



“Jesus Prays & Sweats”

Luke 22:39-46

January 24, 2021

This morning we come to an awesome and peculiar moment in the history of our salvation. It is what we would recognize as Thursday night of the Passion Week, the eve of the crucifixion of Jesus. As you know, Jesus had instituted the Lord’s Supper in the Upper Room. It was the inauguration of this great sign of the Covenant the Jesus brought His people into.

Now we follow Jesus and His disciples to the Mount of Olives, to their place of prayer. In particular, they went to a place called the Garden of Gethsemane. Gethsemane means the place of the olive press.

It was in this place that we see that the weight of the atonement began to press down upon our Christ in a forceful and even perhaps overbearing way. We will see the way that this was pressed upon Him in two ways.

First let’s read the text and see what is before us. Luke Chapter 22 and Verses 39 through 46.

³⁹And he came out and went, as was his custom, to the Mount of Olives, and the disciples followed him. ⁴⁰And when he came to the place, he said to the, “Pray that you may not enter into temptation.” ⁴¹And he withdrew from them about a stone’s throw, and knelt down and prayed, ⁴²saying, “Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but yours, be done.” ⁴³And there appeared to him an angel from heaven, strengthening him. ⁴⁴And being in agony he prayed more earnestly; and his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground. ⁴⁵And when he rose from prayer, he came to the disciples and found them sleeping for sorrow, ⁴⁶and he said to them, “Why are you sleeping? Rise and pray that you may not enter into temptation.”

This morning the Gospel of Luke once again brings us onto holy ground. It was here in the Garden of Gethsemane that Jesus entered into what many theologians refer to as His agony, as we see in Verse 44:

⁴⁴And being in agony he prayed more earnestly

Here we can see that Jesus was entering into a profound sense of spiritual, emotional, and psychological turmoil. He had the great gathering sense of what laid immediately ahead of Him. The cross was very close and the sins and iniquities of the decades, the centuries, and the millennia of the ages were beginning to press down upon Jesus. He knew that soon the wrath of God would be released.

In this text we see the affect that it was having on Jesus. We see this affect in two ways, and I think those two ways are revealed in the title of this sermon, *Jesus Prays & Sweats*. Let's see how the Lord's agony is revealed.

First though, as you see Jesus in this condition and what He was bearing, the goal of it was love. That you would see His love and that your love for Him would be returned as you see what He was going through.

We see the agony:

1. In His anguished prayer (22:41-42)

We see how much He was bearing. Verses 41 and 42:

⁴¹And he withdrew from them about a stone's throw, and knelt down and prayed, ⁴²saying, "Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but yours, be done."

Here we have the Gethsemane prayer request of Jesus. At the center of this prayer request and supplication was the cup. What was the cup? His request, Father, if there is any way that is within Your will to remove this cup, may it be removed. But not my will, but let Your will be done.

What was the cup? That is at the heart of this portion of Scripture. The cup is a pervasive Old Testament theme. We see it all throughout the pages of the Old Testament. This cup is a portrayal of the cumulated wrath of God against sin.

You see it used that way repeatedly throughout the Old Testament. To experience God's wrath was to drink the cup of His wrath. Here as in those many other places of Scripture, this cup was a receptacle that gathered all the fury and indignation of God against human iniquity.

The cup was a receptacle but it was a certain kind of receptacle. It was not like a bucket or a trash can. It was a cup and a cup is meant for drinking. Jesus was facing this cup, and it was weighing on Him.

As we think about this cup, I am reminded of a story that was in the news a number of years ago, and it resurfaced once again. It helped to me to understand the content of this cup. Something happened in a rural portion of the state of Florida.

There was a fifteen-year-old boy who was lured into a house. In that house, there were five other teenagers. They lured this boy in and then they tortured him. After they tortured him they shot him. After they shot him they took his body out and they burned him trying to cover over any evidence of what they did.

I remember reading about that and watching some news coverage of it when it happened, and I just remember something inside of me rose up. There was both the sense of sickness and anger that was stirred up in me. Brothers and sisters, there is a name for that. It is called righteous indignation.

I remember the news reporters did an interview with a woman who lived close by, trying to get her response to it. I remember watching this woman as she was sharing her thoughts about what had happened. She was just trembling. There was something within her that was saying, Those kids need to pay for what they did. There needs to be justice. What happened was evil. And evil has its price. That just can't be glossed over. There is a price to pay for this kind of thing. What that woman was experiencing was righteous indignation. She was rightly outraged by what they those kids did.

Brothers and sisters, that response is just a glimpse of the nature of God that remains upon the human being. Righteous indignation is an inner fury toward evil. We know that where there is evil practice, there is a price to pay. That is why we have a justice system.

God is filled with righteous wrath. Holy wrath. Pure wrath. Our wrath is often impure and imbalanced. God's holiness produces from Him a perfect indignation against sin and evil. Because we are fallen it takes pretty dramatic examples of wrong for us to be stirred with wrath.

But God who is holy, holy, holy, when He sees all sin—any sin; any abuse of speech or of hand; any kind of mistreatment of others; any kind of dishonesty—His holiness responds with righteous wrath.

Here in the Garden of Gethsemane Jesus faced this cup of God's accumulated fury against sin. In this cup there was the fluid and the pulp and the skin and all of the sheer intensity of the grapes of divine wrath. That was the cup!

Here contained in that cup was God's indignation against all sins, murders, abuses, lies, deceptions, immoralities. All such sins of all of the people of God throughout all of the ages was gathered here in one place, and what was a cup for? Once again, a cup is for drinking.

R.C. Sproul has been my companion in the Gospel of Luke. I am reading books on the Gospel of Luke and I have been listening to Sproul's series through the Gospel of Luke. I was listening to him talk about the experience of this cup of wrath and what it must have been like. Sproul pictured in such a way that really affected me.

Try to picture what it would be like to have this cup before you, not necessarily even to drink from the cup, but just to be near it. Imagine such a cup before you, under your nostrils; the brim of it being pressed up against your bottom lip. According to Sproul, one touch of this cup against the skin of any other human being would blast them back into oblivion. And here was Christ with the moment approaching that He would consume it all, drinking it down to the dregs.

And now we have the One who is the Christ. He is the God-man. One hundred percent God, and one hundred percent man. Perfect humanity. Undiminished deity. Joined in one, without any way mixing or diminishing either. While as God, His will is in total harmony with the Father and the Spirit that the atonement will be carried out here as a man with flesh and soul and blood and bone.

There was the tendency in Christ's volition to naturally shrink back from the death and the pain and here He cried out. He called to His Father saying remove this cup from me. That is how intense it was. Yes, that prayer was couched in His submissiveness. If it is Your will remove this cup from me. Not my will but Your will be done.

We know from the other Gospel accounts that in the midst of this ongoing prayer, He also prayed, If it is possible, let this cup be removed from Me. The prayer of the Messiah was, Father, if there is any other way that my bride, my church, my people, could be saved, let's do it that way, please.

By virtue of the fact that the cup was not removed from Him, that He continued on and drank the cup, that tells us two things. First, there is no other way for a human being to be saved. There is only one Name under Heaven by which men may be saved. That is through Christ, by entering into the provision of His salvation by faith, being joined to the Savior.

The fact that Christ went on to consume the cup tells us that there was no other way. It also tells us that it is the will of the Lord that the people of God be saved. His elect, His chosen bride, will be saved. It is the will of God that we be saved; that we be released from the punishments we have deserved; that we be set free; that we be cleansed; that we be forgiven, and that we rise up in newness of life as the family of God; as the bride of Christ; as the people of God.

This is the will of the Lord and Jesus carried out that will. This being the will of the Lord, Jesus continued on to provide salvation for His people. We see a second way in which the agony that Jesus experienced is made evident to us in this text.

We see it:

2. In His bleeding sweat (22:43-44)

We see what it says in Verses 43 and 44:

⁴³And there appeared to him an angel from heaven, strengthening him. ⁴⁴And being in agony he prayed more earnestly; and his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground.

I went back and forth. Do I call it bloody sweat or bleeding sweat? I didn't call it bloody sweat because that pictures for me mostly sweat with some blood mixed in. Jesus was sweating blood. That is what was is being pictured here.

That is how great the pressure upon Jesus was. There is in fact a condition called hematohidrosis. You can look it up and read about it later. It is a medical condition that causes you to ooze blood from your skin. It usually happens around the forehead, on the face, around the eyes and nose.

Doctors say that they don't know exactly what triggers this condition because it is so rare. It could have to do with the fight or flight response, but it happens in times of extreme distress and fear. This indicates the extremity of what Christ experienced in the garden.

How significant that this was all happening in a place called Gethsemane. Gethsemane was the place of the olive press, where olives are compressed so that the oil can be extracted from the olive. Likewise, the pressure of it all was increasingly being exerted upon our Messiah to such an extent that He began to emit blood from His skin. Of course as Dr. Luke would point out to us.

So the capillaries on His forehead were bursting and blood came down from His forehead before the crown of thorns was ever thrust upon it. Blood came from His tear ducts. Blood came from His nasal lining. So before there was ever pools of blood on Pilate's praetorium, before there was blood staining the cross, there was blood falling on the grounds of Gethsemane.

Brothers and sisters, oh how He loves you and me. In my evaluation, we are living in a day and age where there are many, many people who don't really take the concept of sin that seriously. A great number of people will say that God is not angry. He is not displeased. I am okay. You're okay. Don't sweat it.

The One who knew intimately the holiness and the indignation of the Father against sin, He was sweating it. Jesus knew what was to come. Jesus knew what was coming. The Son of God observed and co-experienced the wrath of God the Father in Noah's day when the earth was covered with sin and wickedness and a flood was sent.

The Son of God observed and co-experienced the wrath of God the Father upon Sodom and Gomorrah in its horrendous mixture of sexual perversion and violence, when God the Father caused burning sulfur to rain down.

The Son of God observed and co-experienced the wrath of God the Father upon Egypt when they oppressed and enslaved and battered and even attempted mass infanticide against the Hebrew people. Then God released upon them plague after plague after plague—ten times over.

Jesus now knew that a cup of wrath far exceeding these things was being prepared for the Great Day of Atonement when He would be nailed to the cross as a sacrifice for all of the hatred, perversion, murder, abuse, blasphemy, and every other form of sin that His people would manifest.

That full knowledge of the fury of God toward sin was now pressing upon Jesus in such a way that drops of blood were coming from His sweat pores there in the Garden of Gethsemane. What can we say in response to this? What is the response? I think very simply for starters, Thank you, Lord. Thank you, Lord!

I think looking upon this, we can say, Lord, give me eyes to see. Give me a heart to feel. Help me to perceive. Help me not to take my sin lightly; my sin which was responsible for this. Touch my heart. Lord, help me to love Your Son. Help me to love Your Son! Because it is so easy for us to become indifferent to awesome things that were suffered for us.

As we continue, let us pull back the camera here. We have been focusing on Jesus and what He experienced. Let's remember that Jesus was not there alone in that garden. He was about a stone's throw away from others.

What were the others doing when Jesus repeatedly asked them to pray? They were sleeping! The text says they were sleeping for sorrow. They had just experienced so much. Their hearts were heavy. They were exhausted, and they were sleeping. Our hearts kind of go out to them but we still need to recognize that they were sleeping at a time when Jesus was calling them to pray.

I wonder how many of us know how it is to be weary with sorrow. There are hard times that we face in this world. There are hard things that are experienced all around us. Then there are difficult things in our own lives. We experience hard things that other people are responsible for but guess what, we experience hard things that we are ourselves are responsible for because we are foolish.

We can just get exhausted and worn down. It is the heart of the Lord that we be awake and alert in the days that we are living in. So let me provide three points of encouragement for weary souls. In my opinion, the first one is the best one.

Brothers and sisters,

1. The cup is empty

For every child of God who is joined to Jesus in faith, the cup is empty. It's been emptied and washed and it is squeaky clean. There is no longer now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

If you have come to the place of faith in Christ, confessing your sins to Him, there is no condemnation for you. There is no longer righteous anger against your sin. Jesus has taken it away. Jesus drank it all. He has digested it and it has been done away with.

The anger of the Lord has been propitiated and now there is nothing but His smile that remains upon the people of God. We are set free. We are delivered. We are forgiven, and we just know nothing but the love of our Father.

God is not against you, church. He is for you! 100% for you. He is not bearing down on you. He is holding you up. The role of judge has been replaced by the role of Abba-daddy. He is not frowning upon you. His is a face of tender concern and joyful gladness.

Someday you will find that He is even going to sing over you in your very hearing, as those wonderful words at the end of Zephaniah declare to us. Praise God that the biggest problem that we will have ever faced has been solved by Jesus who loves us.

Next,

2. There is power in prayer

Twice Jesus said, Pray that you not enter into temptation. Pray. We need to pray. You need the breath and the power of God filling your life at all times. If you are not prayerful, you will enter into temptation.

However, in the life that is carried by the Spirit of God through prayer, there is power over the temptations that are faced. There is power in prayer. Temptations come in multiple forms. Sometimes we're tempted to commit sins of commission. We know exactly what we are not supposed to do, but we do it anyway, committing sin.

Then there are sins of omission. We know exactly what we are supposed to do. We are supposed to walk on this path of faithfulness and service. But knowing what we are supposed to do, but we don't it. Apathy and malaise sets in. So falling into sin can happen in both ways.

It would seem that specifically in the Garden of Gethsemane this was taking place. The disciples were falling asleep when Jesus told them to pray. Their calling at that moment was to support Christ in the time of His human need through prayer. They were to also be praying that they would not enter into temptation but they fell asleep instead of praying.

Likewise, apart from prayer, we will fail to support Christ in the mission that He calls us to—to reach out to neighbors and friends and co-workers with the goodness and the grace and the Gospel of the Kingdom.

If we are not daily saying Lord, remind me of the purpose that You have given me in this life, we are not going to be living the life that God has called us to live. Brothers and sisters, isn't our ongoing need for a Savior just made evident in that?

We know the things we are not supposed to do. We know the things that we are supposed to do but even from inside of us, we don't do the things that we are called to do and do the things we are not supposed to do. We are fallen sinners even in the church. We are forgiven sinners, but still fallen sinners who need Christ to be propping us up, holding us up by His power.

Our faithfulness in the Christian life depends on ongoing relational connection to God. We must be abiding in Christ. Apart from abiding in Christ, we can do nothing says Jesus. But abiding in Christ through the Word and through prayer, we will bear fruit. There is power in prayer.

May the Lord overcome our malaise when it comes to prayer. Finally,

3. The cup is overflowing

I don't know if it is the same cup. Probably not, but one cup has been emptied and there is another cup that we have. It is the cup of blessing. As we are filled with the Spirit of Jesus and are abiding in Him, the cup of His goodness overflows from our lives. Psalm 23:5-6

**⁵You prepare a table before me
in the presence of my enemies,
you anoint my head with oil;
my cup overflows.
⁶Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me
all the days of my life,
and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD
forever.**

Let's close in prayer.