Drinking the Dregs  
Matthew 26:36-46  
“Finished?” Easter Series

Introduction

Turn with me in your Bibles to Matthew 26:36-46.

Yesterday, I decided to treat myself to a milkshake, and it was so good. I was enjoying it as I was walking back to the church and then the worst thing ever happened. It’s that sound between happily satisfied and empty. That’s right. The sound of air going through the straw instead of milkshake. I had reached the bottom of the cup. But it was a clear cup, so when I looked at it, I could still see some stuff down there. It’s always the hardest to get out.

We call this last bit of whatever is in the cup the dregs. Sometimes when I make tea and break the teabags, not on purpose of course, there are little tea leaves down there that I don’t want to drink anyway. But imagine if instead of a milkshake or coffee in the cup, there was something bitter and tasteless, something that only made you more thirsty instead of quenched your thirst. As we discuss the cup that Jesus had to drink, we will find out what was in that cup, and we will see that even still, Jesus drank the whole cup, even the dregs. He drank the whole amount.

Read Matthew 26:36-46.

Jesus has many lessons for us in this, His most impassioned prayer to the Father. As we look at how Jesus prayed in the darkest time of His life, we will learn how to pray genuinely to God and we will realize the weight of Jesus’ burden.

I. May This Cup Pass? (vv. 36-41).
   A. The setting of this most intimate prayer with God looms in the background (vv. 36-37).
      1. The time is night and the place is Gethsemane.
         a. After beginning the ritual of communion for the Church, Jesus and the disciples traveled to the Mount of Olives at nighttime, possibly 10 or 11 pm.
         b. Night in the Bible is often a metaphor or an image for darkness and sin and desperation, for depression and woe and dread (Ps. 6:6; 77:2; 91:5; Lam 2:19).
         c. Gethsemane meant “Wine Press” or “Oil Press.” This might remind us of Isaiah 53:10 where the Lord’s will was to crush Him.
      2. Jesus had just foretold of the falling away of His disciples.
         a. In the previous sections, Jesus instituted the Lord’s Supper for the Church and had stated on the way to the Mount of Olives that all of the disciples would fall away.
         b. Every one of them refused to believe that they would fall away and indeed swore that they would never fall away (Matt 26:31-36).
         c. Peter went so far as to promise that he would never fall away, but Jesus knew the truth. Jesus prophesied that Peter would deny Him three times before morning.
         d. Jesus set Himself and the three of his inner circle apart from the rest.
B. The cup of judgment was the weightiest burden anyone would ever bear (38-39).
   1. Jesus has a clear understanding of the cup He will drink.
      a. Jesus called on the three disciples to watch with Him. He expressed the dark night of His soul.
      b. Jesus was transparent about His inner feelings, the anguish through which He was treading. His prayer matched His attitude.
      c. Jesus had reached a point where the weight of all of the sin of humanity had come upon Him. He was feeling that weight even in this garden.
      d. The cup in the Bible is often filled with God’s judgment (Ps. 11:6; 75:8; Isa 51:17; Jer 25:15; Ezek 23:31-33; Matt 20:22; Rev 14:10; 16:19). It can also be filled with goodness (Ps. 16:5; 23:5). See especially Isaiah 51:17-23.
   2. His posture and substance of prayer teach us.
      a. Jesus fell on His face, a sign of complete surrender and humility. This was not a contest of wills between Jesus and the Father. It was Jesus laying down His own will.
      b. Application: Many times in our prayers, it is a test of wills. We want something, so we ask the sugar daddy in the sky to give us what we want. But prayer is not about what we want. It’s what God needs to do in us. It’s about what God wants for us and for our world. Prayer is a time to line up with God’s will, not demand something of God.
      c. Jesus prayed that God would line Him up with God’s will. The weight of sin and the world was so strong that it was crushing Jesus. He was feeling the pain. He was not afraid of death, for that was the goal of His coming. He was feeling a weight too large for just one person to bear.
      d. Illustration: When you work with weights or you’re doing outside yard work, if you haven’t been doing a lot of exercise, your muscles stiffen up later on. You never feel it until the muscles stiffen and begin to cramp. That’s when you realized you over-exerted yourself. Or think of the time when you go outside and tan for a while. Some sunburns don’t show up until the end of the day, or the next day.
      e. He knew mentally that this was God’s will, for Him to die. But the reality of the weight of sin upon the sinless Son of God was so great that Jesus prayed out of His anguish and grief. Jesus could not bear it alone.

C. Jesus truly was alone in His suffering (vv. 40-41).
   1. The disciples had fallen asleep in the hour of Jesus’ greatest need.
      a. Jesus had just said that the disciples would all fall away and they all pledged that none of them would ever do that.
      b. But not even at the finish of the walk to Gethsemane after they had pledged this, they fell asleep when Jesus simply asked them to stay awake and pray for a mere hour.
c. **Application:** Did you know that the national average of Christian prayer per person is under 5 minutes? That’s right, just 5 minutes of prayer a day! And Jesus made it sound like an hour was just barely getting started. The New Testament calls us to a life of prayer, not specific to a timeframe. Constant prayer grows out of the inner transformation of our hearts. We grow to want to spend more and more time with Jesus.

d. In the time where Jesus needed intercession for Himself desperately, those closest to Him had turned to their own needs. Aren’t you glad today that Jesus is faithful to us, always interceding for us, always there for us? But we tend by nature to turn our backs on Him. Not all the time, but this was a special time.

e. Luke adds that God sent ministering angels to Jesus to comfort Him. **Application:** God’s will is not always to get us around trials or out of them. Sometimes His will is to go through them, but we must remember that we never go through them alone. He is always there, always helping us through.

2. Jesus called the disciples to be vigilant in this dark night with Him.

   a. After chiding the disciples for their desire to not stay awake, Jesus used a word play off of wake to speak of vigilance. The word for wake and watch is similar.

   b. There are two steps believers can take to stay away from temptation. Being watchful and praying. Jesus called the disciples to both of these. Temptation slips in as a spy into our lives. It searches for the cracks in our lives where we are not holding up the wall, so to speak.

   c. **Application:** To not be drawn into temptation, we need to be actively doing something! I have found that when I am idle, when I don’t have anything to do, that is when temptation creeps into my life. When I’m not focused on a goal or a deadline, I am challenged and tempted to waste time. So to avoid temptation, don’t become idle! Spend time when you’re “bored” praying and staying alert. Being alert is a duty of all Christians, looking for the end to come and the Son to return.

   d. In our hearts we want to do these things. We want to be vigilant and we want to commune with God, but in reality, we do not often find ourselves naturally being drawn to prayer and to the disciplines of a spiritual life. That is because our bodies become weak and we find other things that end up filling our time. We become passive in our approach and begin to put things off until we no longer have a passion for them.

   e. This is what Jesus was warning when He told the disciples that the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak. It’s one thing to desire to do something, but it’s a completely different thing to actually do it.

II. Your Will Be Done! (vv. 42-46).
A. Jesus was strengthened to do the will of the Father (v. 42-44).
   1. Jesus’ second prayer session shows us persistence.
      a. Even after a whole hour of wrestling with the weight of God’s judgment upon Jesus, He returned once again because the matter was so weighty that it was still unsettled in His whole person.
      b. Jesus agreed to go through the ordeal that would be the poured out judgment of God upon Him, an innocent man, for the sins of the guilty.
      c. Jesus already knew that this was the will of the Lord. But at the same time, He must be obedient to the Lord’s will. He could have still called down angels to rescue Him even while He was on the cross. This would have to be decided upon.
      d. **Application:** What’s holding you back from doing what you know is the Lord’s will in your life? Sometimes because of depression or other emotions, we hold back on what we know God is telling us to do. Sometimes out of fear. Sometimes out of a feeling that we are being sacrificed for God’s sake! Prayer is the only way to work that out with God. In prayer, when we are brutally honest, and God is brutally honest, He always sends us the help needed when we must go through the fire instead of around it.
   2. Jesus settled the matter with God of the anguish of His soul.
      a. Luke tells us from his gospel that Jesus was so distressed over the weight of sin that He sweat drops of blood! This clearly was the greatest burden of all time!
      b. The reality of the mission and the reality of the weight of sin settled on the Son of God. He accepted it all so that you and I could know God personally and be in His presence forever.
      c. Jesus saw that though the unbearable weight of our sins would crush Him, He would bring many sons and daughters into the glory of God.
      d. Hebrews 5:7-9 Jesus accepted this suffering and affliction that was to come upon Him in our stead. That is why He is our great High Priest, because He not only offered atonement that pleased God’s will, but He was the atonement! He offered Himself in our stead.
      e. **Application:** Do we realize that Jesus paid the price for us? I hate it when other people pick up the tab for me! There’s something in me that just screams against grace! But that is what Jesus did. I could not pay the price even if I gave my life. Jesus went beyond paying the bill with death. He arose again and made it possible for you and me to arise again! He paid a debt He did not owe, and I have a debt to Him I cannot pay.
   3. We need to stop our own complacency in prayer.
      a. The disciples again could not hang in there. Let’s not be too hard on them. None of us would have realized the time in history this was.
b. We would all have failed Jesus, and already we have all failed Jesus at one time or another.

c. But Jesus called them out of their slumber and complacency into watchfulness. Will we today heed His voice? Will we come out of our slumber to embrace the plan of God for our world? Will we become active participants?

d. **Application:** It’s so easy to be complacent. It requires no energy, no resources, no extra time, no emotional drain, no work. It’s too easy. But God is calling you and me to step up to the plate, to do what He has called us to do. Jesus asked for a simple thing, for the disciples to pray for Him. What simple thing is God prodding you to do for Him today and this week?

B. Prayer prepared Jesus for His part in fulfilling God’s will (v. 45-46).

1. After Jesus’ time in prayer, He came back and woke up the disciples with words of warning.

   a. The dark night of His soul and His struggle was over. Now it was time to wake up the disciples and actively pursue the judgment of God.

   b. Jesus called them out of their sleeping, out of their stagnant complacency. This time was supposed to be used for their preparation to suffer with Jesus, to deal with their own faithfulness to Him. But they slept instead of prepared.

   c. He told them that there would be rest later on, though. The night would be hard on them and if they could not endure prayer, they would not endure the persecution and hardship that was coming upon them.

2. Jesus would now do the will of the Father to its full extent.

   a. Jesus described the hour that was at hand. The word for hour here means the hour of His death, the hour of God’s judgment poured upon Him.

   b. Jesus calls Himself the Son of Man, calling on the passages that depict His sacrificial death and dominion over the world (Dan 7:13-14).

   c. The will of God started with the betrayal into the hands of the sinful religious leaders by one of His own disciples, Judas Iscariot.

3. Jesus’ attitude was no longer dark, but ready to complete the mission.

   a. God’s strength had become Jesus’ strength. From now on, the story will go much more quickly. Everything that happens will not be protested by Jesus.

   b. You can see Jesus’ foreknowledge working as He tells them of the next part of the plot, the betrayal that leads to the fake trial that leads to the most brutal, unjust murder in human history,

   c. **Application:** When we see that suffering is part of God’s will for us, it does not get any easier. Jesus was experiencing the complete wrath of God for crimes and sins He did not commit. There are times where God’s will is for us to go through suffering, rather
than around it. When those times come, prayer puts us on God’s path and it reminds us of the strength that God will give us to do His will. Only through prayer and communing with God do we feel His strength and line ourselves up with whatever He is planning on our walk with Him.

Conclusion
Jesus took on the whole cup of God’s judgment that was meant for you and for me. And in doing so, He also taught us that God’s will is not always peachy and rosy, and that when we are in pain and anguish, we must first turn to the Lord. So I wonder if anyone out there is going through tough times. It could be that you’re not in God’s will. But it is also possible that you are in God’s will and you need strength to go through the fire of suffering. I would like to pray for you today and to point to Jesus as our great example. When suffering comes our way and is in the will of God, we must turn to Him for strength and encouragement.