

Willing
May 2, 2021
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Welcome to May and to our first Sunday back in person in thirteen months!

Luke 22:39-46

Ponder these questions silently in your own mind:

- What's the most difficult thing you've ever willingly chosen to do in your life? Maybe it was thrust upon you by accident or illness or maybe you chose to go through it for good reasons or for others. Got it in your mind?
- What motivated you to stick it out? (Any words come to mind?)
- How did you get through the pain or fear?

Now, think about someone who went through difficulty or sacrifice for YOUR GOOD. It could be a parent, a spouse, a friend or family member. Get that person in your mind. Now, ask yourself these questions:

- Why would they choose to sacrifice for you so unselfishly?
- Have you thanked them personally? We're you able to reciprocate in some way or pay it forward by sacrificing for someone else?
- If they are no longer alive in this world, do you sometimes pause to thank God for them and what they did for you, since what they did really came from His hand to you through them?
- No matter how wonderful that person is to you, and how meaningful his or her sacrifice was for you, no one ever cared for you (and me) like Jesus.
- The Apostle Paul wrote in **Romans 5:6–8 (ESV)** — **6** *For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. 7 For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die— 8 but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*

- When you hear the name: Gethsemane what words come to mind?
- The word means “olive press.” It is an appropriate name for a garden in an olive grove at the foot of the Mount of Olives.
- Valuable, nourishing, healing olive oil only comes by crushing the olive. The name is ironically appropriate considering the “crushing” agony Jesus experienced there.

Truth that Should Change Us: In great anguish Jesus submitted to God’s plan for our redemption. He bought us and He taught us. On the cross He bought our salvation; in the garden He taught us how to submit to God’s will even if it means enduring suffering.

- Let’s go verse by verse in our text. We begin by looking at what we can learn from the praying, suffering Savior.

Luke 22:39–46 (ESV) — 39 And he came out and went, as was his custom, to the Mount of Olives, and the disciples followed him.

- The key words: “as was his custom” teach us that what is about to take place wasn’t an “emergency measure” in a crisis but a regular practice.
- The presence of the disciples was normal but it was especially significant this time. They also needed strength for what was to come and they needed training in submission in suffering when obeying God’s will.

40 And when he came to the place, he said to them, “Pray that you may not enter into temptation.” **41** And he withdrew from them about a stone’s throw, and knelt down and prayed,

- Far enough for privacy, but still within view and earshot for their sake.
- Our lesson writer summarizes the scene: *“When Jesus faces His greatest challenge, He chose prayer as His number one priority.”*⁴
- The typical Jewish prayer position was standing. Kneeling and later falling on His face shows the intensity and fervency of His plea to the Father.

42 [Jesus prayed] saying, “Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but yours, be done.”

- The “cup” represents the wrath of God Jesus would “drink” to pay for the sins of mankind. (Jer.25:15)

- This prayer is so personal! Jewish prayers didn't address God as Father much less "Abba" (Mark 14:36.) We have intimate access to the Father.
- Here we clearly see Jesus' as both God and man. Godly, sinless commitment to God's perfect plan and real, human fear and dread.
- "...[I]f you are willing" acknowledged the Father's sovereignty and yet models our invitation to implore God for relief when we are crushed.
- Is there any point in praying if God has already decided His plan?
- Jesus taught us in **Luke 11:9 (ESV) — 9** And I tell you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you.
- Jesus also taught us the key to asking, seeking, and knocking in verse 42 of today's passage: "not my will, but yours, be done."
- Here's a great quote from Paul Rezkalla: *"If your understanding of God's providence leads you to pray less, then you need to rethink your understanding of God's providence. There are events that will not happen, souls that will not be saved, and relationships that will not be restored unless we pray for them. Our prayers make things happen."*ⁱⁱ

43 And there appeared to him an angel from heaven, strengthening him. **44** And being in agony he prayed more earnestly; and his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground.

- The angel could not remove the suffering; only give Jesus strength.
- This is an encouragement for us when we experience a trial. God may not choose to remove the trial but He will send Heavenly strength to bear it.
- Were the sweat drops "like blood" or actual blood? It's debated.
- Wiersbe: *"[T]here is a rare physical phenomenon known as hematidrosis, in which, under great emotional stress, the tiny blood vessels rupture in the sweat glands and produce a mixture of blood and sweat."*ⁱⁱⁱ
- Either way, the point is the same: There are no words to convey what Jesus felt in that garden.

- This wasn't just about the horrible physical suffering He knew was coming. Jesus' worst suffering would come from two unthinkable burdens:
 - He would bear all the wrath of God that rightfully belonged to every sinful person past, present, and future.
 - On the cross He would experience separation from God the Father as the Father literally turned His back on Jesus.
- When we read the accounts of Jesus suffering and crucifixion we might struggle with where we should "put this" in our minds and how to respond.
- Our first response should be to trust Him as Savior and Lord. Our daily response after that should be praise and thanksgiving for His sacrifice.
- I think of the lyrics of an old song:

*"No one ever cared for me like Jesus;
There's no other friend so kind as He.
No one else could take the sin and darkness from me;
O how much He cared for me."*^{iv}
- As Paul said, *"When we were utterly helpless, Christ came at just the right time and died for us sinners."*^v Paul also said, *"You are not your own, ²⁰ for you were bought with a price."*^{vi}
- Jesus bought us and He taught us. We've learned from the praying, suffering Savior. Now we turn to the sleeping sheep – the disciples.

45 And when he rose from prayer, he came to the disciples and found them sleeping for sorrow, **46** and he said to them, "Why are you sleeping? Rise and pray that you may not enter into temptation."

- Jesus urged His disciples to watch and pray but they couldn't stay awake.
- Ever been there? We all have.
- *"The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."* (Mt. 26:41)
- Staying focused in prayer can be a challenge because Satan's minions are doing a dance of distraction around every follower of Christ who kneels before the Father.
- In fairness to the disciples, imagine their stress and exhaustion!

- They didn't know everything they and Jesus were facing but they knew enough to be wiped out physically, mentally, and emotionally.
- Anyone who has experienced grief knows the toll it can take.
- Verse 45 says they were sleeping *"from sorrow."* Mark 14:40 says they were so weary *"they didn't know how to answer"* Jesus.
- Jesus warned: *"Pray so you won't fall into temptation."* What temptation?
- The Life Application Study Bible: *"Jesus also knew that they would need extra strength to face the temptations ahead—temptations to run away or to deny their relationship with him. They were about to see Jesus die. Would they still think he was the Messiah? The disciples' strongest temptation would undoubtedly be to think they had been deceived."^{vii}*
- Jesus' warning to them also applies to us today. The best way to avoid succumbing to any temptation and falling into sin is preventative prayer!
- Prayer is a privilege but it also takes effort. One of the best devotionals on battling in prayer comes from Oswald Chambers (here is the link: <https://utmost.org/the-key-of-the-greater-work/> .)
- He writes: *"Prayer does not equip us for greater works—prayer is the greater work...Prayer is the battle, and it makes no difference where you are. However God may engineer your circumstances, your duty is to pray...Wherever God has placed you and whatever your circumstances, you should pray, continually offering up prayers to Him. And He promises, "Whatever you ask in My name, that I will do..." (John 14:13)."*

So, What's The Takeaway?

- Darrel Bock summarizes what Jesus taught us in the garden: *"This text both reveals something about Jesus' character and provides an example for how we can face the great trials of life God sends our way. In these verses we see a man dependent on God and committed to doing his will. We see an individual who faces trial by turning to God. We see a person who reveals his intense emotions to God in prayer. In contrast, the disciples*

have only their exhaustion and emotional pain. Even as Jesus exhorts them to pray, all they can do is sleep. Everything about Jesus' approach models how one should face the tension of trial.^{viii}

- Reflecting on Jesus in the Garden, here is something I journaled:

The two times we most clearly see both Jesus humanity and His deity are at His birth and at the end of His earthly life. Both events reveal the union of and the contrast between His identity as Son of God and the Son of Man.

In the garden the physical meets the supernal [Heavenly.] In the garden we see the struggle between anguish and obedience, the battle between avoidance and submission. In the garden the agony of weak flesh meets the ecstasy of a willing spirit committed to fulfilling God's plan for atonement. The man wanted to run; the Son knew God's will must be done.

- In great anguish Jesus submitted to God's plan for our redemption.
- He bought us and He taught us.
- On the cross He bought our salvation; in the garden He taught us how to submit to God's will.
- The horrible price He paid on the cross should soften our hearts to humbly trust Him as Savior and Lord.
- His example of prayer should inspire us to strive to be more consistent and focused in bringing every praise and petition before our Abba Father.
- Jesus' example of "*not my will but yours*" should motivate us to submit to the Father's will even if it means enduring suffering for a time.
- In the garden, on the cross, and at the empty tomb we can clearly see that "*...No one ever cared for me and you like Jesus. There's no other friend as kind as He. No one else could take this sin and darkness from me. Oh, how much He cares for (you and) me.*"^{ix}

ⁱ Explore the Bible Commentary – Lifeway 2020

ⁱⁱ <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/why-pray-if-god-has-already-determined-everything/>

ⁱⁱⁱ Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). *The Bible exposition commentary* (Vol. 1, p. 269). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

^{iv} https://www.hymnlyrics.org/newlyrics_n/no_one_ever_cared_for_me_like_jesus.php

^v Tyndale House Publishers. (2015). *Holy Bible: New Living Translation* (Ro 5:6). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

^{vi} *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*. (2016). (1 Co 6:19–20). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

^{vii} Tyndale. Life Application Study Bible NKJV (LASB: Full Size) (Kindle Locations 165326-165328). Tyndale House Publishers. Kindle Edition.

^{viii} Bock, Darrell L.. Luke: The NIV Application Commentary from Biblical Text to Contemporary Life (p. 568). Zondervan. Kindle Edition.

^{ix} https://www.hymnlyrics.org/newlyrics_n/no_one_ever_cared_for_me_like_jesus.php