

Communion

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 08 January 2012

Preacher: David MacPherson

- [0 : 0 0] As we look across the world, across the globe, there are many uncertainties. Will the Eurozone survive? Will the UK stop back into recession, if we were ever out of it in recession?
- Will Scotland remain part of the United Kingdom? Will we be the next US President? Will North Korea open up now or remain hermetically closed?
- Will Assad survive in Syria? Will death finally deliver Zimbabwe from the tyrannical clutches of Mugabe? But moving on to more transcendent matters, will Aberdeen still be in the Premier League?
- All very uncertain. But at a more personal level, in our own lives and in our own families, I imagine that many in uncertainty also looms large.
- Will you be in the same job at the close of this year that you are in at the beginning? Will you still be in Aberdeen? What are family matters that are uncertain?
- [1 : 1 1] Some may be quite unpleasant. The survival of the marriage, the relationship with other family members. What will be of these things as we look into the year ahead?
- What about our health? Will our health hold throughout this year? Or will there be unwelcome as surprises around the corner? In all of these things, that is, great uncertainty.
- This morning, I want to spend some time considering the words of Jesus addressed to the disciples as they were making their way from having celebrated the Passover meal to Gethsemane.
- They are words that announced Peter's, and indeed the other disciples, imminent denial of the Lord. And as we consider the words that Jesus uses, I want us to particularly highlight the absolute certainty with which Jesus is able to describe future events.
- And the following future events in particular that he makes reference to in the words that he addresses to his disciples. The first thing that you can say, and you'll develop briefly, is that Jesus was certain that he was to die.
- [2 : 3 8] He was certain that he will die. He was certain also that his disciples would be scattered. He was certain that he would rise again.
- And he was certain that the disciples would be restored to him. Four certainties that are very evident and apparent in the manner in which Jesus expresses himself.
- And of course, as events did develop, his certainty grew well founded. Let's think of each of these in turn. First of all, Jesus was certain that he would die.
- Now, you might say, quite reasonably, that the certainty that he will die is hardly earth-shattering. Most of the same people share that particular certainty.
- But in the case of Jesus, the certainty extends to the time, the manner, and the identity of his executioner.
- [3 : 4 9] In these details, Jesus also expresses great certainty. And if we think of it, first of all, the timing of his death.

Now, the timing of our own demise is not an exact science. That, I think, is a truth that has been impressed upon our own.

Just as secretary as Elvigrachi stubbornly flings on to life in Troukoli. Who's to say when somebody will die?

But in the case of Jesus, he is very explicit concerning the timing, the moment of his death. Then in verse 31 of Matthew chapter 26, we read, Then Jesus told them, So, this very night, you will all fall away on account of me.

And then he goes on to make clear that his reference is to his death. That all will accompany his death. This very night. So, Jesus is certain concerning the timing of his death.

[5 : 03] But what about the manner of his death? And the identity of his executioner? Something that we just suggested he was also certain about.

But in addressing those matters, Jesus applies to himself a prophecy found in the book of Zechariah. We read the whole chapter.

But very particularly, Jesus makes reference to and quotes words that are found in verse 3. In verse 7 of that chapter of Zechariah.

We can read them as they are recorded for us in the passage in Matthew. I will strike the shepherd and the sheep of the flock who will be scattered.

Now, as we do develop a little bit this prophecy, There will be merit in having your Bibles open also in Zechariah.

[6 : 00] Because there are one or two things that are said in the original prophecy that Jesus doesn't quote, But are so very relevant to what we are going to say. So, Jesus voiced himself that these prophetic words spoken, It's worth expressing, by the God himself.

That is what we are told in Zechariah 13 and verse 7. Awake, full sword against my shepherd, against the man who is opposed to me, declares the Lord Almighty.

Zechariah is the vehicle, as it were, for communicating these words. But the words are the words of God. God is the one who declares that this is going to happen.

Now, the words in question, the words that Jesus applies to himself, reveal a number of truths concerning the manner of his death and the identity of his executioner.

We might also say that they reveal, it may seem an obvious thing to point out, but I think an important one. They reveal also who it is that is to be struck down.

[7 : 14] The prophecy in Zechariah speaks of the shepherd, a weight or sword against my shepherd. The one to be struck is the shepherd.

But in Zechariah, we are also given another hymn as in work, that Jesus chooses not to specifically quote, but is relevant nonetheless. Because in verse 7 and Zechariah, it goes on to further identify the one who is to be struck down in this way.

The man who is close to me. Now remember, this is God who is speaking. God says, the one who is to be struck down is the shepherd. And he says, additionally, the one who is to be struck down is the man who is close to me.

Now as we think of that language, that prophetic language that Jesus applies to himself, we know that in the Old Testament it was not uncommon for God himself to be presented as the shepherd of Israel.

But here, God is speaking and he is referring to another who is described as the shepherd. But this other is also described as we notice as the man who is close to me.

[8 : 31] Close to the Lord God Almighty. The language that is used in Zechariah is the language that is used of a very close relative.

The language that is used in Zechariah is the language that is used in Zechariah. The language that is used in Zechariah is the language that is used in Zechariah. It echoes in a sense or is very similar to the language that we find in Psalm 80 and verse 17 that speaks also prophetically and messianically where we read, Let your hand rest on the man at your right hand, the son of man, you have raised up for yourself.

So the one to be struck down is the shepherd. He is the one who is the man close to the Lord God Almighty. And of course, in the light of further revelation, it is very clear that no one, no man, to fit this description other than the divine human Messiah, Jesus.

He is the one to be struck down this very night. Jesus recognizes that this passage speaks of him. And so, for that reason, he applies it to himself.

But the words of the prophet Zechariah, or rather the words of God recorded by Zechariah, also speak of the manner of Jesus' death.

[9 : 55] It is weird that his death was to be a violent death. He was to be struck down. The reference to the use of a sword also speaks of a violent death.

But the reference to a sword also introduces another aspect of his death. And that is that it was to be a judicial death. The sword spoke of a judicial execution.

So, the death is to be violent, but it is also to be in the context of some judicial pronouncement. Jesus will be judicially executed.

Now again, we know in the light of what subsequently happened that this was all fulfilled in the death of Jesus. But the prophet Zechariah, or rather the prophecy found in Zechariah, also reveals a further truth concerning Jesus' death.

That as we mentioned at the beginning in criticism, we are trying to stress that Jesus is certain about. And that is the identity of his executioner.

[11 : 05] Who is the one who wakes the sword from its slumber? Awake, O sword, against my shepherd. Who is the one who awakens the sword?

Who is the one who directs the sword to strike the shepherd? Well, in the prophecy it is very clear. It is the Lord Almighty who awaits the sword from its slumber.

Who directs the sword to strike the shepherd. This is the most chilling aspect of Jesus' certainty concerning his own death.

His own father is identified by Jesus himself as his executioner. Now this is the same truth that we find prophesied by the prophet Isaiah.

In Isaiah chapter 53 verse 10, where we read, Yet it was the Lord's will to crush him and cause him to suffer.

[12 : 09] How can this be? How can this be? How can this be? How can it be? Not only that Jesus is certain concerning what is going to happen, but that his certainty should extend to knowing who it is who will strike him.

And the one who will strike him is his own heavenly father. How can this be? The only possible explanation is that Jesus dies in the place of others.

The shepherd offers his life in the place of the sheep. The just penalty for sin is borne by the sinless one to satisfy the justice of God.

The righteous wrath of God does not fall upon the unrighteous, but upon the altogether righteous one who dies in their place.

To use the language of the prophecy, we are the ones, we here this morning, we are the ones who deserve to be struck down.

[13 : 16] The mortal blow from heaven itself falls rather upon Jesus. God delivers the blow, and God in the person of his Son, in the person of the man who is close to him, receives the blow.

Both the one who delivers and the one who receives. And so pays the price for the sin of the world. For my sin and for your sin.

The only way of understanding prophecy, in the manner in which Jesus applies it to his own head, in what we have here described, is to use more theological terminology, substitutionary atonement.

That is what is going on. Jesus died in the place of sinners. That is what we are, sinners. The price for sin being paid by the sinless one, that we might be delivered from having to pay that price.

So Jesus is certain concerning his death. Why is he certain? Well, he is certain because the Lord God Almighty had, in eternity, determined, so determined that he would die.

[14 : 40] And he is certain because he himself is the man who is close to the Lord God Almighty. And so participated in the very design of the divine decree.

Certain then that he would die. But we also suggested that in the words that Jesus addresses to the disciples, he reveals a certainty that the disciples would be scattered.

Certain that the disciples would be scattered. If we picture the scene as it is presented to us here in this chapter. Jesus and his disciples have shared a Passover meal.

They have sung together the psalms of the Psalms that are referred to there in verse 30 as of him. The Psalms that it was customary to say on this occasion were the Psalms that we find from Psalm 113 through to Psalm 118.

Whether they sung them all or parts of them, we don't know. But they have sung together these Psalms. And in that context, Jesus declares with calm, but I think we could call it painful certainty, You will all fall away on account of me.

[16 : 01] There we have it in verse 31. You will all fall away on account of me. There is no maybe, no perhaps, no speculating on a comical turn of events.

No, the language is the language of certainty. You will all fall away. You will let me down. You will abandon me at my hour of greatest need.

You will deny me. Yes, even that you ever ennuie me. Jesus is certain that his disciples will be scattered.

That they will fall away. To what can we attribute the certainty of Jesus concerning the falling away and scattering of his disciples?

I think there are different strands that would explain why it is that Jesus was so certain. We could argue that any one of these would be sufficient to provide him with this certainty.

[17 : 04] But we can identify the different strands. One strand very clearly is the prophetic, it is written. This is precisely what Jesus is doing. He said, I know this will be so because it is written.

It is written. I will strike the shepherd and the sheep of the flock will be scattered. How does he know, how is he certain that the disciples will fall away? Because it is written. The prophetic it is written would be foundation enough for his certainty.

But there is of course also something that we maybe just touched on in the passing of what we have already said. As the one described by the Lord God Almighty as the man who is close to me.

As the one who has been eternally close to the Father. There is of course in Jesus his own divine knowledge of the events to come.

That would be a second strand as the Lord would explain his certainty. I think there is another element that is worth noting and highlighting. Why is Jesus so certain concerning what the disciples will do?

- [18 : 13] Well I think his certainty is also grounded in the knowledge that he has of his own disciples. Jesus knew them. He knew them to the very core of their being.
- He knew them so much better than they knew themselves. And he knew that they would fall away. He knew that when these things happened. That he knew they were going to happen.
- When he was arrested and when danger was so before them all. They would fall away. And as he knew his disciples then.
- As they made their way to Gethsemane. So he knows his disciples today. He knows you. He knows your weakness. He knows not only the manner in which you have failed him in the year that has passed.
- He knows that. But he also knows the manner in which you will fail him in the year that has begun. And you will. And Jesus knows.
- [19 : 16] And you will. And Jesus knows. Jesus is certain not only concerning his death, the time of it, the manner of it, the one who will execute it.
- But he is certain also concerning the scattering of his disciples. But there is a third certainty that we find here in Jesus' words.
- That is that he is certain that he will rise again. Notice what he says then in verse 32. But after I have risen, I will go ahead of you into Galilee. Jesus declares this certainty concerning his resurrection in a very matter of fact way.
- Notice the manner in which he addresses this. But after I have risen, it is so matter of fact that it being so matter of fact actually adds an intensity to the certainty of it.
- This is so clear to Jesus that this is going to happen. He doesn't need to make a great song and dance about it. He knows for sure that I am going to rise again. After I have risen again, this is what is going to happen.
- [20 : 29] He is certain that this is the error of him. He is certain that yes, though he will die, he will rise again. In fact, he is so matter of fact that it would seem that the disciples don't pick up on this aspect of what he says at all.
- So focused on this reference to death and to them letting him down that they seem to miss the point altogether that he will rise again. Something that he is so certain of.
- But the particular truth that I want to stress in regard to Jesus' certainty concerning his resurrection is another one.
- Not only the fact of his resurrection, but I want you to notice and to identify with me who is the principal actor in his resurrection.
- Now that isn't altogether clear in the verse that we read or the verse that we haven't translated here in the Bible.
- [21 : 37] There we read in verse 32, but after I have risen. But what Jesus literally says when he spoke these words on this occasion, what he literally says is, But after I have been raised.
- Now that puts these things in a slightly different light. It begs the question, well who is it that will be responsible for raising Jesus from the dead?
- And Jesus says, after I have been raised, this is what I am going to do. Well, who is it? Who is it that will raise Jesus from the dead? Well the wonderful truth is that it is the very one who struck him down.
- The very one who struck him down is the one who will raise him up again. It is the Lord God Almighty who speaks through the prophet Zechariah.
- God the Father in the light of further revelation. He is the one who strikes the shepherd. He is the one who strikes his son. And he is the one who raises him back to life in vindicating power.

[22 : 50] And as we consider this glorious truth, and as we consider it and recognize it as we do, we enter on holy ground and must tread carefully.

I do wonder, I do wonder, that France can do more or no more than wonder. I do wonder with what unimaginable and indescribable pain he struck his son.

And yet with what inexpressible joy he raised him to life once again. Jesus is certain that he will rise again.

Why is he certain that he will rise again? Well, as we already mentioned, he is certain because he participated in the design of God's saving mission.

Certain also because the demands of justice allowed for no other outcome than that he would rise again. But certain also because of his unshakable trust in his Father to do the right thing.

[23 : 58] Jesus then is certain that he will rise again. There is a final certainty that I want to mention. And with this we close. Jesus is certain that his disciples will be restored.

Then in verse 32, Well, after I have risen, I will go ahead of you into a Galilee. This certainty that his disciples will be restored might appear to be the one that was least uncertain.

That they would be scattered was habitably not, I suppose. But that they would be restored might be considered more of an unknown, given their weak and fickle and nature.

But the truth is, and hence the certainty, that it is the Lord himself who restores them. They don't restore themselves to fellowship with their Lord.

The Lord restores them to fellowship with himself. You see, he is the good shepherd. The good shepherd that is struck down and put his sheep. He is the good shepherd. And it is his shepherd's heart and his shepherd's skill that guarantees their certain restoration.

[25 : 14] As we are told in another part of the scriptures, not one of them will be lost. Jesus, on being risen again, saw the disciples out.

He restored them to fellowship with himself. And he went on ahead of them into Galilee. And as we go on, I want us to notice briefly this reference of going on ahead into Galilee.

What do we make of that very particular geographic reference of Jesus there in verse 32? We know that the majority of the resurrection appearances of Jesus were in Jerusalem.

So what is the significance of Galilee that Jesus mentions here? Well, the best thing we can do is briefly follow the references in this same gospel to Jesus in Galilee following his resurrection.

Here in verse 32 we have the first reference. But if we just turn a couple of pages to chapter 28. And this is now related following the resurrection.

[26 : 27] And what we did in verse 7. Jesus speaking to the angel speaking to the woman. We read then, go quickly and tell his disciples.

He is risen from the dead. And he is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him. It is interesting that the specific reference is to Galilee.

Even though it is the case that the disciples actually saw Jesus in Jerusalem before Galilee. Otherwise, Galilee is specifically referred to. Then Jesus himself in verse 10 of this same chapter.

Jesus said to them, do not be afraid. Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee. There they will see me. And then of course, in this same chapter, in verse 16.

We have finally a reference to Galilee. And the light is turned on as it were as it were. As it were the significance of Galilee. Because then in verse 16 we read then the eleven disciples went to Galilee.

[27 : 28] To the mountain for Jesus and told them to go. When they saw him they worshipped him. And they said, all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations.

Baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. And teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I have moved you all to the very end of the age.

What the reference to Galilee points us to. Is that there is much more than simply mere restoration. If we could use that phrase.

Those restored are the very ones who are sent into all the nations. To declare a message concerning this as Saviour.

Those restored are to make disciples of all nations. And of this too Jesus was certain. As he made his lonely way to Gethsemane on the night of his death.

[28 : 32] A certain Saviour. In an uncertain world. Certain of his death. Certain of his resurrection. Certain that his disciples would fall away and be scattered.

But certain also that they would be restored. For you and for me. The future is less certain.

But I do want to close by reminding you. By solemnly reminding you. Of those things that you can also be absolutely certain of.

You can be certain of your own mortality. You will die. You don't know the time. You don't know the manner.

But you can be certain that you will die. Of that you can be certain. You can be certain also of impending judgment. The day of judgment. The day of judgment of being set.

[29 : 30] The day of judgment of being set. That is absolutely certain. We don't know when. But there is no uncertainty as to the reality that that day will come. And on that day you will face your making. Of that you can be certain. But you can be certain also. Today and this morning. Of another certainty.

That this Jesus of whom we have spoken. Has his arms wide open. Offering you forgiveness and new life. That you might face that certain death with confidence. That you might face that day of judgment.

Trusting in and resting in what he has done for you. This is also certain. Jesus is ready, willing and able. To forgive you.

To give you new life. To grant you and hope for your forgiveness. If you are a part of your life. In the last few years. But you have a part of your life. If you are a part of your life.

If you are a part of your life. If you are a part of your life. And to grant you hope and confidence. In the face of these other solemn certainties.

[30 : 28] That we all must recognize. God grant that we would know what to do. With such a savior. Who offers himself in such a way.

Let us pray.