day for them, and maybe you're too busy, or at least that's the excuse that you use, or perhaps they're just depressing, because of the season they're in. The Puritan Matthew Henry used to talk of swallow friends, meaning they leave when winter comes. Are you that kind of friend? "Boy, your life is really hard. Let me know when you're through it, and I'd love to see you again." Those are Jesus' friends in his darkest day.

In addition, there is an angel that God sends to minister to him, and angels do two things: they are messengers and ministers, primarily. God created angels. They are spirit beings, and they are agents of messages and ministry. So, early in Jesus' life, when it was announced that Mary would give birth

to him, an angel showed up as a messenger and declared that, we read in the opening pages of Luke. We also saw, I believe it was in Luke 4, when Jesus was tempted by Satan, that after he resisted that temptation—forty days and forty nights of fasting preceded it—he was weak and weary, and angels came and ministered to him and comforted him.

We believe in the supernatural. We believe that there are angels created by God. We also believe that there are demons who started as angels, but rebelled against God. That is the teaching of the Scriptures, from beginning to end, and some of us live in a day where we disbelieve in the supernatural, and the Bible knows nothing of that.

Others of us only believe in the good supernatural; angels but not demons. The result is we can give ourselves over to spirituality, which may, in fact, be the most deadly, damaging, devastating thing that we do, because not everything in the spirit world is good, just like not everything in the physical world is good. There are people who are trustworthy. There are people who are dangerous. As it is in the physical world, so it is in the spirit world.

Hebrews tells us that some of us have entertained angels and didn't even know it, because sometimes they will appear like people who come to deliver a message or to serve us in a way of ministry. And here comes an angel to serve the Lord Jesus.

GOD THE FATHER GRIEVES

Now what about the Father? Sometimes, it is wrongly stated, as if God the Father was the mean one, and Jesus was the nice one, and God the Father got angry, and so he punished Jesus. The truth is that in eternity past, God the Father and God the Son agreed that the plan for the forgiving of human sin would be the death of the second member of the Trinity. This is where Jesus says elsewhere, "No one takes my life from me; I lay it down of my own accord." What he's saying is, "I'm not just a victim. I agree to the plan. I agree to the plan."

Just as Jesus is grieving, so in that moment God the Father is grieving. Jesus says elsewhere, "If you've seen me, you've seen the Father." He is the exact representation of the Father's nature, Colossians tells us. So, when you see Jesus, assume he's mirroring, he's reflecting, he's imaging God the Father. So, if he's grieving, the Father is grieving. If he is in agony, the Father is in agony.

They are having this intimate, painful, heartfelt, devastating discussion, and it goes something like this. "We're here. We're here at the day that we've always known would come. They're on their way to arrest me. They're going to beat me, and scourge me, and physically destroy me, and then they're going to crucify me. And, Father, I want you to know, right now, I have great anxiety about that. I have great distress about that. It's not that I am unwilling, but I want to have one final conversation with you before we proceed forward."

Regarding this account in Mark 14:33, it says he was, quote, "deeply distressed." Hebrews 5:7, speaking of Jesus' prayer life while on the earth, says he prayed "with loud cries and tears." We just read in Luke that he was in agony. What I love about the Bible is its brutal honesty, particularly in the darkest moments.

See, if this were written by purely religious people, they would just give us a theological answer and move on, because that's what religious people do. "Oh, God works out all things for the good of those who love him and are called according to his purpose. No need to cry. Let's move on. Go get crucified."

Some of you are religious people, and you don't know what to do with people when they're hurting, weeping, bawling, crying, suffering, dying. You don't know what to do. You immediately just want to quote a verse, go to a theological category and move on. You need to be there with them in that moment, and that's exactly what's going on here between God the Father and God the Son. Yes, it's all going to work out; but, no, it's not going to be easy. Yes, we believe in the ultimate providence of God. God works out everything. But along the way, sometimes it is just really brutal and painful and horrific. We're in agony. We're deeply distressed. We have loud cries and tears.

The Bible never guarantees that we'll see it all worked out in this life. Much of it won't be unpacked until eternity. Between here and there, there are a lot of days that are difficult, and dark, and dire. Some of you are in those days, today. For those of us who have an opportunity to minister to those who are struggling, and hurting, and suffering, and weeping, and dying, you've got to sit with them.

You know, the Father doesn't tell the Son, "You just need to toughen up and get through it." That's not what he says. The Father doesn't tell the Son, "Hey, you know how it's going to end. It's going to be fine. Just keep the big perspective." The Father doesn't look at the Son and say, "Hey, remember Nehemiah 8:10? 'The joy of the Lord is your strength.' Just fake it. Be happy, pretend. Have a good attitude, positive self-thinking." No, the Father and Son sit together in a sacred moment, and Jesus says, "This is killing me. What I am about to experience has me in great distress and agony." Dear friend, if you are suffering, or when you're suffering, Jesus gives you permission to just be honest.

Now, here's what he doesn't do. He doesn't curse God. He doesn't ask, "Is there a God? Does he love me? Is he sovereign?" He doesn't go to any of those questions. He just says, "Father, I respect you." He demonstrates that by kneeling. "This is very difficult, and I want to talk about it. I want to talk about it." And the Father hears him.

PERFECT SUBMISSION

Jesus' prayer is in the context of agony. Luke, the physician recording this, says that Jesus is actually sweating blood. This is a very rare medical condition that is precipitated by the most extreme duress. You have to be in absolute agony, complete anguish, to all of a sudden be sweating blood. Very rarely does anyone get to this place physiologically. Jesus got there. Jesus got there. He was stressed. He was distressed. It is late at night. He cannot sleep. The disciples all fall asleep.

Have you been there? Are you there? You know what is about to happen, and it seems inevitable, that it cannot be avoided, but you don't know how you're going to brace yourself to endure it. You can't sleep. Your mind is racing. Your heart is racing. It's where the Lord Jesus is. See, we have a God in Jesus Christ who has been there.

Have you been there? "It's cancer." "No, don't say that." "They're dying." "No, not that." "They're dead." "What?" "I want a divorce." "No." "Mom and Dad, I don't want to be a Christian. I'm going my own way." "No." "You're fired." "I never want to see you again." "I'm ashamed of you." "Will you marry me?" "No." "Was it adultery?" "Yes." Loud tears and crying.

And in those moments, dear friend, is it reasonable to go to God and say, "I don't know if I can get through this. I don't know what I'm supposed to do. I'm devastated. I have verses. I don't have answers"? Jesus did. In his full humanity, that's what he did.

And then he has this remarkable statement: "Not my will, yours be done." This is perfect submission. When the Bible uses the language of submission—and it does—it means when you don't necessarily agree. When you agree, you're not submitting. "I want ice cream." "I want ice cream, too." "Well, okay. I'm not going to submit to that. We agree." Submission is when you're having a hard time coming to agreement.

So, when a parent looks at a child and says, "I'm your parent, and I need you to submit to me," it's okay for the child to say, "I want to talk about this. I want to tell you how I feel. I want to tell you why I disagree. I want you to hear me out, and I want to reason with you, and I either want you to consider my appeal and change your mind, or I want you to inform me and instruct me, so that I can agree with you, so we can proceed forth together." That's submission.

And here in his humanity, Jesus is coming to the Father, saying, "I know the plan that we've agreed to, and I'm willing to go through the plan, but I just need to double check. Is there any other way? If not, your will be done. My will will be your will. We will proceed forward together, both shedding tears and devastated, but in agreement as to what has to happen next." I want you to see submission is strong. Submission can be vocal. Submission can be emotional. Submission can be honest, and it can still be submissive.

WHY IS JESUS CHRIST SO GRIEVED IN A GARDEN?

Here's the question. Why is Jesus Christ so grieved in a garden? Why is he in distress? Why can he not sleep? I feel inclined to tell you this. Some of you want to know what's going to happen next. Let me tell you, even if you knew, it wouldn't make it easier. Does Jesus know what's going to happen next? Yes or no? Yes. Does it seem easy? No. Why is Jesus Christ so grieved in a garden?

Luke 22:42: "Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me." His anxiety, his agony is all in relation to some cup. Sort of use this as a mental image. God the Father and God the Son, the first and second member of the Trinity, imagine them sitting down together, and there's a cup that's sort of perched on a table, and they're both looking at that cup. And the Son of God says, "Father, I know from history past, eternity past, we have agreed that I will drink that cup. Now that we're here, I'm asking you, is there any other way?" And God the Father, I could just see him, devastated, saying, "You know there's not. Were there, we would consider that." Pushes the cup over. "Son, I need you to drink that cup." The Son, looking at the cup, "Father, I'm willing, but I'm struggling."

THE CUP OF THE WRATH OF GOD

What is that cup? Why is there so much distress, and anguish, and agony? Why can Jesus not sleep, but he can sweat blood? That cup is filled with the wrath of God. I'll give you three places in the Old Testament—there are more—that connect the cup with the wrath of God. Ezekiel 23:33 speaks of "a cup of horror and desolation." Isaiah 51:17 speaks of, quote, "the cup of his wrath." Jeremiah 25:15 speaks of "the cup of the wine of wrath."

I want you to use this picture that the Bible gives. You are a sinner. You are a sinner by nature, and choice, word, thought, deed. Commission, you do wrong; omission, you do not do right. And if you disagree, you're more sinful than perhaps anyone else, and you're filled with haughtiness, and pride, and self-righteousness, and you have been puffed up by a culture of self-esteem and me-ism, and the hard, cold truth is you will not die and stand before a mirror to give an account for your life. You will stand before the God of the Bible and give an account for your life.

And every day that you and I sin, it is like a drop into a cup, and it is being collected. And we pour the sin in. And then commensurate with the sin that we pour in, God, at the end of this life, pours out commensurate wrath. Wrath. And so the cup is the cup of the wrath of God! Jesus is looking at this cup, and this cup is filled with everyone's sin in the history of the world! With tears in his eyes, he looks at the Father, and he's saying, "Is there any option but for me to drink every drop in this cup?" And with tears in his eyes, the Father says, "Son, we both know that if there is to be salvation for anyone, you must drink that cup, every single drop."

People don't talk about this anymore, because you're all way too intelligent to believe in some sort of primitive justice like that. And you're not that bad. You're good people. You're nice people! Some of you are well educated. Some of you are nice neighbors. Some of you are better than the Christians you know, morally speaking. Some of you have studied enough philosophy, you have a way to argue around this, like an attorney on the run. Some of you have studied enough psychology that you find a way to emotionally say, "Well, yeah, some people believe in a mythical Father figure and justice because it gives them peace, so that they can live their life with emotional stability." Some of you say, "Yes, this is the problem with religion. It's so primitive. It wants things like justice." And might I say, when someone breaks into your home, so do you.

It's the wrath of God. And immediately, some of you would say, "No, no, no, no, the love of God. Pastor Mark, preach the love of God!" "No, the wrath of God." Do you know the wrath of God is mentioned more than the love of God in the Bible? Do you know that the wrath of God is mentioned

with twenty-some words, Old and New Testament combined, over six hundred times?

I did an interview this week, last week, some week, for a documentary. The guys who did the documentary *Expelled* are doing a documentary on hell. So, I got interviewed for that. A big part of our conversation was this. They said, "Well, isn't God loving?" "Yeah, 1 John 4, God is love, God is love. But love is not God, and God is not only love." When it speaks of God in the Bible, it speaks of him in terms of attributes. He is loving and just. He is merciful and holy. He is forgiving and righteous. And what people like to do is take one of God's attributes, elevate it above the rest, and/or ignore the totality of what the Bible says about God.

Someone says, "God is love. I like that one. I don't like the rest. How about I ignore those, or I find someone educated beyond their intelligence with a few degrees, who wrote a book, and tells me that the word 'wrath' in the Bible really means lollipop, and the scholars have got it wrong for two thousand years." And then just, "God is love." And what that means is God's not God, but love is God. "And now I get to create a god that I wish existed, which means I'm god, and I declare good and evil. And I go back to the foundational problem in Genesis 3. I want to be God. I don't like the real God, so I vote myself in as god to declare what is good and evil, and I judge the God of the Bible, and then edit him so that he's more palatable for the modern-day market."

I love you. And I have to tell you the truth. My job is to tell you the truth. Your job is to make a decision. There inevitably reaches a point in a church like ours where the weight is so heavy to lie, that I, and you, and we are in danger. We started with ten people in a living room. By the grace of God, we'll have over ten thousand people today. That means more eyes on it, more ears tuning in, more critics picking apart, more media looking for an error, more people walking away, more dollars, more frustration that could be created by telling the truth.

GOD HATES

If you're going to be a Christian, I want you to really be one, not just another Judas who hangs out with the team and then hangs himself. To do that, you need to know who the real God is and how the real God feels. Some of you, God hates you. Some of you, God is sick of you. God is frustrated with you. God is wearied by you. God has suffered long enough with you. He doesn't think you're cute. He doesn't think it's funny. He doesn't think your excuse is meritorious. He doesn't care if you compare yourself to someone worse than you. He hates them, too! God hates, right now, personally, objectively hates some of you. He has had enough! He is sick of it! There's no sense of urgency with you, but the cup is filled to the rim for him!

The Bible speaks of God not just hating sin, but sinners, because sin is of our nature. Sin is not just a mistake that we make. It's not that we're good people, down in our heart, who had a bad moment. In our worst moments is the truest revelation of who we really are at the deepest level. You will struggle mightily with this, but it is the beginning of freedom. For if we do not diagnose the problem, how in the world can we present the solution? You are the problem, not the solution. You and I are sinners, and we are, by nature, objects of wrath. That's a quote from the Bible.

I'll give you three examples. Psalm 5:5, "You," speaking of God, "hate all evildoers." Again, you can find a Christian on the run when they start doing word studies. "Oh, it means he hates this sin, not the sinner." That's Gandhi, not Jesus. Gandhi is not in the Bible. Gandhi is not close to the Bible. I'm not the judge. I don't decide who goes to heaven or hell. I'm not saying where Gandhi is. I'm saying, apart from Jesus, I know exactly where he is. God doesn't just hate what you do. He hates who you are! My job is to tell the truth; your job is to make a decision.

Psalm 11:4-5, "The Lord is in his holy temple; the Lord's throne is in heaven; his eyes see . . . the children of man. The Lord tests the righteous, but his soul hates the wicked." How in the world could a good, just, holy God look at the earth and say, "Good people with good hearts"? How could God wait thousands of years, one generation to the next, look down and say, "With this, I am well pleased"? He doesn't.

Hosea 9:15 speaks of a place. He says, "There I began to hate them. Because of the wickedness of their deeds I will drive them out of my house. I will love them no more." God hates you, and there is wrath for you! The wrath of God is being stored up for you! You cannot believe in the personal love of God and not believe in the personal wrath of God.

Some of you are in grave danger. You should have a sense of urgency. And as I speak, don't let that small attorney in your conscience come to your defense. It's as if you were in the path of destruction, and I am trying to warn you, and you're arguing, rather than running. It's as if I knew that when you return home today, a plane was going to lose an engine and crash into your home, and destroy you. And I'm telling you. And rather than running, you're arguing.

Old Testament, Psalm 7:11. "God is a righteous judge, a God who expresses his wrath every day." Ephesians 5:6. "Let no one deceive you with empty words." Don't say, "I read a book, and I consulted a theologian, and there's some guy in the New Testament class at my college, educated beyond his intelligence, who says this is all very primitive. And the God of the New Testament is nothing but hugs and muffins, and we're all going to go to heaven, except for maybe Hitler, but it's a coin flip for him, too."

"Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of such things God's wrath comes on those who are disobedient." Colossians 3:5-6, "Put to death whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry. Because of these, the wrath of God is coming." The wrath of God is coming on those who have rebelled against God and those whom God hates!

ACTIVE WRATH AND PASSIVE WRATH

There is active wrath and passive wrath, and some of you would say, "This whole concept of wrath, I think you're just trying to scare me." I am. But some of you would say, "Where is the wrath of God? Pastor Mark, the list you just read, I did that last night, and I slept in, and I had my breakfast, and now I get to be yelled at. This is as close to the wrath of God as I get is you yelling at me. Where is the wrath of God?"

The wrath of God is in two forms, the Bible declares: active and passive. In this life, most of us experience passive wrath. It says this a few times in Romans 1, that God handed them over, God handed them over, God handed them over. It's passive wrath. It says that the wrath of God is on those who suppress the truth.

Imagine if I looked at one of my children, and I said, "Go do whatever you want. I've begged, I've pleaded, I've tried to save you from yourself. You are determined to be who you want to be. You are determined to do what you're going to do. Go do it." That's passive wrath. That's just letting you have what you want to your own destruction. Some of you are living under the passive wrath of God. You're not getting away with anything.

Every single time you fill a glass, remember the wrath of God. Every single time that you fill a glass, remember the wrath of God. "The wrath of God fills a cup," Jesus says. Just like you and I, we always fill cups. Well, there's another cup that we will not see until the end, that we're all filling: sin, after sin, after sin, folly, after folly, after folly, rebellion, after rebellion, after rebellion, arrogance, after arrogance, after arrogance, drop, after drop, after drop!

God lets us fill the cup. All of our sin goes in, and then in the end, God pours out his wrath, and his wrath is commensurate with our sin. And so the days of passive wrath culminate in the day of active wrath, where you die, stand before Jesus, and the wrath of God is poured out forever on you. The Bible uses words like, "grinding of teeth," and "the shedding of tears." Some of you say, "Well, thankfully, Jesus is very loving, and Jesus wouldn't do that to people. That's why we like Jesus." No, this is what Jesus is going to do to people. Don't let your hippy, Hacky Sack Jesus be a replacement for the King of kings and the Lord of lords.

Revelation 14:10–11. It says, "He, too, will drink of the wine of God's fury, which has been poured full strength into the cup of his wrath." "He—" and that might be you, friend—"will be tormented—" that's physical suffering—"with burning sulfur in the presence of the holy angels and of the Lamb." In front of Jesus, who oversees hell. Satan doesn't rule hell. Jesus does. Satan is tormented in hell. How long will this last? "The smoke of their torment rises forever and ever."

You are in grave danger. You are filling your cup of wrath. If you die apart from Jesus, he will pour out full strength the full cup of that wrath on you forever, and ever, and ever, and ever, and ever, and ever, and ever, and ever!

THE LOVE OF GOD AT THE CROSS

But Jesus also drank a cup. Jesus drank a cup, the cup of the wrath of God. This is why he was sleepless. This is why he was sweating blood, that he exchanged places with us. Dear friend, I want to tell you about the love of God now, but first I need to tell you about the righteous hatred of God, so that when I tell you about the love of God, it's as loving as it truly is.

See, at the cross of Jesus, there is hatred for Jesus and love for us, so that when we die, there would not be hatred for us, but just love; that Jesus is God among us, that Jesus became one of us, that Jesus lived the life we've not lived, that Jesus died the death we should die, and that on the cross, the wrath of God was poured out on the Son of God. To say it another way, Jesus took the cup on the cross and drank every single drop of the wrath of God, and he endured it. This was physical, emotional, spiritual, mental suffering to a degree that is incomprehensible; when God made him who knew no sin to become the sin of the world, so that in him we might become the righteousness of Christ.

Jesus died the death that you and I should deserve. And the Bible uses one word to explain this. It's *propitiation*, and it's a big word, but it's an important word, and it appears four times in the New Testament. And what it means is this, that the wrath of God is upon us, and Jesus steps in our place, and he takes the cup from our hand, and he drinks it full strength, and he suffers, and bleeds, and dies, that we might live in love and joy, thereby propitiating, diverting, removing, enduring the wrath of God on our behalf. Theologians are arguing against this. Large church pastors are bristling against this. There's a whole movement to deny this, but it's true.

Romans 3:23–25, "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God," the best among us is not good enough, "and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith."

Hebrews 2:17, "Therefore he," meaning Jesus, "had to be made like his brothers," human like us, "in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people."

First John 2:2, "He," meaning Jesus, "is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world." It doesn't matter: male, female, young, old, black, white, rich, poor, brilliant or simple. Jesus, alone, propitiates the wrath. Jesus, alone, propitiates the wrath. No other religion can. No philosophy will. And psychology may make you feel better until you are in torment forever, and then there's not one thing that the therapist said that will make that more bearable.

Some of you say, "But I thought God was loving, where is the love? This doesn't sound like a very loving God." First John 4:10, "This is love." Do not begin with love and then import your definition of love into it, thereby judging God through it! You can't say, "Well, God says he's loving, and that's not loving." You're not God. You don't sit on a throne. You don't make the decision. You're not the judge. Everything went south and sideways in Genesis 3, when people decided they would judge God, rather than obey him.

"This is love, not that we have loved God," that's the problem, "but that he loved us." God loves you. God loves you. You say, "Sometimes I don't feel it. Sometimes I don't see it. When I am suffering, I have a hard time believing it."

“And he sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.” So, the cross of Jesus is where the wrath was poured out on him, and the love was poured out for us!

So, when we look to the cross of Jesus, we say, “God is holy and just. He does forgive, but not everyone. There is propitiation for sin, but it is in Christ alone. And if I am not in Christ, then I am simply filling a cup of the wrath of God that I will have to drink forever at the end of my days on this earth.”

And so you know that God loves you because of what Jesus endured on the cross. The cross of Jesus is where the love of God is most clearly seen, and it is a damnable thing to then look at the cross and ask, “Where is the love of God?” There is the love of God: that God loved you so much that he would pour out wrath upon himself, that he would suffer and die in your place as a friend, though you are an enemy. That’s the love of God.

So, on the cross, Jesus is being crucified, and he says, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” That eternal, unbroken communion and union between the Father and Son was momentarily severed. The older theologians say that in that moment, it is as if the Father turned his back on the Son, and that was heartbreaking, devastating for both.

I have three sons. I cannot fathom turning my back on my son. My son would be destroyed. I would be destroyed. We would both suffer. And to do it for his enemies, who are in that moment shouting, “Crucify him, crucify him,” and murdering him, that is love. That is love for you and me, from Jesus and the Father.

In that moment, Jesus Christ took upon himself our sin. Second Corinthians 5:21 says that he became our sin, though he was without sin, and he died, spiritually died. And then he says, “Father into your hands I commit my Spirit.” And the greatest reunion in the history of creation, beyond creation, occurred. The Father and Son were reunited in joy, and our sins were atoned for. And then Jesus declares with a loud, triumphant cry, “It is finished!” It’s all finished.

TWO KINDS OF PEOPLE

Let me close with this. There are only two kinds of people that are going to hear this message: those who believe it and those who do not. History is not divided into various religions, or races, or ethnicities, or tribes, or tongues, or moralities, or incomes, or intelligences. Two kinds of people: those who believe, those who don’t. Those who believe, the wrath of God is lifted. Those who do not believe, the wrath of God is coming.

Here’s how the Bible says it. John 3:36, “Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life.” Whoever believes, whoever, whoever! That’s you, friend! Whoever! Anybody, everybody, welcome to Jesus! It doesn’t matter who you are. It doesn’t matter what you’ve done. It doesn’t matter right now how bad you feel. Whoever, whoever! Yes, God is exclusive. There’s only salvation through Jesus. But God is inclusive. Whoever wants to come to him is certainly welcome to. Whoever believes in him has eternal life. The wrath of God is lifted. The love of God is given forever!

“Whoever does not obey the Son,” whoever does not believe, “shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him.” God hates some of you! The wrath of God is filling a cup right now with your name on it! God’s wrath is coming for you! You are living in the path of the wrath of God! You are in grave eternal danger. You have picked a fight you cannot win. You have declared a war that you will certainly lose! You have offended a God who made you! And after he has made provision to die for you, to save you, to love you, to forgive you, to embrace you, if you would say no, his anger against you is all the more just, and there is no excuse.

My job is what? To tell the truth. Your job is to make a decision. I pray this would be the day of your salvation, that you would come to Jesus and receive the love of God and have that great burden of the wrath of God lifted and that that cup with your name on it would not be awaiting you on your last day.

Father God, I thank you for this plan of salvation. God, I know that this is a hard word, but, God—I’ve said it for many years—I believe that hard words produce soft people, and soft words produce hard people. In a world where we are told we are good people with good hearts, and what we need is more self-esteem, we receive the hard word that we are bad people with bad hearts, who need a new heart; that we are the problem, not the solution; that we are the sinner, not the Savior; that we are the object of wrath, not the propitiation of wrath. Lord Jesus, you are amazing, that you would endure all of that for your enemies. Lord Jesus, it’s overwhelming, that the Creator of the universe would suffer and die for his enemies, to make them his friends. Lord Jesus, that’s love. Holy Spirit, please apply this message to us. For those who are believers, give us a deeper joy. For those who are unbelievers, I pray that they would come to Jesus and not experience the wrath that is to come. Amen.

Note: This sermon transcript has been edited for readability.