

Why Bother?

A sermon based on Matthew 26:36-46.

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

He may very well be one of the cutest and most cuddly and famous bears out there. Of course, I'm talking about Winnie the Pooh. And, if you know Winnie the Pooh, you know he can be a bit aloof at times, seems to find himself in a bind fairly often. And when that happens, Pooh is known for saying his catchphrase, which is...? "Oh, bother!"

Now I'll admit, it's been quite some time since I last watched Winnie the Pooh, so I was having some difficulty remember who exactly said that phrase. For a while this past week, I thought it was Eeyore (and I actually saw a debate about this online as well, so I'm not alone). Do you know why? It's because I had the phrase wrong. I wasn't thinking "Oh, bother!" I was remembering it as "Why bother?"

Wouldn't that phrase fit for Eeyore? Now, it's hard not to like Eeyore, he always seems so helpless and vulnerable, you just want to give him a hug and cheer him up. But, if you really think about it (and this might be more *Disney* for adults), he's got a pretty bad attitude, doesn't he...always so gloomy and pessimistic, a constant Debbie-Downer. Or another word for that...he's apathetic. "Why bother?" could very well have been his catchphrase.

...just like it could have been the catchphrase for the disciples in our verses for today, as they couldn't bring themselves to keep watch with Jesus, even though he showed them his vulnerability and asked them to support him in a dark time.

...just like it could be our catchphrase as well, for the times we wound our Savior with our apathy, ignoring what he says in his Word and asks us to do. Why bother?

Friends, thank God that Jesus did bother...that he endured those wounds of apathy to pay for our sins of apathy, so we won't go down to the depths but will be lifted up to the skies by his grace. And thank God that his wounds move us to bother, care about and do what he asks.

Now, apathy is defined as a "lack of feeling or emotion," or a "lack of interest or concern." And that's exactly what Jesus' disciples showed him on Maundy Thursday. Though Jesus was distraught, "**sorrowful and troubled**" at the thought of what was about to happen to him, his disciples didn't seem to care. Though Jesus told them, "**My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death,**" they showed little concern for him. Though Jesus asked them to, "**Stay here and keep watch with me,**" so he could focus on his prayers without having to look over his shoulder for the soldiers who would arrest and abuse him, his disciples showed little interest. They were too tired.

Having just enjoyed the Passover dinner and a few cups of wine, their bellies were full and they grew drowsy. And while Jesus wrestled with his fears and his prayers, they were sound asleep. The same three who were excited to see Jesus in his glory on the Mount of Transfiguration, were now apathetic...they couldn't be bothered to see Jesus in his suffering in the Garden of Gethsemane.

How does that feel—to be the object of apathy among those you love? Has it happened to you? You're eager to share some exciting news with a friend or a parent or a spouse. You rush through the door and

blurt out the news that brings you such joy—the promotion, the aced exam, the good news you just heard from the doctor—and the other person doesn't even look up from the paper or magazine or TV or their phone. The one who you care about and want to share in your excitement just says in a monotone voice that makes it clear he or she could care less, "Uh-huh. Cool. That's nice."

How does it feel when you're desperate for help and come to someone you care about seeking their assistance and they say, "I don't really care. That's not my problem. That's yours."? It hurts, doesn't it? It hurts because they aren't just saying they don't care about your news or your problem. They're saying they don't care about you. You don't mean that much, or really, that little to them.

Jesus was hurt by this apathy his disciples—his three closest friends!—displayed in the garden that night. Can't you hear that hurt in his voice? ***"Could you men not keep watch with me for one hour?" "Are you still sleeping and resting? Look, the hour is near, and the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise, let us go! Here comes my betrayer!"***

And Jesus is hurt by the apathy we show him. And you can't argue that we don't. We show apathy toward his Word when we don't read it and study it and learn it. We show apathy toward his church when we don't come to worship or come to serve. We show apathy toward his people when we show little concern or interest in a brother or sister in the faith who's been absent from worship, who's hurting or suffering, who's lonely and longing for a visit or a call.

Why bother? Why do we show apathy? Pick your reason. We're lazy...picking up the phone to call someone you haven't seen in church for a while or someone who's going through a rough patch...or picking up your head off the pillow early on a Sunday morning to get to Bible class or church or picking your behind off the couch on a Saturday to help out at church...picking up your Bible before the remote at night to spend even five minutes giving your faith the chance to grow by being in God's Word...it shouldn't be difficult. It should be a joy. But how often do we treat any of that like hard work?

We're selfish. What's in this for me? What am I going to have to give up? What do I gain out of coming to church on a Wednesday evening, after a long day of work, when I've heard basically the same thing on Sunday? What do I get out of spending my money to donate some goods to our outreach events or spending an extra night or two (and tiring myself out) at church with a project or a ministry team here, especially when I see others aren't doing anything or as much as me?

We flat out don't care. That person not coming to church and growing in their faith, that's their deal. I'm doing what I need to do. Reaching out to others who don't know Jesus, someone else will do that. I have better things to do.

Friends, those are a few examples. Why bother? Why do we show apathy? Finally, it's because we're weak. That's what our flesh is. Weak, and so we wound our Lord with our apathy. Right, because what we're saying to Jesus by such apathies is, "Jesus, I don't really care about you. You don't mean that much to me."

So, then, when we need him, when we cry to him for help, "Jesus, I can never save myself! Without you, I am surely bound for hell forever!" we ought to hear Jesus reply with apathy to our plight, "That's nice. I don't really care. Why should I bother? That's *your* problem." We deserve to hear him say to us on Judgment Day, ***"I tell you the truth, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not***

do for me." (Matthew 25:45) And we deserve to go away to eternal punishment for the apathy we so often show to Jesus.

That's what we deserve. But that's not what we get because Jesus was anything but apathetic toward us. He showed the greatest feeling and emotion, interest and concern for you and me. And we see that clearly in the garden that night as he was about to go off to the cross alone, while others were apathetic to his fate.

As Jesus was in the garden all alone, abandoned by his friends in their apathetic slumber, he knew things were about to get waaaay worse. He would soon be abandoned by God the Father on the cross—the very next day. And he prayed to the Father in earnest.

"My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me..." "Abba, please! I don't want to do this! You can do anything! Please, take this cup away! Hell is in that cup! Death and damnation are in that cup! My Father, it will tear me away from you if I drink that cup! I don't want to do this! Sin is in that cup! And if I drink it you won't look at me. You will loathe me. I will hate myself. I don't want to drink it. Abba, Abba, please... take the cup away!"

And yet, the Father wouldn't take it away and Jesus would drink it, because so great is their love, their emotions, their feelings, their interest, their concern... for you, for me, who are so often apathetic toward them.

Why did Jesus bother? **"For God so loved the world."** **"How great is the love the Father has lavished on us."** **"God is love."** Jesus bothered because he cares about you. Jesus bothered because he loves you and me, unloving and seeming unlovable creatures.

And in love, Jesus prayed, **"Yet not as I will, but as you will.... My Father, if it is not possible for this cup to be taken away unless I drink it, may your will be done."** And then he went **"into the hands of sinners,"** to be abused by them, to be mocked and beaten by them, to be scourged and bled by them, to be tortured and crucified by them. He went to drink the cup and to be abandoned by the Father who seemed so apathetic to the Son's cries of agony on the cross, to endure the hell of separation from his love, to rescue you and me from our sins of apathy and from every sin! Yes, he was anything but apathetic to our plight. Yes, Jesus bothered to live, die, and rise for us.

And we can no longer be apathetic toward him who loved us so much! No, we won't! Now, **"We love because he first loved us."** (1 John 4:19) We love him with an undying love. We love his Word—his love letter to us! We love his church where we hear his Word and especially that Word of his forgiving love! We love his church where we receive the tangible expression of his love as he give his very body and his blood. We love his people because we love him. And we long to bother...to show our love, as we put it into action, as we serve Jesus and serve others. Why do we bother? We care and love because he loved and cared about us and bothered to save us.

So, don't be apathetic to God's great love for you...not anymore. But stay awake! Keep watch! **"Watch and pray so that you will not fall into... [apathy.]"** You know what Jesus has done for you. And I know you do care. So, let's bother. Let's continue to learn more about our Savior and his great love for us as we daily dig into his Word! Let's continue to care about what he did for us and love him for it and show our unending thanks in all that we say and do...in the name of Jesus, who drank that cup for us. Amen.