

Lasting Impressions from the Last Week of Jesus' Life
The Last Prayer: Thy Will Be Done
Matthew 26:36-46

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Text Introduction: We return this morning to a series of messages concerning the “last week of Jesus’ life.” As a matter of fact, we are now on the evening before His death. Later in this same evening, Jesus will be handed over first to Jewish authorities, then Roman authorities for crucifixion on Friday. At this point, we certainly remind ourselves again that Jesus knows His earthly fate. As a result, His actions and words take on even more significance. Today, we consider the last prayer. Now actually, this is not the last prayer. Jesus prays from the cross several what we might call today—sentence prayers. “My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?” Jesus prayed, “Father, into your hands I entrust My spirit.” He even prayed for those who carried out His death sentence by praying, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.” But, here is the final extended time in prayer. It happens in what the Bible refers to as the Garden of Gethsemane. Luke gives us the detail that He made His way there “as usual.” Luke also simply called the garden “the place.” We read into these phrases that this was not new for Jesus. This was His habit. Thus begins our learning process this morning.

Text: ³⁶ Then Jesus came with them to a place called Gethsemane, and He told the disciples, "Sit here while I go over there and pray." ³⁷ Taking along Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, He began to be sorrowful and deeply distressed. ³⁸ Then He said to them, "My soul is swallowed up in sorrow —to the point of death. Remain here and stay awake with Me." ³⁹ Going a little farther, He fell facedown and prayed, "My Father! If it is possible, let this cup pass from Me. Yet not as I will, but as You will."

⁴⁰ Then He came to the disciples and found them sleeping. He asked Peter. "So, couldn't you stay awake with Me one hour? ⁴¹ Stay awake and pray, so that you won't enter into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak."

⁴² Again, a second time, He went away and prayed, "My Father, if this cannot pass unless I drink it, Your will be done." ⁴³ And He came again and found them sleeping, because they could not keep their eyes open.

⁴⁴ After leaving them, He went away again and prayed a third time, saying the same thing once more. ⁴⁵ Then He came to the disciples and said to them, "Are you still sleeping and resting? Look, the time is near. The Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of sinners. ⁴⁶ Get up; let's go! See—My betrayer is near."

Introduction:

From Jesus’ example, what do we learn about prayer? Again, I point to the main idea of this series. Jesus’ life is at a hectic, frantic pace. Time is of the essence. What does He do? He draws aside so that He can pray. He goes to His spot—His place and talks to the Father. What an incredible example for us. Though all of us think that we are busy and that our time is precious and there is more to do than we can get done, I don’t think any of us would be so arrogant as to say that we are experiencing or have

experienced the kind of agony that Jesus will face in those next hours. So, there is a great lesson on the importance of spending time alone with God. What happens when we take the time to spend time with the Father?

1. God Calms us for the difficult experiences of our life.

The first reason that we need these garden experiences of life is that God uses these times to calm us for the difficult experiences of life.

Several emotions mark this period of Jesus' life.

Loneliness from the departure of His friends.

Some of the most chaotic times of life can also be lonely times. Even when there is lots of activity, the loneliness can be overwhelming. I recall the words of a friend at another friend's funeral. "I've never had so many people around me, but I've never felt so alone in all of my life."

Closeness to His Heavenly Father.

The only good of feeling isolated from our friends is that we are drawn closer to God.

Awareness of His future.

And good or bad, there is a certain comfort in knowing what is in our future.

This garden time is a time of preparation. That's why we need frequent times of being with God. These times prepare us for the struggles that might be unexpectedly coming. One other thing about these times with God—It is hard to be in worship and worry at the same time.

2. God Conforms our will to His will.

God uses these garden times in our lives to conform our will to His will. Jesus prayed three times. There is a small change in the wording from the first prayer to the second and third prayer. Jesus moves to accepting God's will. He moves from asking, "Father, if it is possible" to "Father, if it is not possible."

3 Lessons Concerning God's Will

We can be honest with God concerning His will for our lives.

Sometimes God's will is difficult.

We must accept God's will in our lives.

Mark give us a detail that Jesus said after the first prayer, "All things are possible for you." Jesus gives us the example of how we are to pray—full of faith that God can do all things, but full of faith that we must carry out His will.

These garden times help us to sort out God's will for our lives. This time should help us hear from God. Tim Hansel in a book entitled, *When I Relax I Feel Guilty*, tells the story about two men walking in downtown New York. One is an American Indian. Suddenly, he stops and says, "I hear a cricket."

His friend laughs and says, "You are crazy."

"No, I'm sure of it." He begins to look for the cricket. He finds the cricket across the street in one lone shrub in a cement planter.

Astonished, his friend asks, "How did you do that?"

The Native American says, "It all depends on what you are listening for. Here let me show you." He took out some coins and dropped them on the pavement. Every eye turned toward the dropped coins.

What are we listening for? We need to get away and hear God's voice for our lives.

3. **God Creates in us the courage to do His will.**

Note the Transformation that takes place:

Sorrow⇒ Struggle⇒ Strength

Sorrow in verse 38. Struggle in verse 39. Strength in verse 46. The garden times will move us from sorrow to struggle to strength.

Two prisoners were in a Soviet prison camp cell. One is praying. The other scoffs and says, "Prayers won't help you get out of this dreadful place any faster." Opening his eyes, the person praying answers, "I do not pray to get out of prison but to do the will of God."

Two Final Thoughts:

If Jesus needed this time with the Father, how much more do we need this similar time? We need to be calmed for the struggles that we face. We need our wills conformed to the will of the Father. We need strength to face the challenges of doing God's will. We don't get this power by reading a book. We don't get this help by any other means than being with the Father. For this reason, this brief episode from the last week of Jesus' life ought to leave this lasting impression upon us.

We must place the greatest kind of priority on this time. Nobody else is going to help you place priority on spending time with God. As a matter of fact, most people will probably detract you from spending time with Him. But, oh what a difference this priority will have in your life.

I remember reading years ago about a village of Christians who made much of their commitment to pray. They each had a spot in which to pray. When a fellow believer grew lax in their commitment to pray, the others would challenge them by saying, "Brother (Sister), I see that the grass grows on your path." Has the path grown with grass to your place? Are we too busy to pray? Then, we are too busy.