

Text: Mark 14:27-52

Theme: Series-The Servant King: Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane

Sermon delivered by Revd Canon Dele Agbelusi during Service of the Word on 18/03/2018 at 10.30am

Many of you will remember the D-Day, June 6, 1944. It was a date when thousands of Allied troops invaded Europe and began the march toward Berlin. That invasion marked the turning point in the war and it was one that changed the course of history.

Similarly, in the battle for our hearts and souls, I believe the most important battle was fought in Gethsemane. Jesus was yet to be crucified, but he went to the garden to pray as his practice was. He never did any major thing without first talking to his Father about it: After his baptism before commencing his public ministry, he spent forty days fasting and praying. Before he chose his disciples, he spent all night praying and now, before fulfilling his destiny by dying for sinful humanity on the Cross, he found time to pray.

Let us pray.

1. JESUS PRAYED IN THE GARDEN OF CRUSHING.

Please open your bibles to Mark 14, we will start from verse 32 to 52. In verse 32, we read, "They went to a place called Gethsemane." The name of the Garden came from the two Hebrew words, which literally mean, "Oil press."

Olive oil is used for a variety of purposes but to get the oil the olive is pressed and crushed. Beating the branches, the ripe olives fall into a cloth spread beneath the branches. There were three steps to crushing the olives. First, all the olives would be dumped into a round stone trough and would be crushed to produce a mush. This olive mush was then collected and put into round bags. These bags were stacked on top of each other and a long tree trunk placed on the bags to squeeze out even more oil. I think it is no accident Jesus chose this place to pray.

On this night, He would experience a soul-crushing struggle. Jesus fell on His face on the rocky soil and cried out to God in agony. The writer of Hebrews describes that night when he wrote, "He offered up prayers and petitions with fervent cries and tears to the one who could save him from death." (Hebrews 5:7) – our death.

In fact, Jesus was under such pressure and strain, that Luke tells us "And being in anguish, he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground." (Luke 22:44). Jesus was under such agonizing pressure that His scalp began to ooze bloody sweat. If you have any doubt as to how this Mission affects Jesus, look at verse 33. He took Peter, James and John along with him, and he began to be deeply distressed and troubled. This is in sharp contrast to the Jesus we have seen in the preceding chapters. When the religious leaders and others opposed him and called him names and tried to trap him, he was not distressed, upset nor troubled. Now at Gethsemane, he was. In verses 34 Jesus says, "My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death," and he said to his disciples 'Stay here and keep watch.' He is saying, "I feel like I am being crushed. I feel like I am being pressed like the olive in the press. So what troubled Jesus that much that his spirit was being crushed? The answer is found in the content of his prayer.

2. JESUS' SPIRIT IS CRUSHED AS HE CONTEMPLATED THE CUP OF SUFFERING

Jesus prayed, "Abba, Father, everything is possible for you. Take this cup from me." "Abba" "Daddy". You can still see that the relationship of the Father and the Son is as warm as it should be. However, the request is a big one.

Jesus said, "Daddy, you can do anything. I'm asking you to take this cup from me." The phrase "to drink a cup" meant to experience something. The contents of this cup caused the Son of God to recoil in horror. So, what did Jesus see in this horrible cup as he peered into it, that made His blood to freeze?

It was a cup full of God's wrath and judgement on sin. Your sin, my sin and the sin of the whole world distilled together and concentrated in a cup. Can you remember a time when you did something really rotten? Don't dredge up the details of the deed, instead, just recall the shame and disgrace you felt. Remember that feeling of filthy guilt? Jesus never once felt that. But on that night in Gethsemane, as Jesus peered into this cup, what He saw caused His blood to freeze. The contents of this cup caused the Son of God to recoil in horror. So, what did Jesus see in this horrible cup?

He saw emotional isolation. He saw the physical pain.

Jesus was 100% God, but He was 100% human as well. As a man, he experienced physical pain just like we do. He had nerves running through His body. As He looked into that cup, His humanity shuddered at the thought of the physical pain He was about to face. He knew rough hands would grab him and twist His arms behind His back. He knew He would be beaten and spit upon. He knew a crown of long, hard thorns would be crushed down on His head. He knew that nails the size of railroad spikes would be driven into His hands and feet, and a spear would puncture His side. He saw all that and said, "Please, Daddy, if you can find another way, take it away."

He saw the spiritual shame.

As terrifying as the isolation and physical pain were, I believe neither of those came close to the dread Jesus experienced on a spiritual level. It was a sense of the enormous load of human guilt, which began at that time to press upon Him in a peculiar way. It was a sense of the unutterable weight of our sins and transgressions which were then specially laid upon Him. He was being "made a curse for us." He was bearing our griefs and carrying our sorrows according to the covenant He came on earth to fulfil. He was being "made sin for us who Himself knew no sin." His holy nature felt acutely the hideous burden laid upon Him. These were the reasons of His extraordinary sorrow.

We ought to see in our Lord's agony in Gethsemane the exceeding sinfulness of sin. It is a subject on which the thoughts of professing Christians are far below what they should be. The careless, light way in which we talk about sins is a painful evidence that we think lightly of the holiness and justice of God. Let the recollection of Gethsemane have a sanctifying effect upon us. Whatever others do, let us never "make a mock at sin."

Jesus cried, "If it were possible, if there is a Plan B for salvation without taking this cup, please take it away, but not my will, yours be done. On two occasions, this was the prayer line but on the third occasion, he said "quoting Matthew this time in 26:42: My Father, if it is not possible for this cup to be taken away unless I drink it, may your will be done."

Can you think of another Garden in the Bible? On the first pages of the Bible we read about the Garden of Eden. God put two people there and shared His will with them. But Eve and the First Adam asserted their will over God's will and it led to the ruin of humanity. They said to God, "We know Your Will is NOT to eat the fruit, but it's what we really want to do."

In 1 Corinthians 15 Jesus is called the second Adam. This last Adam was in the Garden of Gethsemane, and He surrendered His will to God, and it led to the redemption of humanity. We face the same choice every day: My will or God's Will?

Jesus accepts that there is no other way. Jesus death is the only way, the truth and the means of life eternal. No one can come to the Father except through Him. NO PLAN B. Luke 22:43 tells us that an angel from heaven appeared to him to strengthen him. We don't know what the angel said or did, we just know that he gave Jesus strength. Maybe he said, "Beyond the cross, there is the empty tomb." Maybe He said, "This is the reason you came here, to die as a perfect sacrifice." This leads us to Jesus example of how to find peace in the midst of life's struggles.

3. JESUS FINDS PEACE IN THE WILL OF THE FATHER (Verses 42-52)

At this stage, Jesus rests in the will of the Father and he had his peace in the midst of the Tempest surrounding him. Jesus said, "Enough! The hour has come. Look, the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise! Let us go! Here comes my betrayer!" (verse 42). But prior to these words of resignation and victory by Jesus, what were the apostles doing instead of watching and praying as commanded by Jesus? Sleeping. They also faced a trying time ahead as disclosed by their Master, but they could not watch and pray as he did. They slept off. No wonder, they all fled when Jesus was arrested. If we fail at our Gethsemane, we will not be able to face the trial coming to us.

What Jesus accomplished by his struggle in the garden resulted in our salvation and redemption. If he had failed there at Gethsemane, he would have failed at the Cross. This victory made the victory at Calvary feasible.

He had found peace. His head was held high; there was fire in His eyes. It was if He was saying, "Go ahead, devil, hit me with your best shot!"

So, what is your personal Gethsemane? What crushing experience are you facing? Is it a bad marriage? A health issue? Your job? Your children? Your retirement? Your future? What is putting pressure on you like an olive press? Whatever form your Gethsemane takes, you can find peace in your pressure by doing what Jesus did -A Surrender of your will to God's perfect plan.

You may be asking God to change your circumstances, and He's more interested in changing you. You want Him to fix the problem, and He wants to fix you. Like Jesus, never hesitate to ask God for what you want. But you must always add, "Not MY will, but YOURS be done."

Verse 43

Just as he was speaking, Judas appeared with a crowd armed with swords to arrest Jesus. He kissed Jesus and addressed him as Rabbi to show him out to those who had come to arrest him. Jesus was betrayed by a friend with a kiss. It is a great disappointment of being disappointed by those we love. It is a bitter cup, which all true Christians have frequently to drink. Ministers fail them. Relations fail them. Friends fail them. Jesus knows what it is to see friends and disciples failing Him in the hour of need. Yet He bore it patiently and loved them all notwithstanding. "His compassions fail not" (Lamentations 3:22).

But one of the disciples (v.47) cut off the ear of one of the soldiers. What an awkward gesture! That is not good swordsmanship. You won't defeat an enemy by cutting off ears. John 18:10 tells us the sword wielder was Simon Peter. Jesus told him to watch and pray, he slept but he could wield the sword which was not Jesus' instruction. Be careful that you do not serve Jesus in your strength and according to your own will.

Afterward, Jesus said, "No more of this. And He touched the man's ear and healed him." (Luke 22:51). If Jesus hadn't healed the man and removed every evidence that could have proved a case of attempted murder against Peter, there could have been a fourth Cross at Calvary the following day- the fourth cross being that of Peter.

Then, (verse 50) everyone deserted him and fled, including the sword wielding Peter!

CONCLUSION

Gethsemane was where the world's greatest battle was fought. What was the real battle that night? It was whether or not to drink the cup. Would He drink the cup, or toss it away? The Father wasn't forcing Jesus to do it. On that night, Jesus told Peter in Matthew 26:53, "Don't you realize I could call on my Father, and he will instantly put at my disposal more than twelve legions of angels?"

A Roman Legion was 6,000 soldiers, so we're talking at least 72,000 angels. And in the Bible, angels aren't cute little chubby babies with wings—they often appear as armed soldiers. So, based on Biblical truth how much damage could those angels have done that night? In 2 Kings 19:35 we read that one warrior angel killed 185,000 Assyrian soldiers in one night. You do the math; twelve legions of angels could wipe out 13.2 billion people, nearly twice the population of planet earth today.

But Jesus squared His shoulders and walked out of the Garden to a cross and then out of an empty tomb. He could have said, 'I'm not guilty, and I'm not gonna' stay; I'm not gonna pay!' But He walked right through the gate, and then on up the hill. And as He fell beneath the weight, He cried, 'Father, not My will.' And I'm the one to blame. I caused all His pain. Thank God Jesus won the Battle of Gethsemane. And because He submitted to His Father's will, we can experience freedom, peace, and forgiveness.