

3-16-08 – Palm Sunday

Jesus, In All Ways Like Us (series)

Ever Been Up All Night Making A Decision - (Mark 14:32-42)

Palm Sunday – the day we acknowledge Jesus' Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem on a donkey and exalted by the cheering crowds. It was the first day of the last week of His life. These crowds soon turned against Him and everything the disciples THOUGHT was going to happen quickly turned around. Jesus, whom they considered their conquering King, would soon disappoint them, and fear would take a higher place in their hearts than faith.

As we move forward, we come to the Passover celebration. Jesus and His disciples gather together in an upper room of a friend's home to take part in this meal together. During this time, Jesus washes their feet as an example of serving one-another as Pastor Jerry has talked about. Jesus then predicts, or prophesies, that the disciples would all flee and disown Him. Of course, they all disagree vehemently! Peter, especially takes exception to this accusation personally – so – Jesus addresses him personally – “You will deny Me three times this very night...” Peter – you have to love him – He's so absolute yet so absolutely wrong. I can relate. I think when I am the most adamant – I am usually absolutely wrong.

Well this brings us to our text for today – Mark 14:32-42

Our text today takes us to the Garden of Gethsemane and Jesus' “night of the soul” – so to speak. He is distressed about what faces Him – so He spends the night in prayer. Have you ever stayed up all night making a decision? Jesus can relate! He can comfort, reassure us, and be an example of how to approach major decisions in our lives.

READ – MK. 14:32-42 (NIV)

Mark 14:32-42:

32 They went to a place called Gethsemane, and Jesus said to his disciples, "Sit here while I pray." 33 He took Peter, James and John along with him, and he began to be deeply distressed and troubled. 34 "My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death," he said to them. "Stay here and keep watch."

35 Going a little farther, he fell to the ground and prayed that if possible the hour might pass from him. 36 "Abba, Father," he said, "Everything is possible for you. Take this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will."

37 Then he returned to his disciples and found them sleeping. "Simon," he said to Peter, "Are you asleep? Could you not keep watch for one hour? 38 Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the body is weak."

39 Once more he went away and prayed the same thing. 40 When he came back, he again found them sleeping, because their eyes were heavy. They did not know what to say to him.

41 Returning the third time, he said to them, "Are you still sleeping and resting? Enough! The hour has come. Look, the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. 42 Rise! Let us go! Here comes my betrayer!" NIV

When making major decisions we want to pray about them and seek God's will for that situation in our lives. Jesus, like us, was praying to know the will of God in His particular situation.

Illustrations:

The way some people attempt to know the will of God would make a great TV series called, "That's Unbelievable." I read about a lady who had a lifetime ambition of going to the Holy Land. She got a pamphlet on the Holy Land tour and read it over carefully. She had the time and the money to make the trip, but she wasn't certain if it was God's will. So before going to bed that night, she read the pamphlet again and noticed in the details of the plan that they would be traveling on a 747 jumbo jet, there and back. She wrestled through the night, tossed back and forth, wondering what God's will might be. And she woke up the next morning, looked at her **digital clock, and it read 7:47**. It convinced her it was God's will for her to make the trip. That's Unbelievable!

(Leslie and Bernice Flynn, God's Will: You Can Know It - Chuck Swindoll's Illustrations)

Who hasn't heard of holding out a fleece before the Lord? A man who was wrestling with knowing God's will, prayed as he was driving, "If it is Your will for me to do this, then may the light at the next corner stay green until I get there." Another one wrestling with God's will said, "Lord, may my phone ring at 9:21 tonight if Your answer to me is YES."

(Leslie and Bernice Flynn, God's Will: You Can Know It - Chuck Swindoll's Illustrations)

A college sophomore was in need of a car and had a series of dreams one night and everything was in yellow, everything! Early the next morning he began to hit the used car lots, looking at one car after another. Finally, he found God's will for him, yellow inside and out. He didn't ask to drive it. He just bought it. **Turned out to be a lemon.**

(Leslie and Bernice Flynn, God's Will: You Can Know It - Chuck Swindoll's Illustrations)

Gethsemane

GET a place to pray:

32 They went to a place called Gethsemane, and Jesus said to his disciples, "Sit here while I pray."

If we take this seriously, we sometimes can't pray without distractions and interruptions. We may just need to get a place to pray, some place that we go to for this purpose.

This garden was not an unknown place for Jesus and His disciples. In fact it was a place he visited quite often during His ministry years. The location was known for the olive orchards there in the foothills of the Mount of Olives and the name, Gethsemane, is Hebrew for "olive press." It must have been known for this. It was a favorite place for Jesus to come and spend time. He was just like us. He also went to the Olive Garden ☺

Luke 22:39-44

Jesus went out as usual to the Mount of Olives and his disciples followed him. On reaching the place, he said to them, "Pray that you will not fall into temptation." He withdrew about a stone's throw beyond them, knelt down and prayed, "Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done." An angel from heaven appeared to him and strengthened him. And being in anguish, he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground. (NIV)

Our text today is very strategically located by Mark in his gospel between the prophecy of desertion and the fulfillment of that desertion.

Mark 14:27 - "You will all fall away," Jesus told them, "for it is written: 'I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered.' " NIV

Mark 14:49-50 - "Every day I was with you, teaching in the temple courts, and you did not arrest me. But the Scriptures must be fulfilled." 50 Then everyone deserted him and fled. NIV

Mark emphasizes, by placing our text between these two passages, that Jesus faced His crisis time totally alone. Did you ever feel that way in a time of crisis? Mark's readers know the real deal. They would soon have to face their own time of crisis. This text gives them the encouragement they will need to get through it with dignity and gratitude. How about you?

GET Support –

33 He took Peter, James and John along with him, and he began to be deeply distressed and troubled. 34 "My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death," he said to them. "Stay here and keep watch."

Jesus separates Peter, James and John from the rest (the inner circle of faithful friends – but not without their own issues). He has done this before. However, in this case it seems even more profound. Jesus' prayer is recorded by all the Gospels. It was customary to pray aloud in these days. They would have been able to hear the actual words Jesus prayed in the garden that night – lends accuracy to this account in Scripture. Yet, they slept through most of it like I do when watching a movie on TV.

Heb 5:7 - During the days of Jesus' life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with loud cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission. NIV

He asked those closest to Him to support Him. He shared His heart-felt need with them, and He asked them to keep watch with Him as He prayed things through.

The disciples were to “stand watch” (see 13:34-36), against temptation and testing. Jesus warned them, “So you do not fall prey to the testing you are about to face.”

Yet, each of them failed and deserted or denied Him.

Peter – Peter – Peter – he had just boldly proclaimed that he would die for Jesus, and Jesus is accepting here the mission to die for Peter and all of sinful humanity. Would Peter be as willing to drink the cup that Jesus was about to drink? In a few hours Peter would deny even knowing his master and Lord. .

Mark 14:29-31 - Peter declared, "Even if all fall away, I will not." 30 "I tell you the truth," Jesus answered, "today-yes, tonight-before the rooster crows twice you yourself will disown me three times." 31 But Peter insisted emphatically, "Even if I have to die with you, I will never disown you." And all the others said the same. NIV

The sons of Zebedee (James and John) have a cup story too. They boldly declared their ability to drink the cup that Jesus was going to drink.

Mark 10:38-39 - "You don't know what you are asking," Jesus said. "Can you drink the cup I drink or be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with?"

39 "We can," they answered.

NIV

How confident!

Jesus told them, “You don’t know what you’re asking.” Yet they think they do. To them, Jesus’ cup is a cup of glory, kingship, victory, and authority. Who wouldn’t want to be included in that? They have their sights set on the final kingdom – HEAVEN – but how will they get there?

They think they can drink Jesus cup of victory and share in His FATE, but they will have to drink the cup of suffering and death first. This is the cup Jesus was talking about. They desire prestige and power, but wind up with persecution and peril.

The baptism of Jesus is a baptism of death to this life and resurrection to a new life – forever. Yes, they would indeed be baptized with the baptism Jesus was baptized with and drink His cup. Funny how these are the three people Jesus takes close enough to hear His prayer of humility, obedience and submission.

His prayer was not some bold statement of someone who could not fulfill his own words – like Peter, but a prayer of obedience to the Father’s will.

It was not a prayer of personal desire of a position of higher standing in the coming kingdom, like James and John, but a prayer that acknowledges the Sovereignty of Almighty God and submission to God’s will rather than His own desire. Yeah, Funny how these three people are there to hear His humble and agonizing words. “Take this cup from Me.”

GET real with God – (recognition, request, resolve)

35 Going a little farther, he fell to the ground and prayed that if possible the hour might pass from him. 36 "Abba, Father," he said, "Everything is possible for you. Take this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will."

Recognition: God alone is Almighty, Sovereign, fully able to meet our need

Abba – Papa – Dad – great intimacy, but reverence and respect.

Jesus doesn’t pray some flowery prayer with eloquent words like we hear on TV or even like He prays in John 17 – This is a get down to business – brass tax – prayer.

George Malcolm used to say ... When things are going great we pray in flowery language – Oh thou Great and wonderful God – How blessed we are today ...

But when we are in trouble, it’s more like – GOD - I NEED YOU NOW – HELP ME!

This is the kind of prayer Jesus seems to be praying at this point. He is praying in desperation. His very life is on the line here. He is feeling the pressure of what He must do - in His humanness. Yet, He is resolved to complete the mission – in His divineness.

Cup – Passover – cup of Judgment (Mk. 10:38) – cross – **cup of suffering...**

(Ps. 116:3-4, 15) – Jesus asks to be spared drinking this cup.

Jesus did not fear death or shrink away back from death. He was in anguish over taking upon Himself the sin of humanity and being judged by God (His Father) in our place for it. But – that was why He came in the first place.

Pray/Prayer – this word recurs multiple times in our text. Maybe there is some significance to that. Nothing in Scripture is there by accident. Jesus goes to the garden with all His remaining disciples – To PRAY. Once there, He commands the three (at least) to watch and PRAY while He goes off alone to PRAY – 3 Times! That is a lot of references to prayer.

Request: Why pray? Why prayer? So we would not be overcome by temptation! Even Jesus here is tempted one last time - - “Father, if there’s another way to accomplish this mission, let Me know NOW!” It’s the same temptation Satan offered in the wilderness – You can have the reign you are intended to have without the cross – Just change your allegiance **to ME!** It’s the same temptation each one of us will wrestle with. Will we follow God, trust in God, or change our allegiance. At this final moment Jesus asks His Papa if there’s another way...

Resolve: YET – down deep He knows the way and remains faithful - as we all are to do – to the end – no matter what. That’s God’s will for Jesus – the disciples – for the early church – for all believers throughout the ages – and for you and me today. Pray that you are not overcome by the temptation to look for an easy way out, but to trust God for yourself.

How do you pray? Are you constantly asking God for more and more? Are you asking for prestige and power? Are you making bold statements of how well you are going to serve God? OR – do you **recognize** Him as the all-powerful and the only One who can meet your needs and humbly come to Him and make your **request** and then **resolve** to whatever His will is for your life – even if it might cost you your life? That’s a tough call.

How easy is that for you to do? It’s not easy for me! When I consider what God’s will might be or could be – I shrink back and pray only in the areas I am comfortable. How about you? Are you ready to try something different? Are you ready to pray Thy Will Be Done in my life – in our church – in our community – on my job? That might revolutionize our lives! Watch out – you might be blessed in the process! You may even grow spiritually. I think I’ll throw my hat in God’s ring knowing He loves me completely and wants what’s best for me forever. How about you?

GET it together –

41 Returning the third time, he said to them, "Are you still sleeping and resting? Enough! The hour has come. Look, the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. 42 Rise! Let us go!"

The disciples weren't chosen because they were knowledgeable. There weren't chosen to learn all wisdom and debate with political or religious leaders of their time. They were chosen to FOLLOW Him and be with Him – Their loyalty failed at this point – They fled. They didn't have it together yet. How about you? Will you follow Him - His example?

The disciples sleep while He prays His most selfless and agonizing prayer. In so doing, they miss out on that lovely place where Jesus accepts His Father's will and is strengthened and resolved. Can we learn something here?

Jesus resolved in the wilderness temptation to do God's will and not cave in to Satan's pressure to escape the suffering of the cross. As time gets closer to the actual event and reality of what He must face, He hesitates for a moment. Has this ever happened to you? You know you have to face something in the future, and you are resolved, but when the time comes, there is some trepidation (surgery?, tests?, even wedding?, etc.). Imagine what Jesus was facing – the most agonizing execution known to humanity – ever. - Really the judgment and wrath of this loving Father against sin was the dilemma.

You can't depend on friends and family alone to get you through crises. Jesus brought His closest companions with Him during His dilemma and they fell asleep. Have you ever relied upon friends to help you through something? What happened? Jesus shows us the only truly reliable one is Abba, Father. Even closest friends may fail to support you, but God is there. His will is perfect and His Word is trust-worthy. Obedient submission to the will of God yields resolve, strength, and ultimately victory - All the Time!

Jesus told them:

“The spirit is willing but the body is weak”

Sinful nature in weakness is inadequate to stand against evil – it gets overwhelmed by situations even with our good intentions.

Mark 14:34b - ... “Stay here and keep watch.”

It was late. They were tired. They had been going all day.

I fall asleep at the computer all the time at night while making the CDs of the service.

I have good intentions, but the old body is tired (my spirit is willing, but my body is weak).

The Spirit's willingness is not any ability of our own – by training, exercise, stamina, experience, or anything else. The willing spirit that stands against the weak flesh is not the better part of our humanity, but God's Holy Spirit within us – (Ps. 51:12).

The only way we can prepare to stand against crises that will come our way is by prayer and watchfulness depending on divine help in the Spirit. There are many Spiritual practices for growth ...

(Adult Sunday School, journaling, personal devotions, fellowship, accountability, prayer).

Jesus spent time in prayer preparing for His own trials and circumstances that awaited Him. He is our model and example of how to resist evil attacks. He did what he told his disciples to do in v.38 – “Watch and pray that you do not fall into temptation – The spirit is willing but the body is weak”

Mark's focus is on the disciples – Jesus prayed and was strengthened in the face of temptation, so He had the resolve to face what was ahead for Him. The disciples slept and were bombarded by the attack that awaited them. They freaked and fled. Jesus was tempted to bail but was strengthened to go to the cross and successfully accomplish His mission and the Father's will.

Mark's focus is on Jesus' return and what He finds – What will He find us doing when He returns the next time? Sleeping? OR Watching and praying? These three were the closest to Jesus – These three were brought by Him a little closer to see first hand and listen to His example – These three were found sleeping when they should have been watching and praying. What makes you think the same thing couldn't happen to you? Mark tells us the disciples didn't know what to say to Him.

“The hour” – starts in v.35 – Jesus prayed that “the hour” might be taken from Him. Here it is settled – “the hour” has come – the answer was NO from the Father – He must go through the agony. Sometimes God's answer to our prayer to be removed from a situation, sickness, disaster, etc. is “NO.” We are feeling this here today with the passing of our dear brother Larry. The plan is for us to endure it and persevere through it with Him and according to His will. Jesus must be betrayed and handed over to sinners and die. It was all part of the Master Plan.

It was rebellion in **The Garden** that brought sin and death to humanity.
Here – submission in **this garden** will bring about the defeat sin and death for humanity!

Closing illustration: Max Lucado – 3:16 – The Numbers of Hope – p. 185-186
Day 26 – Go First To God

Have you ever been up all night making a decision? Jesus has! He showed us what to do at GETHsemane:

GET a place to pray

GET support - from our friends, realize that the responsibility rests on us not them,

GET real with God - knowing He is the only One who will stand by

GET it together – take steps necessary to develop spiritually

Your Spirit may be willing, but the body is weak. Strengthen your Spirit now so you will not be overcome by temptation.