



Home : Sermons : February 25, 2007

Trials, Betrayals, and Denials in the Kingdom – *Luke 22:39-62*

Introduction – The way of the Kingdom is the way of the cross. It is true that we will eat and drink at Christ's Table, but that Table is there because of a death. United with Him in His life only occurs when we are united with Him in His death. It is true that we will sit on thrones and reign with Christ, but we are not resurrected with Him unless we have died with Him (Gal 2:20). And so we too will face many trials – this is the way of the Kingdom. Following Jesus, we learn about walking through such trials.

Learning to Pray in Trials (vv39-46) – Jesus goes out to the Mount of Olives to pray, “*as He was accustomed.*” We have seen several other times in Luke when Jesus withdrew to pray and have wondered if Jesus needed to pray, how much more do we. Add to that this comment by Luke and wonder – how often Jesus felt it necessary to pray. In this scene, we learn quite a bit more about the prayers of Jesus and how and when we should pray.

Lead Us Not Into Temptation – The disciples follow and Jesus tells them to pray so that they will not fall into temptation (v40). He exhorts them again with a stronger warning in v46; if we do not pray, we will fall into temptation.

Agonizing Prayer – Jesus knows what the Father has in store for Him and it is more than “just” a crucifixion. Even the dregs He will drain (Psalm 75:8). If there is any way that this cup of wrath can be passed over, Jesus prays for it. The fact that there is none given confirms that Jesus is the only way (John 14:6, Acts 4:12). Jesus submits to the Father's will, even agreeing that it is the best and only way (consider Heb 12:2), and yet Jesus, fully human, struggles in prayer. The sweat of our brow is a sign of the curse (Gen 3:19), and here the sweat is drops of blood upon the ground.

Sleepy Neglect – Jesus came and found the disciples “sleeping from sorrow.” Their sorrow (probably over what little they did comprehend was coming before them) led them to turn away from God for help. If this coming trial was His providence, they reasoned, why bother to pray. How often we turn from prayer because of the trial instead of seeing the trial as all the more reason to pray.

Answered Prayer – It's important to note that an angel appeared to Jesus from heaven, strengthening Him. God promises such answers (Psalm 138:3, Isaiah 50:7). In the book of Hebrews the congregation was admonished because they were not like Jesus, but had become dull of hearing (Heb 5:5-11). Jesus struggled in prayer and stood in His trial. The disciples slept through their prayer and struggled in their trial. Learn the lesson.

Betrayal in the Kingdom (vv47-53) – Judas comes and betrays Jesus with a kiss; “*Was ever a love-token so desecrated and abused.*” – Matthew Henry. But betrayal is so often like that (Matt 15:8). The betrayer has to find a means to justify himself and his actions; he cannot see himself as simply envious, empty, and wicked.

Confusion, a scuffle, a sliced off ear, and the words of Jesus – “*permit even this.*” When Paul teaches us to “*Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse,*” this scene should come to mind. Of course, Jesus acts this way knowing the rest of what is taught us in Rom 12:14-21. This is the appointed hour of darkness and yet it was appointed by One who will bring His vengeance upon evil-doers and will vindicate the righteous. This was the appointed hour, but there are other “hours of darkness,” which God has appointed. Our time to die, health issues, financial/material struggles, and a huge variety of terrible trials we may be called upon to endure – and yet each and every circumstance finds Satan on a short leash and God accomplishing His perfect and good purposes (Psalm 37:12-13).

Denial in the Kingdom (vv54-62) – Judas is not the only one who will betray Jesus. Peter follows Jesus, but “*at a distance.*” He may have followed Jesus to satisfy his own conscience (remember what he had promised), and yet followed from a distance to protect his own personal reputation. In fact, Peter forsakes the company of Jesus and seeks to join another company around a fire. The price of admission is the denial of Jesus (not only of following Him, but even of knowing Him), which Peter is willing to pay.

When the cock crows, Jesus turns from his own issues and looks at Peter; He knew just what Peter was doing. That look brought Peter to weep bitterly and, knowing the story, we know that this was a sorrow that led to repentance – and restoration (2 Cor 7:8-11).

Many Betrayers, Many Deniers – Peter represented all of the disciples who fled as Jesus was arrested, and there have been many more like Peter, many more like Judas. And God has ordained it all.

Simple Details – Jesus predicts Judas’ betrayal and it comes about. He predicts Peter’s denial and it comes about. And yet, when they do, they are not acting like puppets at all; they are doing what they want. And when Peter weeps, his repentance is real – it is his own, and Christ had predicted that as well. Peter doesn’t say, “Oh, that darn predestination and exhaustive sovereignty of God – that’s what did it.” God’s control of all events never mitigates our own responsibility. In fact, God’s control of all events is our only hope!

The Care of Jesus – Even during this time of agonizing prayer, Jesus warns, teaches, and turns to care for His disciples, calling on them to pray. Even during the betrayal, Jesus will receive the kiss from Judas. Even during His own trial, Jesus will turn and show Peter that He knows all the details of his life. This is the way of the Kingdom. This is the way of Jesus, the way we are to follow.

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