
Jesus Predicts His Death

DARRELL DELANEY

Some travelers set out on a long road, knowing the path would be steep and the destination far. Along the way, they laid down what they didn't need, carrying only what mattered most. As the journey grew harder, the promise of what lay ahead gave them the strength to keep going. In today's episode of *Groundwork*, we begin our series on Lent by exploring its origin and meaning, and we will reflect on how Jesus' journey to the cross invites us to follow him in faith, sacrifice, and hope. Join us as we uncover how this season prepares us for the joy of resurrection, next on *Groundwork*.

SCOTT HOEZEE

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

DARRELL DELANEY

And I am Darrell Delaney; and Scott, we are beginning a series on Lent. Jesus is journeying to the cross; and we want to talk a little bit about what Lent is, why we celebrate it, and what makes it important to us; and so, you know, I think some people, Scott, when they think of Lent, they think of giving up chocolate, giving up social media, giving up Diet Coke. They think about these things where sometimes the season is a little heavier, but then there are some people who think it is more reflective, but maybe we should talk about how we even got here, and what it means and why we set aside forty days leading up to Easter, and the purpose of it all.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Exactly; it does have...the season of Lent has deep roots in Church history. It is a tradition that has developed and evolved over the centuries. A lot of our listeners, if you grew up in a highly liturgical church, like maybe a Catholic church or a Lutheran church or an Anglican church or an Orthodox church, you might associate Lent with ashes—the imposition of ashes on the forehead on Ash Wednesday. Some traditions, particularly the Roman Catholics, will only eat fish on Fridays; they have times of prayer; but really, Darrell, Lent isn't just about those outward rituals, right? It is about recentering our lives on Jesus and preparing our hearts to experience the full joy of Easter.

DARRELL DELANEY

Yes, sir; and the word *lent* itself comes from an old English word, *lencten*, which means spring; but its origins go way back before the English language; and the practice of Lent goes back to the early Christian Church. They also established a time of fasting and repentance in preparation for Easter, and it goes back as early as the Second Century, where we see Christians observing some form of fasting just before celebrating the resurrection of Jesus.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And there is a lot of biblical precedent for that fasting in preparation. It really is woven all through scripture: Exodus 34: Moses fasts for forty days and forty nights on Mount Sinai as he receives the Law from God. 1 Kings 19: Elijah fasts for forty days as he journeys to also Mount Horeb, which I think is Mount Sinai; and of course, we cannot forget Jesus. In Matthew 4 we are told: ¹Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. ²After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry.

So, forty days and forty nights fasting, that is kind of what goes on in Lent, and these are some of the biblical sources from which we draw that.

DARRELL DELANEY

Yes; in all those passages you mentioned, Scott, forty came up, and so that is the reason why we have forty days, because Lent is supposed to mirror the forty days that Jesus spent in the wilderness that calls us to reflect on our dependence on God and renew our focus for his will for our lives; and by the time the Fourth Century comes the Church has formalized that forty-day season that leads up to Easter, so that we can actually have new believers prepare for their baptism. That happened as well; and usually those baptisms happened on Easter Sunday.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes; they called them catechumens or the catechumenate; these were new Christians. They spent the season of Lent fasting and praying, but they also spent the Lenten season learning; I mean, they were learning what their baptism is going to mean; they are learning what it means to be a follower of Jesus; and then, on Easter morning, those catechumens would be baptized and then they would immerse in the water and they would be given a new white robe to symbolize the new that their old self had drown in the waters of baptism, and their new self had arisen. So, from Ash Wednesday through, you know, Good Friday, leading up to Easter, we've got those forty days.

DARRELL DELANEY

Yes; and what was interesting about that was that it wasn't just for new believers, Scott. It was actually for everyone who believed and professed the name of Jesus, to be reminded of the time and the sacrifice that Jesus did for them; and also, they are able to do some more spiritual formation themselves. So, it is not just for the new believer to learn something, but also for the seasoned believer to learn and be reminded of what the Lord has done for them; and so, you also remember that during this time the imposition of ashes is what you mentioned earlier. It usually happens on Ash Wednesday.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes; and again, the ashes are a dual sign of mortality...as we will think about in a minute...and repentance. We think of Job 42, where Job says: ⁶“Therefore, I despise myself and repent in dust and ashes.” Or in Jonah, after Jonah preaches to the Ninevites, the King of Nineveh and all the Ninevites cover themselves in sackcloth and they sit in ashes. So, ashes are a penitential sign that we are sorry for our sins. It is also a reminder that the words that are usually spoken when the ashes are put on peoples' foreheads: Remember that you are dust, and to dust you will return. There is a tradition in literature called the *memento mori* which is a reminder of death. So, Jesus came to forgive our sins, and Jesus came to give us new life so that death will not have the last word. Ash Wednesday...and that sets the tone for also all of Lent...focuses on those two things

DARRELL DELANEY

Yes; so, remember your death: For dust you are and to dust you shall return. That is actually what God said to Adam in the Garden after the curse happened; after he was punished for the sin of disobedience. That from dust you are and to dust you shall return is what was mentioned. It is also mentioned at many funerals that we have done as pastors...we have done those.

But one of the scriptures that beautifully captures the spirit of Lent is in Mark Chapter 8. So, we see Jesus is going to teach them about his mission here. It says:

³¹He then began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and after three days rise again. ³²He spoke plainly about this, and Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. ³³But when Jesus turned and looked at his disciples, he rebuked Peter. “Get behind me, Satan!” he said. “You do not have in mind the concerns of God, but merely human concerns.”

SCOTT HOEZEE

So, this is a striking passage. It is almost dead center in the Gospel of Mark. As we have noted before, Peter experiences the world record for change in status. After he professed that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God, Jesus said: You are Peter...blessed are you...you are the rock on which I am going to build my Church; and three minutes later he is Satan: Get behind me, Satan. And it is interesting that, you know, in that passage Jesus looks at the other disciples and he realizes: Wait a minute; Peter's words are having an effect; they all want to head off my suffering; they all want to prevent my crucifixion; but that is not the things of God, Jesus says. That is just your view, Peter, of what *you* want me to be, but I came here for a different mission. So, in Lent we join Jesus...we will talk more about that more in this program...but we do join Jesus in journeying to that cross, and it is a journey Jesus absolutely had to take.

DARRELL DELANEY

He makes it clear, Scott, that his mission involves sacrifice; and not only that, he calls his followers to take up their own crosses and follow him as well, because this is the time when we all lay down our desires and let go of anything that stands in the way of fully surrendering to Jesus. So, we have to make sure that we are aware of that during this Lenten season.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right; you know, we talked about death and the reminder of death, the reminder of sin. My wife sometimes says: Boy, Ash Wednesday is a real downer! I mean, this is really depressing. Well, it is sobering, right? I mean, it is meant to be, but it is not meant to just leave you in feeling down; like: Oh, great; I am going to die; I'm a sinner. No, no, no; it is to drive you to Jesus—it is to drive you to that cross of Jesus—where the forgiveness of our sins will be accomplished; where the defeat of death will take place. So, we are not focusing on mortality and sin just to be kind of a bummer; we are doing it to get us to the cross, which is what Lent is all about. In just a minute, we are going to keep thinking about that very thing. So, stay tuned.
Segment 2

DARRELL DELANEY

You are listening 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. Darrell, we just explored, in the first part of this program, the first of our Lenten series on *Groundwork*. We explored the history of Lent, its development in the Church, its focus on mortality and our sinfulness; and we have also hinted a little bit about the call to self-denial. So, we were just in Mark Chapter 8, where Peter says to Jesus: You cannot go to the cross; you cannot suffer and die; and Jesus says: I have to. Get behind me, Satan. Then we pick it up there.

DARRELL DELANEY

³⁴Then he called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said: "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. ³⁵For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me and for the gospel will save it. ³⁶What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? ³⁷Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul?"

SCOTT HOEZEE

So, here it is; so, this is what he says following his having to put down Peter for his trying to keep Jesus from going to the cross. This involves all of us. Now, he is calling the crowd *and* the disciples. He is talking to everybody here. He says: You have to take up your cross; and that is misunderstood by a lot of people. You know, sometimes we actually see street preachers who are literally carrying a cross around. That is really not what Jesus meant. What Jesus is saying there, in his day, to take up a cross would mean having the cross bar draped across your shoulders, and what is that? It is a symbol that you are under death, right? That you are under the curse of death. So, we recognize that we have to recognize that we are under a sentence of death,

and only Jesus can get us out of it. So, when we talk about bearing our cross... You know, some people say: Oh, I've got arthritis; that is my cross to bear. That is not really what it means. It means that you are doing what Jesus does, and that is looking to the cross as the only possible source of salvation for forgiveness of sins, and for the defeat of death itself.

DARRELL DELANEY

That is well said, Scott. I think that Peter got a really stark contrast of this. We talked about it in the earlier segment, where he had something in mind for Jesus that he actually has this Roman Empire/David 2.0 possibly, in his mind, where: Oh, he is going to come down and politically take over Caesar and give us a new government; and he is going to do it here on earth. And Jesus says: No; that is not why I came. I came to die; I came to sacrifice. Part of God's mission is to atone for the sins, and my kingdom is not of this world. So, Peter has to be reminded that this is not Jesus' perspective, but he is also challenged, like we are, to live a life of sacrificial love and take up our cross. In Luke 9, Jesus makes this clear.

SCOTT HOEZEE

²³Then he (Jesus) said to them all: "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me. ²⁴For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will save it. ²⁵What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, and yet lose or forfeit their very self?" Or their very soul in some translations.

So, this is an ongoing way of sacrificial living; an ongoing life of humility and of service; an ongoing commitment to look only to Jesus. You know, you can gain the whole world, but you are not going to get saved that way. You can have all the money in the world; you can have all the success and fame in the world; all the glitz and glamor in the world; but you are going to lose your soul. So, why would you want to trade your soul in for something so temporary?

DARRELL DELANEY

And Jesus is trying to help, not only Peter, but everyone who reads this, to align our priorities with that of his kingdom; because Jesus knows it is going to cost us something; but he also knows that we will gain eternal life and peace with him; and so, we need to count the cost, and actually be responsible with this; and that is what Luke 14 is telling us about counting the cost. It says:

²⁸"Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Won't you first sit down and estimate the cost to see if you have enough money to complete it? ²⁹For if you lay the foundation and are not able to finish it, everyone who sees it will ridicule you, ³⁰saying, 'This person began to build and wasn't able to finish.' ³³In the same way, those of you who do not give up everything you have cannot be my disciples."

So, these words are challenging us to examine what we are holding onto. What are we clinging to in the earthly realm? Possessions or securities or money or fame or ambitions? Is that going to cost us our full commitment to Christ? That is the question.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Exactly; so, count the cost, right? The cost of discipleship, to invoke Dietrich Bonhoeffer's well-known book. Know what you are getting into, and look to God to give you the spiritual energy and strength to finish strong, and to not have to... It is kind of an interesting image, like you know: Oh, you've got the foundation poured, and then nothing ever happens to it. Then people will say: Ha; what a fool that he didn't plan...

Don't be that way, Jesus is saying. You know, this just keeps coming up in the gospels. So, we have been to Mark, we have been to Luke, now let's go to Matthew 10:39: Whoever finds their life will lose it, and whoever loses their life for my sake will find it.

So, that is the great paradox of Christian living, right? By letting go, we are given much. If you try to do it on your own...if you try to grasp it or accomplish it on your own...if you try to do it through any other means than the cross and following Jesus to the cross, you are going to lose your life. You are not going to shore it up; you are not going to save it; you cannot save yourself. So, that is the great irony of Christian living; and again, since we are talking about the season of Lent, that is what Lent also tries to encapsulate for us and memorialize for us.

DARRELL DELANEY

Yes; so, during this forty days in this season of Lent, it is an opportunity through fasting, through prayer, through acts of service, through other spiritual disciplines, we discover what that freedom is, that we do when we trust God fully and we surrender to him anything that would be a hinderance or a distraction. I know in our household...in our family, Scott...we spend time in prayer together and doing devotions together; and we turn off some of the things that are distracting. We watch less videos and movies. We listen to less music. So, we just do what we can to be focused on Christ. It is not designed to be a rule of thumb for anybody. I don't want it to turn legalistic, but it does help us to turn down the noise in our spirits and in our lives so we can focus on Christ as a family.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Exactly; and that is what it is about: To know the cost... It is not easy, right? Jesus nowhere says being his follower will be easy. In fact, you know, in the Sermon on the Mount he says: You will be persecuted. They are persecuting me; the world hated me; he says that also in John's gospel. They hated me, they are going to hate you. I mean, the disciple is not greater than the master, right? So, it is a costly discipleship. It is difficult to live under that crossbar...to live sacrificially for others. It is not easy, and yet, we don't do it alone, and that is the other thing that we are reminded in Lent. Again, we do not focus on our mortality; we do not focus on our sins just to be a downer, we do it to refocus us on Jesus, who travels with us on the road of discipleship; who picks us up when we stumble on the road of discipleship, as we all do. So, that is what we focus on, that journey. In fact, there are a number of well-known hymns that we sing during Lent that are all about the journey...the journey through all of life with Jesus; and that is kind of what Lent is all about, so we can then arrive on the other side at Easter.

Well, coming up as we close this program, we want to talk about the journey of Lent and Jesus' own journey as it is documented for us in the gospels. So, stay tuned.

Segment 3

DARRELL DELANEY

I am Darrell Delaney, with Scott Hoezee, and you are listening to *Groundwork*.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Darrell, in the previous segment of this program, we explored the cost of discipleship and the need to take up our cross and follow Jesus, but now let's look at the literal original journey of Jesus. You know, in Luke's gospel, Darrell, in Luke Chapter 9:51, we are told at that point Jesus...some translations say...he set his face like flint toward Jerusalem. So, Jesus is now looking ahead to Jerusalem, and everything in Luke from Chapter 9 onward appears to be Jesus getting closer to that cross—getting closer to that sacrifice; and by the way, starting in Luke 9 through to, you know, sort of the time of the triumphal entry, that is the section of Luke that has the most stuff you only find in Luke, including the great parables like the Good Samaritan and the Prodigal Son, and so forth. That is only in Luke, and all of that is taking place as they journey toward Jerusalem.

DARRELL DELANEY

Yes; and so, Jesus' journey to Jerusalem is what we want to turn our attention to; and in Luke 18, this actually encapsulates Jesus' clear understanding of his mission. Picking up at verse 31, it says: Jesus took the Twelve aside and told them, "We are going up to Jerusalem, and everything that is written by the prophets about the Son of Man will be fulfilled. ³²He will be delivered over to the Gentiles. They will mock him, insult him and spit on him; ³³they will flog him and kill him. On the third day he will rise again." ³⁴The disciples did not understand any of this. Its meaning was hidden from them, and they did not know what he was talking about.

SCOTT HOEZEE

An honest admission there; or maybe they knew exactly what he was talking about and they resisted it. They just, as Peter did, you know, we saw in Mark 8 earlier in this program, you know: God forbid that this should

happen to you! I mean, insofar as they understood Jesus at all, they were surely rebelling against the idea that that is where their master and their friend, Jesus, is headed. So, they didn't understand it, probably because they didn't *want* to understand it. They didn't want to go there. They just cannot see why that would work at all; but Jesus is moving forward.

Now, in the third episode of this Lenten series here on *Groundwork*, Darrell, we are going to focus on the events of Holy Week itself; and so, we will get, as part of that...it gets kicked off on Palm Sunday...but we are going to look at that here, too, because this is also part of Jesus' wider journey. So, let's hear these words from Luke 19:28-40. That is the whole story. We will read just a section of it here; familiar words:

²⁹As he (Jesus) approached Bethphage in Bethany at the hilled called the Mount of Olives, he sent two of his disciples, saying to them, ³⁰“Go to the village ahead of you, and as you enter it, you will find a colt tied there, which no one has ever ridden. Untie it and bring it here. ³¹If anyone asks you, ‘Why are you untying it?’ say, ‘The Lord needs it.’” ³⁷When he came near the place where the road goes down the Mount of Olives, the whole crowd of disciples began joyfully to praise God in loud voices for all the miracles they had seen: ³⁸“Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!” ³⁹Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to Jesus, “Teacher, rebuke your disciples!” ⁴⁰“I tell you,” he (Jesus) replied, “If they keep quiet, the stones will cry out.”

DARRELL DELANEY

Yes; so, you know, needless to say, Jesus does not enter the community...enter into this scene on a horse or a colt...

SCOTT HOEZEE

A stallion...

DARRELL DELANEY

A stallion. You know, that is the impression they expected to see, but he comes in on a donkey, actually proving the point that the kingdom that he represents is not of this world. He has come in in humility when most people come in in honor and pomp and circumstance. He is actually showing that his kingdom is not of this world; and as Jesus journeys to Jerusalem, he is fully aware of what awaits him; and he is not avoiding the suffering that is going to happen. He is walking and honoring, fulfilling God's will, and that is what we do during Lent. We practice obedience as Jesus modeled; and so, we are actually doing the will of the Father as well.

SCOTT HOEZEE

You know, in just a couple verses later in Luke 19, Jesus is going to cry; he is going to weep because he says: Jerusalem, you cannot tell time; you do not know what is going on here. Well, you look at it and you say: They sure look like they know what is going on. They are praising Jesus: Hail to the King, you know. It looks like...but no. They still have a different kind of king in mind. They want a new Caesar. Somebody to take over and establish the new Isreal. So, they are saying the right things, but for the wrong reasons. Jesus knows where he is going; and we know where he is going, too. Listen to Paul's words in Philippians 2, talking about Jesus and the utter humility of Jesus:

⁶Who (Jesus) being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; ⁷rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. ⁸And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross!

So, that is the journey of Jesus, and that is also, you know, our Lenten journey as we follow Jesus toward that cross. So, that is also the journey we take with Jesus as he goes toward that cross; and maybe we will pick up one more passage, Darrell, before we end with some practical considerations; from John Chapter 12 this time.

DARRELL DELANEY

In John Chapter 12 it says: ²⁴“Very truly I tell you, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds. ²⁵Anyone who loves their life will lose it,

while anyone who hates their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. ²⁶Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be.

That is the invitation that we have, Scott, for Lent: To die to ourselves that we might bear fruit for the kingdom of God. That is really what it is all about.

SCOTT HOEZEE

So, let's just think about, in summary for Lent, three considerations. What do we do in Lent? One, we embrace humility; again, that humble entrance into Jerusalem on a donkey's colt, which we just saw. Jesus chose humility over pride; and so, we need to reflect on those areas of life where we need to let go of our pride. We need to let go of our privilege and status and humble ourselves the way Jesus did. That is one takeaway for Lent: humility.

DARRELL DELANEY

Another one, Scott, is to practice obedience. I mean, Jesus' journey is marked by his obedience to the Father's will, even when it was difficult, even when it was at his own inconvenience. I want us to make sure that we take time this week to think about and seek God's guidance in every area, especially when we are struggling to trust him fully, because that is hard to do; and it is impossible to do without the help of the Lord.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes; and of the Holy Spirit. So, embrace humility, practice obedience; and of course, the other thing we do during Lent...and again, this is why Lent isn't really meant to be just a dour, dark season. We want to nurture our hope in the resurrection. Lent does feel heavy, but it is ultimately a journey of hope; and so, we remember that all the sacrifice; all the surrender; all that humility; all the obedience; it all leads to the joy of Easter...it all leads to the joy of the resurrection; and so, during Lent we spend time in prayer; we ask God to show us how he is bringing new life into our lives, maybe even through struggle; through sacrifice. We do believe that God is doing that all for us in ways that will result in joy. So, embrace humility; practice obedience; have hope in the resurrection. Those are some great themes for Lent.

DARRELL DELANEY

Now, Jesus' journey to Jerusalem teaches us that sacrifice and suffering, when rooted in love and obedience, can lead to redemption and life. So, as we continue through this season of Lent, may we walk this path with him, holding onto the hope of Easter that is yet to come; and with this we say thanks be to God.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Thank you for listening and digging deeply into scripture with *Groundwork*. We hope you will join us again next time as we study the important lessons Jesus imparts to his disciples as he begins that journey to the cross.

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DARRELL DELANEY

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