

Rev. Dr. Marcus D. Cosby (10/18/20)
Sermon Title: “The Sifting of the Saints”
Biblical Passage: Luke 22:31-32 NIV
Passage Background and Summary

“³¹ “Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift all of you as wheat. ³² But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers.””

~ **Luke 22 31-32 NIV**

The passage takes place after the Last Supper and prior to the arrest in the garden. In the passage, we see that Peter will be tested, but Jesus is not willing to give Peter completely over, so he prays for him. Jesus’s prayers for Peter will sustain him, and he will be able to pass on that strength to others.

Sermon Points

The majority of us who call ourselves Christians have to admit that at some level each of us wants to be used by God. Similarly, Peter was seeking to be used by God and understood that to be used by God will require some significant costs. It will cost us something weightier than what we anticipated when we signed up for it. According to Luke 22, all of us who seek to serve the present age will have to deal with what Jesus calls some sifting. Jesus uses this agrarian metaphor to help those with him understand there will be some separating so that which is good in us can be separated and used for the purposes of God. Jesus had placed a divine assignment on Peter, and as a result, he was tested in a difficult season.

Every one of us will have to go through a sifting season despite our placement in the congregation. Jesus doesn’t simply make this statement to the disciple Peter but to “all of you,” according to the original Greek. Satan desires to take them all out and separate all of them from God’s plan and purpose for their lives. It doesn’t matter who you are. All of us will have to deal with tough times in our life and circumstances beyond our control. Yet, we serve a God who knows we’ll have to go through circumstances and is mighty to deliver us through them all. He said don’t worry because I’ve prayed for you.

We’re sifted despite our penchant towards supplication. We see Jesus at the Mount of Olives with his disciples and he asks them to pray with him. Jesus prays, ‘Father if it’s possible let this cup pass from me but nevertheless not my will but your will be done.’ Even Jesus has to go through a sifting season. Yet, the good news is God knows how to send messengers, angels, to strengthen you at your weakest point. Jesus could keep on keeping on because God sent angels to help him. No matter what you may be going through, God is sending one to strengthen you. Jesus is sifted even in his prayer meeting. Jesus is sifted by foes and friends. He’s sifted even more by his friends on Calvary. None except John would gather around in the last hours of his life. Even at the most intense point, his friends flee. We can’t be codependent on others; we

must depend on the God who strengthens us in the midst of trouble. Jesus is even sifted by the Father. The weight is so heavy that Jesus says, “my God, my God why has thou forsaken me?” Some of us understand that. We say how did you let this injustice persist? When are you going to turn this situation around? Why have you forsaken me?

Thus, Satan desires to sift you as wheat. That sounds terrible, but the next phrase says I prayed for you that your faith may not fail. We will need faith for times like these. That no matter what the sifting season brings, God is still in control. God is still at work. Then he says ‘when you go back, strengthen your brothers.’

Every sifting season has a point of termination. Trouble don’t last always. We go through this so we can look back and encourage others as well that if God brought me through it, he can bring you through it also. God will take care of you.

Reflection Questions

1. Have you ever been sifted? If so, happened?
2. Share a time someone’s prayers sustained you.
3. When did your prayers ever sustain someone else?
4. Have you ever felt like God was sifting you or God had abandoned you? What did that feel like at that time?
5. What can you do to strengthen those you’re in community with?