

Sermon Matthew 26:36-54 How to Prepare for a Really Tough Situation (Part 1)

Preached at Cloverdale 3/10/2024

³⁶ Then Jesus came with them to a place called Gethsemane, and said to the disciples, “Sit here while I go and pray over there.” ³⁷ And He took with Him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and He began to be sorrowful and deeply distressed. ³⁸ Then He said to them, “My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even to death. Stay here and watch with Me.”

³⁹ He went a little farther and fell on His face, and prayed, saying, “O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You *will*.”

⁴⁰ Then He came to the disciples and found them sleeping, and said to Peter, “What! Could you not watch with Me one hour? ⁴¹ Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed *is* willing, but the flesh *is* weak.”

⁴² Again, a second time, He went away and prayed, saying, “O My Father, if this cup cannot pass away from Me unless I drink it, Your will be done.” ⁴³ And He came and found them asleep again, for their eyes were heavy.

⁴⁴ So He left them, went away again, and prayed the third time, saying the same words. ⁴⁵ Then He came to His disciples and said to them, “Are *you* still sleeping and resting? Behold, the hour is at hand, and the Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of sinners. ⁴⁶ Rise, let us be going. See, My betrayer is at hand.”

Background: Jesus tells his disciples, ² “You know that after two days is the Passover, and the Son of Man will be delivered up to be crucified.” He has been telling them since Matthew Chapter 16 that he would be killed and raised the third day.

Our story begins with Jesus bringing his disciples to Gethsemane which translated means “an oil press”. Olive oil is precious but must be obtained through the crushing process to extract the oil. He tells them to sit there while he goes a little further away specifically to pray. Jesus in this location is undergoing a crushing pressure from what he is about to go through for us.

Jesus brings his disciples with him. Why? It is comforting to have others supporting you when you are about to go through a tough time.

Jesus takes three of his key disciples with him a little further. It is good to have an inner circle of friends you can share with. That is usually for me, a very small number. He goes further to pray alone.

- We need to know how to pray alone when dealing with and preparing for a tough situation.

Notice the following.

- He is deeply distressed and extremely sorrowful. He only shares this with the three disciples...everyone doesn't need to know.
- There must be something important about the need to pray especially when you are full of sorrow and distressed about an upcoming situation.
- His prayer: recognizes God as his Father (humility)
 - Asking if the cup he is facing can be avoided.
 - God's will and not his will be done.

Jesus comes back and finds his three disciples sleeping.

⁴⁰Then He came to the disciples and found them sleeping, and said to Peter, "What! Could you not watch with Me one hour? ⁴¹Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed *is* willing, but the flesh *is* weak."

He presents a question to Peter, "Couldn't you watch with me for an hour?"

He tells them to watch and pray. The power of doing both helps keep you from falling into temptation. Our spirit wants to watch and pray with Jesus. We are willing to do it, but in our flesh it is difficult. Our flesh doesn't want to pray for an hour, our flesh doesn't want to watch either.

What we want to do for Jesus conflicts with what our flesh wants to do.

Jesus goes back to pray a second time and prays for the same things again:

- Can this cup be taken away from me?
- If not, Your will be done, not mine.

He comes back to check on the disciples, but they are again not alert because their eyes are heavy.

Jesus doesn't let the lack of support from his disciples keep him from praying so he goes back a third time.

Notice he prays the same prayer again and goes back to check on the disciples and asks them if they are still sleeping. Jesus already knows the answer to the question, yet he asks it not for his benefit, but for their benefit.

The questions are still applicable today, are we still sleeping?

Next, Jesus tells them time is up. He is about to be betrayed to sinners who do not believe him. Since it is about to go down now, he tells them to rise up because it is time to go and face the challenge ahead.

So, let's review some key elements of this story to help us understand what is going on.

Stay here, where you are, while I go over there. We need to stay here until he comes back from over there.

What does it mean to "watch with me?"

- To be active and vigilant. Watching for the coming of the enemy.

What is this cup he mentions?

- The cup represents his blood sacrifice for the remission of our sins.

Why pray three times for the same thing when he already knows what is supposed to happen?

- Wait a minute. It would almost seem that Jesus is asking to avoid going to the cross! There are several opinions about this. What is it that we actually know about Jesus?
- He called himself the Son of Man. Because he was fully man, he could relate to our circumstances and afflictions. Hebrews 4:15. (hypostatic union).
- But He also called himself the Son of God. He is truly God with us.
- In his human nature, he experiences everything that we go through. The Garden proves that Jesus as a man is going through.
- In His divine nature, he lines up His will with that of God the Father.
- The prevailing opinion is not that Jesus is trying to avoid the cross....but he is going through this agony and this process not for his sake alone.
 - I think he was doing this for us. Jesus did certain things that he didn't have to, but he did them for us, for our benefit, and for our application.
 - He didn't get baptized because he needed to be baptized, he did it for us.
 - He didn't pray out loud at Lazarus' tomb for himself, he did it for us.
 - He didn't spend 40 days in the wilderness without food because he needed to, he did it because we needed him to.
 - He is still the way, the truth, and the life – He is showing us how to live for the King!

He is showing us in the garden that:

- He understands what you are going through.
- If you know the tough time is coming, He is showing you how to prepare for it.....watch and pray.
- The importance and power of watching and praying.
 - Tells us what to watch out for....haters.
- That it is okay to pray the same prayer to God – persistence in prayer is not necessarily a lack of faith.
- Shows a pattern for prayer (humility, turning from our will to His will).
- He shows us that the most important thing is to be in alignment with the will of God.
 - How can I be in alignment with the will of God when I may not know His will, or I may not want to do His well.....keep praying.

In the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus prays the same prayer three times before his arrest. The three time repetition is symbolic. It shows how troubled he really was but also how committed he was to being in the will of God.

Jesus expresses his distress about the judgment he is about to face and all the evil and hurtful acts associated with the cross.



Furthermore, the repetition of the prayer serves to emphasize the importance of prayer itself as a means of seeking strength, guidance, and communion with God, even in the most challenging of circumstances. By praying the same prayer three times, Jesus sets an example for his followers, showing them the importance of persistence and reliance on God in times of trial (AI).

What should we do as a result of this lesson from the Garden?

- Watch and pray. Watch for situations where the enemy is at work.
- Pray when tough times appear.
- Pray with persistence. It may not be what you want to hear or asked for, but it will prepare you to accept and abide in His will; this brings God glory. Doing His will sets you up for success.
- Be prepared to know how to respond when trouble and hard times arise.
- Know that this trouble can't take you out; you will have victory in the end.
- Answer the questions that Jesus asks His disciples, "Are you still sleeping".
 - You can be with Jesus, in church, and still be unaware and miss what God wants you to see.
- Expect to be strengthened and encouraged while praying (Luke 22:43, an angel comes to minister to him).
- While you are waiting for Jesus to finish, wait right there. Don't move from trusting and waiting on Him. He's coming back for you.

Sermon Matthew 26:36-54 Watching and Praying in Advance Can Help You Escape Falling Into Temptation Today (Lessons from the Garden, Part 2)

Preached at Cloverdale and Maxwell 3/17/24

⁴⁰ Then He came to the disciples and found them sleeping, and said to Peter, “What! Could you not watch with Me one hour? ⁴¹ Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed *is* willing, but the flesh *is* weak.”

⁴² Again, a second time, He went away and prayed, saying, “O My Father, if this cup cannot pass away from Me unless I drink it, Your will be done.” ⁴³ And He came and found them asleep again, for their eyes were heavy.

⁴⁴ So He left them, went away again, and prayed the third time, saying the same words. ⁴⁵ Then He came to His disciples and said to them, “Are *you* still sleeping and resting? Behold, the hour is at hand, and the Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of sinners. ⁴⁶ Rise, let us be going. See, My betrayer is at hand.”

Background: Last week we discussed Jesus’ prayer in the garden. He prays three times as he is in tremendous sorrow and despair. The cross is in front of him. Key points are that Jesus is teaching all of us how to prepare for tough times by following his example from these lessons from the garden.

Today we want to see the importance of watching and praying. Jesus explains this in the garden lesson.

What we see is:

- The disciples are with him physically, I mean they show up and they are waiting for Jesus to finish and return, but spiritually they are missing in action.
- Jesus asks after the first prayer, What! Could you not watch with me for just an hour?
 - Now for me, praying for an hour seemed impossible. Jesus could hang on the cross for 9 hours but I find it difficult to spend just one hour in the comfort of my home praying and watching with him.
 - The question for them as disciples is the same question for us today, can you watch and pray without falling asleep?
- Well, you may be asking why is watching and praying so important? Jesus explains that watching and praying can help keep you from falling to temptations in life.

What is the temptation that we avoid through watching and praying?

- Falling short of the will of God.
- Falling short of the glory of God.
- Responding inappropriately when our challenges and haters arrive.

Why is it time to go now that Judas has arrived?

- There is a time to pray and a time to move forward. Don't move until you know the will of God.
- After watching and persistent prayer, Jesus is ready to deal with the difficult situation at hand. He must clearly know the will of God so it is time to move because the enemy is coming.
 - Are you ready to deal with what's coming in front of you?
 - Not all of his disciples then and now are properly prepared even though they show up.
 - They show up in the garden, they show up in the temple, but they don't get the full benefit and miss it.

⁴⁷ And while He was still speaking, behold, Judas, one of the twelve, with a great multitude with swords and clubs, came from the chief priests and elders of the people. ⁴⁸ Now His betrayer had given them a sign, saying, "Whomever I kiss, He is the One; seize Him." ⁴⁹ Immediately he went up to Jesus and said, "Greetings, Rabbi!" and kissed Him.

⁵⁰ But Jesus said to him, "Friend, why have you come?"

Then they came and laid hands on Jesus and took Him. ⁵¹ And suddenly, one of those *who were* with Jesus stretched out *his* hand and drew his sword, struck the servant of the high priest, and cut off his ear.

⁵² But Jesus said to him, "Put your sword in its place, for all who take the sword will perish by the sword. ⁵³ Or do you think that I cannot now pray to My Father, and He will provide Me with more than twelve legions of angels? ⁵⁴ How then could the Scriptures be fulfilled, that it must happen thus?"

How was Jesus able to call Judas a friend while in the middle of being betrayed? Because he watched and prayed before it happened.

Why did Jesus call him "friend?" To let him know he could still be forgiven even for this if he recognized, repented, and came correct. Also, it must have been the will of God.

He asks Judas a question, why have you come? Jesus asks Judas the question that he already knows the answer to. He already knows why Judas has come, so why ask the question?

If Judas were to ever answer the question truthfully, he would know his motives were wrong and he might repent and be saved.

The question still applies today to us, why have you come? Do you really believe or is there another reason?

John 18 account shows the following points:

- Judas knew the place where they were because he had been there with them before.
- Peter is the one with the sword (verse 10).
- Jesus tells him to put it away....he fully accepts the cup which his Father has given him to drink.



Judas knew that was a previous place of fellowship and perhaps prayer. He shows up where he knows Jesus will be, but he is there for the wrong reasons.

So Jesus is able to face this most difficult season, he sees and knows what's coming and yet he shows tremendous restraint and power because he fully knows how all of this will end and, he fully understands the will of God in this situation. He finds this power and revelation through watching and praying.

Peter responds differently and cuts off an ear.

The Peter principle:

Peter defends Jesus which is a good thing but he does it the wrong way. You cannot win a spiritual battle in the flesh.

I wonder if he was able to watch and pray with Jesus rather than sleeping if he could have avoided the temptation to retaliate in the flesh. He was using the wrong sword.

If we don't watch and pray, you will make mistakes that Jesus will have to correct. You will be missing the mark and missing the will of God. All this teaching and all this time spent with Jesus and he still fell to temptation and his night of falling wasn't over yet.

Jesus tells him: ¹¹ So Jesus said to Peter, "Put your sword into the sheath. Shall I not drink the cup which My Father has given Me?"

Jesus is prepared to accept the cup. Put your sword away. Put your plans away. They don't line up with the will of God. I don't need you to do this for me, what I needed was for you to watch and pray.

This is amazing to me because just being with Jesus, loving Jesus, defending Jesus, knowing Jesus, walking with Jesus, showing up with Jesus, serving Jesus.....doesn't mean necessarily that you are in the will of God. You might be acting contrary to God's will, and not know it.

Look at the lessons from the Garden. What is Jesus teaching us about watching and praying so we don't fall into temptation? That is exactly what he is trying to show us as his disciples, we need to be watching and praying in order to know the will of God in our own situations.

- Do you know the will of God for your life?
- Do you know God's will in the situation and season you are in right now, in the decisions you have to make right now?
- Do you know what to watch out for today?

What happened in the garden?

- Prayer was happening, God's will was revealed in the garden.
- Preparation and refreshing was happening in the garden.
- The enemy showed up in the garden.
- Ministry opportunities showed up in the garden.



- Sin and missing the will of God happened in the garden.
- Healing happened in the garden.
- Confirmation and obedience to the will of God happened in the garden.

The difference in watching and praying is you are better prepared to handle the trials that may be coming your way. Jesus was prepared and gained victory in the garden when the tough times came. Peter failed and responded in the flesh in the garden. They were both in the garden, both started out praying, but only one Jesus was prepared to deal with a tough situation.

Questions for today:

Has Jesus asked you to watch and pray? Yes.

Are you still sleeping when you should be watching and praying? Why?

Why have you come looking for Jesus?

Do you know that if you are in the will of God, the scriptures are being fulfilled in your life?

What do the scriptures say about you? Don't you know it may have to happen like this, your cup may not be pleasant, but if God gave it to you, His will is that He will help you through it for His glory and to fulfill the plan for your life.

The enemy is still coming and showing up today. Tough times are still in front of us. Be prepared, glory and victory are on the other side of trouble when you know His will.

How do I know when people are not watching or alert? They miss ministry opportunities. They respond to their problems in the flesh rather than the Spirit. They miss the will of God.

I'm going back to the garden, to watch out for things and pray that His will be done and not mine. So when the enemy comes, when disappointment comes, when the bad news comes, I still have peace and know how to respond....because I know how the story ends.