

September 13, 2020 - Jeffrey Smith

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Preacher: Jeffrey Smith

[0:00] We welcome you to the media ministry of Bethel Community Church, knowing Jesus, making Jesus known. We have this morning, and I just want to kind of start by telling a story.

It's a somber story. I'm just going to give you a heads up there. But it goes back to last year. It's a true story. It goes back to actually the date of April 12th of last year, 2019.

And quite frankly, that day felt like a normal day, a normal spring day. In fact, it was a Friday. I remember having a pretty good week at work, a pretty good day.

And just before leaving the office, as I often like to do, I like to kind of stop and maybe chat with a few coworkers and just kind of talk about the weekend ahead and what's the plan and have you got anything interesting going on.

I remember stopping and talking to two other buddies, one named Rob and one named Nick, just about their weekend plans. We all kind of sat, you know, the three of us all sit in the same pod.

[1:30] At work, we have pods, so like there's six desks in a pod. So we all sit in the same pod. We're all on the same team. All of us have worked together for 10-plus years.

We all started in this group and kind of moved along, and we're in this group now. So Rob and I being about the same age, Nick being a few years older. And unfortunately, April 12th did not end in normal fashion, especially for Nick.

You see, later that day, Nick died. He died from a blood clot that traveled to his lung. There's a medical term for it. I could have tried it, but I was just going to butcher it.

So that's what happened. He was out cutting the grass, wasn't feeling well, came inside, told his wife, hey, I'm not feeling very good. Knowing how Nick was, probably said hi to his, I think, little two-year-old son at the time.

They had another boy on the way, like within two weeks. And he goes back out, and he's suddenly gone. He passes away. And this was a really hard thing for a lot of the folks in the office.

[2:43] Some were much closer to Nick than I was, you know. And they really struggled. And over the coming weeks and months, there was a lot of grieving happening.

And people were just shocked, you know, like a guy that we sat next to for 10, 12, 15 years was just gone. And, you know, one thing that I noticed is people would often share about their last experience with Nick.

You know, for me, it was this last conversation with Nick, you know, as we were walking out the door. Or for some, it was the last lunch they had with him.

Or, you know, the last time, he loved baseball games, so the last Cardinals game with Nick. Or maybe the last vacation that they had gone on with Nick. And it was interesting.

I'm by no means, you know, a therapist in this. But just watching people kind of conclude this memory of Nick they had and thinking about their last moment with him.

[3:49] And really just how that helped them in that grieving process. And I tell that story because it's not a like for like for what we're going to look at this morning. But this story really made me reflect on not only Jesus on the cross, but the last remaining moments of his life.

And if you're here this morning and you've put your faith in what Jesus has done on the cross. And you are a child of God. You're a child of the one true king. We share this deeply intimate relationship with our Savior.

And my goal, and I pray it's your goal as well, my goal is to grow in that relationship. I think it's our mission statement, right? To know Jesus more, to make him known.

And so, I pray that this morning, as we look at the story of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane. Just hours before his death.

That will help us in our growth in a deeper relationship with Jesus. And knowing him in this extremely vulnerable moment.

[5:08] And I believe God's word tells this incredible story of the Savior's last and final moments on earth. To help us fill in this picture of who Jesus is.

And you'll get where I'm going with this in here in just a moment. I'm not going to say it's going to conclude and suddenly all is clear. And I know Jesus perfectly now. But it starts to fill in this picture of who our Savior is.

And with that clearer picture, the closer that relationship and the greater the love that we have for him becomes. I'm not going to cover all these topics.

But this story in the Garden of Gethsemane is truly the making of a good movie. There's friendship. There's betrayal. There's anguish.

There's fear. There's blood. There's an angry mob. And as every good story goes, there's someone getting their ear cut off. So before we dive in, let's pray.

[6:15] Lord, we thank you for this passage this morning. And I pray that your word would go forth in truth. May I just be a mouthpiece for what you would have for the folks here in this room.

Thank you for this glimpse into your character and what it does in drawing us closer to you. Lord, I thank you for the body of believers here this morning.

Amen. So if I can just rephrase what I said just before praying, I want to know Jesus more. It's as simple as that.

I really do. And there's a side of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane that we haven't really seen before. And so that's what we're going to look at.

And I also want to warn you that this is going to feel slightly different. I mentioned this to Brad the other day. This is going to feel slightly different than what I feel like most of my messages kind of come out as, I believe.

[7:17] This is really just a study of our Savior. That's all I'm going to say. In one of his last most vulnerable moments, I typically like to kind of bring in a very, you know, application-bent look at things.

And this is something that you guys can take as you guys leave this room and going into the week. And here's how you apply scripture. This is just truly an expository look at our Savior in the final moments of his life.

I think there's going to be things that you can glean from it, but I just want to just state that up front. So if you want to turn in your Bibles with me, obviously this story is throughout the various Gospels. We're going to primarily look at the account in Matthew 26. There's ten verses starting in verse 36. And I will make mention of a couple references in Mark and in Luke as well.

So if you want to read with me, this is Matthew 26, starting in verse 36. It says, Then Jesus went with them to a place called Gethsemane.

[8:27] And he said to his disciples, Sit here while I go over there to pray. And talking with him, Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, he began to be sorrowful and troubled.

Then he said to them, My soul is very sorrowful, even to death. Remain here and watch with me. And going a little farther, he fell on his face and he prayed, saying, My father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me.

Nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will. And he came to the disciples and found them sleeping. And he said to Peter, So, could you not watch with me one hour?

Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak. Again, for the second time, he went away and prayed, My father, if this cannot pass unless I drink it, your will be done.

And again, he came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were heavy. So, leaving them again, he went away and he prayed for the third time, saying the same words again.

[9:39] Then he came to the disciples and said to them, Sleep and take your rest later on. See, the hour is at hand, and the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners.

Rise, let us be going. See, my betrayer is at hand. And as we know, this is the beginning of the end. Judas leads this mob of chief priests and elders and others into the Garden of Gethsemane.

This is a place, just to kind of paint this picture of the setting, the Garden of Gethsemane is outside of the walls of Jerusalem. It's among what they call the olive groves, on the Mount of Olives.

And this is a very interesting point. It says in the Gospel of John, it says, This is a place Judas knew, because Jesus had often met there with the disciples.

So, this place wasn't just a random garden that they had gone to. It carried a sentimental value. The disciples knew this place, because they had been there with their Lord and Savior.

[10:48] And unfortunately, that sentimental value, I believe, would be soon lost, as now it would most likely be remembered for the place of betrayal, and this betrayer's kiss.

The following hours of Jesus' life would be the last, as he would be taken to the chief priest, the council, Pilate, Herod, and the next morning, he would be crucified on the cross as a sacrifice for our sin.

So, understand, we are in the Garden of Gethsemane. This is, it's late into the evening, and just the next morning, we are just hours away before his crucifixion. And so, if you kind of rewind the clock and go before this passage leading up to the Garden of Gethsemane, it wasn't all rosy either.

It wasn't like, man, we were doing so great, and man, this night really went downhill quickly. It wasn't all rosy before then. You know, he institutes the Lord's Supper.

I read that this morning. He tells the disciples that one of you will betray me, and then confirms that it's Judas. It's kind of a Debbie Downer, right? You're hanging out with your friends, you're taking the bread and the cup, and then it's like, hey, one of you guys is going to betray me, and Judas says, is it me?

[12:04] And he confirms it. They sing some hymns, and they go into the garden, and then just before that, Jesus tells Peter that before the rooster crows the next morning, you're going to deny me three times.

Ooh, man, I mean, the thought of betrayal is just a tough one. And so looking at the passage, look with me at verse 36.

Let's just take a little bit of a look at this. It's starting with verse 36. Jesus takes the 11 disciples, Judas has gone at this point, to the Garden of Gethsemane, and he instructs them to pray.

He then takes Peter, James, and John, the sons of Zebedee, a bit further. And he tells them something interesting. He says that he is feeling very sorrowful to the point of death.

And it's not easy for me to describe this with words, but we all know this feeling of just extreme sadness, of great distress.

[13:07] I mean, think about a moment in your life where something bad has happened, and you're like, oh, this is really tough. And you're getting torn up inside.

Maybe it's something that you had involvement in, something maybe that was outside of your control. Maybe it was health-related, job-related, family-related. I don't know what it is, but I'm sure many of us can just think about that time where it was really tough, and the sorrow was high.

And at this point, I just want to reiterate again a point in this message. As a Christian, I have a personal relationship with Jesus, and I want to grow in that relationship by learning about him and about his word.

And what we're going to see here is this side of Jesus is really something that hasn't come out in the Gospels to this point.

And it really gives us a glimpse into this wonderful, perfect human heart that experiences one of the most beautifully complex situations one could ever be in.

[14:24] where he has such sorrow, knowing what's about to happen. And you'll see where this leads. It says he was feeling sorrowful to the point of death.

He was falling on his face in prayer in a physical submission almost. And just think about how different this is than the fearless Messiah that we just saw.

Okay? Think about what, like when I, let me just give you a couple examples. When he is being tempted in the wilderness, what does he say to Satan? Satan, I'm really not feeling good right now. Like, I prefer you. No, he doesn't say that at all. It is a very assertive answer. Be gone, Satan. Be gone. He says that in power. He says that in power. This is a different side of Jesus that we're seeing here than the one who is boldly healing lepers and lame and those that are sick. This is a different side of Jesus that is eluding captors. This is a different side of Jesus that is powerfully rebuking a storm.

[15:37] When he casts out demons, what does he say? Hey, demons, I would really appreciate it if you guys just went into those pigs over there. Like, let's come.

No, he says go. That's all he says. Go. Go. Go. He's in the temple overturning tables. That is like so much of where my mind goes when I think of Jesus, this powerful, you know, just assertive example of our Savior.

And he is all that. He is all that. I'm not discounting that. But in this passage, we're seeing God incarnate who fell on his face in this physical submission and he's praying to his father.

He is so sorrowful and it almost brings him to death. It says, my father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me. Nevertheless, this is so key, not as I will, but as you will.

In the Gospel of Mark, he says, Abba, Father. And what do we know about Abba, Father? That is that intimate daddy, dad, you know, papa.

[17:00] And here he is before his father saying, Daddy, if it can be done, let this cup pass from me. And the word cup is an interesting one.

I wasn't like fully versed on what it meant, but the cup is a metaphor for one's experience. That experience can be a very joyful one, a very positive one, a prosperous one.

It can also be an extremely adverse one. And it's obvious that this case was one of adversity. You know, there's other mentions of the word cup.

Obviously, you know, you have this institution of the bread and cup. That's slightly different. But one good example of this is when a couple chapters earlier, James and John, here they are again.

And their mom says to Jesus, like, how can I get my sons to be on the right and left-hand side? And what does Jesus say? He says, are you able to drink the cup that I'm to drink?

[18:11] And then he later says, you will drink my cup. And I believe this was in reference to the adverse martyrdom that many would experience.

I believe James is the first one of the apostles to be killed for his faith at the hand of Herod in the sword. But this cup that Jesus is about to drink from is brewed with the filthiest, nastiest, most awful past, current, and future sin.

It is the absolute worst. How could Jesus drink from such a cup and bear the wrath of his Father?

And when I think about just the vast amount of sin in my own life, think about this for a moment.

Think about just 35 years of sin for myself and whatever that looks like for you. Years of sin. And multiply that out by everyone else.

And think about future sin. The weight of this is just unbearable. And so you start to put yourself in Jesus' shoes.

[19:30] And you're like, as a man, I can see where he's coming from. This just great sorrow that he's feeling. The story is a testimony to the authenticity of Jesus' incarnation.

That he was a real man. And real God at the same time. He was both simultaneously. As a man, he's asking God with perfect intention.

Oh, my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me. If there's a way, if there's another plan in your sovereign will, please, I'm begging you.

Let this agony pass from me. But nevertheless, and this is that beautifully complex situation.

Nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will.

He graciously states his desire while perfectly submitting to the Father's will. It's a dance that's really hard to learn.

[20:39] The way I will often pray is I want to take that first step in the dance. We're going to go this way, and we're going to go this way. Lord, come on with me. This is what I want. This is what I want. Lord, I pray that this pans out over here.

And I get this, and I get that. And you're with me, right? That is not this submission to the Lord's will. I found it funny, and I almost left it out, but I wanted to mention it.

There's some people that know nothing about the Bible, and they claim to be critics of the Bible. And so you read this, and you're like, what? But some have criticized, saying God did not hear Jesus in this situation.

And I think, wow, that's extremely foolish and not true at all. In Isaiah 53, it was prophesied that the Messiah would be despised and rejected by man.

He would be a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And here's another one that's very interesting that totally addresses this thought of was Jesus hurt.

[21:39] In Hebrews 5, it says, In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications with loud cries and tears. To him who was able to save him from death, and he was heard.

It says he was heard. Because of his reverence. Although he was a son, he learned obedience through what he suffered. And being made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation. That is awesome. He was heard by the Father. And through obedience, he became the source of our salvation. He wanted to avoid death and alienation from the Father.

But even more, he wanted to do the Lord's will, regardless of the cost. I've never asked for an amen from the pulpit here. But how thankful do you feel right now that Jesus followed through with the Father's perfect plan?

It wasn't just a plan A. It was the only plan for our salvation. Amen. In just picking it back up, I just want to kind of briefly point out a couple things here.

[22:56] In verse 40, Jesus comes back and he finds the disciples sleeping. And he scolds them for not staying awake. And he instructs them to watch and pray that they may not enter into temptation.

You may be asking, well, what kind of temptation are they potentially falling into? Maybe the temptation of sleep. It was late. They were probably tired. But there's also this fact that Jesus has told them that there will be betrayal.

And to perhaps pray that they do not fall into that temptation. Jesus says, the spirit is indeed willing, but the flesh is weak.

Continuing on in verse 42, Jesus goes to pray again. And if you just flip over with me to Luke 22. We're almost done.

Verse 44. And it says, in being in an agony, he prayed more earnestly. And his sweat became like drops of blood falling down to the ground.

[24:09] Just close your eyes for a moment. And picture this scene in your mind. Our Savior is crying out to his Father. Face on the ground.

Saying, if this cannot pass unless I drink it, your will be done. And there is just blood pouring down his face. That is such a picture.

Such a mental picture there. There's a real medical condition called, and I'm going to butcher this. He's hematidrosis. And this is where capillary blood vessels that feed into your sweat glands rupture.

And it's a scientific thing that this happens. It wasn't just a one-time thing. And it causes blood to ooze out of your eye glands.

And from your forehead and from your nails. And it's usually preceded by this intense headache and stomach pain.

[25:14] And researchers have found that the presence of this condition is often found in people that are either waiting execution. You know, so they're on death row and they know this is going to happen.

Or before a soldier goes into battle. It's also been documented in those cases. So these situations that look so dire that death seems just imminent.

But for Jesus, he knew that it wasn't just death that would come upon him in just a few short hours. It was the floodgates of sin and God's wrath opening and being poured over him.

And so to wrap up the message this morning. Jesus comes back to his disciples two more times and he prays again.

And he finally says, sleep and take your rest later on. See, the hour is at hand. And the Son of Man is betrayed in the hands of sinners. Rise, let us get going.

[26:23] See, my betrayer is at hand. Jesus could have called the whole thing off. He could have had legions of angels deliver him in an instant. But he humbly, sorrowfully, obediently followed the will of his Father.

These are the last moments of our Savior. My notes say to call the musicians up, but David, it's just you. So I'm going to come on up. At the beginning of this message, I shared about my friend Nick and how, you know, as coworkers, we reflected on his final moments.

And it gave us a bit of a greater appreciation of his memory. And I want to say that, like I said, it wasn't a like-for-like example to this here. But in an infinitely multiplied way, the reflection and study of Jesus in his last hour, his last hour has drawn me closer to himself.

And I pray that that has been the case for you as well. We've seen Jesus as this bold, perfect, fearless leader.

And like I said, don't get me wrong, that is still 1,000% the case. But in his last hour, we see, again, such a relatable form of Jesus heavy-hearted, carrying the weight of the sin that would be poured out on him.

[28:03] He was carrying the weight of the world's sin, and to put it simply, it made him really, really sad. I didn't write this here, but just in thinking about it, sometimes the most just heart-wrenching experiences are when I see someone that I greatly respect as a, you know, like a father, a grandfather, whatever it may be, someone that is the pillar of how I see people.

And when I see that person cry, that's when it's like, oh, man. And to see Jesus in this sorrowful state, it just makes me appreciate who he is even more.

He wanted to be with his father. He wanted to be in good standing with his father. He didn't want to die, but he did, above all, want to obey the will of the father.

He humbly sought the Lord's will, and I just want to thank him for that this morning. Let's pray. Lord, thank you for carrying out this perfect plan of salvation.

There's not much more I can say than thank you. As we soak this in, Lord, I just pray that all of us would have just this desire to have a real intimate relationship with you.

[29:37] You as our Savior and you as our friend. Lord, you fill so many roles, and I thank you for that.

Thank you that we can just rely and depend upon you in those heavy situations. When we feel like we are just carrying the weight of the world, that we are just in a situation that seems very gloomy and hopeless, Lord.

You are there right along with us. And in a similar way that Jesus cried out to his father, I pray that we, Lord, can express ourselves, but, Lord, in a way, seek your will above all and seek to be obedient to that will.

So thank you for that. Thank you for giving us the gift of salvation. And I pray that we would just, we would take that forward this morning in our own walk with you, in the way we interact with others, thanking you for what you've done and sharing what you've done with those that may not know you. In Jesus' name, amen. Amen.