**A Stone’s Throw**

*Luke 22:39-46*

**Introduction**

1. After Passover, LS instituted, washing feet, final teaching session w/ disciples, intercessory prayer – **Luke 22:39-46** – describes the gloomy scene of the garden as Jesus prayed before being betrayed.
   1. **(vv. 39-40)** – Matthew and Mark’s record specifies Peter, James and John going further with Him, and these words spoken to these three.
      1. **Matthew 26:36-39; Mark 14:32-35** – told disciples “sit here,” took the 3 further and said “watch and pray,” then went a little further.
      2. **Peter, James, and John** – Part of the inner circle of Jesus’ inner circle – Raising of Jairus’ daughter **(cf. Mark 5:37);** Transfiguration (**cf. Mark 9:2**). (Not told why, but they obviously enjoyed a close relationship with Jesus.)
         1. James and John – **Matthew 20:20-24** – desired prominence in the kingdom and were confident in their ability to suffer for Jesus.
            1. Named “Sons of Thunder” – **Mark 3:17** – some conjecture because of their display of zeal.
         2. Peter – **Luke 22:31-34** – Peter adamantly refused Jesus’ prophecy of his denial, claiming he would die with Him.
   2. **(v. 40)** – now, Peter, James and John are given the responsibility to watch and pray while Jesus went to pray.
   3. **(vv. 41-45)** – withdrew a stone’s throw away to pray and returned to find them sleeping.
      1. Matthew records this happening 3 times!
      2. Jesus’ prayer – **(v. 44); Hebrews 5:7-8** – agonizing, vehement cries and tears.
      3. Though only “about a stone’s throw” away from Jesus, they slept.
2. It is important that we do not make the mistake of these three who were in such close proximity to Jesus, but in the way that meant most they were not present at all.
3. **How might it look to be only “a stone’s throw” away? I.e. to feel, or seem close to Jesus, but in spiritual reality be miles away.**
4. Zeal without Knowledge (**Romans 10:2)**
5. Paul’s description of his countrymen – **Romans 10:1-4** – even Paul does not deny their zeal, but it is cause for sorrow (**9:1-2**), not joy, because it lacked knowledge.
   1. **Zeal** – *zēlos* – properly, heat, i.e. (figuratively) “zeal” (STRONG)
      1. “intense positive interest in someth., zeal, ardor” (BDAG)
         1. Some say, “on fire for the Lord.”
      2. **Like fire, zeal must be controlled to be an effective tool, and not a destructive force in itself.**
         1. Knowledge is the control for zeal to be the vehicle of pleasing service to God.
         2. **(vv. 2-3)** – this is what Israel lacked – knowledge of God’s plan for man to be righteous before Him – knowledge of God’s plan for man to have a relationship with Him, be in fellowship with Him.
   2. **Their zeal without knowledge was destructive:**
      1. In describing that Israel is not cast off entirely, for a remnant has believed, but those that are blinded are lost – **Romans 11:7-10**
         1. **(v. 8) – Isaiah 29:10** – describes a willful ignorance.
         2. **(vv. 9-10) – Psalm 69:22-23** – describes what was for their good being their destruction because of their willful ignorance.
      2. **Isaiah’s context shows zeal that is self-destructive because it refuses God’s will – Isaiah 29**
         1. **(vv. 1-2)** – Ariel, Jerusalem, the place of worship – to be judged.
            1. **Ariel** – lion of God or **altar hearth** of God – translated “altar hearth” in Ezekiel 43:15.
            2. I.e. the place where sacrifices are offered to God and consumed by Him.
            3. **(vv. 1-2**) – continue to feast and worship (in vain), and I will make you ***“Ariel”*** (truly an altar hearth – **v. 6** – ***“flame of devouring fire”***).
         2. **(vv. 9-12)** – describes their hardness and willful ignorance of God’s word.
            1. **(vv. 9-10) (cf. Romans 11:8)** – **verse 10** is explained by **verse 9** – this is what THEY are doing, but the Lord is allowing them to do it to themselves.

Idiomatic – “Active verbs were used by the Hebrews to express, not the doing, but the permission of the thing which the agent is said to do” (1954, p. 29, MacKnight, James, Apostolic Epistles)

* + - * 1. (**vv. 11-12**) – the problem is not literacy, or accessibility, but unwillingness, hardness.
      1. (**vv. 13-14**) – Their reverence, service, and worship of God is derived from man’s wisdom, and therefore God will put them to shame.
         1. ***“draw near…but have removed their hearts far from Me”*** – “a stone’s throw,” but really very far.
    1. **David’s context petitions God for deliverance in the face of his enemies, and the enemies of God – Psalm 69**
       1. Messianic – (**v. 9; cf. John 2:17; Romans 15:3** – Christ); (**v. 21; cf. Matthew 27:34, 48** – Christ); (**v. 25; Acts 1:20** – Judas Iscariot)
       2. **(vv. 22-23)** – the enemies of God think their ***“table”*** (sustenance, honor, etc.) is their ***“well-being,”*** but it is their demise.
       3. **Quoted, places the Jews who have rejected the Christ as God’s enemies, and their “table” as God’s people as their trap – ZEAL FOR THEIR IDENTITY WITH GOD BECOMES THEIR DEMISE, because they have rejected God’s will in Christ to remain as God’s only people.**

1. What zeal that is ignorant of God’s righteousness does:
   1. **It accuses God with wrong:**
      1. **God is unfaithful** – **Romans 9:3-6, 8** – is He unfaithful by their terms for rejecting them?
      2. **God is unrighteous** – **Romans 9:14-16** – is He unrighteous for rejecting the Jews and accepting Gentiles because He is supposed to be Israel’s God?
      3. **God is unfair** – **Romans 9:19-21** – is He unfair in finding fault because we fit His mold of who will be hardened, and have mercy withheld?
      4. **Application – what about those who haven’t heard the gospel? What about those raised in another religion? What about those who are sincere? Etc.**
   2. **It stands in the way of God’s mercy:**
      1. **Romans 9:14-18** – Pharaoh is used to demonstrate what physical Israel is effectively doing by rejecting the Christ.
      2. God is seeking to show mercy to ALL (including Gentiles) through the gospel of Christ, and like Pharaoh, Israel stands in the way and says, “NO!”
         1. **Note the vanity** – God will still show mercy on whom He wills.
         2. **Note the destruction** – God will do that through their rebellion, and destruction.
      3. **Application – when God’s word is opposed, and twisted to our own liking, we stand in the way of God’s mercy extended to us, and others. The result will be our own destruction. (cf. 2 Peter 3:16)**
         1. **Our “view” or opposition to God’s will DOES NOT CHANGE ANYTHING.**
         2. **God will still do things HIS WAY, and if we’re not cooperative then we will not be saved.**
2. Haughty Knowledge without Zealous Faith (**Romans 11:20**)
3. Paul’s caution to the Gentiles – **Romans 11:13, 19-22** – in light of their inclusion into God’s kingdom/people, they must maintain humble faith and obedience, or they will be cut off too.
   1. (**vv. 19-20a**) – Here they make an accurate statement. Their knowledge is correct.
   2. (**v. 20b**) – Here Paul gives commentary on the accuracy of the statement and makes them come face to face with its implications for them.
      1. **Irony – the Jew’s unbelief came from pride. If the Gentiles stooped to pride, they would be moved to unbelief too.**
   3. **(vv. 21-22)** – God’s goodness is conditional – they must continue in it, in faithful and obedient application of the truth they know, to stay in it.
4. **We must not make the common mistake of running to the opposite extreme in reaction to the wrong of others. We should simply seek to be what God calls us to be.**
   1. **Application of knowledge** – **James 1:22-27** – we know the truth, but are we fully engaged in it practically?
   2. **In worship** – **John 4:24** – we know the true way of worship, but is our worship absent minded and lethargic, or engaged and enthusiastic?
   3. **In evangelism** – **1 Peter 3:13-17** – we know we are right with God, and the mockery of others is unjust, but are we ably and eagerly sharing that truth with them?

**Conclusion**

1. The disciples were only ***“about a stone’s throw”*** away from Jesus as He prayed in the garden (**cf. Luke 22:39-46**), but their absent mindedness, and lack of diligence meant they weren’t’ even close to Jesus.
2. Let us not make the mistake of merely having the feeling of proximity with Jesus but see to it that we are indeed in fellowship with Him fully by meeting His will exactly.