

I go and Pray

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[0 : 00] I'd like us to turn once again to the Gospel of Matthew, chapter 26, reading once again at verse 36.

Matthew 26, verse 36. Then Jesus went with them to a place called Gethsemane, and he said to his disciples, sit here while I go over there and pray.

And taking with them Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, he began to be sorrowful and troubled.

And then he said to them, my soul is very sorrowful even to death.

Remain here and watch with me. The first words there in verse 36. Sit here while I go over there and pray.

The disciples here had been with the Lord in the upper room.

[1 : 14] We're reading a short account of that here in this Gospel. The other Gospels have fuller narratives of what actually took place on that night of his betrayal.

But we know that he was in the upper room, and he gave them his final discourse. Discourse which we find in the Gospel of John, through chapters 12 through to chapter 16.

And it's called the Discourses in the Upper Room. And he is seen there to be preparing his people for something that's going to happen.

He's told them often that his time was at hand, that he is going to be handed over into the hands of wicked men and be crucified, and he is going to be killed.

What he does also is he initiates the Lord's Supper. Or we read that here in this very chapter. The Lord's Supper is initiated. Paul tells us about it in 1 Corinthians chapter 11, where he speaks there in the night that the Lord was betrayed.

[2 : 24] He took bread. And that's the passage we read so often at communion seasons. But what the Lord is doing is that he is initiating the Lord's Supper.

And he is taking his leave of them. And in his taking his leave of them, he departs from the Upper Room, which is in the upper city of Jerusalem.

And he makes his way through the back streets of Jerusalem, which at this time would be very crowded. It was the time of Passover. And so there were people from every part of the Roman Empire, from Cyrene and the Mediterranean, Cyprus and Crete and Athens, and all those places lying round about the Middle East.

They would all come to Jerusalem for the Passover. So the place was absolutely teeming with people, crowded. And so the Lord didn't want on this night to be in the midst of all that was going on there.

As people were gathering together, as they were choosing the sacrificial lamb, which they would take to the temple the next morning to be set aside for the Passover lamb.

[3 : 39] And as he makes his way through Jerusalem, through the back streets, they no doubt have lantus with them as they go out through the city gates and across the brook Kedron.

Outside of Jerusalem, there is a valley, which is called the Valley of Jehoshaphat. And the bottom of that valley, there is a brook called the Brook Kedron. And they make their way over that. And as they're making their way over that, they come across some vines.

Now again, if you go to the Gospel of John, the Lord there tells them the parable of the vines. My father is the husbandman.

I am the vine. You are the branches. And he goes on to explain the different elements of that parable. He's almost giving them there a manifesto as to what their life should be.

How they should live their lives. How they should learn to be fruitful. And to give witness of that testimony as to whose they are and whom they seek to serve. But we're not going to look at the parable of the vines.

[4 : 48] You can look at what's happening here in Gethsemane. And so they leave the terraces there where the vines are growing. And they climb out of the valley of Josaphat and up towards Gethsemane.

And Jesus came to the place that was called Gethsemane. In the Gospel of John, he tells us that after the Lord had said that he was going to be betrayed, he told them that he was going to rise again.

But after having done all that in the upper room, he says, rise, let us go hence. Almost the same words as he says in this chapter when he's going to meet his adversaries.

So the Lord is ready. He's prepared to engage in whatever situation that he's going to find himself. And so I said, he goes forth with his disciples.

They go over the brook Kedron where there was a garden. So between Jerusalem and the Mount of Olives, there is this garden which is called Gethsemane.

[6 : 06] And it was this journey that the Lord took along with his 11 disciples. Only 11 now because in again the Gospel of John we're told, Judas went out and it was night.

And we hear nothing more of him as regards the fellowship the Lord has with the remaining disciples. John also tells us that the place to where they were going, Judas knew about.

Because the Lord often went there to meet with his heavenly Father in prayer. He was a man of prayer. He was known as a man of prayer. And whenever he was in Jerusalem, this was the place to where he went.

Leaving all the bustle and the hustle of Jerusalem, he would go out into the darkness and go to the garden. And there he would commune with his heavenly Father seeking strength. Seeking intercession for his disciples.

Seeking wisdom as to the way forward. Remember, he is the God-man. But he never used his own abilities as God. He kept those veiled.

[7 : 18] Remember the hymn which says, Veiled in flesh that God had seen. Not only was it veiled to us, it was also veiled to himself. He laid aside all the natural abilities of the Godhead.

And he behaves just as a human being. And when they get to Gethsemane. Remember, this is a place where the Lord knew. And where also Judas Iscariot knew about.

When he comes to that place, he goes to meditate and to pray and to intercede with his heavenly Father.

Now, it was necessary that the Lord's death should appear voluntary. So the place that he was going to was not some secret assignation.

Away from anywhere else, he was going to the place where he usually went. He wasn't trying to escape his destiny. He was going forward to meet that destiny and fulfill it.

[8 : 21] He was going to the place where Judas, who was to betray him, also knew of that place. You read, sang there in the psalm. The Lord is not trying to escape his destiny.

He goes forward with these words. And so, arriving at Gethsemane, the Lord makes plans for the evenings.

First of all, he tells eight of his disciples to stay there at the gate. Almost like the general deploying his forces in the best way possible.

Stay here at the gate. While I and Peter and James and John go a little bit further into the garden. And where we're told here in this narrative that he begins to be sorrowful and very heavy.

And he is sorrowful even unto death. The words describe to us the experience the Lord is going through. He is not here as God.

[9 : 39] He is here as man. He is the one who has laid aside all the attributes of the Godhead. And he is here as a man. And a man is in a low condition.

That's what we're told in Philippians. But he is not only in a low condition physically. He's also in a very low condition spiritually. He is at one of the lowest points of his earthly experience.

And so leaving these eight disciples at the gate of the garden. The Lord proceeds with his three closest friends to confront the adversary.

Not only are they the closest. Spiritually, he no doubt esteems them to be the strongest. They've been with him at difficult situations before.

They've been with him especially when he was on the Mount of Transfiguration. So their spirit, their understanding, their belief would have been strengthened.

[10:41] They'd seen the glory of God. Full of grace and full of truth appearing before them. And he was transfigured. His whole being, his face, his clothing was transfigured.

And they had heard the voice from the excellent glory saying, This is my beloved son. Hear him. Listen to him. Listen to what he's got to say. And so here they are, these men, having not very long before this time, gone through this experience of seeing the Lord transfigured, of hearing the voice from heaven, and so being strengthened in their resolve to continue to be faithful and continue to watch with the Lord Jesus Christ.

You see, one of the last requests the Lord makes is, my soul is very sorrowful. My soul is very sorrowful. Remain here and watch with me.

It's showing his own uncertainty and his weakness that he's asking three of his disciples, disciples who'd always needed his leading and guidance and sustenance and his comfort.

He wants comfort from them. He's feeling so weak and needy and sorrowful that he's asking them for help. He's asking them to watch with me.

[12:01] As I said, these disciples had been with the Lord on many occasions, including the Mount of Transfiguration.

Now, if Peter could have had his way, no doubt they'd have still been there, building tabernacles, enjoying the good time, knowing fellowship and love and glory.

And there wouldn't have been any of this of coming down from the Mount of Transfiguration to meet all the enemies that were there at the foot. And so they would have known the glory, but they didn't want to know the shame.

They didn't want to know the expression of the world's hatred and disapproval of their Lord and the Savior.

So those who had seen his glory were chosen to be with him and to bear witness of all that the Lord was going to experience.

[13:07] They witnessed, first of all, that he was sore amazed and very heavy. They'd never seen the Lord like this before. And said he'd always been full of confidence, sure of the way he was going to go.

And now he seems so uncertain, everything seems to be dark, and he himself is cast down and sore amazed and very heavy.

It was a view of the cup that the Father was about to place into his hand that was causing all his sorrow and anguish. The Lord knew his destiny.

He knew what was in front of him, but he was on the threshold of facing it for himself personally as an act of obedience to what his father had asked him to do.

And what the father had asked him to do was really quite severe. The father asked him to endure the wrath and curse of God for sin as our surety.

[14:22] The wrath of God against the Redeemer of God's elect. He is the Redeemer of God's elect, and he's the one who's going to have to endure that wrath and curse for us.

He's going to have to endure the sword of God's wrath against him in our place for us. It's always for us.

If you go back to the Old Testament in Isaiah 53, he bore our sins. He bore our iniquities. The chastisement of our peace was upon him.

It's always for us. For us. Always for. Never on his own account. Always for us. And so, as well as the withdrawal of the sense of God's love, and the desertion on the cross where he cries out, My God, my God, why?

He tells all his pains and all his sorrows to the three who are with him. But it must be poured out into the year of his heavenly father.

[15:32] And so, he leaves the three, and he goes a little bit further into the garden. See, first of all, he'd left the city.

Left the city with all its uproar and all its noise with the eleven disciples. Secondly, he arrives at Gethsemane. He leaves eight of his disciples there at the gate and takes his chosen three with him. But he must also leave these three and go on alone. It's the same with all of us. In our dealings with our heavenly father, it must be on a one-to-one basis.

No one can do it for us. We can't do it by proxy. It must be done in person. In our own dealings with our heavenly father, in the way that we pray to him, intercede with him for others.

It must be done personally. Our God is a personal God. And so, the Lord says to his disciples, Wait here and watch with me.

[16 : 37] And it's this request that speaks of the Lord's desire that they help him. As I said, he always helped them. But now, he wants them to help him, watch with him, and pray for him.

And so, we're told he goes a little bit further, And he falls on his face and prays, Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me.

Nevertheless, not my will, but yours, may it be done. The impression of these words of the incarnate Son of God, lying prostrate on the ground, should make on us, is to fill us with sore amazement.

He is sore amazed and very heavy. We ourselves should be filled with amazement, as the Son of God is doing here. This one who is the creator of the ends of the earth.

The one who gave you and me being. The one who gives us life. And yet, he's here. He's in the garden. He's sore amazed.

[17 : 49] And he is distressed. But how could the Son of God be reduced to such a state of helplessness?

How could he find himself here almost without help and without succor and need? Well, we got the answers there in the words of Philippians chapter 2. You know the words very well.

He says, He says, He says,

And he's coming to the end of his human resources. Not to have felt in such a way would have meant he had no regard for the wrath and curse of God due for sin.

Not to have felt in such a way. Not to have felt in such a way would have been looking at the penal sufferings as something that was easy to accomplish and to just go on without thinking too much about it.

[20 : 04] But he does feel this feeling of desolation. But he does feel this feeling of desolation. This feeling of being set apart for the suffering of mankind for you and for me.

And so it was in such a way would have been such a way of being made of sin. And so it was in such a way of being made of sin. So it was in such a way of being made of sin.

made the surety of standing in your place and my place, suffering for all the sins that you have done and I have done and all those whom he died for, the elect from the foundation of the world. And why do I say that word elect? Well there is a phrase people sometimes use that the sufferings of God were sufficient for all but only efficient for the elect. Now if that were true the sufferings of Christ would go beyond what was necessary. God would be unjust in making Christ suffer more than he was required to suffer all that he is required to suffer are for the sins of the elect those whom the Father had given him before the world was and those whom he came into this world to suffer and die for.

And so the sufferings that Christ is going to suffer is the sufferings of those who are saved, the elect in Christ Jesus those whom God have called and those who have responded to that call are in a saving relationship of the Lord Jesus Christ as the Catechism puts it who are receiving and resting upon Christ alone for their salvation.

And so the cry nevertheless let your will be done is an assurance to us that the Lord is not working out his own will but he's working out his Father's will a will that he had known about ever since he agreed to this work of salvation before the world was.

[22 : 35] There were covenants that had to be made and this was one covenant that Christ had made and he was going to keep. There's a word in in the New Testament and Old Testament especially which talks about the covenant faithfulness of God to his promises.

Well here is Christ talking about that covenant faithfulness. He has made the covenant and he is going to keep it as sometimes it said in modern words come hell or high water nothing was going to dissuade him from doing what he had covenanted to do with his Father in the glory he had with him before the world was.

And so if it was the Lord's desire to flee from the wrath to come where do we stand in regard to the wrath against those who are lost those who do not have a saviour those who do not have a surety those who will have to answer before the heavenly Father on their own account for what they have done in the body whether it be good or evil for those who are in Christ he is our surety he stands in our room and in our state in our state bearing sin and mocking rude in our place condemned he stood and and also the hymn writer where he says there is a fountain filled with blood drawn from

Emmanuel's veins and sinners plunge beneath that flood lose all their guilty stains why? because Christ washes those blood those stains from us Christ takes our wrath upon himself we receive the forgiveness we receive the pardon we receive the reconciliation because of what he has done for us and for our salvation and this is part this experience in Gethsemane is setting his face as a flint towards Jerusalem setting his face as a flint to finishing the work that his Father has given him to do and although he is amazed and very heavy he is going to complete it he commits himself if this cup will not pass from me unless I drink it the Lord says let your will be done and that's the great covenant agreement that he's made with his Father the cup will not pass so I will drink it and I will fulfill the promises and the plans that you have made for your people before the world wars and then we read that an angel appeared unto him strengthening him now there are many times when angels are mentioned in the scriptures and also in regard to the Lord Jesus Christ we know that the angels appeared in Bethlehem announcing his birth we know for instance that the angels also ministered to him when he was being tempted by the devil you know also that there will be in attendance and they when they will roll away the stone at the time of his resurrection and so also now when he is tempted so also now when his heavenly father is standing afar off and watching so also his heavenly father as he stands there almost in admiration of what his son is accomplishing it's not his own presence that's there it's not his spirit that is going to minister to Christ because that has been laid aside it's an angel who comes is sent from heaven to comfort him and how how can we think of the angel comforts him well in one respect simply seeing the angel at this time when he's amazed and very heavy when his whole mind is clouded with what lies before him just seeing the angel will remind him of who he is the angels are yes ministering spirits but they are his angels the whole host of angels is at his command and they will fall down and worship him continually but not at this time but the appearance reminds him of that perhaps also the angel reminded him of what was to be accomplished at Jerusalem remember at the Mount of Transfiguration but the Lord also has been prepared and strengthened for what lay before him there were two there was Elijah and there was Moses and they spoke about his departure they spoke about what he was going to accomplish in Jerusalem and the great work that was going to be carried out there and the fruits of that work and so also no doubt the angel reminded the Lord about what had accomplished on the Mount of Transfiguration and what he himself adds to that testimony of what's going to happen and the great glory that would follow we're not told how the angel strengthened him but we can assume that it was something along these lines sent to assure him to reassure him so that in his amazement some measure of what he was about to do some measure of the great work of salvation would be made he would be made aware of and so he would be enabled to be strengthened by it the glory the honour the name that was above every other name was something that was in the distance but again the angel would have reminded him of the glory that would follow of the sufferings now but that the glory that would follow of the name he was going to receive a name that was above every name that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow and every tongue should confess that Jesus

[28 : 57] Christ is Lord through the glory of God the Father and so these two great themes of the scriptures sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow were no doubt part of what the angels spoke to the Lord about at that time and yet within a stone's cast of all this taking place three disciples whom the Lord had pled with to watch with him and pray for him fast asleep in the midst of this great transaction taking place for the souls of all believers for their souls as well they are there fast asleep almost uncaring how much more are we reckoned guilty of knowing all that we do of hearing it time and time again and yet finding ourselves sleeping under the gospel asleep to sin asleep to carelessness asleep to the cries of the Lord come unto me all you who labour and are heavy laden and I will give you rest surely the love that's being displayed here in the garden is love so amazing so divine demands our love our life our all may the

Lord then bless these thoughts to us we should conclude our worship now singing to God's praise in Psalm 89 Psalm 89 at verse 1 in the Scottish Psalter God's mercies I will ever sing and with my mouth I shall thy faithfulness make to be known to generations all we'll sing down to the end of the verse mark 6 as six stanzas to God's praise God's praise God's God's mercy I will ever sing and with my mouth I shall thy faithfulness make to be known good good good good generations all our mercy shall be built said I forever shall endure thy faithfulness who nested in the end thou will be established sure

I with my chosen one have made a covenant greater seed and to my servant through my love to David sworn have I that I see the established now forever to reach forever to remain and dwell to generations of thy throne built and maintain the praises of thy wonders
Lord the heaven shall express and in the congregation of saints thy faithfulness for who in heaven with the heaven with the Lord may one sin set compare who is like God among the sons of those that mighty are and thou may grace mercy and peace in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, one God, rest on you, and abide in you, now and always.
Amen.