**THE GOSPEL OF LUKE**

**SUFFERING IN THE GARDEN**

**Luke 22:35-62**

**INTRODUCTION**

Today we continue our extended meditation on the suffering of Jesus in the Gospel of Luke as we move closer and closer to Good Friday.

When we consider the suffering of Jesus, I think that most of us would think first about what happened after he was arrested: how he was beaten, how he was mocked, and how he was ultimately crucified on a Roman cross. Those are all significant elements of Jesus’ suffering, and we will be spending more time considering how Jesus suffered in those ways in the next couple of weeks. But as we will see today, that’s not where Jesus’ suffering began. His suffering began before his arrest in the quiet solitude of a Garden.

As Jesus prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane on the Mount of Olives, he would suffer the agony of considering the suffering that lay ahead of him. Let’s not miss this. Jesus didn’t face his imminent death with cool confidence. He faced it *terrified*.

Before he went to the cross, he had to go to the garden. Before his body ever suffered, his spirit suffered first as he wrestled with his calling to die.

There is mystery here, and there is wonder. Scottish theologian Donald MacLeod describes this eloquently when he writes,

“The wonder of the love of Christ for his people is not that for their sake he faced death without fear, but that for their sake he faced it, terrified. Terrified by what he knew, and terrified by what he did not know, he took damnation lovingly.” – Donald McLeod

We see Christ’s love displayed on the cross, but we also see his love displayed in the Garden, because it is only in the Garden that we see just how hard it was for Jesus to go to the cross.

It seems strange to say that Jesus was scared of death, doesn’t it? We know that Jesus is the eternal Son of God who is just as much God as the Father is God and the Spirit is God, and it’s obvious from the Bible that God does not fear. He never becomes afraid. When his enemies plot against him, he laughs. When Satan works his schemes on the earth, he oversees it all in the omnipotence of divine sovereignty. God does not fear.

But Jesus isn’t just fully God. He is also fully man. And as a man, he chose to veil his divine glory and power and live as a man with the same limitations and weaknesses as us, including the weakness of fear.

And the one thing that sustained Jesus in his weakness was prayer. That’s what this text is ultimately about. It’s about how prayer sustained Jesus in his moment of greatest need, and it’s about how prayer will sustain us as well.

The title of this message is **Suffering in the Garden**. My aim today is to show you that **Praying Like Jesus Means Praying with Submission.**

We will have three points today:

1. The Servants of Jesus
2. The Suffering of Jesus
3. The Submission of Jesus

(1) **THE SERVANTS OF JESUS**

As our text opens, we see that it turns our attention to his disciples first. Jesus asks them a question in verse 35: “When I sent you out with no moneybag or knapsack or sandals, did you lack anything?” They said, “Nothing”. Jesus is referring to Luke 10, where he sent out the seventy-two disciples to go out into the surrounding villages to heal the sick, and to preach the good news of the Kingdom of God. Before he sent them out, he told them to go without providing for themselves. They were to trust that God would provide for their needs through the people they were trying to reach:

“Carry no moneybag, no knapsack, no sandals, and greet no one on the road… whenever you enter a town and they receive you, eat what is set before you.” (Luke 10:4, 8)

Some people interpret these verses as setting a template or model for missions work today. They say that if you go out into the missions field, you should go out like the seventy-two. Don’t go with all your fundraising in place, or with plans for where you’re going to live. Just walk by faith.

Missions work undoubtedly requires faith. But here, Jesus makes it clear that this doesn’t necessarily look like going out with no provisions or plans because he tells them in verse 36 to do the exact opposite! “But now let the one who has a moneybag take it, and likewise a knapsack.” Why the change in instructions?

Verse 37: “For I tell you that this Scripture must be fulfilled in me: ‘And he was numbered with the transgressors.’ For what is written about me has its fulfillment.” Jesus is quoting Isaiah 53 here, the text about the suffering servant, the one who would be “pierced for our transgressions” and “crushed for our iniquities”. He’s the one who would heal us by his wounds. He’s the one who would make many righteous as the Lord laid our iniquities upon him. And here, Jesus says that all of that was written about *him*.

Jesus is the suffering servant who would suffer on our behalf. He would suffer God’s judgment so that his followers wouldn’t have to. But that didn’t mean that they would be saved from man’s judgment. Those who numbered Jesus with the transgressors would do the same with his disciples, which meant that life would never be the same for them again. As they went out to preach the gospel, they wouldn’t be able to rely on the provision and hospitality of strangers like before, because they wouldn’t be welcomed in the same way. That’s why they have to take their own moneybags and knapsacks. They would have to provide for themselves.

Jesus says something else in verse 36 that’s very interesting. He says, “And let the one who has no sword sell his cloak and buy one”. On first glance, it looks like Jesus is rallying his disciples for an armed rebellion. It appears that he’s calling them to take up their arms and fight when the Jews come to number their master with the transgressors. That’s how the disciples interpreted it. In verse 38 they say, “Look, Lord, here are two swords”, and Jesus says “It is enough”. They interpreted his call to sell their cloaks and buy swords literally. But is that what Jesus meant?

The obvious answer is no. If Jesus meant it literally, then what would two swords accomplish? Two swords, against the entire Jewish people? Two swords, against the might of the Roman Empire? That’s not going to get them very far. So when Jesus says, “It is enough” in verse 38, he’s not saying, “Great, we have enough swords to conquer the Roman Empire.” He’s saying, “Enough of this. Stop getting more swords, because you’re not going to need them.”

That’s exactly how things unfold in verses 47-53. As Judas leads the priests and temple guards to arrest Jesus, one of the disciples draws a sword and strikes off the ear of the high priest’s servant. But rather than lead them into battle with the second of their two swords, Jesus says, “No more of this!” He stops the battle before it has a chance to begin, and even pauses to heal his enemy’s wounded ear.

Jesus isn’t interested in leading an armed rebellion. He isn’t even interested in defending himself and his disciples. So what was he talking about in verse 36 when he said, “Let the one who has no sword sell his cloak and buy one”?

The answer is found in verse 40. As Jesus led his disciples up the Mount of Olives just outside of Jerusalem, he says, “Pray that you may not enter into temptation.” Here we find the true war. It’s the war against sin. It’s the war that each follower of Jesus must fight in their hearts. It’s the war that threatens not only to kill the body, but to kill the soul. And the weapon that Jesus puts into our hands is prayer.

Now we understand what Jesus meant in verse 36. When Jesus told them to sell their cloaks and buy swords, he wasn’t speaking literally about a physical war. He was speaking figuratively about a spiritual war. We are to prepare for this spiritual war against sin as we would prepare for a war against human enemies, and the only way to do that is through prayer.

This is the key theme of Chapter 22. It’s prayer. Jesus had just told Peter in verses 31-32 that Satan demanded to have the apostles, but he wouldn’t get them because Jesus prayed for them. Prayer was the means of their deliverance from the devil. Prayer was what enabled them to stand firm in their faith. And now, Jesus exhorts them to pray for themselves. Going into this spiritual war without prayer is like going into a physical war without a sword. We need to pray that we would not fall into temptation, so that sin would have no dominion over us.

But as Jesus returns from his own time of prayer in the Garden, what does he find? Verse 45 tells us that he found them “sleeping for sorrow”. They had finally come to grips with the fact that Jesus was about to die, and that life was about to get hard for them, and it made them very sad. But rather than pray, and trust God, and fight against their temptations to doubt God’s plans and despair, they went to sleep.

That’s so much easier than praying, isn’t it? That’s especially the case when you’re sad. You’re so weighed down by the sorrow of your circumstances that you just want to sleep them away, so that maybe when you wake up, all your problems will have gone away. But they won’t be gone, because sleep doesn’t fix our problems. Prayer does. There’s a war to fight, and it can’t be fought in our sleep. It must be fought through prayer.

Jesus knows this, which is why he repeats this call to pray in verse 46, but he does so with his characteristic gentleness and patience. He doesn’t say, “I can’t believe you’re sleeping, you useless disciples!” He says, “Why are you sleeping? Rise and pray that you may not enter into temptation.”

They failed to pray in that situation, and that failure would have consequences. I don’t think it’s a coincidence that, shortly after Jesus is arrested and taken away, Peter denies knowing Jesus, not once, not twice, but three times. That’s Peter giving into temptation. The temptation to love the approval of man more than he loved Jesus. The temptation to keep his life rather than lose it for Jesus’ sake. The temptation to disassociate himself from Jesus so that he wouldn’t be numbered with the transgressors. He gave in to those temptations because he didn’t fight with the weapon of prayer. He chose to sleep instead.

We must not fall into the same trap. We must pray, even when it’s hard. Even when sorrow threatens to overwhelm us, we must pray. That’s what Jesus wants us to do. That’s what we must do if we are to overcome our sin.

(2) **THE SUFFERING OF JESUS**

Having taught his disciples about the importance of prayer, Jesus now turns to pray by himself, because the disciples aren’t the only ones being tempted. Jesus is being tempted as well. And the only way for him to overcome this temptation is to pray. This leads to our second point: the Suffering of Jesus.

Verse 41 tells us that, after he instructed his disciples to pray, “he withdrew from them about a stone’s throw, and knelt down and prayed”.

Praying together with other believers is an amazing means of grace. Personally, I find it easier to pray longer, and with more faith, when I’m praying with other believers. But Jesus shows us that there are times when we need to pray by ourselves. Even when he was surrounded by people he could have prayed with, Jesus chose to withdraw from them and spend time with his Father in solitude.

I think this is one of the ways that the depth of our relationship with God is tested. When it comes to praying with other people, there are many reasons why we like to do so. Some of those reasons can be good, some can be bad. For example, when we pray with other people, we know that it gives us the chance to encourage the people we’re praying with. People are encouraged when they know that you’re praying for them, and they’re encouraged when they hear the words that you’re praying over them. Those are good reasons. It’s a good thing to want to encourage others through prayer. But our motives aren’t always so pure. Sometimes we want to pray with other people because it gives us a chance to show off our eloquence or display our theological knowledge. We want to pray with others because we want the attention that it brings.

But when it comes to praying by yourself, all of that goes out the window. People don’t know that you’re praying. They don’t know what you’re praying. The only one who knows and hears is God. That’s the real test for whether you believe in the power of prayer. That’s the real test for whether you believe that God hears you. It’s whether you spend time in prayer when only God can hear you.

It takes faith to pray by yourself, and Jesus had a limitless supply of it. That’s why Jesus often withdrew to pray by himself, and that’s why Jesus withdrew now in his hour of greatest need.

And what does he pray? Verse 42: “Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me.” In the Old Testament, “the cup” was a symbol of God’s wrath, his judgment poured out for the sins of the nations. We see that in Psalm 75:8:

“For in the hand of the Lord there is a cup with foaming wine, well mixed, and he pours out from it, and all the wicked of the earth shall drain it down to the dregs.”

We see that in Jeremiah 25:15:

“Thus the Lord, the God of Israel, said to me: ‘Take from my hand this cup of the wine of wrath, and make all the nations to whom I send you drink it.’”

We see it in Isaiah 51:17:

“Wake yourself, wake yourself, stand up, O Jerusalem, you who have drunk from the hand of the Lord the cup of his wrath, who have drunk to the dregs the bowl, the cup of staggering.”

We even see it in the New Testament book of Revelation 14:9-10:

“If anyone worships the beast and its image and receives a mark on his forehead or on his hand, he also will drink the wine of God's wrath, poured full strength into the cup of his anger, and he will be tormented with fire and sulfur in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb.”

It’s undeniable that when Jesus prays “Remove this cup from me”, he’s asking the Father to remove his *wrath*. Jesus was about to face God’s righteous *fury* against sin, but why? Jesus never sinned. Not even once. He obeyed God’s law perfectly in deed, thought, and motivation. He did everything the Father sent him to do and never once strayed from God's will. Jesus was and is and always will be the only one didn’t deserve God’s wrath, and yet, he was about to drink God’s wrath to the dregs.

There are only two possible reasons for why Jesus would face God’s wrath: either God was about to unjustly pour out his wrath on his Son for what he didn’t deserve, or he was about to justly pour out his wrath on his Son for what *others* deserved. Since God only does what is just, option two must follow. God was justly pouring out his wrath against us on *him*.

This is the heart of the gospel. Jesus suffered God’s wrath against us so that we would never have to. On the cross, Jesus died as our substitute. He died as the Lamb of God who takes away our sins so that we could be saved from God’s judgment. This is our only hope for salvation. *Jesus* is our only hope for salvation. If we are to be saved from God’s judgment, we must look to Jesus. We must trust in him as our Saviour and receive from him the gift of God’s forgiveness, both now and forevermore.

The cross reminds us that God’s wrath against those who trust in Christ has been satisfied, but the Garden reminds us that this was no easy task. Jesus Christ, the perfect One who loved us with a perfect love, found the prospect of going to the cross nearly unbearable. “Is there any other way? Does your wrath have to fall on me to save them? Oh Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me!”

Jesus didn’t want to die. He didn’t have a death wish. He didn’t want to suffer the pain of Judas betraying him, or the disappointment of Peter denying him, or the shame of the Jews mocking him, or the torment of the Romans brutalizing his body. And most of all, he didn’t want to face the absolute horror of the Father abandoning him, cursing him on that cursed tree to suffer and die alone. That’s why he prayed, “Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me.”

And you know what? The Father *heard* him. Speaking of the Garden, the writer of Hebrews 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.” (Hebrews 5:7)

The Father heard him because of his reverence, but that didn’t mean that he would answer his request. Of course he would have taken the cup from his beloved Son if he could have. What Father wouldn’t? But the sad reality was that there was no other way. The Father wanted to save his Son, but he did not will to save his Son, because it was his will to save us instead.

And so, although the cup wasn’t removed, verse 43 tells us that the Father sent an angel from heaven to strengthen Jesus. The Father strengthened him in his moment of weakness by giving him supernatural aid. But that didn’t take away his Son’s suffering. If anything, at least for the moment, his suffering intensified.

Verse 44: “And being in an *agony* he prayed more earnestly; and his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground.” I have been around some mighty prayer warriors, but no one who prayed like this. Jesus was praying with such desperation and fervor that his body dripped with sweat. He was overcome by agony, weakened by the thought of the suffering to come, as he kept praying. “Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me.”

If you are ever tempted to doubt the love of Christ, consider this. Consider your Saviour in the Garden suffering in agony and lifting up loud cries and tears for the Father’s deliverance. And then consider him rising up from prayer with strength in his eyes and love in his heart, ready to go to the cross *for you*.

Jesus suffered in that Garden for you and for me, and for all who would trust in him for salvation. And now, because of his sacrifice, we never have to go through Gethsemane ourselves. We may be brought to our knees in prayer. We may cry out to God for strength in our hour of greatest need. But one thing is for sure: we will never have to suffer the agony that Jesus faced in the Garden as he prepared to face the wrath of God. As Donald MacLeod writes,

“Gethsemane is as unique as Calvary exactly because, as much as the cross, it belongs not to church history but to salvation history.” – Donald McLeod

(3) **THE SUBMISSION OF JESUS**

This leads us to the most remarkable feature of our text today and to our third point: the Submission of Jesus.

As Jesus pleaded with his Father to remove the cup from him, he did so with absolute submission. At both the beginning and the end of his prayer, Jesus deferred to his Father’s will. “Father, *if you are willing*, remove this cup from me. *Nevertheless, not my will, but yours, be done*.”

Has there ever been something that you felt you desperately needed? That one thing that you believed would lift your darkness? That one thing that would give you peace? It may be the salvation of a wayward child or your ailing parents. It may be healing from physical or mental illness. It may be for God to bring you true love. Whatever it may be, you feel that it’s the one thing, the most important thing in the world to have, and without it you’re not sure if you’ll be able to go on. Without it, you’re not sure if you’ll ever be able to fully trust God.

For Jesus, that one thing was the removal of God’s wrath. The imminent fall of God’s wrath upon him brought him into such a state of darkness that his sweat became like heavy drops of blood dripping from his body onto the ground. But as desperately as he wanted this deliverance, there was one thing that he wanted even more: to see his Father’s will done.

This was Jesus’ greatest desire. It was to do his Father’s will, and to see his Father’s will done. And if that required him to suffer the nightmare that awaited him, he was willing to do it. There was nothing that Jesus desired more than the fulfillment of his Father’s will, even if it cost him his life.

That’s what perfect obedience looks like. That’s what pure submission does. It puts the will of another above the deepest desires of your own. The world has never seen such submission, and never will again, because it takes a perfect man to submit like this to God.

As impossible as it may seem for us to imitate Jesus in his submission, this is God’s desire for the Christian. He wants to see us submit to him like his perfect Son submitted to him. We may not do it perfectly or consistently, but by the grace of God and the power of the Spirit within us, we must learn to do it nonetheless. We must learn to pray, “Father, save my wayward child, yet not my will, but yours be done.” We must learn to pray, “Father, heal me of my sickness, yet not my will, but yours be done.” We must learn to pray, “Father, provide a spouse for me”, or “a job for me” or even “justice for me”, “yet not my will, but yours be done.”

This is what Jesus taught all along. From the very beginning of his ministry, he taught:

“If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it.” (Luke 9:23-24)

This is what it means to deny yourself. This is what it means to die to yourself. It’s submitting your will to God’s will, so that what you want most in all of life is to do his will, and to see his will done.

**CONCLUSION**

Where does all this leave us? What are we meant to take away from this intimate account of Jesus’ last hours before his death? When it comes to a text like this, we need to realize that the most important application isn’t to *do* more. It’s to *love* more. We love because he first loved us, and today, we have seen a profound display of his love. And if that leads us to love Jesus more, to worship him with greater zeal, to live for him with greater passion, then the Scriptures will have done their work.

But what does loving Jesus more look like? I think our text suggests two things, and they both have to do with prayer: we are to pray more faithfully, and we are to pray more submissively.

You could say that Jesus’ dying wish was for his disciples to pray. It’s the last thing he said to them before he was arrested. “Pray so that you will not fall into temptation”. Jesus wants us to wage war against our sin. To sell our cloaks, buy our swords, and to fight against sin with *prayer*. Will you do that? Will you pray regularly with your brothers and sisters in Christ? Will you pray regularly by yourselves in quiet solitude with only God listening to your petitions? Will you put your sin to death and silence the tempting words of the devil through prayer? That’s what Jesus wants us to do, and that’s what those who love Jesus will do.

Jesus wants us to pray more faithfully, and Jesus wants us to pray more submissively. He wants us to pray like he prayed. He wants us to lay down our lives. He wants us to bow our wills to God’s. And nowhere is that more important to express than in prayer. May the phrase “not my will, but yours be done” be one that is repeated constantly in our prayers as we learn to submit ourselves to the Father as Jesus did.

Last month, I asked Pastor Tim to plan our annual week of prayer, which is coming up next week. As a leadership team we were aware that this week of prayer would be crucial for us as a church. We have felt an increasing burden to pray, both by ourselves, and together as a church, which is why I asked Pastor Tim to devote most of his time to preparing for the week of prayer. And do you know what theme he came up with? *Self-Denial*.

That was before I studied Luke 22 and realized that it was primarily about prayer. That was before I knew that I would be preaching this sermon on the Garden a week before our week of prayer. I believe that God is getting our attention. He is calling us to pray: to pray for submission, and to pray with submission, that we might learn to pray like Jesus.