

In the Garden of Gethsemane: Jesus Prays, Judas Betrays, and Jesus is Arrested

SCOTT HOEZEE

In the gospels, Jesus' famously once told his disciples to take up their cross and follow him. What Jesus meant there, was living a sacrificial life in imitation of him and what he would ultimately do by dying on the cross for our sins. But in Lent each year, the Church also retraces Jesus' actual journey to the cross, and one ancient, traditional way of doing that is through something known as the *stations of the cross*. Today on *Groundwork*, we begin a Lenten series that observes these various stations. Stay tuned.

DARRELL DELANEY

Welcome to *Groundwork*, where we dig into scripture to lay the foundation for our lives. I am Darrell Delaney.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And I am Scott Hoezee; and Darrell, this is now the first episode in what we are planning as a seven-part series that will take us to all fourteen of the traditional stations of the cross. We will do two stations per program; and then the last program will look ahead also to Easter. Now, for some of us, this tradition may be unfamiliar. It might even be something that some Protestants deem just to be a Roman Catholic thing; and Darrell, we have heard about some of the old stations of the cross that don't appear to have any biblical basis, including one stop along the way in which a woman named Veronica is said to wipe the brow of Jesus as he carries the cross. So, that one is not in the Bible.

DARRELL DELANEY

Well, what I have seen is that most of these are in the Bible; and actually, I have walked into, not just Catholic churches, but Protestant churches, where they have had stained-glass windows that show the stations of the cross; and so, it has been interesting for a child to come in who doesn't even know how to read yet, can look on the walls and look at the windows and see these different stations that we are about to go through as a series. So, it is really interesting that we are going to unpack it.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes; and it is also instructive to remind listeners that in 1991, Pope John Paul II released an updated version of the stations, and in that one, all fourteen stations are, indeed, rooted in a biblical event; and because of that, most Protestants have taken up this practice, too. Traditionally, Darrell, following Jesus to Golgotha or Mount Calvary was known as the *Via Crucis*—the way of the cross—or the *Via Delarosa*—the way of sorrows.

DARRELL DELANEY

Yes; so, when you go through these different stations, the idea is that we pause at each station to reflect on its meaning. I do remember doing that as a practice...just a spiritual practice...to be able to reflect on how these moments affected Jesus, but also preparing my heart during the Lenten season; and we are going to invite people to do that while we go through this series as well.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes; it is kind of a form of meditation. It is almost like a form of personal devotion, to praise and give thanksgiving, and to express holy awe over all that our Lord did to forgive our sins and bring us new life in the kingdom of God.

So, here they are, in order; here are the fourteen stations that we will ponder in this seven-part series:

Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane.

Jesus is betrayed by Judas and arrested.

Jesus is condemned by the Sanhedrin.

Jesus is denied by Peter.

Jesus is judged by Pilate.

Jesus is scourged and crowned with thorns.

Jesus takes up his cross.

DARRELL DELANEY

Jesus is helped by Simon to carry his cross.

Jesus meets the women of Jerusalem.

Jesus is crucified.

Jesus promises his kingdom to the repentant thief.

Jesus entrusts Mary and John to each other.

Jesus dies on the cross.

Jesus is laid in the tomb.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And in this episode—our first one here—we are going to look at the first two stations: Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane, and then his betrayal by Judas Ischariot, leading to his arrest.

We are going to look at Gethsemane in the second part of this episode, Darrell, but for now, let's be reminded of what happened right before they went out to that garden.

DARRELL DELANEY

So, there are some familiar verses from Matthew 26, as Jesus and his disciples conclude the first ever celebration of the Lord's Supper in that upper room. So, we will pick up in verse 31 of Matthew 26. It says: Then Jesus told them, "This very night you will all fall away on account of me, for it is written: 'I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered.'"³² But after I have risen, I will go ahead of you into Galilee."³³ Peter replied, "Even if all fall away on account of you, I never will."³⁴ "Truly I tell you," Jesus answered, "this very night, before the rooster crows, you will disown me three times."³⁵ But Peter declared, "Even if I have to die with you, I will never disown you." And all the other disciples said the same.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Those are, Darrell, in some ways, difficult verses to read, you know. We know that Jesus is full of sorrow, and we are certainly going to see that in the next scene in Matthew 26, in the garden; and a good bit of his sorrow, I think, is knowing that these disciples, who had been with Jesus for perhaps between three and five years, are going to abandon him. Even Peter, a clear leader among the twelve disciples, is told he will deny even knowing Jesus...not once, not twice, but three times. You know, Peter won't hear of it; of course, he won't do that: Well, I'll even die with you, if need be, is what he says.

DARRELL DELANEY

Yes; and unfortunately, Jesus, in his all-knowing omniscience in this moment, understands that Peter is over-promising; and over-estimating his faithfulness; and that could be a factor of why Jesus is actually sad, because, I mean, he is trying to tell them the truth: This is bad; it is going to happen. And they will not believe it or even accept that he has always told the truth about things, including things they don't want to hear.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes; and you know, you wonder, Darrell, even at this late stage...and this is really late...even at this late stage in their journey with Jesus, maybe the disciples still didn't really believe that all that sacrifice and death stuff that Jesus had spoken of so often would actually happen. I mean, you know, I think as close as they are here to when Jesus is going to get arrested...as near these events actually are...you kind of wonder if deep down, that the disciples are still thinking: How bad could this get; I mean, we are going to have to figure out a way out of this. I am sure it will all work out. So, we can dare to say that we will stay with Jesus because it cannot possibly get that bad...I mean, could it?

DARRELL DELANEY

I mean, this wouldn't be the first time that they missed the point of what Jesus was teaching here. I mean, there was one time when Jesus is approached by them and they say: Can you do whatever we request? We want one on the right and the other on the left when you are coming into your kingdom. So, they tried to make Jesus as best they could the new emperor or the new Roman leader who could overthrow the government that was oppressing them and do it politically; and Jesus constantly told them: That is not why I am here; I am doing something far more important. I don't think it sunk in, because, I mean, the way they responded to him, they just didn't get it.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes; you know, we've got this sad rhythm in the gospels. You really see it in the Gospel of Mark. It is like a heartbeat in Mark: Jesus predicts suffering and death and then the disciples turn right around and grab for power, right? Jesus predicts he is going to die and then, right, James and John, you know, say: We would like to be on your right and your left. Jesus says he is going to die and the disciples have an argument: Which one of us is the greatest? They respond over and over with the exact opposite; and now, here in that upper room, you know, they had all had a meal, they had been drinking a little bit of wine, so maybe they felt a little braver than they would actually prove to be; but it is a sad scene because, as the world around Jesus begins to crumble and fall apart, the disciples are still with Jesus physically...literally...but, you know, even at this late stage, Darrell, I think that they would just as soon be with Jesus on their own terms. They would like to be with Jesus according to how *they* thought things with the Messiah would need to go according to establish a new Israel and get rid of all those rotten occupiers from Rome. So, they are with Jesus in one sense, but in another sense, they are not with him at all.

DARRELL DELANEY

Yes; they have their own agenda, and it is going to come to a head here soon; but in just a moment, we would like to follow Jesus into the Garden of Gethsemane as well. So, stay tuned.

Segment 2

SCOTT HOEZEE

I am Scott Hoezee, with Darrell Delaney, and you are listening to *Groundwork*; and Darrell, let's dig right back into scripture. Let's go back to Matthew 26 and pick up pretty much where we left off. We are now on verse 36: Then Jesus went with his disciples to a place called Gethsemane, and he said to them, "Sit here while I go over there and pray."³⁷ He took Peter and the two sons of Zebedee along with him, and he began to be sorrowful and troubled.³⁸ Then he said to them, "My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch with me."³⁹ Going a little farther, he fell with his face to the ground and prayed, "My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will."⁴⁰ Then he returned to his disciples and found them sleeping. "Couldn't you men watch with me for one hour?" he asked Peter.⁴¹ "Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak."

DARRELL DELANEY

He went away a second time and prayed, "My Father, if it is not possible for this cup to be taken away unless I drink it, may your will be done."⁴³ When he came back, he again found them sleeping, because their eyes

were heavy. ⁴⁴So he left them and went away once more and prayed the third time, saying the same thing. ⁴⁵Then he returned to the disciples and said to them, “Are you still sleeping and resting? Look, the hour has come, and the Son of Man is delivered into the hands of sinners. ⁴⁶Rise! Let us go! Here comes my betrayer!”

SCOTT HOEZEE

So, there is a lot to unpack here, Darrell. First, we can notice that all the disciples minus Judas Iscariot accompany Jesus to this garden, but as often happened in his ministry, Jesus takes Peter, James, and John...only them...to the place where he needed to pray to his Father. So, you know, Darrell, we have seen it before that somehow Simon Peter and the two sons of Zebedee were at the head of the pack; and so, as with the Transfiguration, it is just those three who Jesus takes with him at key moments like this one.

DARRELL DELANEY

Yes; it is interesting that, even though he has twelve disciples, he does narrow it down to these three when there are some very significant moments coming along. It is very interesting on how the gospel writers got ahold of that information to make sure that we noticed it; and their assignment in this moment was to watch and pray. That is all he told them to do. It should have been a simple assignment, but for some reason, it wasn't.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes; this is not the toughest thing Jesus ever asked them to do. Just watch and pray; how hard can that be? It wasn't that complex. To their knowledge, they were not in any immediate danger, but you know, as we saw, no sooner does Jesus go off to pray, and maybe their full stomachs and the glow of the wine they had drunk, combined with the lateness of the hour, you know...it all kind of catches up with them and these three men go out like a light—sound asleep. They are embarrassed and chagrined when Jesus comes back to them, but it happens again, and one more time again!

DARRELL DELANEY

Yes; so, I mean, what you just said about the glow of the wine and the food and filling their stomachs and how late it was could be an account; but, you know, maybe there is something else going on, Scott. Maybe it is not just the physical reason why this is happening. It could be something spiritual going on.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes; I mean, the physical thing is there. I mean, it is sort of like if you are a professor, nobody likes to have the first class after lunch; the students are going to be sleepy; but as you say, spiritually, could there be something else going on here? Could Satan himself and his minions been present in that Garden of Gethsemane? Could the disciples have been victims of their tempting power—the devil's tempting power, just, you know: Go ahead; shut those peepers for just a moment. Sleep! And sure enough, they do...three times. And you wonder, Darrell, could this have been a way for the devil to torment Jesus even more?

DARRELL DELANEY

So, we know about the temptation at the wilderness for forty days; we know about the gospels do mention that Satan is there present tempting Jesus, but then he kind of goes off the scene; but it doesn't mean that he has stopped tempting Jesus or trying to tempt Jesus. So, there could be plenty of times in his life that are not documented that Satan was trying to tempt him or push him to the edge or cause him to sin; even though we know our Savior would not fall for those things.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes; well, and I like how in Luke's gospel, after those forty days and after those three big temptations that Satan throws at Jesus, Luke says Satan left him until a more opportune time...

DARRELL DELANEY

Yes...

SCOTT HOEZEE

In other words, he is not really going anywhere; and I do think that Satan never stopped tempting Jesus. In fact, we can remember, Darrell, when the Apostle Peter objected to Jesus' words about his upcoming suffering and dying, remember what Jesus did? He whirled around on Peter, and what did he say?

Scott Hoezee/

DARRELL DELANEY

Get behind me, Satan!

SCOTT HOEZEE

And indeed, the devil surely threw everything he had at Jesus to prevent him from going to that cross. So, maybe there was more behind those sleepy disciples than simple human weakness.

DARRELL DELANEY

Yes, it could be; but we need to talk about the prayer that Jesus prayed, because he says: I don't want this to pass...if there is any other way this cup could pass...nevertheless, not my will but your will be done. It sounds like Jesus is wrestling with the cup of responsibility he has to drink: Going to the cross, dying on the cross for our sins; and enduring all the sin that we have encountered on him at that moment, just like Isaiah 53 prophesied would happen. So, there are some things going on in Jesus' actual agonizing prayers, too.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes; I mean, it kind of boils down to: Father, can we think of another way to get this salvation thing done? It is really striking, Darrell, because, you know, Jesus openly predicted his suffering and death over and over. It is not like it is only in Gethsemane that Jesus realizes he has a crucifixion in his future. He predicted it. He told anybody who would listen that it would be necessary. This had to happen, period. What is more, Darrell, when Jesus made those predictions, he also tacked on...pretty much every time...and on third day he would be raised again. So, Jesus also knew what the glorious conclusion to it all would be; and yet, we get this agonizing prayer: Can I get out of this?

DARRELL DELANEY

Yes; so, even though he knows those things, and he was led by the Spirit to tell them these things, so it wouldn't be a surprise when it actually happened, that is one thing; but actually going through the suffering, the beating, and the death are another thing altogether, because now you have to experience the things that you said were coming. So, I think that that was starting to...in Jesus' humanity...sink in, to a place where: Oh, man; this is going to hurt bad. I know it is going to kill me; I know that; and it is really coming to grips with that is what is happening in his wrestling prayer.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Exactly; Jesus was fully divine, but we confess as a Church he was fully human; and as a human, he was as scared of all that as any of us would be. But you wonder when Jesus says: Not my will, but your will be done...does that mean that Jesus' own will in that moment really was to flee what was to come? Was his will, or least maybe his human will, for a moment not actually aligned with the Father's will? I mean, those are really deeply difficult theological questions, Darrell. Now, in the end we know that he will follow his Father's will; and there is a sense that his will...his combined divine human will will line up with the plan of the Father; he will go through, but it is striking that for Jesus, in this critical moment, he wavers just a little bit, because he is actually a human being, just like us.

DARRELL DELANEY

And that is why Hebrews says that we can boldly approach the throne of grace, because he has been tempted with all the points that we have, and yet without sin. So, when we have struggles and we have pain, we can

know that we have a savior who has been through this; but also it helps us to worship and praise him for all the things that he did to go through to make sure that we had a relationship with the Father. So, we actually can appreciate, by reading this, what he did for us.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And as we stop at more of the stations of the cross in this *Groundwork* series, we are going to have multiple occasions for hushed awe...for reverence over all that Jesus accomplished, and what it cost him.

In just a moment, we will wrap up this program with a second station of the cross: The betrayal by Judas Iscariot and Jesus' subsequent arrest. So, stay tuned.

Segment 3

DARRELL DELANEY

You are listening to *Groundwork*, where we are digging into scripture to lay the foundation for our lives. I am Darrell Delaney.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And I am Scott Hoezee; and Darrell, let's stick with Matthew 26 for this next station of the cross, even though traditionally Mark 14 could also be used; but Matthew 26 at verse 47: While Jesus was still speaking, Judas, one of the Twelve arrived. With him was a large crowd armed with swords and clubs, sent from the chief priests and the elders of the people. ⁴⁸Now the betrayer had arranged a signal with them: "The one I kiss is the man; arrest him." ⁴⁹Going at once to Jesus, Judas said, "Greetings, Rabbi!" and kissed him. ⁵⁰Jesus replied, "Do what you came for, friend." Then the men stepped forward, seized Jesus and arrested him. ⁵¹With that, one of Jesus' companions reached for his sword, drew it out and struck the servant of the high priest, cutting off his ear. ⁵²"Put your sword back in its place," Jesus said to him, "for all who draw the sword will die by the sword. ⁵³Do you think I cannot call on my Father, and he will at once put at my disposal more than twelve legions of angels? ⁵⁴But how then would the Scriptures be fulfilled that say it must happen in this way?" ⁵⁵In that hour, Jesus said to the crowd, "Am I leading a rebellion, that you have come out with swords and clubs to capture me? Every day I sat in the temple courts teaching, and you did not arrest me. ⁵⁶But this has all taken place that the writings of the prophets might be fulfilled." Then all the disciples deserted him and fled.

DARRELL DELANEY

Yes; so, Matthew, when he writes his account, he is always trying to make sure that people know that scripture is being fulfilled; and so, the things that Matthew points out to make sure that people know that this is actually in line with what God prophesied would happen to the Messiah, is actually happening here. So, he makes sure that he ties those together; and it is really interesting that Judas would mock Jesus by kissing him to identify: This is the one you need to arrest. So, that is really another thing that Matthew decides to point out.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes; and we think Judas Iscariot belonged to the zealot party, and as such he might have hoped, even more than the other disciples, that Jesus would lead a revolt against Rome and establish a new political nation of Israel that they could rule; but I think it became clear to Judas sooner than it occurred to the other disciples, that Jesus was not going to do that. If the other disciples just turned a deaf ear to all of Jesus' talk about humility, suffering, and death, Judas heard it all and he came to believe that that was exactly what would happen; Jesus was not kidding. So, it is as if he says to Jesus: You think you can change the world through peace and humility? Fine. Here is a symbol of your worthless peace: A kiss. I am going to use it to mark you as the one they need to arrest. Darrell, that is about as sad as it gets.

DARRELL DELANEY

Yes; you mentioned that zealot party like these guys are fanatics. They really are here for fights; they really want to overthrow government. So, for Judas to come from that place, he wanted the political overthrow. He was really one of the ones who was ready for it to happen; and when he realized that Jesus came for peace,

and that he was going to lay his life down; I think the disillusionment of that is what made him turn to...other than Satan influencing him...I think that was what turned him to: I need to go ahead and turn this guy in, because he is not going to be the hero that I need him to be.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Exactly; and only Matthew's gospel has Jesus saying to Judas: Do what you came for, *friend*. We have noted this before on *Groundwork*, Darrell, but in Matthew's gospel, it is never good to be called "friend." It occurs four times in Matthew. The first time was when Jesus' critics and opponents criticized Jesus as being a glutton and a drunk and a *friend* of tax collectors and sinners. Then, in the parable of the laborers in the vineyard, when some of the 12-hour workers grumbled that the 1-hour louts got as much pay as the 12-hour folks, the vineyard master says to one of them: I am not being unfair to you, *friend*. The third time is in the parable of the wedding banquet when the king sees someone who got in without wedding clothes, so he says: How did you get in here, *friend*? Right before having him ejected. And now he calls Judas a friend, and it is not a compliment.

DARRELL DELANEY

Yes; it is kind of an ironic zinger because they are not acting like friends...

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right.

DARRELL DELANEY

They are acting unfriendly; and so, he kind of calls them a "friend" so hopefully it snaps them out of their behavior; but in a sense, it doesn't; and it really didn't help for Judas either. He doesn't realize what Jesus is doing there when he calls him friend. I think he has already had his mind made up; he has already turned him over; and he is going to go ahead with the plan he had.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Then Jesus marvels over the fact that, you know, he had been utterly available and approachable. He was never one to favor weapons or violence, but now he is being arrested by troops who are armed to the teeth. Of course, Jesus no sooner points that out than one of Jesus' followers...maybe Peter...produces a sword after all and slashes off somebody's ear. But Jesus makes it clear that is not what he is about. In Luke's account, Jesus heals the man's ear right then and there, too. But this, then, Darrell, is the moment when all the disciples realize what Judas had already figured out: Jesus was serious about suffering and death as the capper for his ministry; and once that realization hits them, Darrell, they scatter.

DARRELL DELANEY

Yes; I think that the courage that they thought they might have had melted away at that moment because Jesus doesn't lift his arms up; doesn't defend himself; doesn't fight; and even rebukes Peter for bringing his sword and cutting this guy's ear off. He is like: I am not here to lead that kind of rebellion; I am not a zealot; I am not doing what you think I should do; I told you guys that I was going to lay my life down; this is the start of it; this is what I am going to do. When that happened, I think their courage kind of melted.

SCOTT HOEZEE

So, those are first two of the fourteen stations of the cross; and so, as we see Jesus in Gethsemane, see the failure of the disciples simply to watch and pray, see Jesus being betrayed and then arrested and then the disciples flee. Darrell, where do we see ourselves in this picture? I mean, even today, are we willing to stay with Jesus on the difficult road he walks and he calls us to walk as well, because, you know, make no mistake, the error of the disciples in thinking that Jesus could only change the world through power and force, that is ever with the Church.

DARRELL DELANEY

Yes; unfortunately, the Church has had a weird relationship with power. I think that when the Church was in a place of minority and there were powers that were stronger than the Church, the Church was behaving much differently than it did when it became the national state church after the Fourth Century, when it was assumed that everybody was Christian. When power and the Church are connected, it really turns it into something different that I don't think God had designed it to be; and Church leaders are often tempted to side with the people of power so they can kind of get some of that power. I don't know why, but you know, we are still broken people who God chooses to use, and unfortunately, power is going to always be tempting until he comes back.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes; we serve the Prince of Peace, and when we try to turn him into the prince of power, it never works. It always damages the Gospel—it always undercuts the Gospel.

So, you know, as we keep following Jesus to the cross, Darrell, we do so with humility; we do so in repentance; for those times when we want... we want to take an off-ramp... we want to live and behave differently than our Savior; and as you just said, many times that actually happens; and it has happened all through Church history and it is happening today in various places in the world. It just doesn't work. We have to... with prayerful hearts, we have to ask the Holy Spirit to keep us on the narrow way, that alone leads to the eternal life; to the shalom that God desires; that alone leads to a new creation in the kingdom of God. The Spirit can keep us on that path, thanks be to God.

DARRELL DELANEY

Well, thanks for listening and digging deeply into scripture with *Groundwork*. We are your hosts, Darrell Delaney with Scott Hoezee, and we hope you join us again next time as we continue our journey reflecting on the stations of the cross with Jesus' trial before the Sanhedrin, and Peter's denial of Jesus.

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SCOTT HOEZEE

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