

Kirkwall Presbyterian Church
'Jesus loves...How much?'
Matthew 26:47-54, 55-68, 27:27-31, 45-50
October 25, 2026
By Keith Marcy

Last week we celebrated The Lord's Supper. Today, we pick up the account when Jesus and His disciples left the Upper Room and walked out of Jerusalem, crossed through the Kidron Valley and ascended to the Mount of Olives, also known as the Garden of Gethsemane. Judas Iscariot was not with them. He was on a mission of his own. Shortly, he arrived leading a mob – a mob armed with clubs and swords.

Matthew 26:47-54

⁴⁷ While he was still speaking, Judas, one of the Twelve, arrived. With him was a large crowd armed with swords and clubs, sent from the chief priests and the elders of the people. ⁴⁸ Now the betrayer had arranged a signal with them: "The one I kiss is the man; arrest him." ⁴⁹ Going at once to Jesus, Judas said, "Greetings, Rabbi!" and kissed him.

⁵⁰ Jesus replied, "Do what you came for, friend."

Then the men stepped forward, seized Jesus and arrested him. ⁵¹ With that, one of Jesus' companions reached for his sword, drew it out and struck the servant of the high priest, cutting off his ear.

⁵² "Put your sword back in its place," Jesus said to him, "for all who draw the sword will die by the sword. ⁵³ Do you think I cannot call on my Father, and he will at once put at my disposal more than twelve legions of angels? ⁵⁴ But how then would the Scriptures be fulfilled that say it must happen in this way?"

Ray Overholt heard verse 53, "*Do you think I cannot call on my Father and He will at once put at my disposal more than 6 legions of angels?*" and he put it into poetic form. It would become the chorus of a powerful hymn – '*He could have called ten thousand angels.*'

Ray Overholt was born to farming parents, near Gaines, Michigan. His mother, Clara, was a pianist and singer. She encouraged Ray's musical gift. His father bought him a guitar for \$3.00 when he was 11. Ray, with some help from his mother, learned to play. He also taught himself to play the keyboard and harmonica. He had a flare for writing poetry. By the age of 10 he had written, '*The Lonesome Cowboy.*' Gene Autry, a popular writer and singer of cowboy songs on the radio inspired this young lad, as did Hank Williams and Stewart Hamblen, who wrote '*It is no secret.*'

Ray began his career by singing cowboy songs in town halls and local gatherings. As his fame grew, he formed a group called, '*The Grand River Boys.*' They played regularly on WFUR radio station in Grand Rapids. The first hint that Ray was not satisfied with himself came with his song, '*Will the Lord look down on me and frown.*' However, he pressed on to

host a TV program, 'Ray's Round Up.' He left to enter the nightclub circuit. His morality declined; he became a heavy drinker, and a profane talker.

In 1958, while playing at a dance hall and tavern in Battle Creek, his life was about to change. Inspired by the few verses of Scripture that I read, Ray wrote the chorus for a song that would become known as 'Ten Thousand Angels.' To write the verses to match the chorus, he opened a Bible and researched this man called 'Jesus.' While putting the facts into poetic verse, Ray became a believer – converted by his own song! Ray's wife, Millie, became a believer shortly after. The couple began travelling as Gospel singers and evangelists. For 48 years they continued with this ministry with their only son, Ron, making the third person in the trio.

The organ will play the first verse and the chorus of the hymn. You may sing softly, or hum or sit quietly, as you follow the words.

Verse 1. *They bound the hands of Jesus in the garden where He prayed;*

They led Him thro' the streets in shame.

They spat upon the Savior so pure and free from sin;

They said, "Crucify Him; He's to blame."

He could have called ten thousand angels

To destroy the world and set Him free.

He could have called ten thousand angels,

But He died alone, for you and me.

Matthew 26:55-68

⁵⁵ *In that hour Jesus said to the crowd, "Am I leading a rebellion, that you have come out with swords and clubs to capture me? Every day I sat in the temple courts teaching, and you did not arrest me. ⁵⁶ But this has all taken place that the writings of the prophets might be fulfilled."* Then all the disciples deserted him and fled.

⁵⁷ *Those who had arrested Jesus took him to Caiaphas the high priest, where the teachers of the law and the elders had assembled. ⁵⁸ But Peter followed him at a distance, right up to the courtyard of the high priest. He entered and sat down with the guards to see the outcome.*

⁵⁹ *The chief priests and the whole Sanhedrin were looking for false evidence against Jesus so that they could put him to death. ⁶⁰ But they did not find any, though many false witnesses came forward.*

Finally, two came forward ⁶¹ and declared, "This fellow said, 'I am able to destroy the temple of God and rebuild it in three days.'"

⁶² Then the high priest stood up and said to Jesus, "Are you not going to answer? What is this testimony that these men are bringing against you?" ⁶³ But Jesus remained silent.

The high priest said to him, "I charge you under oath by the living God: Tell us if you are the Messiah, the Son of God."

⁶⁴ "You have said so," Jesus replied. "But I say to all of you: From now on you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven."

⁶⁵ Then the high priest tore his clothes and said, "He has spoken blasphemy! Why do we need any more witnesses? Look, now you have heard the blasphemy. ⁶⁶ What do you think?"

"He is worthy of death," they answered.

⁶⁷ Then they spit in his face and struck him with their fists. Others slapped him ⁶⁸ and said, "Prophecy to us, Messiah. Who hit you?"

Verse 2. Upon His precious head they placed a crown of thorns;
They laughed and said, "Behold the King!"
They struck Him and they cursed Him and mocked His holy name
All alone He suffered everything.

He could have called ten thousand angels
To destroy the world and set Him free.
He could have called ten thousand angels,
But He died alone, for you and me.

Matthew 27:27-31

²⁷ Then the governor's soldiers took Jesus into the Praetorium and gathered the whole company of soldiers around him. ²⁸ They stripped him and put a scarlet robe on him, ²⁹ and then twisted together a crown of thorns and set it on his head. They put a staff in his right hand. Then they knelt in front of him and mocked him. "Hail, king of the Jews!" they said. ³⁰ They spit on him, and took the staff and struck him on the head again and again. ³¹ After they had mocked him, they took off the robe and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him away to crucify him.

Verse 3. When they nailed Him to the cross, His mother stood nearby,
He said, "Woman, behold thy son!"
He cried, "I thirst for water;" but they gave Him none to drink.
Then the sinful work of man was done.

*He could have called ten thousand angels
To destroy the world and set Him free.
He could have called ten thousand angels,
But He died alone, for you and me.*

Matthew 27:45-50

45 From noon until three in the afternoon darkness came over all the land. 46 About three in the afternoon Jesus cried out in a loud voice, “Eli, Eli,[a] lema sabachthani?” (which means “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”).[b]

47 When some of those standing there heard this, they said, “He’s calling Elijah.”

48 Immediately one of them ran and got a sponge. He filled it with wine vinegar, put it on a staff, and offered it to Jesus to drink. 49 The rest said, “Now leave him alone. Let’s see if Elijah comes to save him.”

50 And when Jesus had cried out again in a loud voice, he gave up his spirit.

Verse 4. *To the howling mob He yielded; He did not for mercy cry.*

The cross of shame He took alone.

And when He cried, "It's finished," He gave Himself to die;

Salvation's wondrous plan was done.

He could have called ten thousand angels

To destroy the world and set Him free.

He could have called ten thousand angels,

But He died alone, for you and me.

How much did Jesus love you?

Enough to fulfill the mandate of His earthy mission – to allow men to subject Him to inhumane treatment – and then to die for the sins of humanity when He could have called 6 legions of angels to destroy us.

That, my friends, is the love of God!