

Matthew 26:36-41

³⁶ Then Jesus went with them to a place called Gethsemane. He told his disciples, "Sit here, while I go over there and pray." ³⁷ He took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and he began to be sorrowful and distressed. ³⁸ Then he said to them, "My soul is very sorrowful, even to the point of death. Stay here, and keep watch with me." ³⁹ He went a little farther, fell on his face, and prayed. He said, "My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will." ⁴⁰ He came to the disciples and found them sleeping. He said to Peter, "So, were you not able to stay awake with me for one hour?" ⁴¹ Watch and pray, so that you do not enter into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak."

Fourth Sermon for "Solemn Hours of Lent Series" Hour of Temptation

Very little is told us about Jesus' life as a young boy. We know only that when he was very young Herod tried to kill him and his parents took him to Egypt for a time. We also hear of Jesus when he was twelve years old going to the Passover for the first time with his parents and staying three more days to learn more about his Father's word and to discuss it with the teachers of the law. And we recognize all the temptations there are to sin when we were young, so at times we may wonder what tempted Jesus. He did not sin, but what temptations assailed him?

Since he had no sinful nature, no temptations came from inside him as such, but opportunities to sin were surely all around him in a sinful world. And we need not speculate, for we know Satan did his best to test Jesus and get him to sin. We remember that Matthew 4 and Luke 4 tell us how Satan tempted Jesus to avoid going to the cross, but instead to enter his glory. But Jesus was always resolute in his mission to save us. And we know that was not the only time Satan tempted Jesus for we are told that after those temptations in the wilderness Satan left him until a more opportune time. Hebrews 4 tells us that Jesus was tempted in every way just as we are yet he remained without sin. That is important for us to know, as to our Savior's human and divine nature. For it tells us that as a true human being he shares those trials with us, but while he has experienced temptation, yet never once did he even think about giving in and destroying our salvation.

This evening we see Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane, we see the most horrific temptation that any human being has ever had to face. Jesus was not only facing the specter of a terrible mockery, beating, scourging and death, but even more horrifying was being abandoned by his Father. He would face death with no comforts, only the horror of punishment--the punishment of all our sins. So as the entire ordeal began after the Passover meal and Jesus leaving us his last will and testament in the Lord's Supper, we see our Savior during the hour of temptation. As we see him we recognize that so often we face temptation and it defeats us, but Jesus faced temptation to defeat it for us.

- I. So often we face temptation and it defeats us**
 - A. We desire our own will instead of God's.**

1. We see what happened with Peter. Months earlier when Jesus predicted his own death, we see Peter arguing with Jesus and telling him that would never happen. Then on Maundy Thursday evening, we hear Peter again, trying to assert his will over Jesus. He said that he was willing to die with Jesus if he had to.
2. But what did Peter want? He wanted only his own will. He had blinders on. He could not see that Jesus needed to suffer and die for the good of all mankind. So he decided that his own will was better than God's. It seems he would rather go down in a blaze of glory. And we see his attitude in the Garden of Gethsemane; but his desires are misdirected. And later, because he was relying on his own misdirected desires he did not have the conviction to follow them through. So when he faced temptation in the High Priests palace, he caved in.
3. And even though our scene tonight takes place a few hours earlier we get a glimpse of how Peter will deal with temptation and how we often do also.

B. We are unwilling to direct our desires to do God's will.

1. That is our sinful nature wanting to take control. So often when we are tempted want only our own will and desires.
2. Jesus asked Peter, James and John to watch with him for one hour, to support him and surely to pray with him.
3. Jesus wanted them to pray with him, to ask God for his strength and help in overcoming temptation.
4. The gospels tell us these three disciples in particular were exhausted from grief. As a human being Jesus asked for them to help and support him. But he would receive no help or support from these three. They were not willing to consider the importance of their Lord's command. They did not see how much strength he would need from the Father to go to

the cross, to take the sins of the world on himself, be punished and die in our place.

Application: We may not have been in the garden with those disciples, but like them we stand in front of the cross. The cross of Jesus shows us what he has done for us. But so often we fail to face the cross. We turn our backs on it and when temptation comes, we consider our own desires, our own wants. What is it in your life that is more important than obeying God. How well do we take care of our bodies and life? God has made us stewards, caretakers of the physical life he gives us. Do we take care of our bodies by eating, exercising and getting proper rest? And how are we at taking care of our souls? Do we really listen to God's Word so we understand how we have given in to temptation, so we can really see the symptoms in our own lives of how we have given in to temptation because we have desired our own will? Do we see that each time we allow temptation to defeat us, we have desired our own will rather than God's? Do we understand that when temptation defeats us we need to repent, that we have need to do so every day because we have a sinful nature?

Trans: Do we sometimes pray, asking God to guide us, but already knowing what we want to do, and we pray only asking God to sanction our will, rather than truly asking from our heart, Lord, guide me according to your will. Guide me to do what is pleasing to you. While our own hearts may so many times speak selfishly, desiring our will rather than God's, we find our Lord Jesus, in the hour of temptation, facing it head on and defeating it for us.

II. Jesus faced Temptation to defeat it for us

A. Jesus did not look to his own will and desires

1. Peter, "Lord you shall never wash my feet." Then, "Not just my feet but my head and my hands as well." Does Peter say, "Whatever you want Lord"? No, he says, "Not your will Jesus, but mine."
2. What a contrast to see Jesus, submit to his Father's will here in the Garden. He saw the cup of suffering, the cup of his Father's anger and punishment. He saw what he would have to drink and how bitter his suffering would be. And if we put ourselves in his place, we wonder, How could he face such terrible suffering, and not sin against his Father's will by trying to avoid it.
3. But remember, his prayer did not come from a sinful nature. You and I can only relate to his suffering based on our experience because we have a sinful nature. Jesus had none. Scripture says he

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was tempted just as we are but remained without sin. So he could pray, Father if it is possible, let this cup pass from me. "Yet not as I will but as you will."

4. So Jesus could pray those words and still remain fully committed to his Father's will, yet ask that the suffering be taken from him if there was another way to save the world from sin.

B. Jesus turned to his Father to carry out his will and desires

1. Here is our Savior making use of prayer in the way our God invites us to pray. He poured out his heart to his Father communicating to him, trusting that everything was in his Father's hands.
2. He looked to his Father, and his Father's will instead of his own suffering as the reason for his prayer. So Often we look at our own circumstances, we selfishly take only our own circumstances into account and ask for God's help. Jesus saw his Father's will and made that the focus of his prayer.

C. Jesus sought strength for his most difficult hour from his Father

1. His sorrow was great, he knew death was coming, so in the hour of temptation, in the hour when it is a temptation to abandon faith in God Jesus went to his Father for strength.
2. It was a comfort to him to know that he was carrying out his father's will by going to the cross. Yes, there would be the pain, there would be the suffering, He would experience the sorrow of being abandoned by his Father. BUT IT WAS the father's will that he should suffer, so that you and I can enjoy everlasting fellowship with him in heaven.
3. What a comfort to know Jesus was still thinking of us when he prayed to his Father. What a comfort to know he was still One with his Father and his father's will.
4. What a comfort for us to also know that in the hour of our death, in the hour of that most severe of all temptations, we know our Savior went through it for us and we have his promise through the Apostle Paul in Romans 6. Paul speaks of our

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connection with Jesus through baptism and then in 6:5 he says, **If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection.**

Application: In all these things we have assurance that He completed our redemption. He paid the price we could not. So in all these things Jesus has taken away the sharpness and sorrow of death. In the hour of temptation and the hour of death we rely on the one who went before us, who took the power of Satan and crushed him by his cross and his resurrection. In that hour, in every hour of temptation, put away doubt and look to your perfect, holy Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.