

Bible Stories

GETHSEMANE

Mark 14:32-34

September 02, 2023

Today we are going to conclude the Gospels section of our series with Gethsemane.

The Passover meal was over.

Judas had left the group to make arrangements for the betrayal of Jesus.

Now as the little party made their way to the Mount of Olives, Jesus made a startling statement, *"You will all fall away because of me this night. For it is written, 'I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered.' But after I am raised up, I will go before you to Galilee."*

The ever-reliable Peter, blurted out, *"Even if everyone else falls away, I will never fall away!!"*

Jesus: *I tell you the truth, Peter. This very night, before the rooster crows, you will deny me 3 times.*

Peter: *Nonsense! Even if I must die with you, I will never deny you!*

"Dito," said the rest of the disciples.

As they approached the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus told the disciples to wait and pray, but he took Peter, James and John, with him a little further into the Garden - he wanted to have his closest friends near him for support and encouragement.

He asked them to watch and pray, while he went further still to be alone. They tried.....

Jesus collapsed to the ground and began to pray that, if it were possible, another way be found to save humanity. He said, *"Abba, Father, all things are possible for you. Remove this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will."*

Hoping to find Peter, James and John praying, Jesus stumbled over to where he had left them, only to find them sleeping.

Speaking to Peter, Jesus said, *"Simon, could you not watch with me one hour? Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."*

Jesus returned to his place and prayed again, *"My Father, if this cannot pass unless I drink it, your will be done."*

Again, he rose and went to the disciples ---- They were still sleeping.

For a third time, Jesus prayed, *"Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but yours, be done."*

- **Luke 22:43-44** - *And there appeared to him an angel from heaven, strengthening him. And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly; and his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground.*

Sounds uncomfortable, doesn't it? Let's read a more graphic description from the book, Desire of Ages. Mrs. White does not paint a picture of discomfort, but one of agony and torture of soul. It is a moment in time when the very destiny of humanity hangs in the balance:

- **Ellen White {DA Ch.74}** - *As Christ felt His unity with the Father broken up, He feared that in His human nature He would be unable to endure the coming conflict with the powers of darkness. In the wilderness of temptation the destiny of the human race had been at stake. Christ was then conqueror. Now the tempter had come for the last fearful struggle..... Everything*

was at stake. If he failed, his hope of mastery was lost; the kingdoms of the world would finally become Christ's and he would be overthrown and cast out. But if Christ could be overcome, the earth would become Satan's kingdom, and the human race would be forever in his power.

With the issues of the conflict before Him, Christ's soul was filled with dread of separation from God. Satan told Him that if He became the surety for a sinful world, the separation would be eternal. He would be identified with Satan's kingdom, and would nevermore be one with God.

And what was to be gained by this sacrifice? How hopeless appeared the guilt and ingratitude of men! In its hardest features Satan pressed the situation upon the Redeemer: The people who claim to be above all others in temporal and spiritual advantages have rejected You. They are seeking to destroy You, the Foundation, the Center and the Seal of the promises made to them as a peculiar people. One of Your own disciples, who has listened to Your instruction, and has been among the foremost in church activities, will betray You. One of Your most zealous followers will deny You. All will forsake You. Christ's whole being abhorred the thought. That those whom He had undertaken to save, those whom He loved so much, should unite in the plots of Satan, pierced His soul.

The conflict was terrible..... the sense of God's wrath against sin was crushing out His life.

The chilling dew of night falls upon His prostrate form, but He heeds it not. From His pale lips comes the bitter cry, "O My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me." Yet even now He adds, "Nevertheless not as I will, but as Thou wilt."

Three times has He uttered that prayer. Three times has humanity shrunk from the last, crowning sacrifice. But now the history of the human race comes up before the world's Redeemer. He sees that the transgressors of the law, if left to themselves, must perish. He sees the helplessness of man. He sees the power of sin. The woes and lamentations of a doomed world rise before Him. He beholds its impending fate, and His decision is made. He will save man at any cost to Himself. He accepts His baptism of blood, that through Him perishing millions may gain everlasting life. He has left the courts of heaven, where all is purity, happiness, and glory, to save the one lost sheep, the one world that has fallen by transgression. And He will not turn from His mission. He will become the propitiation of a race that has willed to sin. His prayer now breathes only submission: "If this cup may not pass away from Me, except I drink it, Thy will be done."

Having made the decision, He fell dying to the ground from which He had partially risen.....

God suffered with His Son. Angels beheld the Saviour's agony. They saw their Lord enclosed by legions of satanic forces, His nature weighed down with a shuddering, mysterious dread. There was silence in heaven. No harp was touched. Could mortals have viewed the amazement of the angelic host as in silent grief they watched the Father separating His beams of light, love, and glory from His beloved Son, they would better understand how offensive in His sight is sin.

The powers of good and evil waited to see what answer would come to Christ's prayer. Angels had longed to bring relief to the divine sufferer, but this might not be. No way of escape was found for the Son of God. In this awful crisis, when everything was at stake, when the mysterious cup trembled in the hand of the sufferer, the heavens opened, a light shone forth amid the stormy darkness and the mighty angel who stands in God's presence, occupying the position from which Satan fell, came to the side of Christ. The angel came not to take the cup from Christ's hand, but to strengthen Him to drink it, with the assurance of the Father's love. He came to give power to the divine-human suppliant. He pointed Him to the open heavens, telling Him of the souls that would be saved as the result of His sufferings. He assured Him that His Father is greater and more powerful than Satan, that His death would result in the utter discomfiture of Satan, and that the kingdom of this world would be given to the saints of the Most High. He told Him that He would see of the travail of His soul, and be satisfied, for He would see a multitude of the human race saved, eternally saved.

Christ's agony did not cease, but His depression and discouragement left Him. The storm had in nowise abated, but He who was its object was strengthened to meet its fury. He came forth calm and serene. A heavenly peace rested upon His bloodstained face. He had borne that which no human being could ever bear; for He had tasted the sufferings of death for every man.

For a 3rd time, Jesus went to disciples ---- they were still sleeping.

Jesus whispered, "The time for sleeping is over - get up. The time has come for the Son of Man to be betrayed."

Judas approached Jesus, followed by a great crowd carrying clubs and swords – the chief priests and elders of the people among them.

Jesus walked out to meet them.

Judas boldly walked up to Jesus and kissed him – the prearranged signal – “Greetings Teacher!” he said.

Jesus: *Who are you looking for?*

The crowd: *Jesus of Nazareth.*

Jesus: *I AM* {In the original Greek, the word “he” does not appear. It is implied}.

What a simple, yet staggering response, “I Am”

- **Ellen White {DA 694.5-6} -** As these words were spoken, the angel who had lately ministered to Jesus moved between Him and the mob. A divine light illuminated the Savior’s face, and a dovelike form overshadowed Him. In the presence of this divine glory, the murderous throng could not stand for a moment. They staggered back. Priests, elders, soldiers, and even Judas, fell as dead men to the ground.

The angel withdrew, and the light faded away. Jesus had opportunity to escape, but He remained, calm and self-possessed. As one glorified, He stood in the midst of that hardened band, now prostrate and helpless at His feet. The disciples looked on, silent with wonder and awe.

Then they seized Jesus and he allowed Himself to be led away ---- all the disciples ran into the night.

What do we do with this story?

Gethsemane was the place that the destiny of mankind was decided. Yes, the cross was necessary, but by the time Jesus was on the cross the decision had already been made.

When Peter drew his sword and cut off the ear of the high priest’s servant, Jesus said this to him, *“Put your sword away. All who use the sword will perish by the sword. Don’t you know that I could appeal to my Father, and he would immediately send me 12 legions of angels? But if I did that, how would Scripture be fulfilled? This must happen, Peter.”*

When Pilate told Jesus that he had the power of life or death over him, Jesus responded, *“You would have no authority over me at all unless it had been given you from above.”*

The cross wasn’t a tragic mistake.

It didn’t “happen” to Jesus.

He wasn’t a victim of circumstance.

Jesus died because He deliberately chose to lay down His life – and he made that choice at Gethsemane.

The war was not over, but the battle was won at Gethsemane.