

INTRODUCTION

Easter is four weeks away. During this time, I'm tracing the last 94 hours before the disciples discovered the empty tomb. The countdown started with the Last Supper when Jesus gathered with His disciples for the Passover meal. After spending about four hours at this meal, Jesus and His disciples walked about a half a mile to the Garden of Gethsemane which was on the bottom slope of the Mount of Olives. He spent about four hours there. Then He was arrested after midnight and the next five hours was before the Jewish Sanhedrin. The next morning, He was taken to Pilate where He was tortured, and then nailed to the cross for six hours until He died. It took them about an hour to remove His body and place it in the tomb. Jesus said He would be in the heart of the earth for three days and three nights, so that's where the final 72 hours are allotted. Then on Easter Sunday morning, the disciples make the greatest discovery in all of history: He was alive, and He is alive forevermore!

In this message I want to trace the steps of Jesus from the upper room to the Garden of Gethsemane. To get there, Jesus would have crossed the Kidron brook, which flowed in the valley between the Temple Mount and the Mount of Olives. It was just a narrow creek that one could easily step over. The name Kidron means "dark and gloomy."

A thousand years earlier, King David crossed the Kidron brook after being betrayed by his son Absalom. David, the shepherd who became a king, crossed the Kidron with a heavy heart because of betrayal. On this night, Jesus, the King who is also a Shepherd, crossed it with a heavy heart because He was being betrayed as well.

The Jews never drank the water from the Kidron brook because it carried the sewage from the upper city. In addition, a trench had been dug from the Temple Mount so the excess blood from the animal sacrifices could flow into this stream. Josephus wrote that the brook Kidron, often ran red with the blood of sacrifices. We know there was a full moon that night, because Passover is always marked by a full moon. By now it was completely dark. I can imagine as Jesus stepped over this river of blood, He saw the moon reflected on its dark surface. I wonder if He paused to consider that in less than 12 hours, His blood would be running down the slopes of Moriah toward this brook? These four hours in the Garden were some of the most stress-filled moments in the earthly life of Jesus.

Mark 14:32-42. "They went to a place called Gethsemane, and Jesus said to his disciples, 'Sit here while I pray.' He took Peter, James and John along with him, and he began to be deeply distressed and troubled. 'My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death,' he said to them. 'Stay here and keep watch.' Going a little farther, he fell to the ground and prayed that if possible the hour might pass from him. 'Abba, Father,' he said, 'everything is possible for you. Take this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will.' Then he returned to his disciples and found them sleeping. 'Simon,' he said to Peter, 'Are you asleep? Could you not keep watch for one hour? Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the body is weak.' Once more he went away and prayed the same thing. When he came back, he again found them sleeping, because their eyes were heavy. They did not know what to say to him. Returning the third time, he said to them, 'Are you still sleeping and resting? Enough!

The hour has come. Look, the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise! Let us go! Here comes my betrayer!"

We know precisely where the Garden of Gethsemane is located today. The Mount of Olives hasn't moved. Olive trees don't grow taller; they grow wider. They grow new roots and shoots and spread out. Massive ancient olive trees grow in this garden today that were there the night Jesus prayed. The Church of All Nations has been built over the very spot where it is believed that Jesus prayed. There's a rough rock ledge about ten feet by ten feet that is called the Rock of Agony. I have knelt and prayed there many times, touching the rock. A few weeks ago I knelt there with my arm around Pastor Emmy from Uganda, and we both wept as we thought about the pain our Lord endured that night.

I invite you to join me in that garden on the night Jesus prayed. Let's consider three different emotions Jesus faced, because these are the same emotions we face.

I. JESUS AGONIZED THE NIGHT BEFORE THE CROSS

I've heard of the Garden of Gethsemane most of my life, but it was only a few years ago I learned the meaning of Gethsemane. Gethsemane is a parable of what Jesus endured. The olive tree is called the tree of life because it provides oil for light, medicine, food, and soap. To harvest olives, cloths were spread under the branches, and then the harvesters took heavy sticks and beat the branches to make the olives fall onto the cloths. That reminds me that Jesus was beaten with wooden sticks by both the Jewish guard and the Roman soldiers.

The word "Gethsemane" comes from two Aramaic words, *Gat-Šmânim*, which means "olive oil press." Olives were placed in a stone press and a huge millstone crushed them into pulp. That first olive oil was called extra virgin olive oil and is clear. But then the olive pulp was put into cloth bags and endured two more crushing using long presses weighted down with stones, and sometimes a huge press driven by a wooden screw twisted tight. The olives are crushed three times until no oil remains in the pulp. The final crushing of the olive pulp produces a thick dark oil some say resembles blood. Three crushings. And Jesus prayed three times in this garden where olives were crushed.

In Luke's account we read these words, "And being in anguish, he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground." (Luke 22:44) Dr. Luke used a medical word we still use, thrombosis. The literal translation is "blood mixed with sweat." Jesus was under such agonizing pressure; His scalp began to ooze bloody sweat.

This condition isn't unique. A medical expert, Dr. David Teraska has commented: "Of medical significance is that Luke mentions Him as having sweat like blood. The medical term for this, 'hematidrosis,' has been seen in patients who have experienced extreme stress or shock to their systems. The capillaries around the sweat pores become fragile and leak blood into the sweat."

Perhaps the most hated King in French history was Charles IX. Being a Catholic, he ordered the St. Bartholomew's massacre in which over 10,000 French Protestants were killed. The stress from his guilt drove him crazy. He died at age 23 from hematidrosis. Blood began to seep

through his pores, and he died in agony. This condition is rare, but most people die of it. That's how close to death Jesus was in the Garden of Gethsemane.

II. JESUS RECOILED AT THE CUP HE FACED

Jesus left the disciples and fell on His face and prayed this amazing prayer, Abba, Father, everything is possible for you. Take this cup from me." "Abba" was the most affectionate term a Jewish child ever used to their father. It meant "Daddy" or "Papa." Jesus said, "Daddy, you can do anything. I'm asking you to take this cup from me." The phrase "to drink a cup" meant to experience something. Earlier, Jesus had asked James and John if they were able to drink of the cup that he was going to drink. He wasn't talking about a real cup; He was referring to the experience of suffering and death.

The night before the cross, Jesus peered into this cup, and what He saw caused His blood to freeze. The contents of this cup caused the Son of God to recoil in horror. So what did Jesus see in this horrible cup?

A. A cup of isolation

Jesus saw the emotional pain in that cup. He knew He was going to die alone. When you read the New Testament you discover Jesus loved being around people. In Luke 7:34 Jesus complained that the Pharisees criticized John the Baptist for not drinking, and being a recluse; they said he had a demon. Jesus said he came eating and drinking and the Pharisees labeled Him a glutton, a drunkard, and a friend of tax collectors and sinners. Whether their claim was true, we know that Jesus loved to spend time with people. The Bible says the common people heard Him gladly. And you may fool adults, but you can't fool children. Children flocked to Him, and He took them in His arms and blessed them.

But the closer he got to the cross, the more alone he found himself. Early in his ministry there were thousands following Him. He fed 5,000 people on one occasion and 4,000 another time. But as he began to talk about the demands of discipleship, the crowds left him like rats leaving a sinking ship. This night he was down to only 12. Then one left to betray him. And when the mob arrived, all of them turned and ran away.

Nobody likes to be alone. There are many people who deal with the pain of loneliness. They spend nights at home alone with only the company of a pet or computer or television.

Jesus knows your pain of isolation. In fact, He was even forsaken by God the Father when He hung on the cross.

B. A cup of physical pain

Jesus was 100% God, but He was 100% human as well. As a man, he experienced physical pain just like we do. He had nerves running through his body. As he looked into that cup, his humanity shuddered at the thought of the physical pain he was about to face. He knew rough hands would grab him and twist his arms behind his back. He knew he would be beaten and spit

upon and his beard would be plucked from his face. He knew a crown of long, hard thorns would be crushed down upon his head. He realized brutal soldiers would mock him, and make sport of their torture of him. He foresaw that his back would be bared and his hands lashed above his head to a whipping post. He could already hear the whistle from the cat of nine tails whipping through the air over and over again, thudding and tearing into his back. He knew nails the size of railroad spikes would be driven into his hands and feet, and a spear would puncture his side. He saw all that and said, "Please, Daddy, take it away."

I've never had major surgery, but I've been told many times by patients that the worst part of major surgery was waiting for it. It's the dread that is often worse than the experience itself. Just imagine the dread Jesus experienced that night.

C. A cup of sinful shame

As terrifying as the isolation and physical pain were, I believe neither of those came close to the dread Jesus experienced on a spiritual level. Remember, Jesus was Holy God in the flesh. He was perfectly sinless. He had never had a sinful thought, or committed a sinful deed. But in that cup He saw the sins of all of humanity. His holiness recoiled at the thought of drinking in all that shame and disgrace.

Can you remember a time when you did something really rotten? Don't dredge up the details of the deed, instead, recall the shame and disgrace you felt. Remember that feeling of filthy guilt? Jesus never once felt that.

But on the cross He took in His body all the sins of the world. I know most of you are pretty good people, but think about the vilest criminals in our world. Consider the child abusers, the rapists, every serial murderer. In that cup was all the sickening, disgusting shame of every wicked act. And the Bible doesn't just say Jesus took our sins, it says He BECAME sin for us. 2 Corinthians 5:21 says, "God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God."

He didn't just drink the cup; He also spoke to James and John about being baptized in the same baptism He would face, the baptism of suffering. At the cross, Jesus was immersed into the entire sin of the world.

Imagine you are standing in front of a vile-smelling vat of warm, thick liquid with a foul stench. The fluid in the vat has been infected with anthrax, smallpox, Botulism bacteria, Mad Cow Disease, cancer and other terrible bacteria as well as rotting human flesh and sewage. Now imagine yourself being submerged in that liquid, drinking it, tasting it, and smelling it. It fills your mouth, your nose, your eyes, your ears. SICK? Now multiply your revulsion by a factor of 7 billion and you may come close to understanding what it was like for the sinless Son of God to be submerged into the filth of our sin.

Now can you understand why Jesus revolted in horror when he looked into that cup? But still he chose to go to the cross for us.

III. JESUS FOUND PEACE BY SURRENDERING TO GOD

Just as the olives were crushed three times, Jesus returned to pray the same prayer three times. Each time, He begged God saying, "Abba, Father, everything is possible for you. Take this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will." That's the turning point. He said, "Father, you know what I want. My desire is to take the cup and throw it away. I want to avoid the loneliness, pain, and disgrace. But, Father, I cherish your will more than mine, so I'll do what you wish."

Besides adding the detail about His sweat falling like drops of blood, Dr. Luke also wrote, "An angel from heaven appeared to him and strengthened him." (Luke 22:43) There's a famous painting by the Danish artist, Carl Bloch, that pictures this moment. We don't know what the angel said or did, we just know he gave Jesus strength. Maybe he said, "Your Father loves you and this is why He sent you here." Or maybe He said, "Don't worry Lord, if you decide you need me, there are twelve legions of us who will come the instant you call."

All we know is when Jesus returned the third time, He had found peace. His head was held high, there was fire in His eyes. It was if He was saying, "Go ahead, devil. Hit me with your best shot!"

CONCLUSION

That was the crushing Gethsemane experience of Jesus. What is your Gethsemane today? Is it your marriage? Your health? Your job? A temptation? You name it. What crushing challenge are you facing? Whatever shape or form your Gethsemane may take, what are you going to do when you face a crushing experience? I encourage you to do exactly what Jesus did.

(1) Pray

Jesus prayed His way through to victory. When you face a challenge that's the first thing you should do also. Maybe you've received a letter, text, or email with the four letters ASAP in it. We know it means as soon as possible. Let me give you another meaning for ASAP: Always Stop And Pray. And Jesus prayed three times. That reminds us we must continue in prayer. Jesus was so burdened that Matthew said He threw Himself on His face. Have you ever been so burdened about something that you fall on your face in prayer? When I was a teenager struggling with God's will for my life I remember walking in the woods behind my house. I fell on my face to cry out to God, and I even dug a little hole in the pine straw to stick my nose in; it was as if I couldn't get low enough to humble myself before God.

Prayer shouldn't be your last resort, it should always be your *first* resort. You may be thinking, "Well I have prayed! I've prayed many times about this issue." Have you taken the next step?

(2) Surrender your will to God

Jesus prayed, "Take this cup away from me." Let me give you a 21st century paraphrase: "Get me out of this mess!" You may be asking God to change your circumstances, and He's more interested in changing you. You want Him to fix the problem, and He wants to fix you. Like

Jesus, never hesitate to ask God for what you want. But you must always add, "Not MY will, but YOURS be done."

Can you think of another garden in the Bible? On the first pages of the Bible we read about the Garden of Eden. God put two people there and shared His will with them. But Eve and the First Adam asserted their will over God's will and it led to the ruin of humanity. They said to God, "We know Your Will is NOT to eat the fruit, but it's what we really want to do."

In 1 Corinthians 15 Jesus is called the last Adam. This last Adam was in the Garden of Gethsemane, and He surrendered His will to God, and it led to the redemption of humanity. We face the same choice every day—my will or God's Will.

(3) Trust God's perfect plan

God had a plan for Jesus. The Bible says He is the Lamb of God slain from the foundation of the world. The cross was always God's plan. It was scary and intimidating to Jesus, so he hesitated. But he decided to trust His Father's plan.

God has a plan for your life as well. Will you trust Him? My friend, Jack Taylor, used to say, "I was afraid to surrender my life to God because I thought the first thing He would do would make me marry a cross-eyed fat girl and send me to Africa as a missionary."

Jack later surrendered his life to God. He learned that God's will was good. I always loved his definition of God's will. He said, "God's will is what you would choose for your life if you had enough sense to choose it!"

Jesus faced the crushing of Gethsemane. But He prayed, He surrendered His will to God, and He trusted God's perfect plan.

After praying the third time, Jesus returned and said, "Rise! Let us go!" Jesus turned to face the approaching mob. I heard someone say recently there are two ways to spell fear. F.E.A.R. can mean Forget Everything And Run! That's what a lot of us do when we face a scary challenge. We Fear Everything And Run! But Jesus spells F.E.A.R. a different way. Face Everything And Rise! I like that better. It's either Forget Everything And Run or Face Everything and Rise.

Where are you right now? Are you ready to fear everything and run or are you willing to trust God and face everything and rise?

OUTLINE

I. JESUS AGONIZED THE NIGHT BEFORE THE CROSS

Gethsemane = (Aramaic: *Gat-Šmânim*) = “olive oil press”

II. JESUS RECOILED AT THE CUP HE FACED

- A. A cup of isolation
- B. A cup of physical pain
- C. A cup of sinful shame

III. JESUS FOUND PEACE BY SURRENDERING TO GOD

What to do when you face a crushing experience:

- (1) Pray
- (2) Surrender your will to God
- (3) Trust God's perfect plan

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Pastor David Dykes



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