

Luke 22:31-46 "The Praying Savior"

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- [0 : 0 0] You are listening to a message from Southwood Presbyterian Church in Huntsville, Alabama. Our passion is to experience and express grace. Join us.
- Last weekend, I led somewhat of a prayer retreat for our church officers, for many of their wives. And I worked, planned schedules, designed documents, and got handouts ready.
- And all this stuff, so much for the prayer retreat, except not really praying much about it. And the day before the retreat, that just hit me like a ton of bricks.
- What a failure. What a fraud. I felt my weakness and my inadequacy exposed. You're only just beginning to learn about prayer yourself.
- How could you lead others? See, you fall back into self-reliance so fast. When my inadequacies are exposed like that, you're not even praying about a prayer retreat.
- [1 : 1 2] I see them. Sometimes others see them. And I see my frailties and my weaknesses all too clearly. It can be so discouraging, can't it? I suspect you've had that overwhelming sense of your own weakness and inadequacy in some situation.
- Maybe it's a particular temptation to sin that seems to get the best of you over and over. You feel like a total failure when you blow it again. Maybe it's a battle with depression that you feel you're stuck in and you're always losing and you just feel so weak.
- Maybe it's the expectations of others. At work, you've got to provide for my family. At home, I've got to be a great parent. At church, I've got to do more for Jesus. In relationships, I've got to be a better friend or a better spouse.
- There's too many expectations and not enough of you. Your own finite inadequacy is just overwhelming.
- Some of you have shared that with me lately. As our officers were together, many of us shared that with each other. Just, I don't know how to handle it all, y'all. Not good enough. We all know that feeling in some way, don't we?
- [2 : 3 2] All of us have experienced that. We all battle, actually, day in and day out to avoid that shame, that failure, that inadequacy, because we hate it, don't we?
- Listen, as Jesus speaks with his disciples here in this passage, he says a lot of really, really good things.
- And he actually doesn't deny our weakness, these things we're feeling. But he says two of the most helpful, hopeful things that I've ever heard.
- I can't wait to share them with you and with me this morning. As we read, we'll be wrapping up the time in the upper room at the Last Supper. That's where we're going to start up there.
- And then heading outside towards the cross, which is only 24 hours away. It's Thursday night. Luke 22 at verse 31. Jesus, speaking to his disciples, says, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan demanded to have you that he might sift you like wheat.

[3 : 38] But I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned again, strengthen your brothers. Peter said to him, Lord, I'm ready to go with you both to prison and to death.

And Jesus said, I tell you, Peter, the rooster will not crow this day until you deny three times that you know me. And he said to them, when I sent you out with no money bag or knapsack or sandals, did you lack anything?

And they said nothing. He said to them, but now let the one who has a money bag take it and likewise a knapsack. And let the one who has no sword sell his cloak and buy one.

For I tell you that this scripture must be fulfilled in me. And he was numbered with the transgressors. For what is written about me has its fulfillment. And they said, look, Lord, here are two swords.

And he said to them, it is enough. He came out and went as was his custom to the Mount of Olives. And the disciples followed him. And when he came to the place, he said to them, pray that you may not enter into temptation.

[4 : 52] And he withdrew from them about a stone's throw and knelt down and prayed, saying, Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but yours be done.

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

And when he rose from prayer, he came to the disciples and found them sleeping for sorrow. And he said to them, why are you sleeping?

Rise and pray that you may not enter into temptation. This is God's word. Let's ask his help as we look at it together. Father, thank you for this, your word.

Thank you for how it tells us of these special, sacred moments. Thank you for the hope that it gives us in Jesus.

[6 : 02] May we see him. May we know him. May we experience his love for us. That we might love him also. We ask in his name.

Amen. Jesus prays. We've seen over and over that this happens in Luke's biography of Jesus.

Right? Jesus prays all the time. He prays before significant events. He withdraws by himself to pray. He teaches his disciples how to pray.

And here, as he nears the cross, Jesus prays again. And these prayers are such good news.

Because he prays for us. We see here first that Jesus prays for the sake of his struggling followers.

[6 : 58] Verse 32. I have prayed for you. Those must have been good words to hear, don't you think? Jesus turns to Peter.

Maybe they're getting up from the table. I don't know. And he says to him personally, Peter, I've prayed for you. There's no one I would rather have praying for me, right?

Why does Jesus say that? Why would Jesus need to pray for us? Well, he also says here that Satan is actively attacking us.

He's speaking in verse 32 specifically to Peter. But he's addressing all of his disciples here. There at the table, he says, Satan has demanded to have y'all.

To sift y'all. It's plural. Jesus doesn't actually say y'all. But that's what it means. He says, all of you. So Jesus' point is not that he prays for Peter exclusively and nobody else.

- [8 : 07] But that he prays for Peter personally. All of his followers are under the attack of Satan, we're told. But Jesus prays for each of them by name.
- Maybe you hear that this morning. You're tempted to think, no big deal. I'm pretty much okay. Don't bother, Jesus.
- Peter gets that. Verse 33. Jesus says, I'm praying for you. Peter says, Lord, don't worry about me. I'm ready to go with you both to prison and to death.
- And Jesus said, I tell you, Peter, the rooster will not crow this day until you deny three times that you know me. Jesus is reminding Peter, another reason he prays for us, that our flesh is weaker than we realize.
- In fact, it may even be that place you think you'd never fall where Satan would most like to attack. And so Jesus prays for us even when we don't know we need it.
- [9 : 17] These days we think the only good news for someone struggling is to hear that they're not weak. You know, tell them they're good, that they can handle it. Jesus says, on your own, you're even weaker than you know.
- But I have prayed for you. You didn't even have to know the right thing to pray, Peter. I'm looking out for you.
- I've got you. Finally, Jesus prays for us because the world is against us. Jesus has just spent a long time, a couple of weeks ago, for us, telling them that they're going to face significant opposition, persecution.
- And now he tells them that time, it's happening immediately. It's time for this to be fulfilled. What is written about me has fulfillment now.
- And if they attack me, they'll attack you. So no longer like earlier when I sent you out, can you count on others caring for you as you go? Better take some stuff with you. And the disciples say, oh, I get it.
- [10 : 24] Hey, we found two swords. Aren't you proud? It's loud. It's laughable. Think of what they're going to face. Two swords. Jesus says, my translation, you'll never get it, will you?
- Enough means enough with this conversation. I will pray for you as you face opposition that you don't anticipate or understand.
- I'll pray for you. There they are. The world, the flesh, and the devil aligned against us, working in concert to exploit our weaknesses, to tempt our frail wills, to overwhelm our finite capacities more than we could know.
- And you know, if you've been there, you know when you're struggling, it's hard to identify which one of those is coming at you, isn't it? Is it the world, the flesh, the devil? I don't know. It's just so much coming on.
- We just sense it's all too much. Lies become easy to believe. We do things again that we promised and thought we never would.
- [11 : 37] We begin to feel alone and helpless. You know that feeling. Listen. Listen. Jesus says, I have prayed for you.
- Right there. In your weakness. Right where you feel that. Jesus says, I've prayed for you. Maybe you think, well, thanks.
- I'm not really helping. I'm still drowning here, Jesus. I thought you said you were praying. Listen to what he prays for.
- Let's finish verse 32. I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned again, strengthen your brothers.
- This is consistent with the way Jesus and Paul pray for believers throughout the Bible. Praying not usually about their circumstances getting changed.

[12 : 40] It's usually for their hearts in the midst of what they're already facing. That your faith may not fail.

That's what Jesus is praying. In fact, notice Jesus tells Peter in so many words that it's about to look and feel as though his faith has failed.

Tonight you will deny me three times. That doesn't seem encouraging. But I thought you prayed for me, Jesus.

I thought you promised to be with me, Jesus. I thought you would help me out of the tight spot so that I would succeed, Jesus. And Jesus says, I am helping you.

I am with you. I am praying for you about the most important thing. That you would trust me when everything falls apart around you.

[13 : 43] That you would depend on my strength when you are too weak because you will be. Jesus prays not that Peter would avoid the trial.

He actually tells him it's coming. But that he would have faith in the midst of it. And secondly, he prays that his repentance would strengthen others.

When you have turned again, strengthen your brothers. Isn't it encouraging that Jesus is more concerned with our hearts than he is with our performance?

Do you hear that in what he's saying to Peter? When you have turned again. It's that picture of repentance. You will stumble. You will wander.

But when you turn from your own way back to me. To see me as the only strong and sufficient one. I pray you will help others see that same truth.

[14 : 46] Boy, do those prayers get answered in Peter's life. In really powerful ways. But do you see the beauty of Jesus' focus as he prays for you? It's not primarily on our performance, is it?

Jesus doesn't rejoice in our sin. He's not excited about Peter denying him. No. But our hearts turning to him in faith and repentance is much more significant to him.

It's what he prays for because he knows we are weak. You need to hear this. Because you know that weakness. You know where you feel weak.

Jesus' vision for you is beyond your failures. Because he wants you. And he wants others pointed not to your own strength and performance.

But to him. Jesus' vision for you. What he sees for you is beyond your failures. Past, present, future. Where is your weakness or sin that you've repented of?

[15 : 54] Where is it an opportunity to strengthen others? Where have you seen your inadequacy and Jesus' sufficiency that someone else needs to hear about?

Is it in things you chased after in your younger years? You think there's a high school or college student in this room who needs to hear you talk about the idols of your youth?

How Jesus has shown himself as more worthy and more valuable than those things you chased after? There is. Maybe it's in betrayal or divorce.

I think there's someone else who knows the shame of a broken relationship. That needs to know how Jesus has been enough for you. And even enabled you to forgive where you thought you never would.

Maybe it's in battling addiction. You think there's a brother or sister who needs the reminder that Jesus meets you there when you have blown it again?

[17 : 02] That he doesn't give up on you? That there's hope? See, it's often our weaknesses and our failures rather than our strengths and successes that God uses to point others to him.

Right? Because he's the one who's strong. And so we comfort others as we ourselves have been comforted by God. That's how it works.

And so Jesus prays this will happen in the lives of his brothers and sisters for whom he will die. He prays for us in our battle against the world, the flesh, and the devil.

He prays for you in your depression that you will not lose your faith. That you will offer light to others that today you can't see for yourself.

Jesus prays for you. He prays for you in your inadequacy. That you will realize that he is all you need.

[18 : 03] And that you will help others cling to him in a way that today you can't even do yourself. Jesus is our great high priest.

Standing before God's throne today, praying for you. Hebrews tells us he always lives to make intercession for us.

That's good news. How does that encourage you? In what way or in what situation does that truth encourage your heart?

I actually want you to take a minute. Write something down. Where is it? Where do you feel that? Where do you need to know Jesus is praying for you? I'm not going to look, so you have to write something.

I'm not going to look. I'm not going to look.

[19 : 08] Jesus is praying for you. It's such good news. We need to remember it right there in the place that God's putting on your heart right now.

It's such good news. But it actually gets even better than that in this passage. See, the hope of the gospel is that Jesus prays for us.

I know it sounds the same. Emphasis different. That Jesus prays and lives and suffers and dies for me in my place.

Substitution is what's being talked about here. Jesus tells us about this substitution in verse 37. I tell you, this scripture must be fulfilled in me. And he was numbered with the transgressors.

For what is written about me has its fulfillment. It's happening, Jesus says. He's saying he's about to face the rejection, the suffering, the death that lawbreakers, sinners have earned.

[20 : 20] Jesus is about to walk into that. He quotes from Isaiah 53. Numbered with the transgressors.

As he's talking about that, that means he bore the sin of many. Made intercession for the transgressors. Earlier in that chapter that we love, it speaks of Jesus as bearing our griefs.

And carrying our sorrows. The Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

And so Jesus is carrying the weight of that as he walks toward the cross. That certainly happens on the cross. Where Galatians tells us Jesus became a curse for us.

But it starts in his life. That he lives perfectly on our behalf. So that in my failure, my great hope is not merely that Jesus prays for me so maybe I'll get it right next time.

[21 : 27] I've got another shot at it. That's actually not my greatest hope. But truly, it's that Jesus succeeds where I failed.

So God credits his success, his righteousness to me. He gets my sin. I get his righteousness. His perfect record.

2 Corinthians 5 verse 21. For our sake, God made him to be sin who knew no sin. That's Jesus, right?

Jesus is numbered with the transgressors. He becomes sin. So that in him, we might become the righteousness of God.

Jesus succeeds where I failed in my place. That's the gospel. That's our true hope.

[22 : 25] Not that you're stronger than you think. That you can do it next time. But Jesus is stronger than you are for you. And you're safe in him.

That's good news. Watch how Luke makes this painfully but gloriously clear. Because what happens as they leave the upper room is Jesus starts to be alone.

More and more. Just when they're leaving here in verse 39. He walks out. Jesus came out and went as was his custom. Is he alone? What's that? And the disciples followed him.

Not they all walked together. But Jesus went and they're following. He's beginning his isolation. They get there to the garden. And they stop and he withdraws from them.

And kneels to pray alone. Doesn't he? And then he returns. Who's been praying during this whole time in the garden?

[23 : 28] Verse 45. Who's been praying? Only Jesus. A lot of people are supposed to be praying. The disciples at this pivotal emotional moment.

Having just been told to pray are doing what? Sleeping. Jesus alone prays. And it's important for you to see this.

Because despite what some say. It's not your job to go up on Gethsemane. And bear the weight of sin like this.

Jesus experiences this agony in the place of sinners. So those who follow him. Who trust him. Never have to experience it like this.

And it is intense agony. Isn't it? As Jesus prays. He's beginning to consider. And endure. What being a sinner really means.

[24 : 31] Having to drink the cup of God's wrath. Having to endure separation. From God himself. And y'all. Jesus knew what was coming.

Unlike any sinner who has ever lived. And there have been a lot of them. Jesus knows what's coming doesn't he? He understood the sweetness of fellowship with his father.

He knew the righteous indignation towards sin. That God felt with his whole being. Jesus was aware that being numbered with transgressors. Meant being forsaken by God.

And as he considers that. The angst of that thought. Made him sweat great drops of blood. As he prayed.

It's so intense that God even sends an angel from heaven to minister to him. And that makes it all okay. So it's not hard anymore. The angel comes. And then.

[25 : 31] Having been strengthened. There it is again. The cup is so intense. The agony. The breaking in Jesus' spirit. So painful beyond what we could know.

This unimaginable sorrow. It's one of those times I'm reminded of the truth of there being one way of salvation.

Friends. If there was another way. God the father would have taken it. His son is in agony to the point of death.

And to suggest that Jesus endured this trauma when it was unnecessary. And there are many other ways that you can come back into a right relationship with God. Is to distort the entire gospel of God's word from cover to cover.

It's about a substitute. Who comes and lives and suffers and dies for us. Hallelujah. What a savior.

[26 : 31] He's there for you. Do you see that? You see that's your spot? It was. It would have been. Could have been.

Should have been. Your spot. And he's there for you. Do your neighbors know that?
There's good news for them.

It's good news for you. And then you get to share it. See it's not only that the penalty for our sins needed to be paid. And it did.

But on top of that we were created to live in relationship with God. Right? This is the purpose for which he creates us. He loves us. He wants us to know him. Submitting to him always.

Trusting him. Obeying him. This is what we're created for. And Jesus here does that for us. In our place. So beautifully.

[27 : 29] Look at that famous prayer. Verse 42. Father. If you're willing. Remove this cup from me.

Nevertheless. Not my will. But yours. Be done. Jesus says. Father. You are God. No matter what.

Not the way we pray. If you get me out of this mess. I promise I'll believe in you. I'll go to church. I'll do whatever you. You want me to do. If you just come through for me. I'll never do it again.

No. It's. It's. Nevertheless. Whatever else may come. You are. My father. My God. God. Jesus trusts God's goodness. Even when something else.

Seems better. To him. Listen. Please don't be confused here. Jesus. Is pleading. For another way. For it to go differently.

[28 : 30] The overwhelming sense. Of what he's facing. What he's about to go into. As a sin bearer. Bearer. Any other possibility. To avoid.

This cup. But even. In pain. And grief. And darkness. That is closing in. He clings. To God. Being. Good. We're so bad at this. All the way back to the garden. The first garden. Where Adam and Eve are there. And. They wondered.

Is God really good? We've been wondering since then. Haven't we? Is he really good? Is. Is he really looking out. For my best interest? And time and again.

We've decided we need to. For ourselves. We've chosen our own way. We've sought to protect ourselves. We've tried to. Fulfill ourselves. And Jesus trusts.

[29 : 24] God's goodness. For. Us. In fact. All the way to the point. Of being willing. To suffer. Intensely.

Immense. Suffering. We said earlier. Jesus. Understands the trial. Before him. More deeply. Than any other person. Ever has. Suffering.

That you and I. Can't even. Comprehend. And he says what? Nevertheless. Not. My will. But yours. Be done.

And I. Say. Or. Think. God. I'll. Follow you. As long as it doesn't hurt. Too much. As long as there's. Nothing.

Uncomfortable. I'll have to go through. I don't want it to cost me. My comfort. And Jesus. Suffers. For. Me. In fact.

[30 : 19] God sends the angel. Here. Strengthens Jesus. In the trial. Rather than removing him from it. Doesn't he? Just like he promises. To do for us. Jesus is perfect.

Submission. To his father. And his father's will. Is the submission. I. Owed. God. It's the way I was supposed to relate to him.

There he is. Kneeling. Agonizing. In prayer. While I forget. To pray.

Or even fall asleep. While you insist on. On your own way being better. That you really know what you need. While you avoid. Suffering at all costs.

- Instead of. Trusting God. In it. Listen. Y'all. Me too. And Jesus. Prays. For.
- [31 : 23] Us. It's the gospel. In. My. My. Place. Condemned. He. Stood. So that. I. Stand. In. His. Righteousness. Where. Are. Are you. Are you. Are you. Are you. Are you. Are you. Are you. Are you. Failed. Where. Will you. Never. Be. Enough. Listen.
- In our. Weakness. He. Is. Strong. In our. Failure. He. Succeeds. Where. We. Are. Inadequate. He. Is. Completely.
- And. Gloriously. Sufficient. Amen. Will you. Believe. That. Will you. Trust. Him. To be. Enough. Will you. Find.
- His. Grace. And. His. Righteousness. For. You. To be. So. Much. More. Gloriously. Better. Than. Anything. You. Could. Give. For. Yourself. Or. Earn. For. Yourself.
- [32 : 16] Behold. Him. There. The. Risen. Lamb. My. Perfect. Spotless. Righteousness. Your. Righteousness. Is. In. Heaven. John. Bunyan. Says. So. That. You. Can. Know. Nobody. Can. Take. It. Away. From. You. No. Failure. No. Weakness. No.
- Attack. Of. Satan. Can. Take. It. Away. From. You. Jesus. Pray. Says. For. Us. And. Submits. For.
- Us. And. Suffers. For. Us. Horatius. Bonar. Wrote it. This. Way. Upon. A life. I have not. Lived. Upon. A death. I did. Not. Die. Another's. Life. Another's. Death. I stake. My. Whole. Eternity. Not.
- [33 : 10] On. The tears. Which. I have. Shed. Not. On. The sorrows. I have. Known. Another's. Tears. Another's. Grievs. On. These. I rest. On. These. Alone.
- Listen to these words from the valley of vision. Consider what Jesus has taken in your place. And what you receive in his. Christ.
- Was. All. Anguish. Man. We see it. Don't we? He was. All. Anguish. That I might be all joy. Cast off. That I might be brought in.
- Trodden down as an enemy. That I might be welcomed as a friend. Surrendered to hell's worst. That I might attain heaven's best. Stripped.
- That I might be clothed. Wounded. That I might be healed. A thirst. That I might drink. Tormented. That I might be comforted. Made a shame.
- [34 : 10] That I might inherit glory. Entered darkness. That I might have eternal light. My Savior wept. That all tears might be wiped.
- From my eyes. Groaned. That I might have endless song. Endured all pain. That I might have unfading health. Bore a thorny crown.
- That I might have a glory diadem. Bowed his head. That I might uplift mine. Is there anything else.
- That would make you want to pray more. To crawl up into his lap. And tell him what's on your heart. To cry out to him. When you need help.
- Than seeing his heart. For you. Than. Than contemplating what he has endured. In your place.
- [35 : 08] See Jesus still tells his disciples to pray. Doesn't he? A couple times. Oh if they only understood. How he was praying.
- For them. How he was agonizing. And suffering. For them. How he was preparing. To die. For. Them.
- Do you hear. The praying. Savior. This morning. Pleading. On your behalf. For your sake. In your place.

Even. What. Great. Hope. Y'all. No matter. What you're facing. No matter. What you're feeling. Jesus. Praise.

For you. Hear his voice. Trust him. Today. Let's pray. Jesus.

[36 : 07] Might we hear you. Even now. You're praying. For us. Might there be comfort.

In a savior. Who knows. And understands. Our weakness. Who has suffered like us.

In every way. Yet. Was without sin. Because I am. With plenty of that. Father.

Forgive us. Take Jesus. Record. Instead of ours. Cover us. In his. Righteousness. That we might.

Rejoice. And pray. And trust. Because we have no other hope. Make Jesus beautiful.

[37 : 14] In our eyes. This morning. In our hearts. And give us joy. And confidence. And hope. And dependence. Because of it. We pray in his name. Amen. Amen. For more information.

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