Luke Lesson 86 (2021)

**“NOT MY WILL, BUT YOURS BE DONE”**

Luke 22:39-62

Key Verse: 22:42

“Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done.”

 Today’s passage describes Jesus’ prayer on the Mount of Olives, immediately followed by his arrest and Peter’s denial. Being fully aware of what was coming to him, Jesus prepared himself to obey the will of God. He also asked his disciples to pray so that they may not fall into temptation (40, 46). We may assume that the disciples fell into temptation because of their lack of prayer. Yes and no. It seems more accurate to say that they fell into temptation because they failed to surrender themselves to God’s will through prayer.

Prayer is a widespread religious practice among all religious people, including Christians, Jewish, Muslims, Hindi, Buddhists, and even Shamanists. They pray their wishes may come true. Even an atheist might accidentally pray in desperation, *“God, help me!”* As limited human beings, we cannot help but ask God to do what we want. As Christian disciples, we may pray a lot but not necessarily obey God’s will. The fact of the matter is that many Christians fall into temptation in life and suffer the consequences. How can we pray not to fall into temptation? We should learn to pray as Jesus did on the Mount of Olives. Jesus’ prayer on the Mount of Olives was an intense spiritual battle to surrender himself to the will of God. He won the spiritual victory through prayer. Indeed, Jesus’ Gethsemane prayer is the core of the Christian faith. This morning, let us go to the Mount of Olives and learn to pray, as Jesus did.

Look at verses 39-40. “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.” After the Last Supper with his disciples, Jesus went out as usual to the Mount of Olives. The phrase “as usual” indicates that it was Jesus’ routine to spend the night on the Mount of Olives during the last few days in Jerusalem. Probably his disciples, including Judas Iscariot, followed him there. But that evening was different. Jesus was aware that Judas left him to betray him, and it would be his last visit. It was a time of crisis for Jesus and his disciples. Jesus was fully aware that his disciples would be traumatized by what would happen in the next few days, including his immediate arrest and cruel death through the crucifixion. It would be a terrible nightmare and a time of temptation and test for their faith, which they could not avoid. It would be very violent and ugly.

If Jesus wanted to avoid the dangerous confrontation, he could have gone somewhere else. Instead, he chose to go as usual to the Mount of Olives to confront his betrayer. On reaching the place, knowing his disciples’ spiritual unpreparedness, Jesus said to his disciples, “Pray that you will not fall into temptation.” When Jesus told them to pray that they would not fall into temptation, he wanted his disciples to engage in spiritual warfare through their prayers.

Even though Luke’s account does not mention it, it is evident that Jesus was deeply distressed and troubled at that time (Mk. 10:33). What did Jesus do in the time of distress? As he encouraged his disciples to pray, he also began to pray. Look at verses 41 and 42. “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.’” We are not told about how far a stone’s throw is. But we know that it’s far enough to be alone and close enough to hear, especially at night.

As far as I consider it standard, prayer posture is to close our eyes and bow our heads, either sit or stand. So I wouldn’t expect anyone to open their eyes during prayer. But the typical Jewish prayer posture of the day was standing with eyes open and lifted to heaven, and that is what Jesus often did (Pic#1). When we pray in a desperate situation, we would generally kneel and pray. At this time, Jesus also knelt down and prayed, indicating urgency and humility (Pic#2).

Look at verse 42 again. “Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done.” Compared to other gospel narratives, Luke’s description of Jesus’ prayer on the Mount of Olive is brief. He omits several details. Yet, he focuses on a few points.

***First of all,*** Jesus, in the deep distress of his soul, came to the presence of God in prayer. Jesus’ prayer started by coming to the presence of God the Father. Some of us may think that we cannot pray unless we know our prayer topics. Sometimes, we don’t even know what to pray. But that’s okay. To Jesus, prayer was not saying something or telling God what to do. It is to acknowledge God the Father as the ultimate source of power, protection, and provision. Jesus’ prayer started by coming to the presence of God the Father personally in the deep agony of his soul. Most of us are stressed and often feel overwhelmed with many things. But we need to put aside all worries and anxieties and come to God just as we are. We don’t have to say a word when we pray. Just try to be in the presence of God the Father, who loves unconditionally and accepts us just as we are and knows everything and what is best for us. Coming to the presence of God, our Father, is prayer.

Apostle Paul said that prayer is very effective in overcoming our chronic anxiety. He said in Philippians 4:6-7 that we should always pray with thanksgiving, and the peace of God would guard our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. That’s so true. Facing all kinds of life challenges in the world, we tend to worry a lot. Due to the long-lasting pandemic these days, I see many people suffer from anxiety disorders and cry out for help. I am glad that numerous services are available, such as mental health counseling, yoga, meditation, and even prescription-drug. But we must also know that the primary goal of Christian prayer is not just to overcome fear and anxiety but to have a personal relationship with God our Father. The peace of God is the byproduct of our relationship with God our Father.

Look at verse 42 again. “Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done.” In this verse, we see Jesus’ intense spiritual struggle. Jesus prayed, saying, “Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me.” Here, “this cup” refers to his trials, including terrible sufferings of humiliation, excruciating pains, and cruel death on the cross. Jesus was fully human, just as we are. So, the cup of his suffering and death took a heavy toll on him. Humanly speaking, Jesus was just over 30 years of age, too young to die. He cried out to God by saying, “Father. If you are willing, take this cup from me.” I am sure that his disciple could hear when Jesus cried out in prayer. The human Jesus surely didn’t want to die. *“No, I don’t want to die.”*

But he also said, “Yet not my will, but yours be done.” We see that Jesus was in a dilemma between his will and God’s will. He was deeply troubled in deciding either to follow his human desire or to follow God’s will to take the cup of suffering and death on the cross.

We can clearly see that it was not an easy decision for Jesus to make, saying, *“Well, it’s no big deal. I will die because I will rise again anyway.”* No, Jesus really struggled that if possible, he didn’t want to die. Was he weak? No. It shows that he was fully human, like us. Undoubtedly, it was an even greater temptation for Jesus because he was entirely God who had the right to choose not to die but to live. Yet, we see that in his prayer, Jesus asked God’s help so that he would follow his Father’s will through his submission. Wow! It was an intense spiritual battle. I am not sure how many of us can struggle as Jesus did. I don’t think we can fully understand the intensity of Jesus’ struggle on the Mount of Olives. But we are encouraged to do so in the Scriptures. “In your struggle against sin, you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding blood.” (Hebrews 12:4)

Hebrews 5:7 describes the glimpse of Jesus’ fierce spiritual struggle on the Mount of Olives. “During days of Jesus’ life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with fervent cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his submission.” The phrase “prayers with fervent cries and tears” stands out to me. It was such intense spiritual wrestling in the deep agony of his soul. I am sure that the devil that came to tempt Jesus earlier in the wilderness came back to Jesus and whispered, “Hey, Jesus. You don’t have to die. You have the power to do your own. Take it easy! Don’t be foolish!”

Look at verses 43-44. “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.” Luke is the only one who mentioned the appearance of an angel who strengthened Jesus in times of great spiritual battle. The phrase “his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground” highlights the intensity of Jesus’ spiritual struggle against his flesh. Yet, through prayer, Jesus won the victory over the temptation and decided to surrender to God’s will. If Jesus chose not to submit to God’s will, there would be no hope of salvation for us.

We all struggle between our human desires and God’s will. We want to be successful, rich, and famous. It’s not wrong to be successful, rich, or famous. Yet, it’s also easy for us to become proud, selfish and greedy, and fall into temptation. When we experience failure, one after another, we can also fall into temptation with doubt and fear. Like Jesus, we need to learn to fight a spiritual to not fall into temptation through prayers.

We should remember that we will not be left alone in our spiritual struggles because the Lord will be with us. In the book of Genesis, we see how the angel appeared to Jacob and wrestled with him as he prepared to meet his older brother, Esau (Gen. 32:22-32) (Pic#3). Indeed, the Lord wants to help us in times of our need. Hebrews 4:15-6 confirms it by saying, “For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are – yet he did not sin. Let us then approach God’s throne of grace with confidence so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.”

 Look at verses 45-46. “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.’” The disciples could have heard how Jesus fought the spiritual battle. But they failed to join the spiritual warfare, being exhausted from sorrow. I think that they were emotionally burnt out.

 In verses 47-53, we see how Jesus confronted his arrest in the middle of the night with confidence. We don’t see any trace of fear, confusion, or hesitancy in Jesus’ words and actions. Instead, he was in charge of the matters. First of all, When Judas Iscariot approached to kiss Jesus as the signal for his collaborators, Jesus confronted him by asking him, “Judas, are you betraying the Son of Man with a kiss?” (48) Isn’t it too late for Judas to repent? No. Judas can also enter the kingdom of God if he repented of his sins. In truth, no one can enter or see the kingdom of God unless they are repentant of their sins.

 The sudden appearance of the temple guards with swords and clubs, along with the priests, the officers of temple guards, and the elders (Sanhedrin members), was a significant threat to Jesus’ disciples. They immediately reacted and tried to fight back physically using their swords. They appeared to be brave, but they were scared. One of them struck the servant of the high priest, cutting off his right ear. But Jesus said to them, “No more of this!” (51) And he immediately touched the man’s ear and healed him. Jesus rationalizes no violence for building God’s kingdom.

 In verses 54-62, we see how Simon Peter disowns Jesus three times as Jesus predicted. Simon Peter was one of Jesus’ dearest disciples and friends. He loved Jesus and was loyal to him. Yet, he could not accept Jesus’ way of becoming the Messiah. When Jesus predicted his suffering and death, after being rejected by Jewish religious leaders, Simon Peter took Jesus aside and rebuked him, saying, “Never, Lord, This shall never happen to you!” (Mt. 16:22) Jesus turned and said to Peter, “Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me.” (Mt. 16:23) Even though Simon Peter was loyal to Jesus, more than any other disciples, he disowned Jesus in front of others, not just once but three times on the very night of Jesus’ arrest (57, 58, 60).

Why did he deny Jesus? It’s not because he didn’t love Jesus. It was because he was afraid to suffer and die. So to avoid suffering and death, Simon lied repeatedly, disowning his own Savior, Lord, best friend, and the most excellent teacher, Jesus Christ.

 Fear and anxiety are powerful but negative emotions that can separate us from having fellowship with God our Father and often damage our lives. How can we overcome fear and anxiety? We need to be aware of our negative emotions, such as fear, anxiety, and anger. Many people are emotional, but they are not aware of their feelings. So they don’t respond, but they react. Most of all, we need to learn to obey the will of God through prayer. Jesus made his final choice to surrender himself to the will of God through his prayer on the Mount of Olives. Jesus said to his followers earlier in Luke 9:24, “For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will save it. What good is it for someone to gain the whole world and yet lose or forfeit their very self?” Life is paradoxical. But Jesus practiced what he taught his disciples

We still have our choice to follow our flesh or to follow God’s will. We are weak and vulnerable because we are human. But when we choose to surrender to God’s will, I assure you that we have God’s kingdom, his everlasting presence, in our lives now and forever. Jesus’ prayer on the Mount of Olives is the core Christian faith that leads us to a victorious and fruitful life in all circumstances. May we learn to surrender ourselves to the will of God, just as Jesus did. “Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; but not my will but yours be done.”