

Drinking The Cup

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[0 : 00] Well, good morning, church.

We're picking back up in our sermon series with the Gospel of Luke today. So would you turn with me to Luke chapter 22, verses 39 through 53. If you're looking for a good Bible app on your phone, ESV has a good one.

There are lots of others, I'm sure, but I'll be reading from the ESV this morning. As we come to our passage in Luke 22, verses 39 through 53, let me pray for us.

Our Father, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Father, these are the words that your Son taught us to pray, and what good and bolstering and strengthening words they are.

So, Lord, we pray for this moment as we come to your word, as we gather around your scriptures together, that your kingdom would come, and our eyes would be opened, and our hearts would come alive again to behold you in your word.

[1 : 16] Give us fresh insight and fresh vision into who you are, Lord Jesus, that our hearts may be encouraged and strengthened in faith and hope and love in these days.

We ask this, Father, in the name of Jesus, our great high priest, and in the power of your Holy Spirit. Amen. Well, let me read Luke 22, 39 through 53 for us.

And he, that is Jesus, 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 agony, he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat became like great drops of blood falling to the ground.

[2 : 24] 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.

While he was still speaking, there came a crowd. And the man called Judas, one of the twelve, was leading them. He drew near to Jesus to kiss him. But Jesus said to him, Judas, would you betray the Son of Man with a kiss?

And when those who were around him saw what would follow, they said, Lord, shall we strike with the sword? And one of them struck the servant of the high priest and cut off his right ear. But Jesus said, no more of this.

And he touched his ear and healed him. Then Jesus said to the chief priests and officers of the temple and elders who had come out against him, have you come out as against a robber with swords and clubs?

When I was with you day after day in the temple, you did not lay hands on me. But this is your hour and the power of darkness. Well, the disciples were about to face the biggest test of their lives.

[3 : 37] Their friend, their teacher, the one they hoped would be king, Jesus was about to be arrested and put to death. And this moment on the Mount of Olives in a place that Matthew and Mark call Gethsemane and that John calls a garden, this would be perhaps the greatest test of the disciples' lives.

Would they stand by their friend, their teacher, or would they fall away? And at a deeper level, when the story they thought they were living in was dramatically rewritten according to God's plan, what would they do?

You see, the disciples had what we might call a life story in mind. It went something like this. The Messiah was here and he would triumph and we would share in his glory.

But that was not exactly the story God had in mind. God's story, which Jesus had just been telling them moments before at their Passover meal in the upper room at the beginning of Luke 22, God's story involved something much deeper and more costly.

You see, the way to glory would not be through triumph, but through suffering. So how would they fare in the face of this test when the deep story of their lives was being rewritten?

[5 : 04] I think many of us these days can feel like those disciples facing a great test, a great trial. As the effects of the pandemic continue to grow in the weeks ahead, that trial is likely going to increase.

None of us thought that the story God had for us would include the worldwide spread of a virus, the loss of work and economic security, and perhaps, before it's all said and done, maybe each of us losing someone we know, maybe even someone we love.

Luke takes us with the disciples to the Mount of Olives in this moment of trial. And what do we see there that might help us in our moment of trial?

Well, there we see Jesus. Jesus facing a trial greater than any of us can imagine.

Consider first Jesus and his agony in prayer. Jesus' agony in prayer. Luke tells us in verse 44, being in agony, Jesus prayed more earnestly, and his sweat became like great drops of blood falling to the ground.

[6 : 30] Now, only Luke gives us this last detail about Jesus' sweat falling like blood, and perhaps what Luke is describing here is an actual instance of a very rare medical condition where under extreme distress the blood vessels of the skin break open.

Or perhaps Luke is speaking figuratively that the sweat is like great drops of blood because of its intensity. But either way, as the first part of the verse says, the point Luke wants us to see is that Jesus is in true agony.

In his fully human nature, Christ undergoes in this moment great striving, great suffering, great agony. But why?

You know, Luke, more than any other gospel writer, has shown us that Jesus was constantly at prayer. At key moments of Jesus' life especially, Jesus is seen in the gospel of Luke praying. Like before his baptism, or before choosing the twelve, or prior to asking the disciples for a confession of faith. Even prior to the transfiguration.

[7 : 43] But none of those prior moments of prayer were quite like this one on the Mount of Olives in the Garden of Gethsemane. Here, Luke tells us there's agony. Why?

Well, verse 42 shows us, In this moment of prayer, Jesus was beholding, he was seeing, he was viewing, like never before, the cup he was about to drink.

Look at that verse again. Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me. This metaphorical cup brought so much terror to the human heart of Jesus that in his human will, he wrestled with the Father, asking if there might be some other way to do what he had come to do.

Now, at this moment, we step into one of the deep mysteries of the incarnation. Jesus Christ, we see as the Gospels unfold, is both God and man.

He's one person with two natures, a divine nature and a human nature. And this means that Jesus has both a divine will and a human will. One writer put it this way.

[9 : 02] He said, With respect to Jesus' divine nature, being fully God, he had no other will than that of the Father. Yet with respect to his human nature, being fully human, Jesus himself made a clear and careful distinction between his will and the Father's will.

If he did the Father's will, the writer goes on to say, this was because he chose to do it, not necessarily because it always came easily or automatically.

Jesus, with his fully human will, is here wrestling with the choice before him to take the cup.

What then is this cup that filled Jesus and his human will with such agony? Well, it's clear from the context of Luke that the cup that Jesus speaks of is the cross.

On the way to Jerusalem, he told his disciples, more than once, that he would be betrayed and handed over to be crucified. And in the upper room, he had just taken, maybe even a half an hour before this scene, he had just taken the bread and the cup, symbols of that first Passover in Exodus.

[10:21] And Jesus said to his disciples, this bread that we use to celebrate the Passover, it's really about my body being broken for you. And this cup that we use to celebrate the Passover is really about my bloodshed for you, Jesus had just told them.

But why did the cross fill Jesus with such dread, such agony? Think with me of other great figures who've faced an untimely death.

Socrates famously faced death with great composure. Thousands of martyrs, Christian and non-Christian alike, have faced the prospect of even gruesome deaths with cool minds and calm hearts.

But here we see Jesus contemplating his death and he is in horror. What explains that difference? Well, it's because the death that Jesus was about to undergo was like no other death before or after.

[11:34] You see, when Jesus speaks of the cup, we have to hear that metaphor within the thought world of first century Judaism. We have to hear it, that is, as the Old Testament uses it.

And again and again, this is what we hear. Take Isaiah, the prophet Isaiah, chapter 51, verse 17. Isaiah says, Wake yourself, wake yourself, stand up, O Jerusalem, you who have drunk from the hand of the Lord the cup of his wrath, who have drunk to the dregs the bowl, the cup of staggering. Or listen to Jeremiah 25, 15. Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, take from my hand the cup of the wine of wrath and make all the nations to whom I send you drink it.

Again, Jeremiah 49, 12. For thus says the Lord, if those who did not deserve to drink the cup must drink it, will you go unpunished? You shall not go unpunished, but you must drink.

One more example from Habakkuk 2, 6. You will have your fill of shame instead of glory. Drink yourself and show your sinfulness.

[12:43] The cup in the Lord's right hand will come around to you and utter shame will come upon your glory. So what is it the prophets are saying?

How are they using this metaphor of the cup? Well, the cup is clearly a metaphor for God's judgment and wrath against human sin.

What brings agony and terror to the human heart of Jesus is not merely the immense physical pain that lies ahead, but the thought of undergoing the full and fierce wrath of God.

On the cross, Jesus would bear the full weight of God's right and good anger at all the evil, injustice, and sin of the world.

It's like a great tarp. Imagine a great tarp holding back the rain for generations and generations, and it's bowing under the weight, and at the cross, that tarp would tear, and the flood would come pouring down.

[13:51] And in the garden, Jesus is given a full view of what was to come. He sees the cup that he must drink, and in agony he prays, Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me.

But note the next line of Jesus' prayer. Nevertheless, not my will, but yours be done.

Do you see what's happening in this moment in the Garden of Gethsemane? The human will of Jesus reckoning fully with what it will cost him to obey his Father's will and go to the cross for our salvation.

Jesus, in full knowledge of what's ahead, even to the point of sweating blood, chooses the Father's will. And then his agony in prayer in verses 39 through 46 becomes his willingness to face betrayal in verses 47 through 53.

This is the second paragraph of our text. We see Jesus in agony in prayer, and then we see him willingly, in willingness, going out to face his betrayal in the next paragraph. This is the second thing Luke wants us to see in this episode.

[15:10] Having seen the cup in prayer, Jesus now takes the cup. He meets his betrayer, Judas, and in compassion he says to Judas, would you betray me with a kiss, Judas?

And when his disciples rouse from their sleep and start slashing with their swords, he says, no more of this and heals the servant of the high priest. And when the crowd closes in to arrest him, he confronts them with the reality of their dark deed.

This is your hour, he says, but it's the power of darkness. And so the passion of Jesus begins. It begins in the pain of betrayal and in the shame of arrest.

Now friends, what are we to make of this? What are we to make of Christ's agony in prayer and his willingness to face betrayal and the way these two things are intimately locked in the passion story?

What are we to make of the fact that Jesus sees the cup in all of its horror and then willingly steps forth to take it? Well, what we are meant to see here at the very least is the wonderful strength of the love of Christ for sinners.

[16 : 36] Paul writes in Romans 5, now most people, Paul says, would not be willing to die even for an upright person, though someone might perhaps be willing to die for a person who's especially good, but God showed his great love for us in this, that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Do you see the love of Christ for you in the Garden of Gethsemane? As Christ kneels in agony, sweat falling to the ground, do you see Christ choosing that cup for you?

The Father sent his Son, do you see the Son choosing the Father's will for you? Do you see the Son exercising in time this eternal plan of redemption when God set his heart on you in love, choosing you, and then agreeing to pay the full cost for your sin, to bear the exclusion and the death and the wrath that you're in my sins rightfully deserved?

Do you see that Jesus faced the biggest trial of his life in this moment, there, bowing before the Father, his betrayer already at hand making his way right at this moment.

Don't you see Jesus, Jesus, the rightful King of Heaven, could have called down armies of angels to defend him, to judge his enemies, and he could have walked away from the cup and all its horror in complete freedom and justice.

[18 : 13] But instead, our King chooses the will of his Father. He chooses instead to receive heavenly, angelic help not to destroy his enemies but to aid his prayer as he chooses willingly to die for them.

You note how Luke says the angels are present in this scene. They're there supporting Jesus in his prayer as he takes the cup. The greatest trial of Jesus' life and for you and for me, he takes the cup. He takes the cup out of your hands. He takes the cup of judgment that your sins deserve and in exchange he hands us the cup of salvation purchased in full at the cross.

And if you've seen, if you and I have seen and received the love of Christ for us as sinners, then here's what's true.

If we've seen and received what Christ has done for us, here's what's true. that no cup you are asked to drink in this life can destroy you.

[19 : 41] Because Jesus drank the cup of God's wrath for me, any cup that my heavenly father places before me must ultimately be for my good. You know, the cup of our life, think about your life as a cup that you have to drink.

What is it? It's mixed with many joys and it is mixed with many sorrows. But because of what Jesus has done, that cup in Christ is the cup of our salvation.

Because there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. The cup of condemnation has been drunk to the dregs down to the very bottom and all that's left for you and me is the cup of God's salvation.

You know, our cup might be mixed with a lot of sorrow. Jesus faced betrayal.

And so at times may we. Jesus had friends who misunderstood him and in his moment of most need they put him in greater danger.

[20 : 47] Two guys with swords was not going to stop this whole band coming into the garden. The only thing it was going to do was make Jesus look even more guilty. Here were his friends misunderstanding him, putting him in even greater danger.

Friends, there may be times when we have friends who deeply misunderstand us. Jesus faced betrayal, so may we. Jesus had friends misunderstand him, so may we.

Jesus faced an untimely death in the prime of his life. And the reality is, friends, so may we.

Who knows what trials the coming weeks or the coming months may bring. But knowing what Jesus has done for us, knowing the love of God for us, we too can pray.

Father, if possible, let this cup pass. Nevertheless, thy will be done. Because the Father's cup for us, because of what Christ has done is the cup of his salvation.

[21 : 57] And is this not what the disciples, what Jesus tells to his disciples here? What is his word to them as they enter into the Mount of Olives, into the garden? Pray.

So let us end this morning where our passage begins. Jesus tells us, pray that you may not enter into temptation.

Temptation, that word can mean test or trial as well. And what does it mean to enter into temptation? Well, it means to give in. It means to fall prey to it. So how do we not fall prey to temptation?

How do we not give in when trial comes? How do we not give in to despair? How do we not give in to anger and bitterness? How do we not give in to unbelief? Jesus says, pray.

You know, one of the things I've observed in the last week is that as many of us have been forced to work from home and distance ourselves from one another, is that all that frantic energy that we usually spend in the world out there is now just being channeled into our lives at home.

[23 : 04] Facebook posts are going crazy with like 400 ways to homeschool your kids. There are now 700 new home projects you can do and get done with all that time you have on your hands now that you're working from home.

You know, we're just taking all that energy and just redirecting it and plowing it into our home lives. You know, but perhaps one of the things that we're meant to learn in this season isn't how to redirect all of our frantic energy into other things.

Maybe we're meant to learn simply how to wait. To wait on God as the psalmists tell us over and over again and to pray.

Of course, we shouldn't be against finding creative ways to connect and care for one another. You know, we should be very happy to find new and meaningful things to do with our time now that our lives are changing.

But, this is a season when we should also be learning to slow down, to wait, and to pray. To pray as Jesus invites us here, to pray, Father.

[24 : 22] Jesus invites us to pray, Father. You know, this is a moment when all of us should be looking to God again. To acknowledge our complete dependence on God again and to rediscover that because of Jesus' finished work, we too can call God Abba, Father.

So, could we slow down and pray in this season and remember who God truly is for us in Jesus? Jesus. Now, I understand some of us have had very absent fathers.

Some of us have had maybe even pretty terrible fathers. But, that's not who God is. To know God as Father is to know God as intimate and trustworthy, as strong and gentle, as holy and good.

when we pray, Father, we celebrate the fact that because Jesus has taken away our sin, we are now beloved daughters and sons of God no matter what circumstances may bring.

And then Jesus invites us to pray, Father, if you're willing, remove this cup from me. Now, we saw that for Jesus the cup was a very specific thing, a very specific and unique part of his mission.

[25 : 47] He was the only one who could take up the cup of God's wrath and drain it for us because only he was fully God and fully human to do that work for us. But, by analogy, we now take up that prayer for whatever cup lays before us.

And we can pray, Father, if you're willing, remove this cup of sorrow from me. You see, it's not wrong to pray for different circumstances. We can cast all our cares on God because he cares for us.

We should be honest with God in our desires, our fears, our concerns. And so, we pray like we did earlier in the service. We pray for God to end the spread of the virus.

we pray for God to protect the most vulnerable, especially from not just the disease, but from the effects of our economy shutting down.

We pray for God to keep our family members safe. And we pray for God to keep our medical workers safe and the people working in the grocery stores so we can continue to get food.

[26 : 49] We continue to pray. And you see, God is honored when we pray like this. When we make these requests to God, Father, if you're willing, remove this cup from us.

When we make those kinds of requests to God, on the one hand, we glorify God for his power. We're acknowledging that God is almighty and he can actually do something about it.

And at the same time, when we pray those prayers, we glorify God for his goodness. We acknowledge that God is loving and like a good human parent, God gives good gifts to his children.

So in taking all of our needs and our concerns to God and wrestling with God in prayer, we're actually exalting God's power, we're exalting his goodness. So we pray, Father, if you're willing, remove this cup from us.

But lastly, Jesus invites us to pray, nevertheless, not my will, but yours be done. Now, I imagine that if I gave us all a little theology quiz, we would all get straight A's, you know, if we sort of pumped out

onto the Facebook feed two questions, true or false?

[28 : 05] God is wiser than we are. True or false? God is more loving and good than we are. Suddenly, they would all start ringing back, ping, ping, ping, ping, ping, ping, ping, and we'd all get 100%, true and true.

God is wiser than we are. God is more loving and good than we are. Great, we've all passed the test, but when trials come, we often realize that head knowledge of God is not heart knowledge of God.

When trials come, the wisdom of God and the love of God start to come under question, don't they? God now, of course, we may never know why God allows the circumstances in our lives, the trials, the tragedies, but here's what we do know.

Look again with me at the garden. There you see God the Father giving up his only son for you, and there we see God the Son willingly drinking the cup for us.

You see, whatever God may decree, it cannot be because he doesn't love us. At the cross, in a wisdom that shames the wise of this world, God proved his love without reserve so that we can trust his love without hesitation even when times are hard.

[29 : 33] And so we too can pray, nevertheless, not my will, but yours be done. And notice what courage and what compassion that prayer gives to Jesus.

Praying the prayer, Father, your will be done. Jesus then moves from agony to courage and compassion. He meets his betrayer and offers him one last chance to change his mind.

He heals the servant of his enemy and tells the disciples to put their swords away. He addresses those who would arrest him with the challenging light of truth. How will we face our trials with such courage and compassion?

When we in prayer, when we've wrestled, and when we've said with Christ, not my will, but yours be done, then we can step forth with the same courage and the same compassion of Jesus.

And so then, friends, like the disciples, we may be facing the biggest trial of our lives, but like the disciples, we too have a Savior in the Lord Jesus, who intercedes for us, who prays for us, who's standing even now, risen, glorified at the right hand of the Father, so that we might come to the Father in his name, and so that we might pray with confidence to God as our Father.

[31 : 09] Father, if you're willing, remove this cup, nevertheless, not my will, but yours be done. And having that kind of confidence in Jesus, we too can face the trials of our time with courage and with compassion.

Let's pray together. Lord Jesus, we confess that oftentimes we can feel the same sort of agony in such a smaller degree, Lord, we acknowledge, but we too can feel like we're wrestling and striving in prayer.

But we thank you, Jesus, that you've sent the Holy Spirit to be our helper. we pray that you would strengthen all of us to be able to pray and slow down in these moments, to remember that you're our Father, to remember that you're good and loving and that your plans are good and wise.

Lord, help us as the church to move forth in the confidence that this prayer provides. Lord Jesus, that your finished work provides so that we might be light and salt in these needful times.

We pray all this in the name of Jesus. Amen. Well, friends, in response to sharing and looking at God's word together, let's continue to sing together.