

# (John) 21 - Trial Tragedy of Divine Love

by Alan Redpath

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*The sermon explores the trial of divine love through the story of Jesus' betrayal, Jewish trial, and civil trial, highlighting the themes of the will of God and the principle of the cross.*

**Duration:** 52:17

**Scripture:** Matthew 27:46, Luke 23:34-46, John 19:26-30

**Topics:** "John"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the movements of Jesus during his trial and crucifixion. The speaker highlights the contrast between the cruelty of Jesus' enemies and the tenderness of his friends, particularly four women who stood by him. The speaker also mentions the seven statements made by Jesus on the cross and emphasizes the love and sacrifice Jesus endured for humanity. The sermon concludes with a prayer expressing love and gratitude towards Jesus.

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## Transcript

Thank you, dear Lord, for those who went out from outreach and you used for your glory. Many of us here have experienced this, and though exhausted and tired after it, it was so abundantly worthwhile, and we bless you for it. Thank you for the letter we've just written.

We just take it and bring it up to you with praise and honor and glory to your name. Thank you, Lord. It's not we, but Christ in us who gets all the praise and all the glory.

Now here is, and Lord, you know that we're feeling tired, and for many of us it's been a busy day, and we just trust you now for the last hour of this evening that you will give us refreshing and the cheered joy of being together and loving you and being loved by you, and being bound up together in a bundle of life in the Lord our God. So help us all now, in Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Now then, for the last time today, would you just look at chapter 18 of John, please. Now we have just to look at the outline a bit, for outline a moment, and the last section we're in now, part c, the revelation of God as love to all. By the way, I missed, you know, of course, those three chapters.

May I say to you that in relation to the ministry of the Holy Spirit, if you want a book which has been a treasure store to me in my life, it would be Andrew Murray's book called The Spirit of Christ. I think that's a must for Christian people. Andrew Murray, The Spirit of Christ.

Andrew Murray was the founder of what is now the African Evangelical Fellowship, went to the South Africa General Mission, and it's got 31 chapters, a chapter for every day of the month. You don't read the book at once, you just read a chapter at a time, and it's got different aspects of the ministry of the Holy Spirit. It's simply tremendous.

I do commend it to you. Andrew Murray, *The Spirit of Christ*. All right? Well, we had to miss out those chapters.

This morning we dealt with chapter 17, the prayer of our Lord. Now, the revelation of God as love to all. We have three lectures left, including this evening, and we're going to look at what I've called in the outline, the trial, the tragedy, and the triumph of divine love.

We are hoping to do the first two tonight, then we'll look next week at the triumph of divine love, and finally at the epilogue in chapter 21. Now, the trial of divine love. Chapter 18.

To save time, I won't read it now, but you'll have your Bible open before it, before you, and we'll refer to it as we go along. First of all, in this chapter, we have the betrayal of Jesus. In the first 11 verses, the betrayal of Jesus.

Verses 1 through 11. Some things are especially, I think, noteworthy. First of all, that this took place in Gethsemane, a place often frequented by the Lord and his disciples.

It said that in the first two verses. There was a garden which he and his disciples entered. Now, Jesus, who betrayed him, also knew the place, for Jesus often met there with his disciples.

When we started John's Gospel, I said that there was no Gethsemane in John. Well, there's only that reference to it. There's no reference to the prayer of agony that's recorded in the other three Gospels.

I'll just give you one of them. Matthew 26, verse 36. There's also a reference in Mark and Luke, but if you get that one, that'll do.

You remember the prayer I'm referring to? When the Lord Jesus was praying, and again the disciples presumably listening in, and he prayed, Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but thine, be done. And his sweat was, as it were, great drops of blood falling on the ground.

That prayer of agony, John doesn't refer to it. But notice that this was a place they often went to. Familiar ground.

And notice also that Jesus knew what was going to happen to him. Jesus knew what was going to happen to him. This for Jesus knowing all that was to befall him, came forward and said to them, Whom do you seek? And notice in the third place, will you, that three times Jesus said, I am he.

You can ring those words round. You'll find them in verse five, verse six, and verse eight. He said that before.

He said that before. And I'm sure Judas knew the meaning of his answer. Compare that I am he with chapter four, verse 26.

Don't bother to look it up. Just jot it down. Chapter four, verse 26.

I hope I'm not going too quick. Tell me if I am. Chapter six, verse 20.

And chapter eight, verse 24. Jesus all the time, I am he. I am he.

I am he. And then notice also in these verses that Peter shows, as he often did, more courage than sense. Verse 10.

Simon Peter having a sword, drew it and struck the high priest's slave and cut off his right ear. It was not a bad shot. He meant to behead him, I'm sure.

But he missed and just got his ear. Strange thing, he wasn't arrested. I presume that was because the Lord Jesus healed the man's ear.

I can think of no other reason. And then when Jesus said, I am he, you notice that in verse six, Judas and the soldiers fell to the ground, overcome by the majesty of Christ. Verse six.

And Jesus repeats his question, who do you seek? And verse seven, he gets the same reply. Whom do you seek? And they said, Jesus of Nazareth. I am he.

So they may arrest him, but not the disciples. Verse eight. They affect their escape.

And scripture is fulfilled in verse nine. And then Jesus gives himself up. He gives himself up, surrenders himself.

Just let me say slowly, and if you have the energy, strength, left in one finger, just jot down this sentence, would you? The one passion of our Lord's life was the will of God. The question of the cup had been raised in fellowship with his father in prayer. The question of the cup had been raised in fellowship with his father in prayer.

But always with the same restraint. Not my will, but yours be done. And so the moment of inquiry was over.

Going too quick? Exhausted. So sorry. Repeat.

The one concern of our Lord was the will of God. The question of this cup had been raised in fellowship with his father in prayer, but under the same reservation. Not my will, but thine.

And so the hour of inquiry was over. The cup had been given him to drink. Therefore, no further questions.

The cup had been given him to drink. Therefore, no further questions. Is that okay? Trouble? Serious trouble? You want me to repeat? Who wants repetition? Get some grease on your hand and get going, right? I'm just repeating because it's important that we realize this, because it's important personally too.

The one concern in our Lord's life was the will of God. The question of the cup had been raised by him in fellowship with his father in prayer. If there's any other way whereby people might be saved, Father, let it be that way.

But not my will, but thine. If possible, let this cup depart from me. You see it all in Matthew, in the portion I gave you.

The cup had been given him to drink. Therefore, there was no further question. A question raised in prayer and settled in prayer could never be raised again.

A question that was raised in prayer and settled in prayer could never be raised again, in any other form, or with anybody else. That's a tremendous thing to remember. When we've settled a question in prayer, never allow any discussion with anybody to raise that question again.

And now we have, um, after the betrayal, the first thing then is the Jewish trial. It would, the technical term would be the ecclesiastical trial, the religious trial, verses 12 through 27. Jesus is, in quotes, tried by the Jews.

First before Annas, verse 13, and then before Kephias, verse 24. And part of this is peculiar to John, only he mentions it. Let me just say this as interest, I don't think it's really important, but Annas happened to be the father-in-law of Kephias.

And he had once been high priest himself, and then he was deposed and put out of office by Kephias' predecessor. But he still sort of acted in the background, preserved some background authority. And so, he's the first one to whom they take Jesus.

And you notice that these 16 verses, verses 12 through 27, seven of them are not about the trial of Christ, but the trial of Peter. Seven of them deal with the trial of Peter. Verses 15 through 18, and verses 25 to 27, are about Peter.

Just repeat that, of these 16 verses, verses 12 through 27, seven of them are not about the trial of Jesus, but about the trial of Peter. That is, verses 15 to 18, verses 25 to 27. I haven't really time to go into those, but just let me say and put it down.

Verse 17, verse 25, and verse 27. In each of those verses, Peter makes his denial of Christ. Verse 17, I am not.

Are you also one of his disciples? I am not. Verse 25, I am not. Verse 27, Peter denied it again, and at once the cock croaked.

Those three verses, three denials of Christ, in public, are the result of chapter 13, verse 8, never, says Peter, never. Chapter 13, verse 8, and verse 37, of chapter 13, and also chapter 18, verse 10, and also Mark 8, verse 31. Those three denials, which Peter made, are the result of, in a word, his refusal of the principle of the cross.

He thought the cross was a disaster, and did everything he could to get Jesus out of it. We have to beware of Satan's traps like that. Right? Now just look for a moment at this religious trial, in verses 12 through 14, and 19 through 24.

Jesus was led away by his captors, not because he was helpless, but because he was willing. He was led away by his captors, not because he was helpless, but because he was willing. It wasn't fetters that bound him, but love.

It wasn't fetters, but love. Notice in verse 19, they asked him about his doctrine, teaching, and his disciples. They asked him, in order that they might believe in him, but to try to incriminate him, find him guilty.

People's inquiries about Christ are not always honest. They have a subtle motive. In verses 20 to 21, Jesus pointed out to them that his teaching was in public.

Verses 20 through 21. I have spoken openly in the world. I've always taught in the synagogues and in the temple.

Where all the Jews come together, I have said nothing secretly. Why do you ask me? Ask those who have heard me, what I said to them. They know what I said.

In other words, he hadn't been scheming behind closed doors. He'd been preaching out in the open. John records the trial before Annas at night, and then before Kephias in the morning, verse 28.

Both illegal, wrong times. Verse 28. And you notice when questioned about the nature of his teaching, Jesus claims that it's known to everybody.

Verse 21. Ask those who have heard me. And Jesus has slapped for insolence, that nobody can reject his answer.

Verse 22. Verse 23. If I have spoken wrongly, bear witness to the wrong.

But if I have spoken right, why do you strike me? And then, he is sent to Kephias. And then, we have this, what I call the civil trial. First the ecclesiastical trial, the religious one, before the Jews, verses 12-27.

And from verses 28 to chapter 19, verse 16. Got that? This is the civil trial before Rome. Verse 28 to 19, verse 16.

This is, you can almost picture this, it's very interesting, because the scene of it moves to and fro in relation to the praetorium, the place of judgment, trial. Sometimes it's outside, sometimes it's inside. I'll just give you that.

Now, you put down in your Bible, in a margin or in your notes or something, put down this. Mark these movements. Got it? Outside, verses 28 to 32.

I'm just quickly going to look at them all in a minute, but get them down first, so we know where you are. Outside, verses 28 to 32. Inside, verses 33 to 38.

Outside, verses 38 to 40. Inside, chapter 19, verses 1 to 3. Outside, verses 4 to 7. Inside, verses 8 to 11. Outside, verses 12 to 19.

Got it? I can sort of picture it in my mind, out and in, out and in all the time. What a travesty the whole thing is. But here you are, I'll give it to you again, because it's very interesting to picture these movements as they go out and in.

And Jesus is on trial. Outside, verses 28 to 32. Inside, verses 33 to 38.

Outside, verses 38 to 40. Inside, chapter 19, verses 1 to 3. Outside, verses 4 to 7. Inside, verses 8 to 11. Outside, verses 12 to 19.

Now, just look at each of them very quickly, and you'll have a sentence, just a sentence, about each, to put down in your notes. First one. Pilate asking the Jews, what's the charge? Verses 28 to 32.

They led Jesus from the house of Kivas to the praetorium. It was early. They themselves didn't enter.

So they might not be defiled, but might eat the parcel. What religious hypocrisy. So Pilate went up to them, up to them, and said, what accusation do you bring against this man? It's absolutely clear that the Jew would have nothing less than a death sentence.

Verse 30. And he answered him, if this man were not an evildoer, we would not have handed him over. Pilate said to them, take him yourselves and judge him by your own law.

The Lord, you said to him, it is not lawful for us to put any man to death. They were determined on a death sentence. And only the Roman authorities could impose that.

But, remember two things, and put down, just right now, right there, in your notes, see, chapter 10, verses 17 through 18. I lay down my life. No man takes it from me.

I lay it down, and I take it again. This commandment I have received from my Father. Two things got to be seen there.

Jesus was put to death by men, but he died voluntarily. He was put to death by men, but he died voluntarily. Verses 28 to 32, that is.

In the second section, verses 33 to 38, which is peculiar to John, only he records this. Pilate has a sort of private interview with Christ. Verses 33 to 38.

Pilate entered the Praetorium, inside now, again, and called Jesus, and said to him, Are you the King of the Jews? Jesus answered, Do you say this if you are in accord? Or do other people say it to you about me? Jesus answered, Am I a Jew? Your own nation and the chief priests have handed you over to me. What have you done? Jesus answered, My kingship is not of this world. If my kingship were of this world, my servants would fight that I might not be handed over to you.

I would be handed over to the Jews. But my kingship is not from this world. Pilate said to him, So you are a king? Jesus answered, You say that I am a king.

For this I was born, and for this I have come into the world, to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears my voice. Pilate said to him, What is truth? There is a tremendous, tremendous confrontation.

Who do you think is king in that situation? Jesus stood before Pilate. One day Pilate will stand before him. Fancy God standing before a governor.

Pilate asks his question, verse 33. And Jesus asks him, Is it your own thinking? Or is it somebody else's idea? Verse 34. After Pilate's scornful disclaimer and his question, verse 35, Jesus finds out the true nature of his kingdom.

It is not of this world. Not established by earthly power. But it is a spiritual kingdom based on truth.

Pilate dismisses his claim with a sarcastic comment, What is truth? Truth has got to prevail, verse 37. And Christ, who was the truth, has borne witness to it. To this end, verse 37, For this I was born, and for this I have come into the world, to bear witness to the truth.

Do I know, do you know, why you are born? What are you born for? Human life is a plan of God. And each of us either frustrates it or fulfills it. It is a good thing to know why I came into the world and what I am in the world for.

God has a life plan for every one of us. And the great thrill will be one day to see that plan fulfilled. Now the third section, verse 38-40, shows us what a mockery Pilate's justice is.

Verse 38-40, got it? Pilate said, What is truth? After he had said this, he went out to the Jews again and told them, I find no crime in him, but you have a custom, that I should release one man for you at the Passover. Will you have me release for you the king of the Jews? They cried out again, Not this man, but Barabbas. Now Barabbas was a robber.

I find in this man no fault, but, but, you have a custom. And the choice is between a robber and a redeemer. And nobody hesitates.

There's many alternatives to Jesus, but every one of them is fatal. We can all have alternatives to the will of God, but every one is fatal. That's the third section.

But it's absolutely clear he allowed all this, hoping it would satisfy the Jews, and Jesus would escape. I'll just give you time to jot that down. The judge is becoming a criminal.

Chapter 19, verses 1-3. Why did all this happen to Christ? Part of capital punishment. But no judgment had been given about it.

Perfectly clear, that Pilate allowed all of it, hoping it would satisfy the Jews, and Jesus would escape. Sure. What do you mean, that? The whole thing? All right.

The judge, thus becoming a criminal. Why was Jesus scourged? Why? It's part of capital punishment, but no formal judgment had been given on Christ. And it's quite clear that Pilate allowed all this, hoping it would satisfy the Jews, and that Jesus might escape.

You'll find that very clearly commented on in Luke's gospel. I'll just read it to you. Chapter 23 of Luke, and verse 22, I think.

Chapter 23 and verse 22, yes. The third time he said to them, why, what evil has he done? I have found no crime in him deserving death. I will therefore chastise him and release him.

That's Pilate speaking. That's what he wanted to do. He knew it was right.

No, notice the fifth, inside the praetorium. Rather, outside, before the crowd. This is 4-7 of John 19.

Pilate went out again, and said to them, behold, I am bringing him out to you, that you may know I find no crime in him. Underline that he said that three times. Underline that.

One, chapter 18, verse 38. I find no crime in him. Two, I bring him out to you, that you may know that I find no crime in him.

Three, verse six, take him yourselves and crucify him, for I find no crime in him. Three times over. One thing to do, when you can find no crime in anybody, obviously, is to release him.

Pronounce him not guilty. But, you are for custom. Chapter 18, verse 39.

Did you say we have a law? Verse 7. It's not just a custom, it's a law. By that law he ought to die, because he has made himself the Son of God. In the name of custom, law, and anything alike, get rid of truth.

That's what they were saying. Get truth out of the way. So, Peter, I mean Pilate, and Jesus, go inside again.

There's another private interview with him. Verses 8 to 11. In the first private interview, he talks about kingship.

Chapter 18, verse 33 to 38. Kingship. Now, he talks about power.

Chatters about power. Power. Pilate doesn't seem to have much power.

But he chatters about it, in these verses. Verses 8 through 11. Where are you from? Jesus gave no answer.

You won't speak to me? Do you not know that I have power to release you, and power to crucify you? Jesus answered him, you would have no power over me, unless it had been given you from above. Therefore, he who delivered me to you has the greater sin. And the seventh.

The governor, who had an absolute contempt for the Jews, now taunts them. When Pilate heard these words, verse 13, he brought Jesus out, and sat down in the judgment seat, at a place called the pavement, in the Hebrew gatherer. Now, it was the day of preparation of Passover.

It was about the sixth hour. He said to the Jews, here is your king. They cried out, away with him, away with him, crucify him.

Pilate said to them, shall I crucify your king? The chief priests answered, we have no king but Caesar. And he handed him over to them, to be crucified. What a farce.

What a farce. The trial. The trial of divine love.

Now, just in a few moments, the tragedy of divine love. I don't know if that's quite the right word, because in the end it was victory. But tragedy amused.

And notice this, the crucifixion, verses 17 through 30. Verse 18, there they crucified him, and within two others. One on either side, and Jesus in the midst.

He's always in the midst. The title on the cross, the title on the cross, Jesus of Nazareth, the king of the Jews. Written in Hebrew, Latin, and Greek.

The languages of religion, art, and law. Verse 20, and Pilate sort of became tough, but too late. Firm, but too late.

Verse 22, they said, do not write the king of the Jews, but until he said, I'm the king of the Jews. And Pilate answered, but I've written. I've written.

It was the first time he was firm. Notice verse 22 here, verse 22. John adds details regarding the dividing of Jesus' garments.

Verse 23, sorry. And the soldiers had crucified Jesus. They took his garments and made four parts.

One for each soldier, also his tunic. But the tunic was without seam, woven from top to bottom. So they said to one another, let us not tear it, but cast lots for it to see whose it shall be.

To fulfill the scripture, they parted my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots. That's not stated in any of the other gospels, only in John. And the significance of it is, an unrealized fulfillment of Psalm 22, verse 18.

An unrealized fulfillment of Psalm 22, verse 18. You notice that Jesus had enemies and friends at the cross. Verses 23 to 27.

He's never without both. It's a tremendous contrast here. You see the cruelty of his enemies, 23 and 24, and the tenderness and love of his friends, verses 25 through 27.

I think it's to the credit, eternal credit, of these four women. Incidentally, three of them called Mary. They stood by him in Nazareth, verse 25.

But standing by the cross of Jesus were, and then you have four women. Verse 26 and 27 are very wonderful. Then he said to the disciple, sorry, when Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing near, he said to his mother, woman behold your son.

Then he said to the disciple, behold your mother. And from that hour the disciple took her to his own home. That's the third of the seven statements made on the cross.

Let me just give you those seven. It might be helpful. And in order in which they were made.

The seven sayings on Calvary. Here they are. Father forgive them for they know not what they do.

That's in Luke 23, verse 34. That can't be right. Hold on.

Luke 23, verse 34. Sorry. Yes.

Chapter 23 in Luke, verse 34. Father forgive them for they know not what they do. And the second statement.

Today, to the thief. Today thou shalt be with me in paradise. Luke 23, verse 43.

And woman behold your son. John 19, verse 26. Number four.

My God, why hast thou forsaken me? Matthew 27, verse 46. The fifth one. I thirst.

John 19, 28. The sixth one. It is finished.

John 19, 30. The seventh one. Father into thy hands I commit my spirit.

Luke 23, 46. I'll just give you those references again. So as you can look them up to be sure.

Luke 23, 34. Luke 23, 43. John 19, verse 26.

Matthew 27, verse 46. John 19, verse 28. John 19, 30.

Luke 23, verse 46. Those are the seven sayings on Calvary. Interesting too to trace the sentence in verse 26.

The disciple whom Jesus loved. Who was that? The author of this gospel. The disciple whom Jesus loved.

And you'll find that statement five times. Five times in this gospel. That's what Jesus, what John called himself.

The disciple whom Jesus loved. John 13, 23. John 20, verse 2. And John 21, verses 7 and 20.

I'll give you again. Five times the disciple whom Jesus loved. John 13, 23.

John 20, verse 2. John 21, verse 20. And look at the work accomplished here in verse 28 to 30. After this, Jesus knowing that all was now finished said, At first a bowl full of vinegar stood there.

They put a sponge full of vinegar on his hip and held it to his mouth. When Jesus had received the vinegar he said, It is finished. And he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.

It is finished. Finished. And I've just one minute, two minutes to say just one other thing.

And by the way, just read John 4, 34. And John 17, verse 4. John 4, 34. John 17, 44.

17, 4, sorry. Finished. And the last sentence is the burial of Christ.

Verses 31 to 42. And you notice in this section two requests. Verses 31 to 42, two requests.

First one, verses 31 to 37. Verses 31 to 47. The Jews asked Pilate that their legs might be broken.

They might be taken away. So the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first and of the other. The other thief would be crucified with him.

But when they came to Jesus and saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs. That was fulfilling prophecy. Exodus 12, 46.

A bone of him shall not be broken. Exodus 12, 46. Numbers 9, 12.

The legs of the thieves are broken, but not the legs of Christ. When we say, as we often do at communion service, this is my body which is broken for you. That's not right.

His body wasn't broken. It's the body he took from the cross right up to heaven. That wasn't a broken body.

His body was given for me. Yes, you say that. That's right.

It was given, but it wasn't broken. And the last request. Lovely thing.

In verses 38 to 42, we've already been thinking about the devotion of these women. Here now are two devoted men. Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus.

Both his disciples. They come to show their love. Jesus could have done with that before he was alive.

Better late than never. Joseph of Arimathea, disciple of the Jews of Jesus, secretly for fear of the Jews. Asked Pilate he might take away the body.

And Pilate gave him leave. Secretly took away his body. Nicodemus also, who had at first come to him by night, came bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes.

A hundred pound weight. They took the body of Jesus and bound it in linen cloth with the spices. As it is the burial custom of the Jews.

Now in the place where he was crucified there was a garden. And in the garden a new tomb where no one had ever been laid. So because the Jewish day of preparation, as the tomb was close at hand, they laid Jesus there, there.

You can put Nicodemus' story in just three little sentences. Short sentences, three words. His desire for Christ.

Chapter 3, verses 1 to 11. His defense of Christ. Chapter 7, verses 45 to 52.

And his devotion to Christ. Chapter 19, verse 39. You notice the progress here.

A cross, a garden, a tomb, a body. But Jesus is alive today. And Jesus suffered all that for you and for me.

Right? Let's pray together. Lord we tell you that we love you. We don't understand why you should love us, but we know you do.

And in return we love you. And would seek to evidence that love in our submission to you. And our walk with you.

Thank you for your help given to us. Bless us this evening and on the morrow, if you tarry. Give us a great day.

We ask it in Jesus' name.

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