

March 16th 2008: Gethsemane : Mark 14:32-42

From my earliest days as a Christian, I have always been fascinated by the story of Gethsemane. Drawn to this account of such great emotional suffering. Inspired by the fact that my Lord and Master, even though He was, and is God, was also so completely human, **that He became deeply distressed** as He contemplated death on a cross for me.

As I read the different accounts, I have to continually remind myself, that this is Almighty God that I am reading about.

Yet (Philippians 2:6-8)

The Message:

"When the time came, He set aside the privileges of deity and took on the status of a slave, became human! Having become human, He stayed human. It was an incredibly humbling process. He didn't claim special privileges. Instead, He lived a selfless, obedient life and then died a selfless, obedient death—and the worst kind of death at that: a crucifixion."

As a counsellor I know the danger of saying to someone who is going through a really bad experience, *I know how you feel; I know what you are going through, unless I have experienced exactly their situation, which is most unlikely.*

Jesus can say that to anyone, for not only has He borne the guilt of every known sin, He also faced the absolutely agony of utter hopelessness and abandonment, and yet kept trusting to the end. The story of Gethsemane particularly shows us that.

This is the reason why the experience of our Lord at Gethsemane is recorded for us, with so much detail, in 3 of the 4 Gospels.

Here in front of just 3 disciples, Jesus parades the total distress of His soul

And it was not a quite prayer that He uttered but a loud lament or cry of painful sorrow. He prayed, not in the normal fashion with hands raised, but prostrate on His face before God. A desperate supplicant crying out in absolute anguish.

Roger was explaining to us at Deacons, *that the most effective way of learning is to be involved in doing. The second is to see it and the third is to hear it.* Jesus used all three. But His favourite method was to teach by EXAMPLE

- **Jesus knew that all His followers would at times be in positions a lot less severe, but in a sense, similar to His.**

Times when they would feel absolutely desperate. Facing situations, difficulties, pain and anguish for His Name's sake that they too would pray to be released from, but would have to go through

He knew the devil would attack through situations of life, whispering: "Where is your God now?"

Most would face times of feeling alone and abandoned

Some would endure a terrible death for believing in Him

All would experience times when submission to God's will would call for sacrificial and ongoing trust.

So Jesus allowed these three to see Him when He was at His most vulnerable

He gave to them an example of prayer FOR when one reaches the very lowest point, so that we could learn from Him

- **Lesson One:**

Never forget that God is still your Father

14:36 "Abba, Father," He said, "everything is possible for you. Take this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will."

Jesus uses the term, Daddy. The expression of trust from a child. Reminding each of us that even at those times when God seems so distant, he is still close by us. He never stops being our caring, loving Father

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- **Lesson Two:**

We can be so honest in our prayers to our Father.

When the pain is the greatest we should be the loudest.

Jesus deliberately went apart, even from the three. He needed them to witness what He went through, but He wanted them to learn that sometimes we all need to get away from everyone, and agonize alone before God.

And when we are at that place, we should not be fearful to ask the Lord for anything that we feel we need. Tell him your fears. Explain your pain. Ask for the cup to be withdrawn. The Father hears and shares your pain.

- **Lesson Three:**
Obedience is the Only Sensible Way.

I consider myself a bit of a handyman and because of that there have been several times when instead of following the directions given I have rushed to assemble something, or to use a certain tool without following the directions of the maker. Ways that seemed so much better, quicker, and less demanding, have left me in a chaotic mess, looking furiously for the discarded directions.

The problems caused have never done much damage. Yet in life the result of not accepting God's will, even when His way seems painful and wrong, is catastrophic. For God knows all that is ahead of us. He loves us and if his will is to allow us to suffer at this time, then we know that His plan has a brighter future for us because of it.

Obedience is the only sensible way because we are obeying the All-knowing, Almighty God, who loves us so much.

But such obedience has sometimes to be learn't through pain and tears. It was for Jesus.

Hebrews 5:7-8

"During the days of Jesus' life on earth, He offered up prayers and petitions with loud cries and tears to the One who could save Him from death, and He was heard because of His reverent submission. Although He was a Son, He learned obedience from what He suffered."

Do you believe that Jesus now broods upon that terrible time of the crucifixion. Of course not. He looks upon us with joy, the fruit of His obedience to the Father's Will.

- **Lesson four:**

After you have prayed and accepted His will, move on in trust.

When He returned to His disciples the final time He said:

41 "Are you still sleeping and resting? Enough! The hour has come."

The word "enough" is normally used as a financial term. It means "the account is closed". Some say that Jesus is saying to His disciples: Time's up. You've slept enough.

But it can also be Jesus recognizing that His request is finished.

He has shared with his Father His distress. His pain. His anguish and fears
 Now that account is closed
 He can safely leave it to his father
 He will move on to enter the hour of darkness. Trusting in His father's love.

What a powerful example for us to hold on to:
When life becomes so tough that we despair.....
Jesus gives us this example of real, desperate prayer
And then calls us to Trust....

When all else has been tried.....Even desperate Prayer

Trust: For God's Will ends in victory and in Triumph

For the cross was not the end.....
It allowed the Absolute Victory of the Resurrection.

