

Matthew 23-04-23a

Good morning. Welcome to the Sunday morning services at Grace and Truth Bible Church. It is a privilege to be back with you after a hiatus.

We're going to pick up our study in Matthew chapter 27 this morning. And we will be resuming in the 34th verse, Matthew 27, verse 34. Let's take a moment to ask God's blessing on our fellowship and on our study, and we'll begin.

Father, we are grateful once again for another time of fellowship and mutual edification and encouragement. We thank you for the privilege of being able to pray for one another and lift one another up and bring concerns and thanksgivings before your throne. We know that this is possible because of the Lord Jesus and his work on our behalf as the fullest expression of your love.

And we pray that as we look at his work on the cross together this morning, that the Holy Spirit will give us understanding and insight and appreciation that will not only enhance our gratitude for the Lord Jesus and our grasp of his eternal significance as well as his significance to us in our life, but that it will motivate us to love and good works to represent him on this earth as his body until that day that you send him to collect us and bring us into the eternal future. We pray it in Jesus' name, amen. As I said, if you look at the passage before us in chapter 27, verse 34, we have seen Simon of Cyrene who was compelled to bear the cross.

And this was a happenstance. He did not volunteer. He was coming in from the field.

He was coming in from outside and was more or less crossing paths. It is often speculated because he was from Cyrene that he was a black man, but this is not the case. He was from the Jewish community in Cyrene.

And one of the things that we come to understand is that there was a synagogue that was attended by Cyrenians. And he is mentioned in Acts chapter 13, according to some. And if you look at the first verse of Acts chapter 13, there is another man named Shimon or Simeon in Greek.

And Cyrene is mentioned in the same verse. And so there has been this natural connection and you will see many depictions of the Via Dolorosa or the road to the cross. And it will show a black man or an African man bearing the cross.

And this is thought to be Simon of Cyrene. And part of it comes from this first verse of Acts 13 in the church at Antioch, there were prophets and teachers, Barnabas, the son of encouragement, Simeon called Niger or Niger is actually the pronunciation in Greek. It is a word that means dark.

And then Lucius of Cyrene, Manan who had been brought up with Herod the Tetrarch and

Saul who will become Paul. Antioch is well north of Jerusalem. This is Antioch in Syria.

And it is a significant distance away. Not to say that in the intervening years, Simon of Cyrene could not have traveled there, but the style in verse one, giving details such as Manan having been a childhood companion of Herod Antipas. This is helpful information.

Simeon not having previously been mentioned, if he was the one who carried the cross, we would expect that Luke would mention it here just as he does the detail that Manan was a childhood friend of Herod. But it's not mentioned here. And Simon Simeon is an extremely common name in this day.

There are at least two, if not three Simons among Jesus' disciples. You have Simon the sorcerer. New Testament times are just replete with Simon.

So it is unlikely to the vanishing point that Acts 13 is talking about the Simon who carried the cross. He is more notable for being the father of the sons that we saw last time. So having come to Golgotha, the place of a skull, it says in verse 34, and this is where we pick up this morning, they gave him sour wine mingled with gall to drink.

But when he had tasted it, he would not drink. This detail, everything about the crucifixion is notable and is noticed, but I don't think this is necessarily given the attention that it might warrant. I wanted to read you an observation here that I think is helpful.

It is so interesting the way that this is depicted. Having crucified him, writes Matthew, with marvelous restraint. That's verse 35.

But the most significant things that happened during the crucifixion are almost given as asides. They are not the main verb and the main subject. They are dependent clauses and they are not given in the kind of spectacular central focus that we would expect.

There is no detailed description here of the manner in which the nails were driven through the hands or wrists and feet, et cetera. In the original, only two words are used, having crucified, which is one word, him. Having crucified him.

The scripture does not place all the emphasis on that which Jesus suffered physically, but on the fact that he himself in both soul and body was made an offering for sin, laying down his life. And this takes you to Isaiah 53, verse 10. It pleased the Lord to bruise him.

He has put him to grief. When you make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see seed, he shall prolong days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. You similarly find Jesus himself saying in John chapter 10, verse 11, I am the good shepherd.

The good shepherd gives his life for the sheep. And then again in verse 15, as the father knows me, even so I know the father, and I lay down my life for the sheep. And Jesus

connects his relationship to the father, his dedication to the father.

And please in your notes, use that word. Jesus expresses his dedication to the father in John 10, verse 15, as the father knows me, even so I know the father, and I lay down my life for the sheep. It gives the motivation.

It gives the focus, which is God's love for us expressed through the Lord Jesus Christ. And the Lord Jesus' love for his father in accomplishing that purpose. It is clear and it is stated elsewhere in scripture that it was out of love that the Lord Jesus accomplished his work, not only his love for the father, but also his love for us.

But the focus here is on the love for the father. And that's something we're going to see in this sometimes overlooked passage. So let's back up to verse 34.

They gave him sour wine mingled with gall to drink. If you look at the parallel passage in the gospel of Mark, it says that this was wine mingled with myrrh, wine mingled with myrrh. This is Mark 15, 23.

Gall and myrrh are two quite different things. And people have speculated that, well, maybe it was both, but we'll examine these and what the purpose of that mingling might have been shortly. But the word translated sour wine here is oxos.

So O-K-S-O-S perhaps, oxos is the word for, this is not oinos in other words. O-I-N-O-S is the standard word for wine. This is oxos and this was a sour wine.

And it was the common beverage where oinos was the finer and more expensive beverage of kings in some contexts. And the word that is translated gall here, mingled with gall, this is coles, C-H-O-L-E-S, coles. Oxos mixed with coles.

And you remember in our revelation study when we got to Smyrna and this was the word for myrrh. And the words are quite different and you really can't mix them up. You can't even suggest that there's a typo of some sort.

But it says that they came to this place, they gave him wine mixed with gall. And it is clear that it is the soldiers who gave him this cup. And we find this out specifically in John that it was the soldiers who handed him this.

There is a later occasion where Jesus is again going to be offered sour wine when he says I thirst and they put it on a pole and a sponge. And so this caught my attention. What do you think of this? There is wine in the upper room.

There is wine before they crucify the Lord Jesus. If you look at the order here, verse 34 comes before verse 35. They offered him this wine mixed with gall.

Then having crucified him, they divided his garments. And sitting down in verse 36, they kept watch over him there. So you would imagine that this first offering of the sour wine

or in some translations, you see it as vinegar.

The word vinegar is explained and you can get this from the French. Vinegar comes to us through French. The French word for wine is vin.

And then the word for sharp or sour in French is aigre. A-I-G-R-E. They probably say it more elegantly than I do, but A-I-G-R-E.

So vin aigre is wine sour or wine that has a sharp bite to it. It's not fine wine. Cheap wine, supposedly has a much harsher and sharper taste.

So sour wine, vinegar, not apple cider vinegar or the kind of vinegar we would find in a kitchen, but this sour wine. Keep in mind also that in no context, the upper room or here, would there be simple grape juice because grapes are harvested in the fall. This is the spring.

This is Passover. And there is no fresh grape juice to be had. The only way to preserve grape juice was to ferment it.

And depending on the fermentation and the preservation and the kind of skins that it was placed in, it would either be oinos or oxos, O-X-O-S. So in this case, it is the cheaper variety, the common variety, oxos. And many times to sweeten it or to take the edge off of it or to give it more robustitude, they would mix myrrh.

Myrrh had a pleasing aroma and in the proper proportion would make the drink more palatable. If you put enough myrrh in it, it becomes a medicine and a painkiller, a palliative that would dull and even stupefy the person who drank it. It just depends on what is the proportion of the sour wine to the myrrh.

So Mark tells us it was myrrh. Matthew tells us it was gall, collase. Gall is a quite different substance.

It is this word collase is used in the Septuagint to translate the Hebrew word, which is hemlock. Hemlock is a poison. And if you want a confirmation of this, you can go, you need know, go further than the Psalms, where it is used in Psalm 69, verse 21.

You might keep your finger here and turn back to Psalm 69. And we turn there because the context is important to understand what this is. Psalm 69 is subtitled in your Bible, an urgent plea for help in trouble.

David is praying in the midst of affliction. And you can begin in verse 19. You know my reproach, my shame and my dishonor.

My adversaries are all before you. Verse 20 of Psalm 69, reproach has broken my heart and I am full of heaviness. I look for someone to take pity, but there was none.

I look for comforters, but I found none. They also gave me gall for my food. And for my thirst, they gave me vinegar to drink.

Gall in my food or for my food. And for my thirst, they gave me vinegar to drink. This is not being offered as a comfort or as a mercy.

Being offered by adversaries, putting gall in your food, putting hemlock in your food, this is to hasten death. There is not a direct connection between this passage and the crucifixion. Our main purpose in looking at it is to see what gall is.

It was a poison. It's not a medicine. Gall is a poison.

And it is used for bitterness in the spiritual sense. The bitterness of gall, this is sorrow unto death. This is discouragement and disheartenment to the point of dysfunction as it's used elsewhere in the Bible.

We could do a longer word study on it, but I want to return to Matthew 27, 34. This is what I want to note. They offered him sour wine mingled with gall to drink.

And when he had tasted it, he would not drink. He would not drink. There is no passage in the four gospels prior to this day where Jesus is ever depicted as drinking wine.

You think about the passages that are associated with Jesus and associated with wine, but it never says he's even accused of being a wine bibber. You remember that. He's a glutton and a wine bibber.

Was the charge true that he was a glutton? If that one is not true, what is the likelihood that the charge that he is a wine bibber is true? They accuse him of both and he is actually neither. Of course, a wine bibber, you would get the idea that this would be someone who drinks to excess. But let's think back to the times where Jesus is associated with wine.

The first one chronologically of the seven signs that John gives in his gospel is what? What's the first sign after the disciples join him? John chapter two, the wedding feast at Cana. His mother comes to him and you might flip forward to John chapter two. We are going to find that we may have discovered some insight into things that are said and done in Jesus' earlier career as we look at this 34th verse of Matthew 27.

Here we are in chapter two. On the third day, there is a wedding in Cana of Galilee and the mother of Jesus was there. It's not an accident that this is Mary.

Both Jesus and his disciples were invited to the wedding. When they ran out of wine, the mother of Jesus said to him, they have no wine. Jesus said to her, woman, what does your concern have to do with me? My hour has not yet come.

His mother said to the servants, whatever he says to you, do. And you remember the

result and there is water that is turned to wine. The master of the feast tastes it.

We assume the guests consumed it, but it doesn't say anything about Jesus testing it to be sure his miracle was performed. He seemed to have had every confidence, but he says in chapter two, verse four, my hour has not yet come. Associated with wine that Jesus makes, but does not drink.

What I want to suggest here, who is it that doesn't drink wine in the Bible? He is offered wine and as soon as he tastes and finds out that it is wine, he refuses to drink it. Who categorically in the Bible doesn't drink wine? The Nazarite, those who have taken a Nazarite vow. Turn with me back to Numbers chapter six.

Numbers chapter six. The Lord spoke to Moses saying, speak to the children of Israel and say to them, when either a man or woman consecrates an offering to take the vow of a Nazarite to separate himself to the Lord. To separate himself to the Lord.

It's so interesting in the context of Acts chapter 13, where we were looking at the Lucius of Cyrene and Simon Neger there, that if you go to the next two verses, God says to the folks in Antioch, separate unto me Saul and Barnabas for the work whereunto I have appointed them. And coincidentally, this idea of being separated to the Lord is central to the Nazarite vow. When either a man or a woman consecrates an offering to take the vow of a Nazarite to separate himself to the Lord, he shall separate himself from wine and similar drink.

He shall drink neither vinegar made from wine nor vinegar made from similar drink. Neither shall he drink any grape juice nor eat fresh grapes or raisins. All the days of his separation, he shall eat nothing that is produced by the grape vine from seed to skin.

All the days of his separation, he shall be holy to the Lord. Turn back forward to Judges chapter 13. Most famous Nazarite in the Bible is Samson.

And there are four entire chapters devoted to Samson. Judges 13, 14, 15, and 16. So when you turn to Judges chapter 13, this man of the family of the Danites, whose name is Manoah, the angel of the Lord appears to his wife and says, indeed now you are barren and have born no children, but you shall conceive and bear a son.

Conceive and bear a son. Echoed later on in Isaiah, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son. Verse four, now therefore, please be careful not to drink wine or similar drink and not to eat anything unclean.

For behold, you shall conceive and bear a son. It is repeated. No razor shall come upon his head.

The child shall be a Nazarite to God from the womb and he shall begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines. He shall begin to deliver Israel. He is a Nazarite and he

is a deliverer.

So the woman comes and tells her husband, it is repeated in verse seven, you shall conceive and bear a son, drink no wine or similar drink, nor eat anything unclean. The child shall be a Nazarite to God from the womb to the day of his death. From the womb to the day of his death.

Turn with me to Luke chapter one, verse 15. Luke chapter one, verse 15. This Luke one, as you recall, is the story of Zachariah and Elizabeth.

She is barren. She bears a son and he too is to be a Nazarite. He will be great in the sight of the Lord, shall drink neither wine nor strong drink.

He will be filled with the Holy Spirit out from his mother's womb. He will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord, their God. So he is a Nazarite.

He is a deliverer. Think about these two famous Nazarites in the Bible. How does the prophecy and the purpose that is stated about Samson come to fulfillment? In chapter 16, how does Samson end up? He is humiliated and seemingly overcome by the enemy and yet in his death, he secures deliverance for his people and is victorious.

Samson is victorious in and through his death and his death provides deliverance from the Philistines in that day. Let's think about the second Nazarite, John the Baptist. He is a Nazarite out from his mother's womb.

How does he come to his end? Having accomplished his work, he is imprisoned by the enemies of Israel, a complicit oppressor, yet in his death, he achieves a victory. His witness to the coming one is assigned to Israel. The death of Elijah, so to speak, the death of the Old Testament prophet system rings in the new age of the Lord Jesus Christ, deliverance, and the witness of the truth that Jesus came to deliver.

For this reason, I was born and for this cause came I into the world to bear witness to the truth. John the Baptist heralds the way. So how likely do you think it would be, especially in the case of John the Baptist? His role is to be the forerunner.

He must increase, I must decrease. If John is a Nazarite, how likely do you think it would be that the Lord Jesus himself in his humanity would be separated unto God and dedicated to God from birth and be a Nazarite? It isn't explicitly stated, but we have no case where Jesus is depicted as partaking of wine. Even in the upper room, he takes the cup and says, this is the blood, this is the new covenant in my blood.

Drink ye all of it. And he does not drink from it. And then what does he say in the upper room? We saw that just a few chapters earlier in Matthew.

He says, I will not drink of this cup until I drink it new with you in the kingdom. Why

would Jesus be able to drink the cup if our estimation, if our hypothesis is correct that Jesus was a Nazarite and had never partaken of wine? And he says, I will continue to abstain until I drink it new with you in the kingdom. Because his work for which he was separated to God would be complete, right? So think about it.

Jesus' time throughout his ministry had not yet come. He is still working toward the fulfillment of his separation and dedication to the father. So in John 2, speaking to his mother, my hour has not yet come.

When he is speaking to his brothers in John 7, verse six, and they are in a sense challenging him because they are not yet believers. You come to the feast of tabernacles being at hand. And in verse three of John 7, his brothers therefore said to him, depart from here and go to Judea so that your disciples can see the works that you are doing.

For no one does anything in secret while he himself seeks to be known openly. If you do these things, show yourself to the world. The challenge of his brothers in John 7. Verse five, even his brothers did not believe in him.

Jesus said to them, my time has not yet come. Your time is always ready. The world cannot hate you, but it hates me because I testify of it that its works are evil.

You go up to this feast. I am not yet going up to this feast for my time has not yet fully come. And further on in the chapter, John 7, 30, they sought to take Jesus when he does go to the feast of tabernacles, but no one laid a hand on him because his hour had not yet come.

There is an hour toward which he is working, but that hour had not yet come. He is under a vow. He is separated and dedicated to God and its fulfillment has not yet come.

The next chapter in John, John 8, 20. These words, having cleansed the, when Jesus was speaking in the treasury and teaching in the temple, no one laid hands on him for his hour had not yet come. His hour had not yet come.

John 8, verse 20. Yet after this, in John chapter 12, verse 23, the message changes, the statement changes. In John 12, 23, Jesus says, when the Greeks come and ask Philip who is from Bethsaida in Galilee, we wish to see Jesus.

Philip came and told Andrew, Andrew and Philip told Jesus. Jesus answered them saying, the hour has come that the son of man should be glorified. The appearance of these interested Gentiles approaching the Galilean disciples because Galilee is more accessible.

You know, the, the Judaistic Jews thought that no good thing came from Galilee, came from up North, that they were beyond Samaria. And so Greeks felt like they had a more sympathetic ear perhaps with the, the Galilean disciples. And so they come to Philip and

Andrew who come to Jesus the hour has come that the son of man should be glorified.

And from this time forward, Jesus says the time has come. John chapter 13, verse one, before the feast of Passover, when Jesus knew that his hour had come, that he should depart from this world to the father. John chapter 17, verse one.

Jesus spoke these words, lifted up his eyes to heaven and said, this is the beginning of the high priestly prayer as it is known. Father, the hour has come. Glorify your son, that your son also may glorify you.

And we saw this in our own gospel, turning back to Matthew, the preceding chapter to our passage in chapter 26 with the preparation for the evening meal before his arrest in chapter 26, verse 18, when Jesus is giving instructions to his disciples, where do you want us to prepare for you to eat the Passover? He said, go into the city to a certain man and say to him, the teacher says, my time is at hand. My time is at hand, 26:18 of Matthew. And what is that time? It is of course, his work on the cross, the crucifixion.

But that work is not yet complete when he is at the foot of the cross, when they are preparing to crucify him. So when they offer him this sour wine mingled with gall, when he had tasted it, he would not drink. We've generally assumed and often been told that Jesus tasted the gall and that it was some sort of palliative at mixing it up with myrrh, which is a palliative, but gall is not.

But when he tasted it, he would not drink it. They say, well, he didn't want to reduce his suffering or he didn't want to have some effect of the chemical that was added, the substance that was added to the wine. I think when the wine touched his lips, he is still under his Nazarite vow.

This is my belief. This is my suggestion. I can't imagine that John the Baptist would have been a Nazarite and Jesus would not.

And I think this is why these accusations are false that he's a wine bibber. I think it's why he's never shown he eats fish, he eats bread, but he never drinks wine throughout his earthly ministry. It's never said to take place.

Even here at the foot of the cross, it wouldn't necessarily matter what is in the wine. But these substances that are in it, what would this suggest? We have them explicitly mentioned. One is this gall or hemlock, which is a poison.

What would this do? It would kill him before his work is complete. If he is given a poison and he passes out or gets sick or is otherwise unable to accomplish the work of bearing our sins on the cross, this would be a premature death. This would hasten his death through poison.

I think that with the circus carnival atmosphere around crucifixions, such as you saw in

the Old West around hangings, such as you saw in Rome with Christians in the center of the stadium being fed to lions and so on, that there was probably a lot of this sour wine available. It's like when they sell beer at ball games and sodas and other refreshments. And there's a lot of it around.

What the soldiers give to him is laced with hemlock. As soon as it touches his lips and Jesus recognizes that it is a fruit of the vine, he refuses to drink it. So this would hasten his death.

You could also imagine that if it had been given to the soldiers by one of those who were sympathetic to the Lord Jesus, some of the women or whatever, knowing that he was going to be crucified and endeavoring to spare him the suffering and let's do sort of a mercy killing here. He won't have to endure the agonizing death of crucifixion. Let's bribe a soldier, let's slip it to the soldiers and have them give him something that's got gall in it to put him out and kill him before the effects of the crucifixion do their horrific work.

And that it could have been something on the lines of a mercy killing. We don't know. We just know that there is poison in this wine that is offered to Jesus before they nail him to the cross.

Mark's account says that he was offered wine mixed with myrrh. Mixed with myrrh. This sweetened the wine as opposed to hemlock, which is very bitter.

It's kind of like, you know, the almond taste of cyanide. I mean, you can't miss it. It is easily understood.

And it could have been that Jesus tasted this bitter note and didn't want anything untoward, either the wine or the poison to interfere with the work and his willing dismissal of his own spirit when his work is complete. But in Mark, when you have the myrrh, this is a palliative. This is something that would dull pain and even stupefy the person who partook of it.

And he didn't drink that either. I think this may have been two different times that he was offered wine. One with something to hasten his death and the other, which even if it was intended as a mercy, let's dull the pain.

And you get the idea. And Haggadah and some of the Jewish writings after this time, remembering crucifixions, it was common practice to offer the victims something to dull the pain. But what effect would this have? This would actually be killing someone with kindness because it would lengthen the stay on the cross.

Because of stupefaction, because the effects are dulled, this is like somebody who's hopped up on drugs and you shoot them five times and they're still coming because their body doesn't register the effect. And it's possible that the two thieves did accept this

wine with myrrh. And that's the reason they are still alive and have to have their legs broken to hasten their death.

And that in the act of trying to dull the pain, people actually extended the agony on the cross. It's unclear, we can only speculate. But the Lord Jesus in this hour of greatest trial and greatest testing is aware.

And even in the midst of his intense pain and suffering from the floggings, from the cat o' nine tails, from the crown of thorns, the carrying of the cross out to this place of a skull is still thinking and still aware. And if he is in fact still fulfilling his Nazarite vow as I think he is and was, then even at the point of extremis, he doesn't bend, he doesn't waver. It's so interesting when you think of the other part of the Nazarite vow that he's not to defile himself by touching something that is dead.

Jesus touches several dead people, but he's not defiled because things flow the other way. Instead of him being defiled, they are given life. And whether it is Talitha Kumi or whether it is the woman with the issue of blood, you could imagine that the woman with the issue of blood touching him, even the hem of his garment would concern the Lord Jesus.

If he is under the Nazarite vow, he has to ensure that he is not defiled by anything touching him. And another reason why the woman is instantly healed is that's the direction that the energy must flow because Jesus cannot be defiled, not just because of who he is, but because of his intention of maintaining his dedication to the Father and fulfilling his purpose. Well, we have much more to say about this.

Now let's pause here and take our break. When we come back, we're going to look at the second offer of wine while Jesus is on the cross.