

Matthew 17:22-23

22 As they were gathering in Galilee, Jesus said to them, "The Son of Man is going to be betrayed into human hands,
23 and they will kill him, and on the third day he will be raised." And they were greatly distressed (NRSV).

This is another passion prediction whereupon Jesus is speaking about his death. All four of the gospels have passion predictions. Being recorded in all of the gospels shows us how important it is. Matthew records four times where Jesus spoke about his death and resurrection. The first passion prediction we covered in Chapter 16. Jesus and his disciples went to the region of Caesarea Philippi. While they were there Peter proclaims that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God. Then Jesus gives his first passion prediction. Matthew 16:21 From that time on, Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and undergo great suffering at the hands of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised (NRSV). From there Jesus, Peter, James, and John go up a mountain where the Bible reveals the transfiguration of Jesus and a voice from the cloud proclaims Jesus is the Son of God. They come down from the mountain and Jesus encounters a problem with the healing ability of the disciples.

Then we get to today's Scripture which is the second passion prediction. At this point Jesus has entered into a new phase of his ministry. They have now arrived in Galilee where they are back inside Jewish territory. Matthew 17:22-23 as they were gathering in Galilee, Jesus said to them, "The Son of Man is going to be betrayed into human hands, and they will kill him, and on the third day he will be raised" (NRSV). The third passion prediction is found in Matthew chapter 20 and the fourth in Matthew chapter 26. This is a repeated lesson. It is told four different times because it is emphasized by Jesus repeatedly. This shows us that this is the most significant event. It is repeated because it is so important. It is important to Jesus, as he gets back into Jewish territory, to remind the disciples what is going on. All of us can relate to school, or college, when a teacher repeats a lesson you know it is important. It is done to help us learn. When a boss or a parent warns you more than once, it gets your attention.

I'm going to break away from the Scripture now and talk about how we process verbal information. I sometimes listen to education and motivational audio tapes. One of the instructors explained how important it is to listen to the same tape several times. When you hear it for the first time, the mind reflects on the first part of the information and processes it while the audio continues. While the mind is processing the first part, the rest of the information gets heard but your mind does not do the necessary reflection. It does not sink in as the mind is still busy processing the first part. When the mind is finished processing then it is free to process new information. So, it is important to hear the information again. The mind can now process the information that it missed while the mind was busy. Each time you hear the same information you process it differently. An example of this is when you watch movies. If I like a movie I sometimes like to watch it again. When you watch a movie the second time you will pick up on things that you didn't notice the first time. The same thing is true when reading a book. I encourage you to read Bible over and over again, each time you will learn something new.

The passion prediction has three parts to it. The first part of the passion prediction is that the destination is Jerusalem. This they know. In the first passion prediction Jesus said "he must

go to Jerusalem” The disciples get that part without any problem. The second part of the passion prediction is about the things that Jesus has to endure. This is where the disciples struggle. It is emotionally intense so they get stuck. In the first passion prediction Jesus tells them that he has to undergo great suffering at the hands of the elders, chief priests, and scribes and be killed. The response of the disciples is denial and a challenge to Jesus mission. The disciples don’t fully grasp what Jesus is all about. This troubles them as the focus is on their emotions. Now during the second passion prediction Jesus tells the disciples the same thing but a little different. This time he talks about being betrayed into human hands, and killed. Once again the disciples grasp the most emotional part - the bad news about his death. Now this time they are greatly distressed. They missed the good news altogether because their minds were still processing the bad news. The third part of the passion prediction is the good news that on the third day he will be raised. They have not yet processed the happy ending.

The disciples got stuck on the pain and failed to see glory. We tend to do that too. We endure all kinds of pain in life, physical, emotional, and bereavement. Sometimes we get stuck on the pain and fail to see the good. When someone dies we often focus on the pain of separation. But death is a gateway to eternal glory; it is a rite of passage to the next stage. The focus should be on the glory. We should be filled with peace, happiness, and a sense of satisfaction.

The cross is a cruel and humiliating thing. It was for criminals deemed to be the worst of humanity. Yet Jesus willingly accepted it. He died for all of us, for the disciples, for the people of present, and the future, for you, for me, even for the very people that tortured him. He accepted it. Jesus did not focus on the pain. His focus was always on the glory. The Scripture shows us that Jesus knows what is going to happen. He voluntarily went there to suffer and die for us in order to get to the glory. Jesus identity is the Messiah, the Son of God. That’s why he went to the cross. The crucifixion is verification of his identity. Jesus knew exactly what would happen. Only the Son of God would know and be willing to do that.