

Grace, mercy, and peace be unto you from God our Father, and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Tonight, we continue our sermon series for this Lenten season, “Places of the Passion.”

- Each week we progress in looking at a place of the passion as we approach Jesus’ final sentence of crucifixion and His being led out of the city to the cross.
- Recall, if you were able to be with us last week, we looked at, “The Upper Room, A Place of Remembrance.”

Tonight, we look at “The Garden of Gethsemane. A Place of Temptation and Submission.”

- In the Garden of Gethsemane temptations and submission were very major and key points.
- In the Garden of Gethsemane, the temptations were many and great for both Jesus and for man.
- And, regarding Jesus, He did not submit to the temptations of the devil but did fully submit to the will of God the Father.
- For man, in our weakness and sinful nature, we did and do submit to temptations.
- There is much we can learn and apply here tonight both for Jesus and ourselves.

It is proper that we look at temptations and submission in the Garden of Gethsemane.

- After all, if you look at the structure from the texts of the original Greek manuscripts, here in the Garden of Gethsemane Jesus faced temptations otherwise never approached to this level of intensity except for His time in the wilderness way back at the start of His public earthly ministry.

And.....it was in a garden that man failed and gave into temptation.

- The Garden of Eden.
- And here, in the Garden of Gethsemane Jesus continued to do what we cannot do on His way to the cross as the perfect sacrifice for our sin.
- Jesus is making atonement for our sins.

As we begin our look, I took the liberty of first getting us from the Upper Room to the Garden of Gethsemane.

- When Jesus had completed His discourses with His disciples and had prayed His high priestly prayer, the feast was concluded with the singing of a hymn.

Think about the contrast here already between God and man.

- While Jesus and His disciples are singing a hymn, the powers of darkness were assembling to prepare an all-out attack against the anointed of the Lord.

This in itself speaks to us.

- Modern customs today would perhaps seal our lips in submission to emotions of affliction and sorrow versus singing songs of faith and hope to our God.

What kind of songs would they have been singing?

- It was customary to sing a group of Psalms, known as the huh lel (Hallel) in conjunction with the celebration of the Passover.
- These were Psalms 113-118. Sometimes also Psalms 130-136.
- Perhaps it would be good for each of us to take time to read and meditate on these Psalms in this Lenten Season.

And from here we are told Jesus and His disciples “came out and went forth.”

- That is, into the city streets of Jerusalem.
- The celebration of the Passover was now in full gear. It would have been a festive night.
- Many people on the streets. Many coming to the temple.

Jesus knew the opposition was building.

- Yet He went forth into the city streets.
- No hiding. No trying to be sure to not be seen.

What about us?

- We face much opposition in this world.
- Do we stay silent so as not to be noticed? So as not to be persecuted?
- Do we even want to avoid the opposition?
- Speak up and you will be put down as not being tolerant of others. Oh, you are not open minded. Oh, you are prejudice and show no love.
- It is easy to become stealth Christians.

So, as they proceed, to get to the Mount of Olives and the Garden of Gethsemane they would have to cross the Kidron Valley.

- The Kidron Valley is mentioned often in the Old Testament and the annals of Israel’s History.
- From the Book of Joel it is even identified by Christians as the place of decision.

This night, it would be a place of decision and temptation for Jesus.

- You see, from the Passover and all the animal sacrifices made at the temple, the blood of the animals would be flowing in the Kidron.
- As Jesus passed through this He had to be thinking that now He was the sacrifice, the ultimate sacrifice, and He would be replacing those animals and it would be His blood, not the blood of animals flowing.
- Yet He, of course, proceeded on. Deliberately going forth and doing the will of the Father.

What about you and me?

- Ever face opposition? Ever face deterrents or things that would slow us down or turn us around?
- Do we ever give in to those temptations?

And so now we get to the Garden of Gethsemane.

- Jesus and His disciples would have much familiarity with this place.
- They came there often.
- Judas Iscariot would also know this place well and would know that Jesus would go there.

As it is envisioned and the Garden of Gethsemane is described.....

- It would have been a grove of olive trees with equipment for making olive oil.
- Gethsemane means “oil press.”
- It was probably surrounded by a stone wall.
- It would be a place of quiet retreat and seclusion.

Eight of the disciples were left near the entrance of the garden with the instructions to, “Sit here while I go over there and pray.”

- There was nothing more natural for Jesus to do under the circumstances than to converse with His heavenly Father in prayer.
- What about for you and me?

On other occasions Jesus preferred to be alone in His devotions, but in this fateful hour He felt the need to have someone with Him.

- So He took along further Peter, James, and John.
- The 3 that had been with Him and witnesses of the Transfiguration.

They had seen Jesus in His glory and now they see Him in deep humiliation.

- Now in this time of great distress Jesus felt the urgent need of the presence of His trusted friends to comfort, encourage, and support Him with their prayers.
- What Jesus knew all along would take place now swept over Him with devastating fury.
- Jesus was now burdened by the combined weight of all men's transgressions.

Jesus' instructions to the 3.....

- "My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch with me."

These were the 3 that had most fervently proclaimed their love and loyalty to Jesus.

- Peter had just earlier assured loyalty, even if it meant death.
- James and John had professed the ability to drink His cup.

And Jesus went a little further and fell with His face to the ground and prayed.

- Nothing more natural than to be in prayer to the Father.

Nowhere else does Scripture record that Jesus fell on His face during prayer.

- But nowhere else was His anxiety so great.
- His battle so hot or His prayer so intense.
- "He lay on the ground like a worm." Psalm chapter 22 verse 6.
- Jesus trembling, but perfectly obedient.

Jesus prayed, "My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will."

- It was not a prayer to be absolved from doing the Father's will, but a question as to whether or not another way might be found to accomplish the redemption.
- He prays with the trust and confidence that is appropriate for a dear Son, asking His dear Father.

God spared not His own Son.

- And the Father's will was also Jesus' will.
- By contrast, how often aren't we tempted to dictate to God the time, place, and manner of His response.
- It is unimaginable the anguish there must have been between Father and Son at that moment.

And so, Jesus then returned to the 3 disciples.

- You know the account. You know how He found them.
- Sleeping.
- Not in prayer.
- Not even a word of comfort or encouragement from their lips.
- It seems no human eye had witnessed His agonizing struggle except the shadows cast from the olive trees.

And He gave the disciples a gentle rebuke. “Couldn’t you men keep watch with Me for one hour?”

- And then Jesus renews His admonition.
- “Watch and pray.” But this time He does not say “with Me.”
- They were to do it for themselves.

And what was to be there prayer? What is to be our prayer?

- “That you will not FALL INTO TEMPTATION.”
- And Jesus adds, “The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.”

The disciples own soul’s welfare was at stake. Jesus had warned them in the upper room of the severity of temptation.

- They needed divine assistance through prayer.
- Does not Jesus give us this same warning? Do we not need this same help?
- Jesus’ own great burden does not hinder Him from helping His disciples to bear their burdens also.

So Jesus went away again a second time to pray.

- Jesus’ words and prayers to His Father were similar to the first time.
- We are to continuously be in prayer.

But again, Jesus returned to the 3 and again you know what happened.

- They were even drowsier than the first time and were unable to give Him an intelligent answer.
- Shame probably helped with their silence.

Jesus then went away a third time to pray.

- Again, the words were similar but the prayer even more earnest.
- Even though the night was cold, here is where Jesus sweat drops of perspiration mixed with blood.

And it was at this time an angel appeared to give strength to our Lord.

- When the people assigned to the task of strengthening their Lord fell short of their high privilege and duty, the task was given to the angel to perform.

Jesus' fervent prayers had been heard by the Father.

- The disciples may sleep and be indifferent to His sorrows, but God the Father was still concerned about Him.
- Jesus is not forgotten in His Father's house. And neither are you.

When Jesus returned from His 3<sup>rd</sup> period of prayer, He found His 3 disciples, who had promised so much, still deep in slumber.

- And now the hour was at hand.

Judas Iscariot, one who had been called to lead people to Christ, was now leading a band to Christ to destroy Him.

- And with him a great multitude, consisting of a cohort of Roman soldiers, the Temple police, some servants of the chief priests, and perhaps some voluntary followers.
- As described by those titles it could have been 600. More likely a portion of those numbers.
- But very, very many. Armed with swords, staves, lanterns and torches.

How silly of man.

- To think that we can be in control with weapons, to think that they can control the very Son of Man with our own strength and force.

And this is shown when Jesus identified Himself to them and they fell back to the ground.

- Jesus and His Word is far more powerful than all the power and weapons man can muster.

And Judas came forth to identify Jesus with a kiss.

- A kiss.
- A symbol of love, friendship, and fidelity, and in the East a sign of discipleship.

We are told Judas himself had devised the sign.

- It clearly suggests satan's rule in Judas' heart.
- None other would so effectively demonstrate hypocrisy.

- Neither the bruising blows of servants or priests, nor the spit, blood, and sweat that marred Jesus' face in the hours ahead matched the indignity heaped upon His face by the kiss of betrayal.

And they came and laid hands on Jesus.

- After Jesus' speaking and the multitude falling backward, you think they might fear to lay a hand on Jesus.
- But so depraved is the sinful hearts of man, that this miracle did not at all deter Jesus' enemies from their mission to capture Him.

Of course, here is where Peter pulled his sword and cut off Malchus' ear.

- Even though Jesus had commanded them not to use the sword, Peter did.
- Did Peter not think that our Lord could handle Himself? That He needed help?
- Not to mention how puny the help of Peter as compared to our Lord.
- Perhaps He was trying to make up for his having slept.
- Perhaps like you and me, sometimes thinking we have to have a part, thinking we have to help earn our salvation.

Of course, even though the temptation was there to rebel, Jesus, in divine love and mercy, touched Malchus' ear and healed Him.

- The love and mercy and healing power of our Lord.

And Jesus said, "This is your hour and the POWER OF DARKNESS. But all this was done that the Scripture might be fulfilled."

- And now it was clear to the disciples that all hope was gone and that Jesus would submit and be arrested.
- And the disciples forsook Jesus and fled.

Oh, the folly of self-confidence.

- The disciples had relied too much on their own strength and had neglected the warnings of Jesus.

And Jesus was bound and led away.

- Not by human strength, not by human force.
- Nor could the ropes hold Him.

- Rather, it was His obedience and submission to the Lord and His love for you and me.

Temptations and submissions.

- Dear Christian friends, we are now on this Lenten journey with Jesus to the cross.
- We have been reminded here tonight of the pitfalls and many temptations we face.
- We are reminded here tonight that we cannot do it on our own.
- We have been reminded here tonight that this was all for our salvation.

Please dear fellow saints.....

- Don't flee from Christ. Don't fall asleep. Don't run away.
- Do not submit to temptations. But turn to Christ who will give you the strength to resist temptation and submit to Him.
- As Christ has loved us and given Himself for us; may we love Him and take up our cross and follow Him.
- Walk with Him and you will hear the words, "It is finished." You will see the empty tomb and our risen Lord.
- And one day you will see that His submission was for you and that you will be with Him for all eternity.
- Amen.

And now, may the peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.