

I.N.I.

Ash Wednesday  
Feb. 13, 2013  
Luke 22:39-46

In Christ Jesus, whose life of prayer was perfect in His submission to His Father's will and an example for us to follow, Dear Fellow Redeemed,

This year's Lenten series is entitled: "Passionate Prayers of our Savior." Jesus was passionate about His prayer life and He also prayed passionately. There are many Biblical references of Jesus taking the time in His busy life to spend it in fellowship with His Father. This was a continual activity for our Lord. Also when He prayed, He prayed with a perfect heart and will to His Father. His heart and thoughts never strayed, never were selfish in nature and always submissive to His Father.

This is a simple statement of fact, but a difficult concept to embrace---namely that Jesus Christ was True God and the Second Person of the Trinity who was with God and was God in eternity, and yet now also at the same time was true Man and in His humility subservient to His Father's will and purpose. And what was His Father's will and purpose---to send Him to this earth to redeem all of mankind by being the sacrificial payment for the sins of the world by His death on the cross.

So if I asked you what one prayer, above all others, comes to mind with this title "Passionate Prayers of our Savior"? What would you say? I would say Jesus' prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane for during that prayer Jesus prayed so fervently, so passionately that His sweat was like great drops of blood falling from His forehead. And that is the first passionate prayer of our Savior that we will be meditating on this Lenten season in our mid-week worship devotions.

Lets open our bulletins and follow along with this evening's sermon text from Luke 22 found on page 5.

We mentioned last Sunday that during Epiphany we saw Jesus manifest, show Himself as the Son of God by His miracles and what an awesome display we saw on Sunday—His face and His clothes shone like the sun. His glory as God was clearly seen by Peter, James and John in His transfiguration.

Well during Lent we see much the opposite. We see Jesus as the Son of Man resolved to be obedient to His Father's will, yet with all of the struggles of one born of flesh and blood. We see that so prominently in tonight's prayer as Jesus looks ahead to the next hours and His betrayal, arrest, trial, conviction, and eventual crucifixion.

There was confusion, agony and disappointment in that quiet garden. Jesus spoke to His confused disciples and asked them to watch and pray with Him. In agony of soul He went a ways further, fell to the ground and prayed. In disappointment He returned and found them sleeping.

But in Jesus we see the spiritual courage to pray **NOT MY WILL, BUT YOURS, BE DONE.**

I can imagine someone in fervent tear-stained prayer saying the same words over and over. I can imagine someone prostrate on the ground in desperation emotionally shouting, crying, murmuring with trembling hands and convulsing body. I can imagine this because I have seen it before in some of my members and even in myself.

But no matter how graphically the Gospels describe the anguish of Jesus---His falling on His face to the ground, His sweat like great drops of blood---I still cannot imagine it. Our Lord did not pray in despair and desperation or faithless questioning and doubt, or selfish concern.

Jesus did not pray for the Father to allow Him to bypass the cross, for our Lord knew Isaiah 53 and He knew that He was the Suffering Servant of whom Isaiah spoke: **SURELY HE HAS BORNE OUR GRIEFS AND CARRIED OUR SORROWS; YET WE ESTEEMED HIM STRICKEN, SMITTEN BY GOD, AND AFFLICTED. BUT HE WAS WOUNDED FOR OUR TRANSGRESSIONS, HE WAS BRUISED FOR OUR INIQUITIES; THE CHASTISEMENT FOR OUR PEACE WAS UPON HIM, AND BY HIS STRIPES WE ARE HEALED... HE WAS OPPRESSED AND HE WAS AFFLICTED, YET HE OPENED NOT HIS MOUTH; HE**

**WAS LED AS A LAMB TO THE SLAUGHTER, AND AS A SHEEP BEFORE ITS SHEARERS IS SILENT, SO HE OPENED NOT HIS MOUTH.**

In His humanity Jesus dreaded the cross and all it meant—the mocking, the spitting, the whipping, the thorns, the nails, the sins of the whole world upon His soul, the condemnation of His Father. And so His request was not a prayer to be absolved from doing the Father's will, but a question as to whether or not another way might be found to accomplish the redemption of mankind, without His passing through that hour of suffering and damnation.

Jesus prays with the trust and confidence that is appropriate for a dear Son asking His dear Father. He realized that this cup was poured out for Him by His Father and that His suffering was determined by Him. But He also knew that His Father could do all things, that He was omnipotent, so He cried out **ALL THINGS ARE POSSIBLE FOR YOU. TAKE THIS CUP AWAY FROM ME;...IF IT IS POSSIBLE...IF IT IS YOUR WILL.**

From the very outset this prayer of Jesus was offered in the spirit of perfect submission and absolute surrender to the Father's will. Jesus **YIELDED** to His Father's will. Never for a moment would He place His will, according to His human nature, ahead of His Father's will. He had said it before and He meant it **MY FOOD IS TO DO THE WILL OF HIM WHO SENT ME, AND TO FINISH HIS WORK...FOR I HAVE COME DOWN FROM HEAVEN, NOT TO DO MY OWN WILL, BUT THE WILL OF HIM WHO SENT ME.** The Father's will was still also His will. Someone wrote "There was not a self-centered bone in His body and that He was never so concerned for Himself as He was for the people for whom He had come to live and die."

With spiritual courage Jesus could pray from the heart **NOT MY WILL, BUT YOURS, BE DONE.** Jesus did not come into this world to make demands of His Father, but to submit to His will. That takes spiritual courage and selflessness to go the way of the cross; to relinquish ones' needs and fears. As we said we cannot fathom what Jesus endured in the Garden as He prostrated Himself on the ground, yet we can relate to it.

As human beings we too can dread the future---a loved one's death; our own terminal disease or disability; a serious operation; a family dilemma or disaster. How easily the words, "**Thy will be done**" fall from our lips, but how hard the heart matches that sentiment. How often don't we instead with a lump in our throat and a murmur of the heart; fret and worry about the problems, concerns, and trials really thinking "Your will be done Lord, if it matches my will"?

This is not only because we are spiritually weak, or lack the spiritual energy or courage, it is because we are spiritually sick through and through. Our heart is totally corrupt, sin-filled and self-centered so that often we just **DON'T WANT** to do otherwise than what our own will wants.

What a blessing that the Son of Man willed to do His Father's will for us. He took our place. Our sin became His sin, our death became His death; our punishment was His punishment; our damnation was His damnation so that His righteousness might become our righteousness and His life might become our life. And through the power of the Spirit His will also becomes our will.

When we **YIELD** to God's will and the Spirit leads us to pray "**Thy will be done**" it is a cry from the depths of our hearts; it is a prayer of repentance. But it is not a prayer of defeat and resignation, but a prayer of courage, victory and joy! It cannot truly be spoken or meant by anyone who merely is forced to give in or submit to God's will from which there is no escape—no, this is spoken by a child of God, loved by their Heavenly Father who knows His will is best! If we **YIELD** to His will, submerge our will wholly into His will, we will have peace and fulfillment in our lives. When our Father's will rules in our hearts filled with Christ's forgiving love for us, then everything works out for our eternal good!

Heavenly Father, was it really Your will that Your Son die so accursedly on the cross? Was it really Your will that someone so perfectly obedient and innocent suffer so much hatred and cruelty? Was it really Your will that One Man die for the sins of all, in their place, as their Substitute?

**YES!** And that's why we are here this evening on Ash Wednesday---because the Spirit has called us to be here, to relive that Passion History of our Lord, and also to repent of our sins, and to be renewed in the promise of God's forgiveness through His Son who had the courage to say, **NOT MY WILL, BUT YOURS, BE DONE.**

'Tis dark on the Mount of Olives, And shadows obscure the way -Where I follow in spirit my Savior, As He goes to the Garden to pray. For the sin of the world He is ready to die, His Father's will to obey.

I see Him arise from prayer And turn to His followers three, For a word of comfort and solace In His pain and agony. But they sleep; and in sorrow the Savior asks: "Could ye not watch one hour with Me?"

Fain would I wake them, reprove them, And chide for their inconstancy; But as I look into their faces, Ah, God! 'tis my own face I see. I am Peter and James and John, Christ is asking His question of me.

For He often has found me sleeping, Though He tells me to watch and to pray, And although the spirit is willing, The flesh finds it hard to obey. But I know I have received Thy pardon, O Lord, Even the same as did they.

Amen.