

When "As You Wish" is hard
(Our own Gethsemanes.)

3/5/2017

This Sunday is the 1st Sunday of Lent, that period of introspection and setting stuff aside leading up to Easter.

What might be the connection

between Lent and our theme for the year, "As You Wish?"

Matt. 26:36-44

Then Jesus went with his disciples

to a place called Gethsemane, and he said to them,

"Sit here while I go over there and pray."

³⁷ He took Peter and the two sons of Zebedee

along with him, and he began to be sorrowful and troubled.

³⁸ Then he said to them,

"My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death.

Stay here and keep watch with me."

³⁹ Going a little farther,

he fell with his face to the ground and prayed,

"My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me.

Yet not as I will, but as you will."

⁴⁰ Then he returned to his disciples and found them sleeping.

"Could you men not keep watch with me for one hour?"

he asked Peter.

⁴¹ "Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation.

The spirit is willing, but the body is weak."

⁴² He went away a second time and prayed,

"My Father, if it is not possible for this cup

to be taken away unless I drink it,

may your will be done."

⁴³ When he came back, he again found them sleeping,

because their eyes were heavy.

⁴⁴ So he left them and went away once more

and prayed the third time, saying the same thing.

What can we learn from this
critically important vignette from the experiences of Jesus,
fully God, but also fully human,
tempted or tested just like we are, but without sin?

The name Gethsemene may be a description
and not a name at all, we can't be sure.

But the word Gethsemene in Greek
means “oil press,” where, under great pressure,
the oil is squeezed or crushed out of the olives.
What an apt description of what is about to happen
in the life of our Savior Jesus.

WE want everything to be comfortable and convenient,
but the Kingdom has never come that way.

1. Its initial proclaimer, John the Baptist,
was beheaded by King Herod.
2. Jesus himself was nailed to a cruel Roman cross.
3. All the apostles except John died martyr's deaths,
including Paul, who was beheaded in Rome.
4. Through the centuries,
at the hands of a million different kinds of persecutors,
our brothers and sisters were willing to be killed
in order to be able to bring us the good news of Jesus.

But if we are true to God,
each of us will face our own “oil presses,”
just like Jesus did.

(3 points to our sermon today,
as we each face our own Gethsemenes)

1. Friends may or may not be there to help us.
2. The answer that we get to our prayer may not be
the answer that we want.
3. To accomplish God's plan of redemption,
hard things must be done, sacrifices made.

- #1. Friends may or may not be there to help us.
- a. Jesus had hand-picked the men in this story.
 - b. He had personally trained them,
the ultimate master teacher, for about 3 years,
being with them awfully close to 24/7.
 - c. He had given them insight into God's Word,
 - d. He had modeled right behavior for them,
had sent them out 2 x 2,
then had helped them de-brief after their initial efforts.
 - e. Out of the 12, he had 3 that were his closest friends-
Peter, and the brothers, James and John.
 - f. He made himself vulnerable, was open with them-
"My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow
to the point of death.
Stay here and keep watch with me."

It was a simple request...

but they were tired; they were human...

(but so was he, and he was overwhelmed

by what he knew had to happen next...)

and they let him down.

It will happen. It DOES happen... (3 x it happened HERE...)

Gethsemenes are like that.

When all the props are kicked out,
and your human support networks fail,
then there is nowhere else to turn,
except upon God himself.

For Jesus, the weight of the sins of the world
were about to be dumped on HIS shoulders.

He didn't deserve it, he had done nothing wrong,
but somebody had to do it,
and there was no one else qualified
to do what had to be done.

And for us, when we deserve it,
when we HAD done something, or many things- wrong,
we don't like it, but we can understand our suffering.

But that's not always the way things come down.
Sometimes bad things happen to good people,
and like Jesus, we turn to our friends for support,

but they won't, or can't be there for us.

They weren't there for Jesus, either.

He knows what that's like.

The props were stripped away,
and He only had God to rely on...
and maybe that was the point.

#1. Our friends won't always be there for us.

#2. The answers we get to our prayers
might NOT be the answers we want.

Could Jesus be any more clear?

³⁹ Going a little farther,
 he fell with his face to the ground and prayed,
 “My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me.

There. That is what I want.

In my humanness, in my hour of need,
 I don’t want to suffer, be abandoned, be tortured,
 die that horrible death upon the cross.

I don’t want to take on the sin of the whole world,
 for all time,
 to feel that guilt and shame and self-loathing.

I don’t want to FEEL abandoned by you,
 when it is sin that turns me away from you,
 and not You away from me.

“Father, If it is possible...”

“But Jesus, it’s not.

If there WERE any other way, we would take it,
 but there isn’t.”

1. This is the only way.
2. This is what Love requires.

And Jesus didn’t have to like it, or prefer it,
 but he was willing to DO it, to carry out His Father’s will.

#3. Which leads us directly into
 our 3rd lesson from this passage-

To accomplish God’s plan of redemption,
 hard things must be done, sacrifices made.

Hebrews 12:2-3 read

² Let us fix our eyes on Jesus,
 the author and perfecter of our faith,

who for the joy set before him endured the cross,
scorning its shame,
and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

³ Consider him- (THINK deeply about Him)
who endured such opposition from sinful men,
so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.

God and country... and duty.

1. Our military understand this.
2. Our first responders understand this.
3. Good parents understand this.

Not my will, not even the answer I want to my prayer...
but your will be done.

“As YOU wish” ... But WHY?
God, why would you wish such a thing?

Because God is good, all the time.
God’s will is for our good, and the good of others.

God does not delight in suffering,
but he knows certain things can only be accomplished
through suffering.

- #1. Our friends may let us down.
- #2. We may not get what we want in prayer.

But #3. To accomplish God’s plan of redemption,
hard things must be done, sacrifices made.

It’s no longer “my discretionary time” or “my money.”
If we pray, “Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done,
on earth, as it is in Heaven,”

Are we willing to put some skin on it,
 to really practice with Jesus
 “Not my will, but yours be done?”

And not just in the fun times, when the going is easy,
 but when the going gets tough,
 when we feel the pressure of the oil press crushing us,
 making us more than a little uncomfortable?

1. What kind of faith propels Kent Brand into West Africa,
 so that he is willing to contract Ebola,
 in order to treat others suffering from Ebola?

2. What kind of servant heart propels Mother Teresa
 into the streets of Calcutta, India,
 to care for people suffering with leprosy?

You feel the squeeze, you know what you want,
 but you go with “Not my will, but yours be done.”

You understand that sometimes love HAS to
 go the extra mile and do the hard things.

And when you do, “eternity character” gets shaped.

1. You reflect the glory of your king.
2. You begin to look a lot like Jesus...
3. You participate in the divine nature.
4. You are developing the mind of Christ.

Philippians 2:5-8

⁵Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus:
 (more lit.,
 Have this mind in you which was also in Christ Jesus)

- ⁶ Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality
with God something to be grasped,
⁷ but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of
a servant, being made in human likeness.
⁸ And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled
himself and became obedient to death—
even death on a cross!

Is this easy to do? No, of course not. That's the whole point.

But it IS what God calls us to do, for the good of others,

1. So that they may be saved,
2. To save our marriages...when we really don't want to...
And that is where some of you are this morning.
To do the hard thing
is to feel the squeeze of Gethsemane.

3. To be good parents,
4. To care for those we don't even like,
and who may not like us either.

And if it's hard to do,

if it cuts against our natural bent, what WE want,
it's going to take practice to develop this attribute.

1. Friends may not be there.
2. The answer to our prayer may not be what we want.
3. To accomplish God's plan of redemption,
hard things must be done.

In closing, why bother?

Why not just go the selfish, "me-first" route?

Hebrews 12:2-3

- ² Let us fix our eyes on Jesus,
the author and perfecter of our faith,
who for the joy set before him endured the cross...

**You and I are the answer
to the question of “why bother” to Jesus.
WE are the “joy set before him.”**

**He went through both Gethsemane AND Golgotha,
both the olive press and the cross,
that we might have new life in Christ.**

And he calls us to walk in his steps, for those yet to come-
1. for our kids, and grandkids,
2. for our marriages, that really are worth fighting for,
3. for those who will spend eternity with us,
because we were willing to go through
Gethsemane for them.

Not MY will, but yours, be done... Amen?