



CANYON HILLS

COMMUNITY CHURCH

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Lessons from Gethsemane

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Oh, my. That never gets old, does it? Just amazing. Walking in obedience to Jesus Christ in baptism. What a testimony that is! Good morning! It's now time to give to the Lord as we have also received from the Lord, giving back to him. I'd ask the ushers to go ahead and come on forward as I open our time praying over the offering, as well as us opening his Word together. Let's pray.

Father, please help us to accurately hear and apply your Word today. May these truths reveal your infinite glory, expose our desperate need, and transform us into the likeness of your Son, the only Savior, Jesus Christ. We thank you for the opportunity to give and we ask that you receive these gifts as an expression of our faith and our love for you. We love you, Lord, and we thank you for loving us first, amen.

My name is Mark Wilson. I am the pastor of the School of Discipleship and Residency, but that's really of no importance. The one whom I hope you came to hear from this morning is your God as he speaks to us clearly, sufficiently, and without error in his Word. Grab your Bibles, and open them up to Mark 14.

Before you stand, let's recall the context for where we are in the life of Christ and, most specifically, where we are in the Passion Week. It's now Thursday evening and Jesus, along with the 11 remaining disciples, has eaten the Passover meal and departed from the upper room. They are now headed toward the Mount of Olives. More specifically, to a private, secluded refuge known as *Gethsemane*.

The word *Gethsemane* itself means oil press, which is an appropriate term, considering that the olives that were harvested there were then gathered and put under the weight of rocks and pressed to extract the oil for use. The name of this place is also quite providential, as it became better known as the place where Jesus is pressed under the weight of all that awaits him in the hours ahead.

You see, Jesus is at a most critical juncture in his life. He is concluding his sinless life and anticipating a horrific death, both of which are necessary in order to affirm God's holiness, satisfy God's justice, and demonstrate God's love for you, but they invite an agonizing dread, nonetheless.

So, with every step toward Gethsemane, Jesus grows more troubled and deeply grieved. If, hypothetically, Jesus were to not continue at this point, if he wouldn't persevere at this point, there would be no salvation, no gospel, no church, and no hope for anyone. Thankfully, you know the end of the story: he did, praise God.

Would you now please stand as we read Mark, chapter 14, verses 32-42? Follow along as I read. Pick it up in verse 32.

"And they went to a place called Gethsemane. And he said to his disciples, 'Sit here while I pray.' And he took with him Peter and James and John, and began to be greatly distressed and troubled. And he said to them, 'My soul is very sorrowful, even to death. Remain here and watch.'

And going a little farther, he fell on the ground and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him. And he said, 'Abba, Father, all things are possible for you. Remove this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will.' And he came and found them sleeping, and he said to Peter, 'Simon, are you asleep? Could you not watch one hour? Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.'

And again he went away and prayed, saying the same words. And again he came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were very heavy, and they did not know what to answer him. And he came the third time and said to them, 'Are you still sleeping and taking your rest? It is enough; the hour has come. The Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise, let us be going; see, my betrayer is at hand.'"

As we just read, Jesus enters Gethsemane burdened with the anticipation of his imminent death. Leaving eight of the disciples at the entrance, he then goes a little further and he brings Peter, James, and John with him. Again, he becomes even more distressed and troubled by the horrific events awaiting him and expresses to the three who are with him that his soul is overwhelmed with great sorrow.

The language here is quite heartbreaking. Jesus is horrified. Jesus is dreading what must take place in just a few short hours. He then assigns the three with the duty of staying awake and keeping watch while he seeks refuge, help, and even rescue from his Father through prayer.

Going a little further, Jesus falls to the ground, and with loud cries and tears he makes his petition to let this hour pass, if at all possible. The hour mentioned in verse 35 is not a specific 60-minute chunk of time, if you will. It is the time from his suffering at Gethsemane through his death on the cross. This hour of suffering, this time. He returns to the three disciples, only to find

them, not watching or praying, but sleeping. Three times, Jesus pleads with his Father, and three times he finds his disciples negligent.

We'll return to this scene later. For now, I want us to consider a few of the lessons we can pull from the school of Gethsemane. This passage can easily leave us with more questions than answers, but there are some clear truths that give us infinitely profound insights as well as intimately practical helps for us as we strive to live godly and faithfully for him in this present fallen, broken world.

1. *Jesus is authentically human.* The Scriptures are clear that Jesus is both fully God and fully man without confusion of natures but by unity in one person. To deny one or the other is to deny the gospel itself and forfeit any hope of salvation. We rightly emphasize Jesus as God and affirm that there was never a time when he was not God, but we often minimize Jesus' humanity.

Yet this is essential Christian doctrine, and our passage today displays for us in living color the reality and mystery of Jesus having a human nature, a human body, human emotions, and human struggles, and yet without sin and without ever ceasing to be God. I'm convinced, and I truly pray that you will be convinced today as well, that the doctrine of Jesus' humanity provides for an often-neglected comfort and confidence for the Christian, especially in the midst of a broken world where we are in the midst of suffering.

Now, with any doctrine, we don't just stop at the point of affirmation and certainly not just appreciation, but we must dive into it and draw out those things for application into our own lives and faithfulness to Jesus Christ.

A. *Jesus is authentically human; therefore, he is able to save.* Because he is human, he is able to save. You see, it's not accidental, nor is it incidental, that God took on a human nature. We call this the incarnation. John begins his gospel this way in John, chapter 1, verses 1 and 14. **"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God... And the Word became flesh..."** This was necessary because it was determined from the beginning that the Savior would be a man.

Immediately after Adam and Eve sinned in Genesis, chapter 3, God revealed that it would be by the offspring of a woman that a Savior would come. This was a sure promise, but this was a profound reality. God was going to send a man to redeem what had been lost and destroy the Devil and his works. However, he had to be born apart from the curse of sin and then live a completely sinless life. Praise God, that's exactly what he did.

The Gospels lay this out for us in detail. Paul also testifies in Galatians, chapter 4, **"But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons."** He not only had to live a genuinely human life; he had to die as a man in order to pay the wages of your sin and satisfy God's justice. It had to be this way.

In fact, God even revealed that it would be this way in Isaiah, chapter 53. In Isaiah 53:5, he tells us, 700 years before Jesus was born, that Jesus would be pierced for our transgressions, crushed for our iniquities, chastised for our peace, and wounded for your healing. You see, it was required that one was truly human yet without sin in order to die for your salvation. The writer of Hebrews puts this very clearly for us in Hebrews, chapter 2.

"Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil... Therefore he had to be made like his brothers in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people."

Now, I understand these are some big truths to absorb, and we certainly don't have time this morning to unpack all of them, but we do have classes in our School of Discipleship that start in September that you can enroll for pretty soon. You must grasp the reality of Jesus' humanity in order to recognize that that was necessary for our salvation. In addition to us, we must grasp and affirm that reality so we might understand his ability to sympathize with us.

B. Because Jesus is authentically human, he is able to sympathize. I wonder if you believe this, that Jesus truly knows you, your condition, your situation, your trials, and your struggles. That Jesus truly does know what you are going through. The Scriptures make it clear that he definitely does. Listen to Hebrews, chapter 4, starting in verse 15.

"For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need."

Dear Christian, be encouraged. Be encouraged that he truly does genuinely know your struggles, trials, and situation. In fact, we can say it this way: He knows it better than you know it, and he cares! There's confidence and comfort to be found in Jesus. Again, Hebrews says earlier, in chapter 2, **"For because he himself has suffered when tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted."** Are you being tempted? Jesus was tempted, and he calls you to persevere as he did.

Have you been forsaken by family, friends, a spouse, a child, or maybe even an employer? Jesus knows what it is to be forsaken and rejected, and he offers his abiding presence. Does the burden and the hostility of a fallen world with the ever-present oncoming of sin and rebellion against God weigh on your soul? Jesus knows this burden and he provides peace.

Do the pressures of your calling or situation in life at times just simply become overwhelming to you? Jesus knows and he offers a peace that is beyond your understanding. In fact, he calls every single one of us to cast our anxieties on him because he cares for us.

Now, take note that Jesus does not have the experience of being a sinner. He has never had a sinful response, and he has never made a sinful choice. However, don't let that tempt you to think he can't relate with you.

You need to remember that although Jesus, your Creator, your Redeemer, your High Priest, your ever-present, even now, right at this moment, Advocate on your behalf... Even though he doesn't know what it is to be a sinner, he is the only one who truly knows the full ramifications, consequence, and punishment of your sin. Though he has never experienced sin, he is the only one who knows its full consequence. This brings us back to Jesus' struggle in Gethsemane.

2. *Jesus is our example for effective prayer.* After reading this passage and considering the meekness and majesty of Jesus' prayer, how does one sufficiently pray in the midst of our own suffering? Quite honestly, how many of us would actually boldly affirm that we sufficiently pray?

As one pastor mentioned before, "If ever I want to humble a man, I'll ask him the state of his prayer life." Oh, isn't that true? None of us walk away from our prayers bold and self-confident, or we simply haven't prayed. However, prayer, like so much of the Christian life, is not about perfection; it's about direction.

We must ask ourselves and evaluate ourselves in light of what we see in the text. Throughout your life as a follower of Jesus Christ, are you growing in prayer? Does your life demonstrate an increasing dependence upon prayer? Is prayer your first response or your last resort? Are your prayers boxed into segments of mealtimes and devotions, or is it a constant, ever-present posture before the Lord your God, your Maker?

The fact is, fervent and effective prayer is just simply hard, but it's rewarding and it's necessary. If you're feeling a bit convicted and maybe defeated by the mere mention of your prayers, thinking to yourself, "I don't sufficiently pray," let me encourage you by saying that though you may not sufficiently pray, you have been sufficiently prayed for and sufficiently paid for by Jesus Christ himself.

Therefore, in an effort to appreciate Jesus' struggle in Gethsemane, let's learn from his example. I'd like to highlight four principles we can take away from verse 36. Look back at your Bible. Verse 36. Grab it again. We'll take it one piece at a time. "**And he said, 'Abba, Father...'**" *Abba* is an Aramaic term for papa or daddy. It's an affectionate, very intimate term, reserved for those who personally belong to God.

A. *Prayer begins with a personal relationship with God.* To say it quite directly, if you don't know Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior of your life, you have no access to God on your own, and he has no obligation to hear your prayers, much less answer your prayers. It is useless to seek the comfort and favor of God as your Father before he is your Father, and he is only your Father if you've received his Son, Jesus Christ. Therefore, prayer to God begins with a relationship with God through Jesus Christ.

Every subsequent prayer in your life is simply an affirmation of and cultivation of that reality, that relationship. Every prayer prior to a relationship with God through Jesus Christ is simply you talking to yourself, to say it quite directly. God is calling you to repent of your sins and trust Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior of your life so he will be your Father. I can assure you there is no other Savior, hope, or peace available apart from him.

This life was not intended to be lived apart from God, and you will find no salvation and no rest apart from him. In fact, it was Augustine who said as much: "Thou hast made us for thyself, O Lord, and our heart is restless until it finds its rest in thee." Once you find this rest in God, then you can call upon God as your Father, as Jesus did.

Romans 8:15 reveals to us that if you are in Christ, "**...you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, 'Abba! Father!'**" Yes, the same exact words Jesus cried in Gethsemane are yours to embrace and own. "**Abba! Father!**" Jesus went to his Father for comfort.

He had every right to. He was a Son. He had every desire to, in the midst of his suffering, and that's our example. We must do the same. After calling out to his Father, Jesus then affirms, in verse 36, "**...all things are possible for you.**"

B. *Prayer affirms the character of God.* Before Jesus made his request, he knew God could do all things. Therefore, Jesus affirms this reality and testifies to God, as well as to the disciples dozing off in the background, that he's not doubting his Father's ability or his Father's character. Instead, he affirms them with full confidence, as Job did at the conclusion of his suffering. Job 42:2 says, "**I know that you can do all things, and that no purpose of yours can be thwarted.**" Amen!

We can learn from this. Before declaring, "I need..." remind yourself of who he is. You may just find that a peace and a confidence will come over you as you recall to yourself God's sovereignty, goodness, love, greatness, and ability to care for you, corresponding to the God he is and the character by which you know him as he has revealed it in his Word.

Let your request for provision be put in the light of his providential care. Let your trials and struggles be put in the context of his triumph and let your hopes and dreams be informed by the empowerment of his divine help. Effective prayer begins with a personal relationship with God through Jesus Christ. Effective prayer affirms his character. Then...

C. *Prayer confesses the desire for God.* Back to verse 36. Jesus now makes his request. "**Remove this cup from me.**" The cup referred to here is the cup of God's wrath poured out against sin. Numerous Old Testament texts point to the fact that this is what's referred to, and Jesus knows it all too well.

Now, get this and don't miss this. Jesus' greatest cause of anguish in Gethsemane was not the attack from Satan, as bad as that is. He had already declared in John, chapter 14, verse 30, that Satan has no claim on him. In addition, his greatest dread was not the physical death he would

suffer. He was determined to endure this horrific pain for the joy set before him in order to accomplish God's glory and secure your salvation.

In addition, are we to assume that Jesus had a weaker mental and emotional physical constitution than all those followers of Christ throughout the thousands of years who stood boldly in the face of death, proclaiming God's name and Jesus Christ as Savior? Absolutely not! That's not what caused him the greatest anguish.

Rather, Jesus' great anguish and dread in Gethsemane was the spiritual aspect of his death, specifically the prospect of being forsaken by his Father. Taking on himself the curse of sin and the debt of our guilt would cause Jesus to become that which God hates: sin. To drink the cup of divine wrath was to receive the full weight of God's justice against sin.

Just to clarify, Jesus never became a sinner. It is blasphemy and heresy to claim as much. However, 2 Corinthians 5:21 tells us that he made him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf that we might become the righteousness of God in him. Jesus did not want to experience this spiritual death because his sinless human desire was to enjoy unbroken fellowship and unhindered communion in the presence of his Father continually.

Is this your desire? In the midst of temptation and suffering, what is your primary motive for resisting, putting away, and turning your back on sin? What is your primary motive? Do you resist sin because it might hurt your reputation or because it will hinder your relationship with your Father in heaven?

Do you avoid compromising because of the conflict it causes in your own soul (which it truly does) or because of how it clouds your view of the pure and beautiful Savior whom you call Lord of your life? Have you put off evil practices because you no longer like the consequences of them or because it grieves and quenches the Holy Spirit of God by whom you live pleasing to him?

Jesus was asking his Father if there was any other way to avoid this separation caused by bearing your sin, and yet, as we see in the next portion of this verse...

D. *Effective prayer prefers the will of God.* You see it there at the end of verse 36. **"Yet not what I will, but what you will."** With these words, Jesus actively submits, as he always has, his entire life, to the will of his Father, as we ought to.

Here's an often-overlooked reality in regard to effective prayer. Would you like to always get a *yes* answer to your prayer? Wouldn't that be great? It's simple. Just pray, "Not my will, but yours be done." To pray, "Your will be done," is to live out Jesus' instruction to seek first his kingdom and his righteousness. It is to die to self and live for his glory.

This doesn't mean your request will always be granted, but your desire will be. To pray, "Your will be done," means your request, that thing which you think is most pleasing, might not always be granted, but your desire will be.

We often quote Psalm 37, verse 4. **"...he will give you the desires of your heart."** Absolutely! Amen. But let's not forget the first part of the verse. **"Delight yourself in the LORD, and he will give you the desires of your heart."** You see, when your delight is the Lord, your desire is to know him and make him known and you trust that he knows how best to accomplish this. This is how we effectively pray for healing, protection, and opportunity. "Lord, you know how I'm feeling. You know what I'm wanting for myself (or for them). Nevertheless, your will be done."

It's not about naming it and claiming it. It's not about blabbing it and grabbing it. Instead, it is honestly, transparently confessing your desire for that which you believe is most pleasing to God while at the same time acknowledging that he has a better plan than you think you might have. You posture yourself with a willingness to submit to his good and perfect providence, even when it doesn't look so good.

As William Cowper, an eighteenth-century poet, put it, "Judge not the Lord by feeble sense, but trust him for his grace; behind a frowning providence, he hides a smiling face." He does all things for his glory and your good. This is what Jesus did, for even though he requested that the cup be removed from him, he was willing to submit to the Father's will, and he did.

As we will learn later, in Mark, chapter 15, Jesus will indeed suffer what he most dreaded. As he hung on that cruel cross, he said these words: **"My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"** We can't erase, nor can we fully comprehend, the mystery and the magnitude that shrouds that event and those words, but we can conclude that because Jesus tasted death and was forsaken, all who are his followers will never have to.

Because Jesus drank the bitter cup and suffered that terrible hour, all who have repented of their sin and trusted in Jesus Christ alone for salvation will never, ever, *ever* have that experience. Jesus tasted death for you if you are in him.

I'd like to close by looking at Hebrews, chapter 5, verses 7-9. As the author of Hebrews is speaking about these events in Gethsemane and giving us some insight and detailing for us the significance of these events, he says,

"In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to him who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverence. Although he was a son, he learned obedience through what he suffered. And being made perfect, he [Jesus alone] became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him..."

That is both a praise and a warning. It's a praise for every single one of us who find ourselves in Christ Jesus today by faith. It is a warning for those who, as Hebrews puts it, still refuse to obey. If you've come this morning and you recognize your need of salvation and that you are not walking in obedience, in submission to and trust in Jesus Christ as Lord of your life, after I pray, there are going to be some counselors up front. I would ask that you come and talk with them so they can walk with you through this process of entrusting your life to him.

If you've just come for encouragement and prayer as well, we would love to walk down that road with you. We have a mighty Savior. We have a wonderful God. We have a great salvation. We have every reason to rejoice and every reason to trust him for his promises because of what he revealed previously, what he has done, and what he has promised to do on behalf of all who are his. Let's pray.

Father, Jesus, and Holy Spirit of God, thank you. Thank you for your power, your provision, and your good providence. Thank you for this salvation we have by your grace. Help us, Lord. Help us to trust you in all things. May your will be done, amen.

Now, to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and make you stand in the presence of his glory, blameless, with great joy, to the only God our Savior through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and power forevermore, amen. God bless you.