

Real Prayer

Matthew 26:36-46

Did You Know?

There are several different interpretations for why Jesus was so sorrowful and weighed down emotionally in the Garden of Gethsemane. Even the name for the garden means, “Oil press” and might point to God’s determination to crush Jesus, as Isaiah puts it, because He takes upon Himself the sins of the whole world. Imagine what that would be like for Jesus who had never sinned to now have the full weight of all sin upon Him, and to be subject to death and separation from His Father!

Monday, March 18, 2013

Read: Matthew 26:36-41

Discuss: The first time that Jesus prays, He prays in a most human way. Scholars tend to highlight Jesus’ humanity as the hour of His death looms in the near future. Some will even go so far as to say that He was afraid of the prospect of the cross, but that is not true. Many have faced death with no fear. Jesus might be more concerned about taking on the sin of the world than the death part. But that death part will be hard, since He has never experienced the weight of sin before, nor the penalty of separation and death for sinning.

Act: What are some of the hardest things to understand about this prayer of Jesus? Is He being overly human here? We have a God who has understood through experience our deepest pains and suffering. He is not unfamiliar, but has suffered even more deeply than us. He understands, and that understanding makes all the difference. How can you feel the heart of God in the midst of your struggles more?

Tuesday, March 19, 2013

Read: Matthew 26:42-46

Discuss: The account of the second and third times in prayer shows us quite a bit about what God’s answer to Jesus’ prayer was, and how Jesus reacted. Jesus had asked if there was any other way to bring about salvation, and God’s answer must have been “No.” When Jesus comes back, He accepts that He must drink the cup of God’s judgment and submits Himself to God’s will.

Act: There is a strength in facing suffering or trial and knowing that you are still in the will of God. Many shrink from trials and suggest that if it is a trial or suffering that it is not

God's will, but this wasn't true for Jesus and most of the people we know from reading the Bible. When we experience hardship, we don't want it to be God's will, but there are times where it will indeed be so. That is when we need His comfort and guidance the most!

Wednesday, March 20, 2013

Read: Luke 22:39-46

Discuss: Luke's account of the Gethsemane prayer is shorter than Matthew and Mark, and yet Luke tells us pieces the others did not mention. The addition of angels ministering to Jesus in His hour of greatest need, and of Jesus being so agonized and distressed in His prayer that He sweat like drops of blood are some of Luke's contributions. Why do you think Luke was the one to add these details?

Act: As we continue to study how Jesus prayed that night before the greatest event of salvation in all of human history, what strikes you about his interaction with the Father? Can you point to a specific time where in your most dire need, God did the same for you and somehow brought you strength, comfort and peace in your prayer life?

Thursday, March 21, 2013

Read: 2 Corinthians 5:21; Leviticus 16:21-22; John 12:27; Habakkuk 1:13; Hebrews 5:8

Discuss: These verses help to clarify how Jesus saves us from sin by dying on the cross, and what He may have been enduring as He prepared emotionally, physically and spiritually for His death. The idea that Jesus bore our sins upon Himself, though was sinless, is found in reading these passages and a few others like them. What do you think is the strongest case for that kind of understanding of Jesus' actions on the cross for us?

Act: As you study more and more the effects that this time of prayer had on Jesus, how He before enduring the cross and its shame set aside time to meet with the Father, to be strengthened? Do you use prayer to be strengthened and rejuvenated so that you can bear the weight of your work and life? Or do you think that prayer is a waste of time? How can you change your schedule, maybe even your lifestyle, to meet more with Jesus for your spiritual health?

Friday, March 22, 2013

Read: Isaiah 51:17-22; Psalm 11:4; Psalm 42:11; Isaiah 53:10

Discuss: These verses highlight the cup that Jesus is most likely speaking of in His Gethsemane prayer, which is the cup of God's judgment for sin. Jesus is not the culprit of the sin, but He will endure the punishment for those who deserve it. What kinds of judgment did God pour out in the Old Testament? What kinds of crushing or wrath are in store for those who do not fall under the cross of Christ?

Act: In reading through this judgment and wrath of God against sin, we are renewed in our gratitude for what Jesus did on the cross. We see the pain and anguish of the suffering He would endure in the Garden. Jesus feels the weight of the sin of the world coming upon Him, and He needs God's strength to endure the wrath that goes with that sin. What kinds of weight has Jesus lifted off of you?

Saturday, March 23, 2013

Read: Psalm 102:1-28

Discuss: Many connect this psalm to what Jesus must have been feeling and praying in the Garden of Gethsemane. He prayed for at least an hour, by one Gospel writer's account. So what did Jesus express? How did He speak with His Father? This psalm challenges us with examples on how to approach God with respect and awe, and yet be genuine and open about our trials and how we process them.

Act: What parts of this psalm do you see parallels to Jesus' situation in the Garden of Gethsemane? What parallels do you see in your own prayer life right now? Is there something that you need to trust God to bring victory about? Don't be afraid to show God how you feel, and then move to the season of trusting and faith-filled words of praise, even if He hasn't brought your victory yet!

Sunday, March 24, 2013

Read: Luke 19:28-40

Discuss: This is a text to prepare you for Pastor Jon's message this morning about Palm Sunday, celebrating the Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem on a Sunday, just one week before His resurrection.

Act: Listen to the word that Pastor Jon has to share and ask God how you can best apply it to your life right now.