

JESUS PRAYED, “NOT MY WILL, BUT YOURS BE DONE”

Luke 22:39-65

Key Verse: 22:42

“Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done.”

We are now in the most holy and humbling Christian season of the year, the time leading up to our Lord Jesus’ suffering, death and resurrection. In today’s passage, Jesus prays on the Mount of Olives through the night. Then he is arrested. Peter follows at a distance but denies three times that he knows Jesus. No one helped Jesus. Even his top disciple disowned him. Jesus had the wisdom and power to save himself. Then why didn’t he? Because he was obedient to the Father’s will, which was to die on the cross. We stand in awe of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Savior of the world. May we learn of Jesus who said, “not my will, but yours be done.”

First, Jesus prayed to obey God’s will (39-46). Jesus had his last supper with his disciples. He took bread, broke it and gave it to them saying, **“This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me.”** After supper, Jesus took the cup, saying, **“This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you.”** At the supper he also foretold that one of the disciples would betray. Peter boasted, **“Lord, I am ready to go with you to prison and to death.”** Jesus answered, **“I tell you, Peter, before the rooster crows today, you will deny three times that you know me.”**

After this last supper, Jesus went out to the Mount of Olives, and his disciples followed him. This was Jesus’ usual place of prayer. Luke 21:37 says, **“Each day Jesus was teaching at the temple, and each evening he went out to spend the night on the hill called the Mount of Olives...”** Luke showed how Jesus’ life was a life of prayer.

Jesus worked hard day and night, preaching, healing the sick and teaching his disciples. We might think Jesus had no time to pray. But he prayed. Jesus could’ve done everything with his divine wisdom and power. But Jesus depended on his Father God in prayer. Jesus delighted in communicating with his Father God.

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From Jesus we learn not to do anything without prayer to God. Especially when we need to make an important decision, when we need strength and wisdom, when we need grace and mercy, we must come to God in prayer, humble and submissive prayer. But how often we depend on our own resources—our own knowledge, our own experience, our own bank account. It is our fallen nature that we depend on God only in desperate situations.

There are many stories of people who cried out to God in a life or death situation, “God, if you save me, if you get me out of this, I’ll serve you all my life.” Louis Zamperini, in the true story book and movie called “Unbroken” said a prayer like this when his war plane crashed in the ocean. He survived miraculously and then again as a prisoner of war. He suffered nightmares, restlessness and alcohol abuse after the war. But he surrendered his life and heart to Jesus Christ and was set free from his torment and given a new life.

Prayer is an expression of faith, depending on God, and loving God. Jesus had a habit of prayer. It was his lifestyle, his heartbeat, his joy. It is easy to form a habit of worrying or complaining or seeking entertainment. But it is not easy to form a habit of prayer, like Jesus. May God revive and deepen our prayer lives as we learn of Jesus.

When Jesus reached the Mount of Olives, he said to his disciples, **“Pray that you will not fall into temptation.”** Jesus teaches us that prayer to God is key to overcoming temptation. Jesus had taught his disciples to pray, “Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.” The disciples were human like us. They were committed to Jesus. But they were also prone to weakness to fall into temptation. So they had to pray. They could not overcome by their own strength or wisdom.

Then what was the temptation that the disciples could fall into? It was the temptation to fall away from their faith and abandon their trust in Jesus. In Luke 22:31-32 Jesus had said to Simon Peter, **“Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift all of you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers.”**

Prayer is the evidence that we are not depending on ourselves. We fall into temptation when we stop depending on God in prayer. 1 Corinthians 10:13 says,

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“No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it.”

Verse 41 describes Jesus’ posture and attitude: **“He withdrew about a stone’s throw beyond them, knelt down and prayed...”** Jesus prayed alone, close enough to be seen and perhaps even heard if he prayed loudly. We don’t know whether he prayed loudly or quietly at this time. What we do know is he prayed humbly on his knees. Hebrews 5:7 describes this attitude: **“During the days of Jesus’ life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with fervent cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission.”**

We usually think of prayer as asking God for something that we want. This is called supplication, which is also the same word for begging. What was Jesus’ request? Look at verse 42. **“Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done.”**

Jesus prayed **“not my will, but yours be done.”** It meant, “not what I want, but what you want.” This is probably the hardest prayer for anyone to pray and really mean it. But it is a prayer that God delights to hear and answer. In fact, Jesus taught his disciples to pray this prayer: **“Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.”**

Usually, prayers to God are prayers asking for something: a solution to our problem, a way out of our difficulty, a relief from suffering, hardship or loss. “God, would you do this for me?” Jacob said a vow and prayer like this, **“If God will be with me and will watch over me on this journey I am taking and will give me food to eat and clothes to wear so that I return safely to my father’s household, then the LORD will be my God and this stone that I have set up as a pillar will be God’s house, and of all that you give me I will give you a tenth.”** (Gen 28:20-22) It was a somewhat selfish, presumptuous and immature prayer, but it was sincere, and God accepted it and held Jacob to his vow.

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I once prayed in confusion and agony as a college freshman: “God, if you exist give me a sign. Just let me know the truth, and I’ll give my life to make it known.” The answer did not come immediately, but in the course of time, through Bible study and prayer. The word of God convinced me that Jesus is the Truth that I prayed to know and vowed to make known.

“Not my will, but yours be done.” This is a holy and high prayer. Yet it is the best, purest and most proper prayer to God who is sovereign over all. People may think, “If God just lets me know his will, I will do it.” Once the people of Israel asked the prophet Jeremiah, **“Tell us God’s will and we will follow it.”** He said, **“No you won’t.”** They said, **“Yes, we will.”** He said, **“Ok, surrender to Babylon. This is God’s will.”** They replied, **“You are lying. We will not do that.”** He said, **“I told you so, that you would not follow God’s will.”** We learn from this short story that we like to obey God’s will when it agrees with our idea and desire. But if it does not agree with our hopes and desires, we suddenly become theologians who have many complicated reasons not to follow what God wants.

To really obey God, one must completely love and trust God, that God knows best, that God’s will is best for us, as well as for all people. We learned from our 1 Thessalonians study that God’s will is for us to be sanctified and to give thanks in all circumstances. We can’t do this if we live to please ourselves or if we live by our feelings and situational condition. We can only do this by faith and trust in God.

For Jesus, God’s will was humanly impossible to obey, for it involved the suffering, shame and sin associated with crucifixion. No human being could take that pain, humiliation and curse allotted for Jesus to endure for our salvation. So we eternally praise Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior!

What happened when Jesus accepted the will of God above his own human will and desire? The Bible says, **“An angel from heaven appeared to him and strengthened him.”** Jesus received strength from above. Then Jesus prayed even more earnestly in anguish, and his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground. Jesus wrestled in prayer against his human desire to choose an easier way. It is human nature to seek an easier way all the time. This is why people so easily

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lie, cheat and steal. It is costly and difficult to do the right thing, that is, to follow the will of God. The road to destruction is broad, popular and easy. But the road to eternal life is small, narrow, difficult and unpopular.

Jesus rose from prayer and went back to the disciples. He found them asleep, exhausted from sorrow. **“Why are you sleeping?” he asked them. “Get up and pray so that you will not fall into temptation.”** It is easy to eat or sleep when we are stressed out. Some turn to drugs or alcohol or something fun or anything to get their mind off their burden. But Jesus prayed. And Jesus told his disciples to pray. If we are disciples of Jesus Christ, we must pray.

Second, Jesus was betrayed by Judas (47-53). While Jesus prayed and the disciples slept, Jesus’ disciple named Judas came up, leading a crowd. He approached Jesus to kiss him. But Jesus asked him, **“Judas, are you betraying the Son of Man with a kiss?”** Even then, Jesus did not mock Judas, but appealed to his conscience out of love. Jesus was gentle and lovable enough to be kissed by a traitor.

When Jesus’ disciples saw what was going to happen, they got an idea which came not from prayer but from human thinking: **“Lord, should we strike with our swords?”** And without waiting for Jesus’ reply one of them (actually it was Peter) struck the servant of the high priest, cutting off his right ear. We know from John 18:10 that the servant’s name was Malchus and the sword-wielding disciple was Peter. Peter did not fight with prayer or spiritual weapons. So he fought with a sword. But it was contrary to Jesus’ way and spirit. So Jesus answered, **“No more of this!”** And he touched the man’s ear and healed him. Even at this heated, critical moment, Jesus extended grace, mercy and healing to an enemy.

Then Jesus said to the chief priests, the officers of the temple guard, and the elders, who had come for him, **“Am I leading a rebellion, that you have come with swords and clubs? Every day I was with you in the temple courts, and you did not lay a hand on me. But this is your hour—when darkness reigns.”** Jesus was preaching and teaching in the temple courts day after day, openly in public. But they were arresting him in the dark. It was the hour when darkness

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reigned. Jesus let them arrest him. He let evil win temporarily, so he would win the final, eternal victory through his death and resurrection, just as he said.

Third, Jesus was disowned by Peter (54-65). Jesus was arrested and his disciples fled. Seizing Jesus, they led him away to the house of the high priest. Peter, however, followed at a distance. Peter didn't run and hide like the others. He wanted to show that he could follow Jesus even when others gave up. Peter did not know his own weakness, and he didn't listen to Jesus. A fire was kindled in the courtyard and Peter secretly sat down with them, hoping not to be noticed. A servant girl saw him seated there in the firelight, looked closely at him and said, **“This man was with him,”** that is, with Jesus.

Now was Peter's chance to speak up for Jesus. But he denied it. **“Woman, I don't know him,”** he said. What a surprise! Peter had said he was ready to go with Jesus to prison and to death. A little later he had a second chance to stand up for Jesus. Someone else saw him and said, **“You also are one of them.”** **“Man, I am not!” Peter replied.** About an hour later, maybe just when he thought he had escaped their notice, another asserted, **“Certainly this fellow was with him, for he is a Galilean.”** Peter's accent gave himself away. But Peter replied, **“Man, I don't know what you're talking about!”** The unbelievable had happened: Peter denied Jesus three times within a few hours.

Just as he was speaking, the rooster crowed. Roosters can crow any time, but they most commonly crow near the time of dawn.

Verse 61-62 says, **“The Lord turned and looked straight at Peter. Then Peter remembered the word the Lord had spoken to him: ‘Before the rooster crows today, you will disown me three times.’ And he went outside and wept bitterly.”** As Jesus had foreseen and prophesied, Peter denied knowing Jesus three times before the rooster crowed. Jesus knew in great detail all that was going to happen. He knew that Judas was going to betray him. He knew that Peter was going to deny him. How discouraging it must have been for Jesus to know all this. Yet Jesus did not give up or give in to the temptations to save himself by fleeing or fighting.

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Jesus knew that Peter had denied him three times. Jesus also heard the rooster crow. When Jesus looked at Peter, it jolted his memory. He remembered Jesus’ prophetic words that Peter would disown him three times before the rooster crowed. It was Jesus’ look and remembering Jesus’ words that helped Peter not to fall away completely. He went outside and wept bitterly. They were tears of repentance. He acknowledged his own weakness and limitation.

After this, the men who were guarding Jesus began mocking and beating him. They blindfolded him and demanded, “**Prophecy! Who hit you?**” And they said many other insulting things to him. Jesus was betrayed, disowned, mocked, beaten, blindfolded and insulted.

In this passage, Jesus totally surrendered and completely relied on God in prayer. I am convicted and ashamed of my lack of prayerful reliance upon God and proud reliance on my own effort or understanding. Lord, give me the spirit of prayer by the help of your Holy Spirit. Give us the spirit of prayer, “**Your will be done,**” for ourselves, our families and our congregation. In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.