

April 6, 2007 (Good Friday Service)
The Cross Question: Am I Not to Drink the Cup?
John 18:1-11 NLT

After saying these things, Jesus crossed the Kidron Valley with his disciples and entered a grove of olive trees. 2 Judas, the betrayer, knew this place, because Jesus had gone there many times with his disciples. 3 The leading priests and Pharisees had given Judas a battalion of Roman soldiers and Temple guards to accompany him. Now with blazing torches, lanterns, and weapons, they arrived at the olive grove.

4 Jesus fully realized all that was going to happen to him. Stepping forward to meet them, he asked, "Whom are you looking for?"

5 "Jesus of Nazareth," they replied.

"I am he," Jesus said. Judas was standing there with them when Jesus identified himself. 6 And as he said, "I am he," they all fell backward to the ground! 7 Once more he asked them, "Whom are you searching for?"

And again they replied, "Jesus of Nazareth."

8 "I told you that I am he," Jesus said. "And since I am the one you want, let these others go." 9 He did this to fulfill his own statement: "I have not lost a single one of those you gave me."

10 Then Simon Peter drew a sword and slashed off the right ear of Malchus, the high priest's servant. 11 But Jesus said to Peter, "Put your sword back into its sheath. Shall I not drink from the cup the Father has given me?"

After eating the Passover meal, Jesus and His disciples left the upper room. Jesus led them to a grove of olive trees, a place known as Gethsemane. It was their favorite place to go to get away from the crowds when they were in Jerusalem... and Judas knew that.

We don't read of it in John's Gospel but we know from the other Gospels that upon arriving at Gethsemane Jesus told His disciples to wait for Him while He went and prayed. Then He took Peter, James, and John aside, expressed His deep distress to them and asked them to stay awake with Him. In His hour of great distress He sought the companionship of His closest friends – someone to stay awake and be with Him. [as we need friends to be with us and pray for us when we are in distress]

(Matt 26:39 NLT) He went on a little farther and fell face down on the ground, praying, "My Father! If it is possible, let this cup of suffering be taken away from me. Yet I want your will, not mine."

Jesus was completely God and completely human. He did not want to suffer and prayed that if there were some other way let the cup of suffering be taken away. Yet, He was willing to accept the Father's will.

Although deeply troubled Jesus accepted His destiny, with full confidence in the outcome and in His resurrection and ascension. [we need that same faith and pray that same prayer when we are faced with the circumstances that come into our life, "Father, if possible take this cup of suffering from me, yet, I want Your will not mine."]

He prayed this prayer three times, and three times returned to His disciples, and all three times found them asleep. [sometimes our friends let us down]

The leading priests and Pharisees had given Judas a battalion of Roman soldiers and Temple guards to accompany him. They expected to meet with violent resistance, because they arrived at the olive grove with blazing torches, lanterns, and weapons.

The arrest of Jesus demonstrates His divinity. He was in complete control of the situation. He was subject to no human being. He could have escaped, He had before. Boldly He faced His betrayer and allowed Himself to be arrested in order to carry out the plan of salvation. [we must always remember that Jesus is in control and works all things out for His good purposes]

It doesn't say it here in John's gospel, but from the other gospels we know that Judas betrays Jesus with a kiss. It would be the first time Judas openly betrays Jesus before the other disciples, and it would forever change their lives.

Jesus fully realized all that was going to happen to Him. Boldly and courageously He Stepped forward to meet them, and asked, "Whom are you looking for?"

"Jesus of Nazareth," they replied.

"I am He," Jesus said. Or literally what Jesus said was, I AM!" It was The Name God used to identify Himself in Ex. 3:14. It was a declaration of His divinity. Judas was standing there with them when Jesus identified Himself. And as Jesus said, "I am," they all fell backward to the ground!

Once more He asked them, "Whom are you searching for?" And again they replied, "Jesus of Nazareth." Jesus said, "I told you that I am He. And since I am the one you want, let these others go." Even in this time of great distress He was thinking of others, not Himself. He was also fulfilling His own statement that He made to the Father: "I have not lost a single one of those you gave me." He indeed was the Good Shepherd who lays down His life for His sheep.

Simon Peter had promised to die for Jesus, he was not going to let Jesus be arrested, at least not without a fight. So he drew a sword and slashed off the right ear of Malchus, the high priest's servant. Luke tells us in His gospel that Jesus healed the servant's ear.

Jesus said to Peter, "Put your sword away." Then He asks the question, the Cross question: "Shall I not drink from the cup the Father has given me?"

The cup meant the suffering, isolation, and death that Jesus would have to endure in order to atone for the sins of the world. Peter may have shown great loyalty, but he missed the point. All that was happening was part of God's plan. Think of it, if Peter had had his way, Jesus would not have gone to the cross, and we still would be dead in our sins. Immediately after Jesus asked the question the disciples deserted Jesus and fled.

[sometimes, like Peter we try to help God along, instead of waiting on Him.]

Jesus knew the suffering He would endure, but He chose to do the will of God. He trusted and waited upon God. As they came to arrest Him, Jesus did not see Judas, He saw the Father. He not only saw the hand of Judas in what was happening, He saw the hand of God in what was happening. [When we face the cup of life's pain and sorrow we too need to trust that the hand of God is working through the circumstance. God has a plan...He always does. Don't just see the circumstance, don't just see Judas, trust that the hand of God is at work in the circumstance.]

If Jesus suffered, what makes you think we will not suffer, if we follow Jesus. Jesus said (John 15:20-21 NLT), "Do you remember what I told you? 'A servant is not greater than the master.' Since they persecuted me, naturally they will persecute you. And if they had listened to me, they would listen to you! The people of the world will hate you because you belong to me, for they don't know God who sent me."

He also said (John 16:33 NLT), "I have told you all this so that you may have peace in me. Here on earth you will have many trials and sorrows. But take heart, because I have overcome the world."

Tonight ask yourself "The Cross Question: Am I Not to Drink the Cup?" Yet, if while we were enemies of God, Jesus gave His life for us, how much more now that you believe in Jesus, will God be with you and give you grace especially in your time of need? Commit to living for God.

Jesus believed that what would follow His suffering would be the resurrection, then His ascension into heaven. As we put our faith in Jesus we know that our short life here with its imperfection and suffering, will be followed by eternity in heaven where there is no more, pain, sickness, sorrow or death.