**Pastor Tim’s Message Notes from 11-21-21
 Jesus Praying on the Mount of Olives**

Friends, prayer is truly our greatest connection to our Triune God. We are called to talk with Him all the time. Yet prayer is so easily and so often neglected. Perhaps it is that Americans often feel like they need to be busy all the time and prayer seems to interfere with that. Prayer invites us to slow down a bit and just talk with God. It may seem unproductive.

Sometimes, even in our eagerness to serve God, we can neglect tending to our relationship with God. I confess that there have been times that I have neglected this more important practice myself.

Certainly, there are all different habits that we can build into our lives in order to prioritize prayer. One opportunity that strengthens my prayer habits came about a week ago, when I was able to attend a retreat at a campground called Mount Asbury. It is about a half hour away and is one of the beautiful campgrounds that our conference has. There were about 25 other pastors there and while we spent some time together talking and eating together, the main focus of the time was strengthening our prayer habits as we enjoyed time outside in God’s beautiful creation.

Our times of prayer are needed for our soul to be refreshed and strengthened. Our prayers make a difference in this world and our praying impacts us as well. Jonathan Angel shared that important insight to me following last Sunday’s worship service.

**The bottom line is that prayer is essential for the life of the believer**. A day without prayer, without communication with God, is very unhealthy for the soul.

Today, we are taking a closer look at the 7th and final time we find Jesus praying in Luke’s Gospel. **And perhaps it is the most important of them all.**

And before we turn to the Bible, I need to say that it is not every Sunday that I get to preach on the powerful scene that is depicted in the painting at the front of our church sanctuary.

What a powerful scene this is. They say that a picture paints a thousand words. And this painting certainly does just that. And we will talk about some of these things in a moment.

At this time, though, let us turn again to God’s Word as found in Luke 22:39-46.

**Jesus went out as usual to the Mount of Olives, and His disciples followed Him. On reaching the place, He said to them, “Pray that you will not fall into temptation.” He withdrew about a stone’s throw beyond them, knelt down and prayed, “Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done.” An angel from heaven appeared to Him and strengthened Him. And being in anguish, He prayed more earnestly, and His sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground.**

**When He rose from prayer and went back to the disciples, He found them asleep, exhausted from sorrow. “Why are you sleeping?” he asked them. “Get up and pray so that you will not fall into temptation.”**

This is such a sobering passage. Again, the painting captures much from the scene. We see the night scene with Jesus’ sleeping disciples. We see Jesus in deep emotional prayer, kneeling and looking up to His heavenly Father.

In both the painting as well as the biblical text, we can see Jesus’ humanity very clearly in this passage. One of the amazing things about our Lord Jesus is that He is both fully God and fully human.

But in His physical weakness and anguish, His humanity is very evident.

For a moment, let us just consider this scene again in your mind. Jesus is in the Garden of Gethsemane on the Mount of Olives. This is a favorite spot for Jesus to retreat to outside of the city of Jerusalem.

It is late at night. Jesus knows that Judas would be on his way to hand him over to the Romans. And He instructs his disciples to pray that they do not fall into temptation.

And then maybe you can visualize Jesus slowly walking a stone’s throw away and then His knees dropping to the ground in prayer. And Him just looking up to the heavens to talk with His Father.

Truly, Jesus had known for years what price He was to pay for the sins of the world. He knew that He would be laying His life down and then would rise again. In fact, He tells His disciples this truth on multiple occasions earlier.

But yet, on this night when Jesus was awaiting Judas’ return which would lead to His arrest, He was feeling the imminent weight of His coming sufferings. He knew that His night would be spent undergoing mock trials and that He would be striped and beaten and then crucified, Jesus is feeling overwhelmed.

He asks His Father if this coming suffering could be avoided somehow. Yet, He wanted to obey His Father more than avoid suffering and so He prayed, “**not my will, but Yours be done**.”

What a powerful scene. And it doesn’t end there. Even though the Father’s will did not change, the Father did send an angel from heaven to give Jesus strength.

Yet even with the angel strengthening him, He was still in anguish and prays even more earnestly.

And Luke then writes that His sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground.

And this is not just artistic license here. Luke, the writer of this gospel, was a medical doctor. And there is a medical condition called **hematidrosis** that under extreme anxiety and anguish, people can indeed sweat blood. The sweat glands are surrounded by tiny blood vessels and under extreme anxiety, ruptures can occur and the blood and go into the sweat glands.

Friends, this is what Jesus endured for us. His love for us is amazing that He did this. This is our King whom we celebrate. Amazing love how can it be, that You, my King, should die for me. That is love.

In contrast to Jesus’ triumph through prayerful surrender, the disciples fall asleep. Jesus had told them to **‘pray that you do not fall into temptation,’** but instead they were exhausted in sorrow and fell asleep.

Again, sometimes praying just doesn’t happen, even if it’s the most important thing.

So, friends, what are we to make of this powerful scene of Jesus’ final time of prayer in Luke’s Gospel?

I would like to highlight 4 significant takeaways and can help us apply this passage to our lives.

**First, it is biblical and sound important to pray for oneself**. Jesus prayed for Himself and if He needed to do that, we certainly do as well.

Both Jesus and His early followers were tempted to sin. They were tempted to do what they weren’t supposed to do. We will be tempted to sin as well. And so, we need to pray for ourselves. This is critically important.

God has been teaching me about the importance of praying for myself over recent years. One way that He has done this is through a Christian friend of mine named Chuck. A couple of years ago, I was with Chuck and he asked me if I got dressed today.

That sounds like a strange question, doesn’t it? Did I get dressed today? Well, you’re standing in front of me and I clearly am not in my PJ’s, what do you think.

But I knew Chuck was not thinking about pajamas. He was asking if I have put the armor of God on that day.

Did I put on the Gospel armor of Jesus Christ - The belt of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, the shoes of peace, the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, the sword of the Spirit? This is all described in Ephesians chapter 6.

The truth of the matter is that I did not get dressed in that sense on the day that he asked me to. But since then, it has been pretty much every day. He helps me to not fall into temptation. This, and other prayers for myself are very important.

So please, pray for yourself sisters and brothers. And one way that we can do that is by putting on the spiritual armor of God. This will help you to overcome temptation.

**The second big takeaway is that God’s will is not always easy, but it is always best for us.**

Sometimes the Lord leads us into painful situations. Jesus’ pain was our gain. And Jesus’ sacrifice is more than enough. Amen.

But, as we follow Jesus, we must be willing to suffer as well. We are not to have a martyr complex certainly, but sometimes God’s will is not an easy path. Sometimes God’s will is difficult. It may be uncomfortable. It may challenge us. It may cause us to have to surrender in some ways that we don’t want to. His will might open us up to receive persecution sometimes.

Jesus said that if we are to follow Him, we have to deny ourselves daily. In other words, Jesus must be the center of our life. Not Tim Klein or you in your case. Jesus. When Jesus is at the center of our life, it will be more and more natural to do the will of God, even when it is difficult.

So remember that His will is not always easy, but it is always best for us and He will be with us as we follow after Him.

**Third, this passage teaches us that sin is very serious to God. Jesus paid the penalty for the sin of all humanity. So if there is any willful sin in our lives, we are to know that it is a big deal and God wants us to deal with it. And we deal with sin not in our own strength, but by the power of the Holy Spirit.**

**And fourth and finally, this passage should cause us to love Jesus even more**.

Jesus didn’t have to suffer; He chose to suffer. He chose to suffer not only to do the will of the Father, but because He loves You and He loves me. We matter a lot to Him.

Passages such as this should stir us in our love for our Triune God.

Let this passage stir you and ignite your love for Him to grow.

The Bible says that **“we love Him because He first loved us.”** And I believe that the more that we grasp and receive the love of Jesus Christ and the love of our Heavenly Father and the love of the Holy Spirit, the more that we will be able to love Him back and to love others in His Name.

May this scene of Jesus’ praying in the Garden on the Mount of Olives enable you to love Him even more.

Let us pray:

-help us to pray for ourselves.

-help us to remember that Your will and path for us is not always the easiest path and give us courage to follow you.

-help us to remember how serious sin is to You.

-And help us to be thankful for Your sufferings for us and to fall more in love with You. Amen.

Sources:

[www.BibleGateway.com](http://www.BibleGateway.com)

<https://www.gotquestions.org/sweat-blood-Jesus.html>