

Dear Heavenly Father,

Praise

Jesus said, as sweat poured down his face, “Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but yours, be done” (Luke 22:42). I praise you today as the God who looked down on your only begotten Son and said, ‘It is my will that you offer yourself as a sacrifice for sin.’ May I never forget that you sent your Son to die in my place that I might be reconciled to you! Praise God for love like this!

Today in Your Word

Today you told me about the night Jesus spent in the Garden of Gethsemane. After Jesus finished praying for his disciples, they sang a hymn and then made their way back to the Mount of Olives for the night. On the way, Jesus told them that they would all “fall away because of me this night” (Matt 26:31). He knew this because of Zechariah’s prophecy, but why did he bring it up? Was it to rub their noses in the fact that he couldn’t count on them? No, I think it was because he wanted them to remember his words *after* their failure and realize that he understood and forgave their lack of faith. Oh, to think that Jesus extends such kindness and love to me! Jesus led them to the place called Gethsemane (lit. ‘oil press’) and told his disciples that he wanted to pray. His actions in the garden teach me many crucial lessons:¹ (1) Jesus saw the companionship and support of his friends as a legitimate need. In this, he modeled for me the importance of reaching out to others in times of trouble, rather than withdrawing and trying to go it alone; (2) Jesus didn’t pretend to be tough or try to hide his emotions. So many times people in leadership think they can’t be real for fear of looking weak. But not Jesus—he felt like he was being crushed under the weight of his sorrow, and he admitted it to his disciples; (3) Jesus chose to pray when he was at his lowest point. Often prayer is the last thing that comes to my mind when I’m in trouble. Jesus reminds me that finding spiritual strength by communing with you in prayer is the way to handle trials; (4) An angel appeared to Jesus the first time he prayed, but it came to strengthen his resolve, not release him from the fight. So many times I want to get out when your will is for me to go through! (5) Jesus didn’t let his emotions lead his will. He freely admitted that he didn’t want to go through the terrible torture of the cross, but he brought those feelings captive to the sovereignty of your will; (6) Jesus didn’t pray only once. He poured out his heart to you *three* times before he was ready to pick himself up and say, “Rise, let us be going.” This teaches me that there will be times when I need to wrestle *repeatedly* to bring my mind, will and emotions in subjection to your will. I must not give up before I have determined to follow you no matter what; (7) When they finally came for him, Jesus had every opportunity to resist. His disciples reached for their swords, Peter cut off Malchus’ ear, and the entire group of soldiers fell to the ground at the mere sound of his voice. Yet Jesus went quietly. The Son of God, the One who had legions of angels at his command, meekly held out his hands to be bound. He wanted everyone to know that no one took his life from him—he laid it down freely. In this, he left me an example of calm obedience in the midst of crisis. No wonder they call him the Savior! Hallelujah!

Reflection

I always read the account of Judas’ betrayal of Jesus with a mixture of revulsion and bewilderment. How could you spend three years with God’s Son and come to such an end? Yet any time I say ‘Yes’ to sin and ‘No’ to the Spirit, I’m right there with Judas, betraying the Son of Man with a kiss. (Keep me from such madness!)

Request

Father, the same grace and strength that you gave to Jesus in the garden is available for me. Help me to be mighty through you so that I can resist the devil and submit to your will!

Thanksgiving

Thank you for the example of Jesus! He shows me that even the hardest trials can be overcome by falling on my face before you in prayer and staying there until my heart is firmly fixed on following you.

In Jesus’ name, Amen.

Suggested Hymn: “Down in the Garden” – W. H. L.

Meditation Verse: Matthew 26:41.

¹ Matt, “Looking at Gethsemane Anew: The Fall and Rise of Jesus.” Web blog post. *Theology in Tension*, 22 Nov 2015. Web. 14 Mar 2016.