11.10.26 am

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Date: 11 October 2026

Preacher: Reverend Donald Smith

[0:00] Good morning everyone. Welcome to everyone, this morning especially to visitors. I see we have a number with us today. Unfortunately you haven't outnumbered the number that we've lost to the mainland on their holidays.

! It's great to have everybody here. There is a holiday Sunday school running today and the children go out during the second singing so it's just children of primary school age.
Any visiting children are very welcome to come and join with our children in that Sunday school. There's also a creche provision just immediately behind me here if anyone happens to need that. We're very pleased today to have Reverend Donald Smith leading our worship both this morning and this evening. He will take the service shortly.
The various meetings through the week as usual and the prayer meeting on Wednesday will be taken by Coona to encourage everyone who is able to come out to the prayer meeting.
[1:09] Our minister David is on holiday until the 20th of October. If you require any pastoral support during that time, please speak to one of the elders. And Reverend Donald MacDonald is available to anyone who needs a minister.

Services next week is taken by Reverend Gordon Matheson in the morning and evening service will be taken by Stuart King, our minister in training.
And one more information I'd like to highlight is volunteers are needed for both the Connect Club and the Rooted Club on Fridays.
So Connect meets at 4 to 5.30pm and Rooted meets, not at 4 to 5.30pm as shown in the intimation book from 6.30pm to 8.30pm.
And if anyone wants to have any more information on that, please speak to Stuart or Joyce. But if you're able to volunteer for either of those clubs, that would be extremely helpful. And those are all the intimations, so I just ask Donald to come forward and lead us in worship and pray for God's blessing upon your time with us.
[2:20] Thank you so much for the warm welcome. And let me extend that welcome to all of you as well, especially to those visiting. It's wonderful to have you here with us as we gather together to worship God with one another.

And that is what we are here to do. So we're going to begin by doing just that as we sing together. We're going to sing the wonderful hymn, How Great Thou Art. So if you're able, please do stand as we sing these words to God's praise together.
We're going to sing these words to God's praise together. Oh Lord my God, when I am awesome wonder, Consider all the warmth I have to fear.
I see the stars, I hear the mighty thunder, The perfume of the universe is made.
Then sing my soul, my Savior God to Thee, How great Thou Art, How great Thou Art, How great Thou Art, How great Thou Art, When sings my soul, my Savior God to Thee, How great Thou Art, How great Thou Art, When I am the wind and forest leaves, I wonder, And hear the birds sing sweetly in the trees, When I look down, When I look down, From lofty mountain grandje, I hear the blue, Can feel the gentle breeze, Then sings my soul, my Savior God to Thee,
[4:35] How great Thou Art, How great Thou Art, How great Thou Art, And sing my soul, my Savior God to Thee, How great Thou Art, How great Thou Art, How great Thou Art, How great Thou Art, And when I think that God is Son of Spain, Send Him to die, I scarce and take it in.

But on the cross, my word of gladly pain, He bled and died to take away my sin.
Then sings my soul, my Savior God to Thee, How great Thou Art, How great Thou Art, Then sings my soul, my Savior God to Thee, How great Thou Art, How great Thou Art, When the cross shall come, With shout of acclamation, And take me home, For joy shall fill my heart, Then shall I love, In

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humble adoration, And in humble adoration, My God, How great Thou Art, Then sings my soul, my Savior God to Thee,
How great Thou Art, How great Thou Art, Then sings my soul, my Savior God to Thee, How great Thou Art, How great Thou Art.
Now we are going to come before God in prayer together, Let us bow our heads in prayer. Our good and gracious God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, We come before You this morning in awe of Your majesty, And wondering at Your greatness.
[7:16] Lord, as we have sung, so now we confess, How great Thou Art. You alone, O God, are holy, holy, holy, Without comparison, utterly other, In being and perfection, You are infinite, eternal, and unchanging, In Your being, Your wisdom, Your power, Your justiceness, goodness, and truth.

Yet greater still than all these things is the wonder of Your redeeming love, A love so great that You should give Your one and only Son, To save sinners such as we are.
We come this morning to worship You, O Lord, For You alone are worthy of all worship, Because of who You are, and because of what You have done for us.
For as we remind ourselves of Your holiness, We see in Your brilliant purity, The uncleanness of our own hearts unveiled. For Father, we know we often try to convince ourselves of our innocence, When we compare ourselves to others.
But Lord, when we behold Your holiness, We realize that we are altogether unclean. We confess this morning that we have not loved You, With all our heart, soul, mind, and strength.
[8:38] That we have not loved our neighbours as ourselves. That in our thoughts, words, and actions, We have done what we know we ought not to have done, And left undone what we know we should have done.

We have been fearful when we should have been faithful, Silent when we should have spoken. We have denied Your loving kingship over our lives, By living as the Lord of our own lives.
But Father, we thank You that as we come before You this morning, Our hope does not rest in the goodness of our own deeds, But in the finished work of Jesus.
We praise You that Jesus, The only righteous and truly innocent person to have ever lived, Had Himself declared guilty on our behalf. That He allowed Himself to be betrayed into the hands of sinners, So that sinners might be reconciled to You.
We thank You that His death has paid the price of our guilt, And that all who repent and trust in Him are forgiven, Justified, made sons and daughters of the living God.
[9:41] Lord, grant all of us who have put our faith in Christ The assurance of Your pardon and grace this morning, And help us to rest afresh in His completed work for us.

We pray for our time of worship now, That You would help us to turn our hearts and minds towards You. That we would lay before You the burdens of our week, That we might come to Christ and find our rest for our souls in Him.
That You would keep us from distraction, And cause our hearts to be filled with thankfulness, So that our worship may be pleasing in Your sight. May Christ be exalted among us, And may all that we do bring glory to Your great and holy name.
In the precious name of Jesus we pray. Amen. Amen. Well, it's the holidays, isn't it? But boys and girls, for those of you who are around, If you want to come down to the front, If you're feeling brave enough, I've just got a very little thing to tell you about, To show you which side you normally come down.
Do you go this way? Excellent. Come over here. Let me come down. Wonderful. Right. Am I allowed to sit down for this bit?
[10:50] Excellent. I'm going to sit here. That's nice. Take the opportunity to sit down while I can. Boys and girls, great to have you here. I wonder, can any of you tell me, What is the brightest thing in our solar system?

Jesus. Oh man. I've been shown up straight away. What's the second brightest thing in our solar system? Excellent. Yes.
The sun. Brilliant. Okay. Right now, we're working down. That was an easy one, wasn't it? What's the third brightest thing in our solar system? A little bit trickier. The stars. The stars. That's a good guess.
They're outside our solar system. They're far away. They're really, really bright. That's an excellent guess. In the dark. You see the stars really brightly in the dark.

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Don't you? That's when you see them shine really brightly. Do you know what the third brightest thing in our solar system is though? Right. Are you ready? The answer, okay, is my running shoes. [11:46] Look at them. Right, folks. This is what I... Now, there is a story behind these. It's not what I would have chosen. Okay. I promise.

Let me assure you of that. But I have ended up with them. Right. These are really, really bright running shoes, aren't they? Now, have any of you ever been to Scalpy? Yeah, been Scalpy. Do you know that bit of Scalpy that's really flat?
No. Right. No. That bit of Scalpy doesn't exist, does it? It's just... It's bumpy. It's just bumpy. There's hills and hills and hills and hills. Dude, bumpy.
Do any of you remember the day on Scalpy when it wasn't windy? No. No. It's always hilly and it's always windy.
No. Do you know what... Do you know what that means? Thanks, Finn. Do you know what that means for running? Is running easy in Scalpy? No.
[12:43] It is not easy. Right? We live in Aberdeen. The place we live in Aberdeen, there's this little town. There's our house. There's this little town. There's this wonderfully flat path. No. Still a month ago, I took that flat path for granted.

But when we go back home, I'm never going to take it for granted again. Running on flat things is wonderful. But for the last month, I've had to run up and down lots and lots of hills and into lots and lots of wind.
Now, do you know what keeps me going sometimes when I'm running up the 15th hill? That's the other amazing thing about Scalpy, right? It doesn't matter which direction you run. It's always into the wind. It's a meteorological marvel.
What keeps me going? Do you know what keeps me going? Fear. Fear. Because I'm running in these. And this is a bit silly, but the thought of someone seeing me walking while wearing shoes like this is quite terrifying.
Because to wear shoes as bright and bold as this, you kind of need to be really, really good at running. And I'm not really, really good at running. So sometimes when I'm struggling up a hill, what keeps me going is the thought of someone seeing me having to walk in these and me getting a bit embarrassed.
[13:53] Is that a good motivation to keep on running? No. No, it's not, is it? Especially when we first arrived, I had a really sore ankle. And I kept on running because I was wearing these.

And then my ankle got really, really sore. That's not good, is it? No. Sometimes we do things that we shouldn't really do because we're worried about what other people think.
Now that's a really silly example. But sometimes, maybe you find this at school. I know lots of the adults will find this at work or with their own friends. Sometimes we find it difficult to do the right thing because we worry about what other people think.
We're afraid that they'll say something or think something or do something that we don't want them to do. And so instead of doing what we should do and what we know we should do, we do something else instead.
We're going to be thinking a little bit about that in the service later on. How sometimes we can live by fear instead of faith. But Jesus shows us a much better way to live. Even though he was afraid, even though he was in a really terrifying situation, he cared less about what people thought of him and more about the people themselves.
[15:05] He wasn't so worried about what they thought. He wanted to love them anyway. And so he did some really, really difficult things, even when he was afraid, because he loved people.

And I hope we can do that as well. That we can live by faith instead of by fear. That we can tell people about Jesus, even when it might be scary because we care more about them than what they might think of us.
And we're going to think a little bit more about that in the service later on. But you know what? There's actually something we're going to think even more important about in the sermon later on. And here's a bold thing. I'm not going to tell you about it right now.
Oh, no. Does any of your, when you're going home, does anyone ask you what you learned in Sunday school? Yeah. Now, that's a good thing. And that's a great thing to be asked. And I hope you can answer that question well. Here's what I want you to do, though.

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After you've answered that question, ask them what they learned in church. And they, hopefully, will be able to tell you what the even more important thing is. If they don't, come speak to me.
[16:03] Hopefully, though, that can mean some really good conversations on the way home or after lunch as well. Right. Can I pray for you? And then we're going to sing together and you guys are going to head out after that to Sunday Club. Father, we do thank you so much for the Lord Jesus.

That he, Lord, did not live by fear but by faith and did what was right, even when it was really difficult. Lord, that he was ready to love people, even when it meant that they were really unkind and horrible to him.
And Lord, we pray that you would help the boys and girls to live in that same faith. Lord, we thank you most of all that there is forgiveness in the Lord Jesus, even when we do not manage to do that. Pray that you be with the boys and girls and those teaching the now as they go out.
Lord, that you would show them more of your love for them and that they would come to know and love you too. In Jesus name we pray. Amen. Amen. Amen. Great. Thank you very much, boys and girls.
Well, we are going to sing again. We're going to sing from Psalm 130, a wonderful psalm of the redemption we can know when we come to God in faith and trust in his word.
[17:06] Let us stand as we sing these wonderful words to God's praise together. Lord, from the depths I call to you. Lord, hear me from on high. And give attention to my voice when I for mercy cry.

Lord, in your presence who can stand if you are sin's record. But yet forgiveness is with you that we may fear you, Lord.
Lord, I wake my soul, wait for the Lord. My hope is in his word. More than the watchman waits for dawn, my soul waits for the Lord.
O Israel, put your hope in God. For mercy is with him. And for redemption from their sins, his people he'll redeem.
Amen. The cup would pass from him.
[19:21] But above that, that his father's will would be done. Verse 47 is picking up from that very moment. And from there we'll read through to the end of the chapter. A longer chunk, but it all kind of holds together as we'll see in a little while.

So Matthew chapter 26, reading from verse 47. Let us hear God's word together. While he was still speaking, Judas came, one of the twelve, and with him a great crowd with swords and clubs from the chief priests and the elders of the people.
Now the betrayer had given them a sign saying, the one I will kiss is the man. Seize him. And he came up to Jesus at once and said, greetings, Rabbi, and kissed him.
Jesus said to him, friend, do what you have come to do. Then they came up and laid hands on Jesus and seized him.
And behold, one of those who were with Jesus stretched out his hand and drew his sword and struck the servant of the high priest and cut off his ear. Then Jesus said to him, put your sword back into its place.
[20:37] For all who take the sword will perish by the sword. Do you think that I cannot appeal to my father and he will at once send me more than twelve legions of angels?

But how then should the scriptures be fulfilled that it must be so? At that hour, Jesus said to the crowds, have you come out as against a robber with swords and clubs to capture me?
Day after day, I sat in the temple teaching and you did not seize me. But all of this has taken place that the scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled. Then all the disciples left him and fled.
Then those who had seized Jesus led him to Caiaphas, the high priest, where the scribes and the elders had gathered. And Peter was following him at a distance as far as the courtyard of the high priest. And going inside, he sat with the guards to see the end.
Now the chief priests and the whole council were seeking false testimony against Jesus that they might put him to death. But they found none, though many false witnesses came forward.
[21:46] At last, two came forward and said, this man said, I am able to destroy the temple of God and to rebuild it in three days. And the high priest stood up and said, have you no answer to make?

What is it that these men testify against you? But Jesus remained silent. And the high priest said to him, I adjure you by the living God.

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Tell us if you are the Christ, the son of God. Jesus said to him, you have said so. But I tell you, from now on, you will see the son of man seated at the right hand of power and coming in the clouds of heaven.
of heaven. Then the high priest tore his robes and said, he has uttered blasphemy. What further witnesses do we need? You have now heard his blasphemy. What is your judgment? They answered, he deserves death. Then they spit in his face and struck him and some slapped him saying, prophesy to us, you Christ. Who is it that struck you? Now Peter was sitting outside in the courtyard and a servant girl came up to him and said, you also were with Jesus the Galilean.
But he denied it before them all saying, I do not know what you mean. And when he went out to the entrance, another servant girl saw him and she said to the bystanders, this man was with Jesus of Nazareth.
[23:23] And again, he denied it with an oath. I do not know the man. After a little while, the bystanders came up to him and said to Peter, certainly you too are one of them for your accent betrays you. Then he began to invoke a curse on himself and to swear, I do not know the man.

And immediately the rooster crowed. And Peter remembered the saying of Jesus, before the rooster crows, you will deny me three times. And he went out and wept bitterly.
So God's word will come to consider it in a few minutes time. Before that, though, we're going to respond to the reading of God's word by singing once more. This time we're going to sing in Gaelic from Psalm 41 and verses nine and 10. We have the privilege of singing the words of the Psalter, but more than our Psalms, these are Christ's Psalms. And the words of this Psalm here echo what we've just read about in the garden of the Gethsemane. Yea, even my own familiar friend on whom I did rely, who ate my bread, even he his heel against me lifted high. And so we sing these words, know something of Christ's pain, not because it is our pain, but to know the sorrow of our Saviour who endured it for our sakes. Let us sing these verses and we'll remain seated as we sing in Gaelic. Okay. Thank you.
■ tu imi sa te ■ ■■ ■■ ■■ ■ ■■ ■ ■■ ■ ■ Thank you.
[26:43] O I I I I I I I I I I I I God bless you.

All right. All right.
All right. All right. All right.
Amen, I'm your God. Amen. Before we turn back to God's Word, let us join in prayer once more. Let us pray.
Father, we do continue to worship you as we come before you in prayer once more. Lord, we come as those whose souls have been saved through the death of our innocent Saviour.
[28:44] Having confessed our sin and been wonderfully assured of your grace, we come now as your adopted sons and daughters, those who have been made your own because of the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ.

Lord, we thank you that you save us not only as individuals but as a people. For Christ died not to save us apart from one another, but to bind us together into one body.
That together we might be presented before our Saviour without spot or blemish. And so we pray, Lord, that you would continue to sanctify us, to make us more and more like Jesus.
It is an amazing calling which you have given to your church. And so we pray as a family, as brothers and sisters in Christ, together with all those united in faith across the world, that you would strengthen us by the power of your Spirit, that to love one another in a way that makes us more like Jesus.
to move towards one another in grace, to challenge sin and encourage righteousness. So that we would not only be a people saved from sin, but a church that longs to be holy, to live as Christ lived, to love as he loved, to be abounding in compassion, to be patient, to bear with one another, to acknowledge our faults and forgive the failures of others.
[30:03] Lord, we pray that you would grow, continue to grow this church in gospel unity, that give us ever greater confidence in the gospel in your words, that we would go out with it to all people, that we would trust it as the means of grace you have given to us in your goodness.

Father, help us even now to treasure the privilege of coming together on this your day, that we would delight now to sit under your words, to be convicted by it, to be encouraged by it, to be sustained and equipped to serve you and one another as you build us up in our faith by the power of your Spirit.

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We pray that you would speak now to us through your word, that the word of Christ would dwell in us richly, that those who know you would grow in their love for you, that those who do not know you would come to love you as we hear the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ in Matthew's gospel.
Speak to us now for your good, for our good and your glory. In the name of Jesus we pray. Amen.
Well, if you do have that passage that we read in Matthew open in front of you, it'll be helpful as we kind of work through it together.
I don't know what colour your running shoes are. I hope for your sake they're a little less garish than mine. I don't know what colour your shoes are, but I do know, I was speaking about something with the kids, even in a slightly silly way, that we are all familiar with.
[31:39] Far too often, don't we, we live not by faith, but by fear, and end up doing things we know we shouldn't, or perhaps more commonly, not doing things we know we should.

I know that we're all familiar with it because, as we'll see in a moment, it is a battle every person knows. Our actions being driven by our fear of what other people might say or think or do.
It is a shortcoming that is true of every person, bar one. There's a lot to get through in these verses. So we're just going to get stuck right in. We're going to take in two points as we go. First of all, we'll see two motives with one outcome. And then secondly, we'll see two trials with one verdict.
First of all, two motives, one outcome. We see that in verses 47 to 56 there. There is so much in these verses, but just one question I want us to focus on. We've already started to think about it.
[32:43] What is everyone here being motivated by? You have Judas and the crowd from the chief priests, and you have Jesus and the disciples.

And it feels initially, doesn't it, like the line is quite clearly drawn between these two groups as they meet in Gethsemane. But as we read on, we realize that the line is not drawn between the mob and the disciples, but actually between Jesus and everyone else.
And what sets them apart is fear or faith. And we begin in verse 47 there with Judas and the crowd marching into Gethsemane under the cover of darkness.
And it would have been darkness. Now, we live in Aberdeen. They have streetlights. You really take that for granted until you spend a month in Scalpy. No streetlights in Scalpy, right? No streetlights in Gethsemane. It would have been like going out to the Shed in Ardnashic.
Pitch black. You can't see a thing. It would have been as good as utter darkness. Why? Why are the crowds marching on Jesus in pitch black?
[34:02] There is no doubt part of the reason why Judas has to go and identify Jesus with a kiss. From a distance, you wouldn't have been able to tell who was who. And there was only one man amongst the crowd who could walk straight up to Jesus without the disciples intervening.

Until this very moment, they still don't know what Judas has been plotting. It's all happening in the dead of night because they, Judas and the crowd with him, are afraid.
They are afraid. If you've got your Bible in front of you, just look back to the beginning of this chapter, verse 5. Why did the chief priests not arrest Jesus earlier?
Because they are afraid. Afraid of the people's response. Lest there be uproar among the people. Jesus calls them out on it in verse 55.
Day after day, I sat in the temple and you did not seize me. But why do you come now with swords and clubs? They are there in the night because they are afraid.
[35:10] But they are not the only people in Gethsemane who are being ruled by their fear. As soon as the mob lays hands on Jesus, one of the disciples immediately draws his sword, doesn't he, and starts swinging.

The disciples are not violent men, are they? They are not the only people in Gethsemane who are being ruled by their fear. And for three whole years, there is not, is there, a hint of physical violence amongst them.
Not until this very moment. These are not men who go looking for a fight. What is it that provokes peaceful people to lash out?
It is fear. They are ruled by fear, not faith. That is Jesus' point, isn't it, there in verse 53.
The only reason you would pull out a sword is if you don't really think Jesus has it under control. But instead of having faith in Jesus, they fear the swords and clubs in front of them.
[36:14] So that when they have to put their swords away, what do they do at the end of verse 56?
All the disciples left him and fled.

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They tried fight. They tried to fight. Jesus took that off the table. So now they opt for flight. Because fear is what is driving their actions. That is true of Judas.
It is true of the crowd. It is true of the disciples. But it is not true of Jesus. It is not true of Jesus, even though he is the one who had more reason to fear than anyone else.
David was pointing out a couple of weeks ago that just a moment before the mob appeared, right, verse 47 starts, doesn't it? While he was still speaking, Jesus was looking into the cup of God's righteous wrath.
Jesus is hours away from bearing the unbearable. From taking upon his shoulders the righteous punishment of every sin, of every one of his people.
[37:31] The one who had everything to fear. What is driving his actions? The answer for Jesus is not fear, but love for his people and the will of his Father.

He has legions of angels at his beck and call. Tens of thousands of angelic beings. But he chooses neither fight nor flight. Why, verse 54?
How then should the scriptures be fulfilled? Again, verse 56. All this has taken place that the scriptures of the prophets be fulfilled.
Was Jesus afraid? But we have to say in a very real sense, yes. A couple of weeks ago we heard him pray, Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me.
He was afraid, but that was not the end of his prayer, was it? My Father, if this cup cannot pass from me. Your will be done. He did not let his fear rule his actions, because greater than his fear was his desire to carry out his Father's will.
[38:53] Now, when I was putting this point together yesterday, I initially started thinking about a little bit what we were speaking about with the kids. How often our actions are motivated by fear instead of faith when it comes to sharing the gospel, when it comes to standing up for Christian values in a post-Christian culture.

Now, are we motivated by fear of man or faith in God? That's a good question to ask. And if we were to spend all our time in these verses this morning, I think that would be a fruitful direction to go down.
But having thought about it, I don't think that is the point that Matthew is wanting to drive home in these verses. His point here, right in these verses, is not so much how we should be like Jesus, but how unlike us, Jesus is.
The attention is not, I don't think, to be on our actions, but his character first and foremost. Because while we are so very quick to buckle, aren't we?
Jesus, facing not only swords and clubs, but the totality of human sin. He stands firm. Unswerving in his desire to do the will of his Father, even at the greatest cost and most excruciating pain.
[40:13] Here we are to dwell on how utterly different Jesus is to us. How we could not possibly take his place in this story.

And the reason I'm confident that is the case is because of the great contrast that the rest of this chapter lays out for us. Even though the motives of Jesus and the crowd is very different, they are both working towards one outcome.
And that is his death. The crowd, motivated by fear and hatred. Jesus, motivated by faith and love, but both moving towards that one outcome.
And so they go together to the court of Caiaphas. From verse 57 through to the end of the chapter, we are given the account of two concurrent trials happening at the same time, very close to one another.
Our second and slightly longer point this morning, that they'll take us through to the end. Two trials, one verdict. The kind of parallel courtroom scene is set for us in the first couple of verses there, 57 and 58.
[41:24] Having been arrested, Jesus is immediately dragged into the palace of Caiaphas, the high priest, in order to be put on trial. But there is another trial happening in the courtyard, verse 58.

Where one of Jesus' disciples is hidden amongst the crowds. In Gethsemane, all the disciples fled, but Peter has plucked up the courage to follow behind.
So we have Jesus and Peter within a stone's throw of each other. And over the next few verses, both of them are going to be put on trial.
And have the very same life or death question put before them. Who are you? Who are you?

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Two trials, one question. And as we'll see in a little while, one verdict. Let's begin with a trial happening inside the high priest's palace.
[42:26] We've actually already been told how this is going to go. I mentioned that verse 5 earlier. If you were to go back to verse 3 and 4 of chapter 26, you'll see exactly what's going to happen here. The prosecutors had already met in this very courtroom to predetermine the outcome of this case.

To arrest Jesus by stealth and put him to death. Part 1 has been completed in Gethsemane. They have him under arrest.
Now they are putting part 2 into action. So as we come to these verses, we should not be expecting a fair trial. This court is interested in only one thing and it is not justice.
It is a death sentence. What is remarkable though, is how much difficulty that this kangaroo court have to find anything to pin on Jesus.
Throughout the Gospel, Jesus has proven himself guiltless. Right? Literally without fault. Not just better than the average person, but perfect.
[43:38] But it's not just that he didn't do anything wrong. He did all things right. And if you've not been following along through Matthew's Gospel or you're not sure that is really the case, just look at verse 59 and 60.

These men were doing all they could to find some kind of dirt on Jesus. That they were ready to accept false witnesses. That they were looking for unreliable testimonies. But even then, they still could not find a reason to condemn him.
Think about that just for a minute, right? How far would someone have to go digging into your life? Before they found something come to light.
Before an imperfection came to the surface. But even amongst a crowd of false witnesses desperate to find something, anything, so they could charge Jesus, nothing would stick.
Eventually, two witnesses come forward with the same story. Verse 61, this man said, I'm able to destroy the temple of God and to rebuild it in three days.
[44:49] Desecrating a place of worship that was a capital offense in the Roman Empire. So now Caiaphas at least has a kind of a line of questioning to go down.

A chance to maybe trip Jesus up. What do you say to these charges? The charges. Now Jesus posed no physical threat to the temple in Jerusalem, did he?
He was speaking about himself as the temple of God. That the place on earth where God had come to dwell with his people. Now neither had Jesus actually done anything or even said he would do anything.
He had only said what he was able to do. Jesus has numerous lines of legitimate defense here. But what does he do in verse 63?
What does he do? Jesus remains silent.
[45:49] How do you react when someone accuses you of something you didn't do? Well, when you're innocent and you know you're innocent and yet people start to think you are guilty.

there are a few things out there that get so under our skin but in the face of false accusation with a straightforward defense Jesus does not say a word when a defense might save him he says nothing but when silence might save him that is when he starts to speak I think there's an element of exasperation in Caiaphas' plea in verse 63 that they're running out of ideas I adjure you by the living God tell us if you are the Christ the Son of God Jesus has not said a word all night he doesn't need to hear no comment and there is no case to take forward and yet now he responds not to save his life but to lose it we've seen throughout this passion narrative how Jesus has remained in complete control there are other people here who think they are pulling all the strings but Jesus knows everyone's every move he could have escaped long ago if he wanted to he could have called on a legion of angels to save him at any moment but from the beginning of Matthew's gospel his mission has been not to save himself but to save his people from their sins and he knows that in order to do that even though he is innocent these men must condemn him to death and so now he speaks you have said so he replies
I tell you from now on you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of power and coming on the clouds of heaven the sinless Son of God declares his kingship in order to lose his life because this is a claim of absolute unrival authority parallel to God over Caesar hypocrisy to the Jews treason against Rome silence might well have set him free but Jesus says just enough to ensure he

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would be contend to death both by this court here and the Roman governor in a few verses times and that is exactly what happens blasphemy is the charge death is the sentence and in the next few verses the irony spills over in bucket loads God's high priest condemns God's Son the chief priests prove themselves guilty of the very charge of blasphemy they are leveling against Jesus that they are committing the capital crime while the only innocent man in history is declared deserving of death those who pretend to be just judges are those who a chapter earlier were conspiring to murder the promised prophet is mockingly commanded to prophesy having spent years prophesying about this very moment can you see that the gravity of the sin that is packed into these few verses these men did everything they could to ensure that a man they knew was innocent died the most agonizing death they hated him they humiliated him they vilified him the truly innocent Son of God who had come to save him and they were determined to destroy him
I think it's important we see the wickedness on display here but it's also important we don't let it blind us to the fact that it is all still in Jesus' hands just look at verse 65 again and see how it is Jesus' own words you have heard what he said the false witnesses weren't working it is Jesus' choice to break his silence which enables the court to declare him guilty he is choosing to take this path in order to save his people from their sins he willingly went through the gravest injustice there has ever been he underwent the treachery of his own high priest questioning him and pronouncing him guilty he silently stood there as he was beaten as his face was spat on and struck again and struck again and struck again and again surrounding by a crowd baying for his blood the innocent Son of God declared that he was king so that this would happen so that they would gleefully cry out he deserves death the gavel comes crashing down the verdict guilty guilty that is what is happening in courtroom number one outside in courtroom number two another individual is being questioned about his identity but instead of declaring who he is in order to save others this defendant is denying who he is in order to save himself in verse 69 we are moved out of the palace and into the courtyard where Peter is amongst the crowds now Peter understandably he gets a pretty bad rep for all that happens in the lead up to Jesus' death a couple of weeks ago we heard Jesus tell Peter that he would deny him three times but Peter was having none of it was he?
even if I must die with you I will not deny you not knowing what's going to happen knowing what we just read a little while earlier it's easy for us isn't it to see Peter's foolishness but let me remind you of the very next sentence after Peter's bold promise earlier in this chapter verse 35 what happens immediately after Peter says I'll never deny you all the disciples said the same it's not just Peter is it it is every one of Jesus' disciples they all have a hyperinflated view of their own faithfulness but things very quickly go very wrong the mob come Jesus is arrested and what did we see just happen in Gethsemane verse 56 then all the disciples left him and fled every disciple says they are ready to die for Jesus every disciple flees at the first sign of danger but one disciple and only one disciple has not yet completely abandoned his Lord and that disciple is Peter
[54:25] Peter Peter is the last man standing and as he enters the courtyard of the high priest's palace he is not stepping into the spectator's gallery of the old bailey I think we can sometimes read this narrative as if Peter was kind of in Tesco doing his weekly shop and somebody asked him he was a Christian and he sort of put his head down and started shaking his head sheepishly that is not what is going on here who do you think is gathered in the courtyard of the high priest at three o'clock in the morning it's not people milling around the market is it it is the people who had just been out with the swords and clubs ready to see Jesus die on the cross of all Jesus followers here is the most dedicated the one who in the middle of the night followed the armed mob that had just arrested Jesus the one who willingly went into the heart of enemy territory because he was not yet ready to completely abandon Jesus unlike every other disciple they're not denying Jesus because they are nowhere to be seen

I think the fact that he is here at all proves that in a sense he is as good as it gets and that is why what happens in this trial is so crushing so damning because it says a lot about much more than Peter if Peter is the most fickle disciple we can look down on him here and shake our heads but if Peter is the most dedicated disciple if he is as good as it gets what do his actions here say about every other disciple who hasn't even made it into the high priest's courtyard At this part of Matthew's gospel it is full of contrasts and we have another bunch of them here but while Jesus is being questioned by the high priest it is a servant girl who comes up to Peter both of them want to know the identity of the one they are speaking to who are you tell us who you are but while Jesus is declaring who he is in order to sacrifice himself

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Peter is denying who he is in order to save his own skin while Jesus stays silent in the light of a false testimony Peter is making a desperate defense in the face of a true testimony that the first servant girl you are with Jesus don't know what you're talking about second witness this man was with Jesus I don't know the man then a whole group of witnesses certainly you too are one of them your accent betrays you at this point the case is watertight there is evidence in his accent there is an abundance of corroborating witness statements but Peter the most dedicated of the disciples plunges himself ever deeper from a plea of ignorance to an outright lie to the invocation of a curse on himself he doubles down he triples down and refuses to acknowledge his king all so that he could save himself fear not faith in the presence of danger the most dedicated disciple defaults into self preservation modes but in his desperation to appear innocent before people
Peter declares himself guilty before God and this is the one who followed Jesus the furthest even he denies his king this really is treason and then again I think we could and it would be worthwhile spending time kind of pushing and thinking about the ways that we might like Peter have denied Jesus his kingship over our lives publicly or privately and again that would be time well spent but I just want to take a little step back here and just think about the bigger picture of what's going on across this section because it's not just that Peter denied Jesus in the courtyard The second trial proves that Peter and therefore all the disciples not only denied their king but grossly overestimated their goodness their faithfulness over and against God's word
Jesus said they would deny him they said we're not that bad we're not that bad what Jesus told them was true they rejected because they thought we're better than you think but they were every one of them and every one of us we are that bad when God's word tells us there is none who is righteous no not one do we listen to it or do we think I'm not that bad but there are moments in all of our lives when we reject Jesus kingship over our lives if he is as he claims to be king over all creation then any failure to keep his command is a rejection of his rule over our life it is a word an action a thought that says not my king
[60:40] Peter made it into the courtyard of the high priest before he caved in and said he didn't know him the rest of the disciples caved in long before that and the reality is for most of us it doesn't take does it being surrounded by an armoured mob for us to even just for a moment turn our back on him we don't need to be nearly so deep into enemy territory before we are ready to deny his rule over our life and live our own way for our own safety for our own comfort for our own security if this is the most dedicated disciple then the point is that every one of us stands guilty there is only one who is innocent and it is none of us while Jesus is falsely condemned before Caiaphas without evidence we stand justly condemned don't we before God and there is plenty of evidence isn't there how deep would Caiaphas have had to dig to find some dirt on you if you're anything like me and I know you are quite like me the answer is not very deep and so the gavel comes crashing down once again guilty but this time the verdict's right so what can we do if we all find ourselves declared guilty not by a corrupt priest but a just judge if we are all guilty how can we possibly be cleared that is where we see our two trials come together the guilty can be declared innocent because the innocent was declared guilty what Jesus is doing is stepping into the dock so that we don't have to being declared deserving of death so that those who are united to him by faith can have the penalty paid the guilt wiped away and every stain of sin removed he puts himself forward to pay our debt to carry our burden to die for our iniquities and he is choosing to do it for us but we do not have a reluctant saviour knowing the depths of our sin better than we do this is what

Jesus chooses to do it's an amazing thing isn't it that Jesus knows what Peter is doing out in the courtyard that Jesus knew what Peter was going to do long before Peter did while he was being falsely accused while he was being spat on while he was being beaten and mocked while he is suffering Jesus knows exactly what his most dedicated disciple is doing at exactly the same time and yet he chooses to lose his life for Peter and for every one of his disciples who failed him who have denied him who have fled from him but do in the end still come back to him not in strength but in sin knowing that it is only in Jesus that we can be saved and we are saved only because the innocent chose to be declared guilty can the guilty be declared innocent if we try to declare ourselves innocent we will like Peter end up looking pretty stupid pretending we are people who we know and everyone else knows we aren't we will see
Peter's restoration more fully tonight in John 21 but you don't need to know that story to come back to Jesus now knowing you have nothing to offer knowing that you are not innocent but guilty and he will save you knowing the depth of your sin even better than you do he will save you because that is

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what he came to do he declared himself king so that he could be declared deserving of death for you he knows how badly you've messed up he knew exactly what the disciples were going to do he knows what you have done but he chose to die for you and if you will have him as your king he has died for you and there is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus we put our faith and trust in him the gavel falls and the declaration for me and you is innocent righteous covered by the precious blood of
Christ no condemnation not now not ever because the sinless son of God declared himself king not to save his life but to lose his life so that he might save yours as we pray let's give thanks to God for this amazing gospel and pray that it be both our gospel now and forevermore father we do thank you for this most amazing gospel of lord jesus christ father we do confess that like peter we are guilty lord we have denied your loving lordship over our lives in many ways we know and in many ways we don't but lord we thank you and praise you that in spite of our sin jesus christ chose to have himself pronounced guilty despite his perfect innocence that although he had done all things right he chose to be declared deserving of death so that we who did deserve that penalty might walk free while he bears our sins for us lord we thank you for this glorious gospel we pray that we would know it as our own lord that for those of us here who have our faith and trust in jesus that that faith and trust would strengthen that it would deepen lord that we would marvel afresh at the beauty and wonder of the gospel we pray for those who don't yet know you here this morning lord that they would come and put their faith and trust in jesus christ lord that they would recognize their own guilt but know that jesus christ chose to die for them not because they are good but because he is glorious and has done all things for us lord help us to rest in his finished work and rejoice in the righteousness that we now have in him father we do praise you for that gospel and breathe us now as we continue to sing your praise for jesus glory amen and then we're going to respond to god's word by singing once more we're going to sing the hymn man of sorrows what a name let us stand as we sing these wonderful words to god's praise together man of sorrows what a name for the son of god who came ruined sinners to reclaim hallelujah what a savior feeling shame men of Little pain what a savior screen bet you love got you feel my pardon with his love hallelujah what a savior guilty violent helpless me spotted sacram won't wait hear story
Lord free fan nor tick kill tranqu rush Spontless Lamb of God was he, full of torrent caliphate, hallelujah, what a Savior.
[69:54] Lifted up was he to guide, in his wish was his cry, now in heaven exalted high, hallelujah, what a Savior.

When he comes, our glorious King, all his runsome gold to bring, then a new will song will sing, hallelujah, what a Savior.
Now may the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all both now and forevermore. Amen.

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