

Christ in Gethsemane

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[0 : 00] Let's turn now to Luke's Gospel, Luke chapter 22. We've been working through this Gospel, coming closer to the end.

Luke chapter 22, and we'll read from verse 39 to verse 46. Luke chapter 22, and reading at verse 39.

And 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. 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 an agony, he prayed more earnestly.

[1 : 11] 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. Now, if something awful was going to happen to you in a particular place, you were absolutely persuaded that in this particular place, that if you went there, an awful thing was going to happen to you.

I am quite sure that you would do everything in your power to avoid going to that particular place. I certainly would. I'm sure I would do everything that I could do humanly possible to keep myself from going to such a place.

But Jesus, as we see here, did the very opposite. He deliberately went to the one spot where he knew the danger was most imminent.

And how did Jesus know that that's a place where the danger would be? Well, Judas, who was going to lead the religious leaders and going to lead the soldiers to Jesus, knew that this is a place where Jesus would go.

[2 : 38] Because the Bible tells us that Jesus often went there. Luke tells us that he went as was his custom. That's what he said.

And 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.

What place? Well, we're told in Matthew, it was the Garden of Gethsemane. But we're also told in John's Gospel that he went, this is what it says, he went with his disciples across the Kidron Valley where there was a garden.

Now Judas, who betrayed him, also knew the place. For Jesus often met there with his disciples. So you see how the Gospel writers are focusing in on this particular place, this location, the Garden of Gethsemane.

And each one is showing that this is a place that Jesus would go with his disciples. Sometimes, obviously, the disciples would make their own way there to meet with Jesus.

[3 : 39] Jesus often went. It was the place. It was obviously just like the home in Bethany was a special place in the experience of our Lord, so was Gethsemane.

It was a place that he frequented. And Judas knew that after Jesus had been in the upper room with instituting the Lord's Supper, but where they had gone to celebrate the Passover, and Judas, remember, had left them there to go and do his dirty work, Judas knew that the one place, the one location where he could hand Jesus over privately, where there would be nobody else around and about, would be this place, the Garden of Gethsemane.

And so we find that our Lord Jesus, and that's why it's so important, I think this is why the Bible lays so much emphasis upon this, that Jesus' actions were voluntary, that he is giving himself.

If Jesus was a Savior who was taken against his wishes and taken against his will, he would be doing everything in his power to avoid being taken.

But we see that it's the very reverse, that he is going full on as he came up to Jerusalem. He was telling them. He was telling them, we've seen that, we've been following through Jesus' journey to Jerusalem, and he's telling the disciples what's going to happen to him.

[5 : 13] On one occasion it tells us how he set his face like a flint. There was just this absolute determination. Nothing was going to sidetrack him. Nothing was going to derail him.

He had a purpose, a mission. He had come to be the sacrifice for sin, to fulfill all that God had given him to do. He was fulfilling every step of the way the Father's will.

And nothing was going to sidetrack him. And so now we find he is moving, moving ever so slowly to the spot where he's going to be taken.

Now, of course, as we said, I believe that this garden, the Garden of Gethsemane, was a special place for the Lord. And I'm sure we all have our special places in this world.

And I talk about that at a spiritual level. Places that are important to us. Places that have a special significance or a special meaning. Where the Lord may have manifested himself in a special way to you.

[6 : 20] Where maybe it might be here in church or in another church. But you will never forget that particular time. Or particular occasions where God's word became so alive in your experience.

And you could feel that it was only yourself there and the Lord. And that this was as if the Lord was drawing into your very soul. And there are many days that you've wished that it could be like that.

That somehow you could turn the clock back. Or that you could experience once again these things. It might be in somebody's house. It might be out in the moor.

It might be in your own house. In a room in your house. There might be some particular place where you want to draw a sight. For instance, if there is some great pressure or difficulty brought into your heart.

Into your life. And you want to be alone with the Lord. You want to get alone with the Lord. And that's becoming increasingly difficult in the day that we're living in. To just get time to be alone.

[7 : 28] It's getting very, very, very, very difficult. To get a time of quietness and isolation. Very difficult. But you need to.

You want to. You don't want anybody around. And you want... And that you can think of a place.

Now, in many ways, you may say to yourself, this is ridiculous. Because I can go to the Lord.

And that's the beauty. We can go to the Lord anywhere. And at any time. And of course it is right that we can do that. But maybe it's just the way we feel. That there are places that are special to us.

Because of previous blessings. Bethel was always going to be precious to Jacob. It was a place that was linked to his mind.

To his spiritual journey. There was always... If you said to Jacob to speak of places that were important to him. There's no doubt that he would have spoken about Bethel. And so, in the experience of the disciples and the Lord.

[8 : 29] There is no doubt whatever. But that this place, Gethsemane, was special to them. And so, we find that they would have...

I'm sure on many occasions, they would have just drawn aside. And Jesus would have talked with them. And I'm sure the disciples... If you had spoken to Peter and James and John and Andrew.

And you said to them, Can you identify any special landmarks or places in your life? I'm sure they would have spoken about Gethsemane. They would have spent many, many wonderful hours with Jesus.

Listening to him. Sharing with him. Fellowshiping with him. Wonderful. And you know, it's so important for us. I just... I mentioned that just a moment ago. It is so important for us.

To stop in this frenzied world. The world today is demanding of us all the time. Hurry, hurry, hurry. And I think we're all fed up.

[9 : 29] Trying to achieve what we cannot achieve. And huge mountains of work that we're no longer able to cope with. And there's no time for the Lord.

And the Lord hasn't changed. You know, one of the things that the Bible says is, Be not conformed to this world. And I think the Christian has to take heed of that.

And one of the ways that we're being conformed to the world is by being sucked into this ever-speeding-up treadmill that is racing us on faster and faster and faster.

And we've got to be able to say, Look, no. For my spiritual good. For the sake of my Christian service. For everything.

It is vital that I find time every day to stop, to meditate, to study, to reflect, to pray.

[10:30] Because if not, we're going to go on a downward spiral to become ineffective, lukewarm Christians.

It is inevitable. It's going to happen. And it is happening. I'm sure all of us today, and you'll find so many people say, I don't know what's wrong. There's a coldness.

Part of it is, is this frantic, frenzied world we're living in. And we've lost the ability to be alone with the Lord. And the more time we spend with the Lord, the more like Him we will become, and the more effective we will be in working and serving Him.

And so I really believe that we are the losers, and the church is the loser in the long run, for our inability to be able to find time, to spend time.

Anyway, we find that when Jesus came to the garden, He divided up the disciples. First of all, He left Adon and behind, and He took with Him, as it were, the inner three, Peter, James, and John.

[11:35] And they, of course, were the ones who were privileged to have been with Jesus when sometimes the other disciples weren't. For instance, they were the witnesses of the transfiguration, witnesses of Jesus raising Jairus' daughter from the dead, and so on.

But even here, there came a point where Jesus had to leave the three of them behind. Because Jesus was on a journey on His own.

Yes, He wanted His companions, He wanted His followers, He wanted them to be with Him. But there came a point where He had to leave them behind. Because He was going to enter into this cauldron all on His own.

And Jesus moves away from them, we're told, about a stone throw. And this garden that He loved so much was, has been said, was going to take on a new significance for Him.

because into this garden, He entered into an experience that was awful. It wasn't as severe as the cross, but it was an experience that really became so painful.

[12:51] And we find that the intensity of the struggle as Jesus began to pray, that it had an effect upon Him, not just inwardly, but outwardly. the struggle, spiritually, and mentally, and emotionally, and all that He was going through, the intensity of Him, it in turn had an effect physically upon Him.

Because we're told that He began to sweat profusely. Now people may say, well, of course, that was in the Middle East and it's boiling hot.

But not at night. And we know that on this particular night it was actually a cold night because you remember that, well, you know from, we haven't reached that, but we know it already, that on that particular night when Jesus was arrested and they were, Jesus was taken with the soldiers into the courtroom, that they made a fire of coals because it was so cold.

You find them warming themselves at this particular fire. So here it is, it's, the Bible tells us it was a cold night. And yet we find Jesus and He's sweating, as it were, profusely on this cold night.

Because Jesus at this moment is discovering more and more of what it means to be a sin bearer. Everything in Him recoiled from what was before Him.

[14:23] there was like a shuddering in His whole being. His whole system was beginning to, it was like almost a vice, as it were, squeezing Him as He was seeing the spiritual horrors that were there lying before Him.

And He was looking into a cup, as it were, that He was going to have to drink, not take a sip from. You know, when we come to a communion and the cup is passed from one person to another, we take a sip and we pass it on to the next person.

Jesus, the cup that He prays about, when He looked into that cup, He was seeing there the cup of God's wrath. He was seeing there the cup of the wine of astonishment.

And He knew that it wasn't a sip He had to take, but He had to drink it all, the whole cup. And it filled Him with dread.

And so we find that the impact was that, we read there that it was like, verse 44 tells us, and being in agony, He prayed more earnestly, and His sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground.

[15:39] That's the intensity. You know, people sometimes think that it was easy for Jesus. We've mentioned this quite often because one of the things that Luke emphasizes so often, Luke is great at emphasizing the humanness of Jesus in His dealings with the different situations in life.

Luke, of course, being a doctor, and he often, it's the kind of thing that Luke picks up on. But we see here that Jesus is as human, apart from sin, as you and me.

And if Jesus had touched something hot, His hand would recoil. He would feel pain in the same way as you and I. He experienced tiredness in the same way as you and I.

You would often find Him with this weariness. He experienced hunger in the same way as you and I. He experienced thirst in the same way. In all these things.

And so here is this perfect, beautiful, sinless Savior. fear. And we see the pressure that He's under. And we find also that as Jesus began to pray, it seems that this struggle intensifies.

[16 : 56] Now, of course, His soul, we're told in Matthew, was sorrowful prior to Him entering into prayer. But it seems to intensify as He prays.

And you know, not that we can in any way enter into where Jesus was on this occasion because what He was doing was unique.

His struggle was unique. But is it not true with ourselves that there have been times when we have gone into prayer with the Lord on our own?

A time where there is some where we really come to the Lord in prayer. And you know, as we go into prayer, deeper into prayer, everything changes.

And we become so aware of our own sin and uncleanness as we stand before a holy God. When we began praying, we weren't maybe conscious of that.

[17 : 56] But the more we've been with the Lord, it's like we're being brought, as it were, step by step closer to seeing something of the holiness and the majesty of God.

And the more we've seen of that, the more we recoil as we see ourselves at our own ugliness and filthiness. And we feel like Peter saying, depart from me for I am a sinful man, O Lord.

Like I say, a woe is me for I am undone. I am a man of unclean lips. And so sometimes, although this is, as we say, a unique experience here, and we cannot enter into it, sometimes we also have discovered in our time of prayer something of a struggle.

But Jesus here was not being made aware of his own unworthiness or made aware in any way of these sort of things because he was sinless, he was pure, he was undefiled, but he was being made aware of what it was going to be for him to be the sin bearer.

And so as we see Jesus in this distress, going through this, what distress, what was he experiencing? Well, one of the things he was experiencing was loneliness.

[19 : 15] He was on his own. Those who were closest to him were all going to go. One of his number was going to betray him. The leader of his group was going to deny him.

The rest of them were going to run away. And let us not minimize the hurt that that is going to cause our Savior.

Because we so often tend to forget the human aspect of it and of how these things, if we are betrayed by somebody close, that is going to hurt.

If we are denied, if somebody denies us in a way that really is going like a knife through us, can you imagine your own family, your own son or your own daughter or your own father or mother or whoever in the company of other people and people said, oh, is that your son?

Is that your... No! I don't know anything of it. That person and swearing and cursing and saying, that person means nothing to me. It would be like a knife in your heart.

[20 : 28] And that's exactly what Peter was doing in the very presence of Christ with oaths and with cursing saying, he means nothing to me. I don't know that man.

Of course, these things are going to hurt our Savior. But the loneliness was far greater than that, though these things were part and partial of what was going to be involved.

The greatest loneliness of all was the breakup, as it were, of the communion and the fellowship and the togetherness that he had always enjoyed with his Father.

We cannot begin to grasp just how the amazing oneness that Father and Son enjoyed. And yet, as Jesus throd the wine press alone, Jesus, who had the Spirit without measure and all the communication of love and grace and everything communicated by the Spirit, the Spirit's impact was being withdrawn and withdrawn and withdrawn.

so that his sense of closeness and togetherness with his Father was being taken away. And of course, whatever he might have experienced in Gethsemane was nothing compared to what he was to experience on Calvary.

[21 : 54] At the high point, or we should say the low point, where he cries out, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? But you know, while we will never experience what Jesus experienced, there will ever be called upon to go through it, let us remember, the Bible tells us that we have a high priest who has been touched with the feeling of our infirmities and was in all points tempted like as we are yet without sin.

And you know, the wonderful thing is that whenever you go through a time of abandonment or forsakenness or people let you down or you feel lonely or you feel that everybody's against you, you remember, Jesus knows, he understands, he's been there far deeper than you've ever been and he's able to help and to strengthen and to support and do for you far and beyond anything you could ask or think.

Again, Jesus experienced weakness, not just loneliness, but he experienced weakness. And again, weakness is not something that we tend to think about with regard to Jesus because right throughout his life he demonstrated the most extraordinary strength, strength of resolve, strength of character, moral strength, spiritual strength, physical strength, mental strength.

All the time you look on Jesus as you say to yourself, was ever a stronger person walking through this world? I doubt it because there was just this amazing strength about him and yet here we find that there is a weakness and we know that because an angel came and verse 43 tells us and there appeared to him an angel from heaven strengthening him.

We wouldn't know of that weakness unless we read of this that he was being strengthened. How he was strengthened, we don't know. Many people reckon it as through the angel worshipping him. But you know the great thing again if we can apply it to ourselves is that there are times in life we feel weak as well.

[24 : 09] We feel weak in the face of temptation. We feel weak with regard to our Christian walk. We can feel weak physically, mentally, emotionally. We can feel weak spiritually in all the different areas of life.

You remember here's a saviour who knows what weakness is. But he's a saviour today who's strong and a saviour today who's able to impart strength to you so that whatever you're having to endure or face or go through he can equip you.

Those who wait upon the Lord will renew their strength. Weakness is a fearful thing when we feel weak in the face of whatever it is. Whether that weakness comes about from the weakness of old age or infirmity or whether it is a weakness in face of all the difficulties of life or maybe today there's some people and you're feeling weak in face of what's in front of you this week and you're saying to yourself I don't know if I can face it.

Remember what the Bible says and Paul was able to say that I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me. To have Christ strengthening you this Jesus who knew what weakness was and yet this Christ who is altogether powerful and strong.

And again we could say that in the heart of the Savior there is a fearful sense of apprehension dread. Again you say to yourself how can there be dread in the heart of the Savior is he not somebody who is full of faith yes.

[25 : 49] Some people think you can't have dread and faith in the same heart. Oh yes you can. Jesus wouldn't have been praying Father if it would be possible. Let this cup pass from me but not my will but thine if it weren't for the dread that was in his heart.

His faith was vibrant but there was still this sense of dread. Jesus is here the most courageous obedient submissive passion this world has ever seen before before the Father and yet there is this sense of dread.

However we see here that Jesus submits to the Father's will. And you know we must never forget this struggle that we read about here because this struggle where we find Jesus on the floor of Gethsemane was for you and me.

these few verses compacted together are some of the most powerful significant verses in the whole Bible.

Jesus struggled on the ground of Gethsemane for you and me. He wasn't in this world for himself but for you and for me.

[27 : 09] What is our reaction to all this? Do we just read it and sort of shrug our shoulders and say well it's very moving or do we try and engage in it and say well Lord you were there for a purpose.

And if you're today here without the Lord Jesus Christ please don't push this away from yourself and saying well I know these are powerful statements and such like. Remember this was a wrestling.

The forces of darkness were out. Jesus was at the center of the most incredible cosmic battle. Jesus had said that. This is your hour and the power of darkness.

Satan and the gates of hell had been opened up and this was a fearful moment. But Jesus went back and he went back and he went back in prayer.

And he came forward to face the final part. In faith strong resolved the disciples weren't ready for it. [28 : 16] Why? Because they had fallen asleep. They were in prayer. You can't find fault with them in a sense. Jesus said that very thing to them. The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak.

They were good men but they weren't ready spiritually for what was to happen. And Jesus said to them, rise and pray. Because if you don't pray you're going to enter into temptation.

And if you enter into temptation and you're not ready for it, it'll get you. Remember we've often said this temptation is not sin. But if we enter into temptation unprepared it's only a step until we've entered into sin.

Just one step. That's why we need to be prayerfully on guard. We need to be attuned and my dear friend if you're facing temptation as you and I face it all the time.

Do you know the most dangerous time is when you don't want to pray? When the temptation is so attractive, so alluring and you say to yourself, I know I should resist this, I know I should, there's a voice and it's God's voice speaking to you and say, seek my help, avoid this and there's another part of you say, I'm not even going to pray about this.

[29 : 36] I don't want God's help just now. Have you ever been there? Terrible place. We need to be seeking God's help and grace and the most vulnerable time is when we don't want to pray.

That's when we have to pray because we cannot on our own face temptation. Always it is too powerful for us unless we have the armor, unless we have God's help and grace.

the disciples were not ready. They entered into temptation and they failed. May we then seek to learn from these things, to look to the Lord, to find his clothing, his protection and that we may go forward trusting in him.

Let's pray. Lord our God, we give thanks for thy gracious goodness to us and as we reflect even very briefly this morning upon our saviour's struggle, help us to remember the cost of our salvation. May we never take it for granted, but may we appreciate it more and more and more. Bless us together, bless us individually, bless all our homes and our families and all whom we love.

[30 : 55] Take us to our homes safely and guide us in all that we're about and we pray to bless the cup of tea that will be held in the hall afterwards and that thy presence might be with each one.

Bless us and guide us in all that we're about and forgive us our sin in Jesus' name we ask it. Amen.