

[Matthew 26:36-46](#)

Jesus Prays in Gethsemane

Introduction

On the night before the Lord Jesus went to the cross, there were some noteworthy events that took place. Jesus celebrated the Passover and instituted the Lord's Supper with his disciples; He washed their feet after the supper to set an example of servanthood. Afterwards, Judas Iscariot, one of the original twelve disciples, betrayed Jesus into the hands of those who wanted Him dead. And if that wasn't enough, one of His closest disciples, Peter, denied knowing Jesus three times.

But one of the most noteworthy events that happened that night was Jesus praying in the Garden of Gethsemane. God must deem the account of this event important, as it is recorded in all four of the New Testament books of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. Jesus' prayer in the garden was in a dark, agonizing and sorrowful hour. Yet, in one of His darkest hours, Jesus' prayer in Gethsemane was:

- persistent
- passionate

Those are the two main points of this Maundy Thursday message.

Persistent Prayer

As was His custom, Jesus went to Gethsemane on the Mount of Olives to pray with His disciples. However, this night would be different. Indeed, there would be much prayer, but there would also be much agony and sorrow. Amidst all of this suffering, Jesus' prayer was persistent.

According to the text, Jesus was very sorrowful, even to death ([Matthew 26:38](#)). In fact, He fell on His face and prayed "My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will." ([Matthew 26:39](#)) The second and third time Jesus prayed "My Father, if this cannot pass unless I drink it, your will be done." ([Matthew 26:42](#) and [Matthew 26:44](#))

What does it mean by "this cup"? It alludes to the cup of the wrath of God against man's sin. It was the cup that Jesus prayed and agonized over. It was the cup filled with the awful punishment that only Jesus could drink; only He could satisfy the wrath of God against man's sin. In His persistent prayer, willingly facing the Father's wrath, Jesus humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross ([Philippians 2:8](#)).

Yes, Jesus prayed three times for God's will to be fulfilled, not His own. And for God's will to be fulfilled, it meant suffering and agony. Just as olives in Gethsemane, which means "place of the olive press" were crushed to make a delightful oil, God would crush His only Son to satisfy His wrath for sin. Out of the agony of Jesus' suffering and sorrow, God would delight in those sinners chosen in His providence to be rescued from sin through Christ's substitutionary death on

the cross. Here's some Bible verses to drive this truth home: [2 Corinthians 5:21](#) and [Isaiah 53:5](#) and [Isaiah 53:10](#).

For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.
[2 Cor 5:21](#) (ESV)

But he was wounded for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his stripes we are healed.
[Isaiah 53:5](#) (ESV)

Yet it was the will of the LORD to crush him; he has put him to grief...
[Isaiah 53:10](#) (ESV)

In Jesus' persistent prayer, God the Father Almighty was glorified. And not only that, but all who put their trust in Christ can rejoice that He prays persistently for us as our Advocate and Intercessor. All those who receive Him by faith, who believe in His name, are called children of God by His power, through the work of the Holy Spirit ([John 1:12](#)). That's the gospel, which is the good news message of the cross.

How about you? Have you embraced the good news message of the cross? Are you trusting Jesus is persistently praying for you? If not, turn to Him now. Come, believe and see for yourself. Because when God transforms our lives, Jesus' prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane is seen as a passionate prayer for us. In His prayer, may we comprehend the depth, width, length and breadth of the love that He has for the Father, as well as those on earth that He suffered and died for.

Passionate Prayer

In Jesus' prayer to His heavenly Father, He cried out passionately to God three times. His request was to let "this cup" pass, yet not Jesus' will, but the will of the Father be done. His deep love for and dependence upon God was expressed each time by saying the words, "My Father." In fact, in the Garden of Gethsemane account found in the book of Mark, Jesus calls out to God as Abba, Father ([Mark 14:36](#)).

Abba is the definition of the word "father" in the Aramaic language. In this context, Jesus' passionate prayer was directed toward His Abba, Father, and Daddy in a humble and intimate cry. For Jesus, as well as all of us who are in Christ, don't ever be afraid to cry out, "Abba, Father, Daddy, help me, I need you." In fact, in Jesus' case, He prayed all the more earnestly, or passionately, while being in agony. Here's [Luke 22:44](#).

And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly; and his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground.
[Luke 22:44](#) (ESV)

Let this imagery of Jesus' agony and suffering sink into our hearts and minds. Here was the Lord of lords, the King of kings, the Prince of Peace, the Wonderful Counselor, Almighty God in the flesh in such agony that His sweat became like great drops of blood. Even with an angel from

heaven strengthening Him ([Luke 22:43](#)), He prayed all the more earnestly, all the more passionately. Perhaps this was a full realization that He would be forsaken by the Father as He suffered and died on the cross ([Matthew 27:46](#)). Forsaken so that we could be forgiven.

Here's another aspect of Jesus' passionate prayer. His love for the disciples, His dear friends whom He had cried, laughed, ministered, and prayed with and for, was as deep as His heavenly Father's love for Him. And this amazing love is not just for the disciples; it's for all of those who are followers of Christ. Here's [John 15:9](#).

As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love.
[John 15:9 \(ESV\)](#)

You can just see it now. Here is Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane with three of his closest disciples, Peter, James and John. He returned three times from prayer and found them sleeping each time. Here were the three who marveled at the glory of His transfiguration ([Matthew 17:1-4](#)). Yet, now in Gethsemane, they slept while Jesus prayed in agony and sorrow. After a gentle rebuke to Peter, Jesus exhorted them to watch (keep awake) and pray that they may not enter into temptation; He observed that the spirit is indeed willing, but the flesh is weak ([Matthew 26:41](#)).

Whether we'd like to admit it or not, we're like the disciples. We're constantly susceptible to temptation; we're prone to failure, and even when our spirit is willing, our flesh is often weak. Yet, in our temptations, failures and weaknesses, Jesus remains faithful. In fact, for those in Christ, Scripture states that Jesus and the Holy Spirit intercede and pray for us ([Romans 8:27](#) and [Romans 8:34](#)). Even when we're faithless, He remains faithful ([2 Timothy 2:13](#)). That's the passionate love of God, which can't be separated from those in Christ Jesus ([Romans 8:38-39](#)). That's the love of Jesus displayed in His passionate prayer, which surpasses all knowledge.

Conclusion

In past sermons, Pastor Dan has said the following: "Prayer is not about forcing our will upon God, but bending our will to Him." In the dark hour of agony and sorrow in Gethsemane, Jesus did just that. His persistent and passionate prayer in seeking His Father's face made all the difference on that night for His disciples. It can make the difference on this Maundy Thursday for all of us too. We are reminded to remember the awful price Jesus paid in His suffering in the garden, as He prepared for His suffering on the cross.

Here's one final thought. What's your and my Gethsemane? What darkness is causing agony and suffering in your life and my life right now? Remember, even in our darkest hour, the Lord Jesus Christ is the Light of Life. Even the darkness is as light to Him. Even in all of our temptations, failures and weakness, He intercedes and prays for those He came to save. Even when the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak, His amazing grace and steadfast love flows eternally. Let's heed His exhortation to "watch and pray that we might not enter into temptation." Let's pray persistently and passionately as He did, "My Father, not our will, but your will be done." Amen.