

Just outside of Jerusalem is a little garden—the garden of Gethsemane. Jerusalem has always been a very crowded city where property is hard to come by and only the wealthy could purchase private garden spots on the slopes of the Mount of Olives. This one was probably owned by a friend of the Lord and was a special place for him to go for rest, refreshment, and prayer. Gethsemane means “oil press.” Evidently, it was a place where they would press and crush the olives from the trees to remove the oil. This is a significant name because Jesus was about to be *crushed and pressed*, so the oil of salvation and hope could flow freely to the whole world.

This side of heaven, we may never understand what Jesus went through that night in The Garden. Our vocabulary would be exhausted trying to express the depth of his experience. Here is the place where Jesus surrendered his will to the Father’s will in order to go to the cross. And so, it was in the garden that the battle of the cross was fought, and the victory of the cross was actually won! Let’s approach this story with reverence, because we’re on holy ground as we walk together to this garden! We’ll notice several things along the garden path:

His Sorrow. To Peter, James, and John Jesus says, “*My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death*” (v. 34). “*Overwhelmed with sorrow*” comes from a Greek phrase that literally means “my soul is deeply grieved unto death.” Or we could say, “engulfed by sorrow.” Why did he experience such sorrow in the garden? I can think of three reasons:

First: The emotional suffering he was about to endure. Jesus was subjected to every horrible emotional attack possible. And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly. Luke makes a special note, to say: “*In his anguish he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down on the ground*” (22:44). In medical language this is called hemathidrosis, or bloody sweat in which the blood vessels burst under extreme duress. Add to this stress the unbelief of people calling him a liar and a blasphemer. It hurts to have your integrity doubted and your sincerity questioned. People that he loved, his own people, hated him. The religious leaders of that day hated him.

The betrayal of Judas Iscariot who walked with him, prayed with him, must have taken a terrible emotional toll.

Did you catch verses 37 and 38 in our Scripture today? Talk about the ultimate example of sleeping on the job: *“Then he returned to his disciples and found them sleeping. “Simon,” he said to Peter, “are you asleep? Couldn’t you keep watch for one hour? Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.”*

The desertion by all the disciples soon happens. The denial of one of his own (Peter) is soon coming. The injustice of his coming trial—a kangaroo court that broke every law of juris prudence of that day—convicted of crimes for which he was not guilty! And he knew he would be further ridiculed, spit upon, stripped naked (a great indignity) and put to open shame. If you or I experienced any one of the above we would be devastated, yet Jesus went through it all at once! Salvation may be free, but it’s not cheap, friends! *Overwhelmed with sorrow...to the point of death*, he endured all this emotional suffering!

Second: The physical suffering. He knew a rugged cross awaited him...and historians would say to be crucified is to die a thousand deaths! Verse 34 makes it noticeably clear his emotional suffering would immediately lead to physical suffering— *“to the point of death.”* His physical body recoils at the thought; not that he was afraid to die, for he faced death with courage and with perfect peace...but no one in their right mind looks forward to torture and death. You’re not looking forward to dying!?! If the Dr. gives us a choice between living and dying, we’ll take living every time! As humans we have a built-in defense mechanism to resist pain and death. But the worst part of his suffering may not have been physical or emotional.

Third: His spiritual suffering was perhaps the worst. Mark writes, *“Going a little farther, he fell to the ground and prayed that if possible, the hour might pass from him. “Abba, Father,” he said, “everything is possible for you. Take this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will.”* (Verses 35&36). That cup was much more than physical and emotional suffering, for in that cup was the sin of all humanity, the accumulated sin of all the ages about to be laid

upon the sinless, perfect Son of God. “*Take **this cup** from me.*” Can we even pretend to imagine the repugnance he must have felt at the thought of becoming the vessel for the most vile sins of humanity? To the point that his own Father could not look upon him? This was a deep, deep sorrow...

Then...His Surrender. Thank God Jesus chose to surrender! Consider another garden: The Garden of Eden. There the first Adam *exerted* his own will and brought about the ruin and condemnation of the whole human race. But in the Garden of Gethsemane, the last Adam, Jesus Christ, did not exert his own will, and in so doing brought about the redemption of the human race! The first Adam said, my will be done, and brought about death. The second Adam said, “*what you will,*” and the result was salvation and life eternal!

He surrendered. He did God’s will! When I think of the surrendering of Jesus’ will, it makes me wonder how we mere human beings can ever exert our own wills before an awesome and almighty God! Yet daily, we make choices, and answer the question, either “My will” or “Thy will.” We faced that question when we got up just a few hours ago! Satan tries to keep us so very busy and gives us so many alternatives to the faithful worship of God, but through our lives we give an answer when it comes to praying / serving / witnessing / TV watching / web surfing / doing taxes / washing the car / catching up on work / you name it.

There’s an old hymn titled, “I Surrender All,” but let’s be honest, most of the time we ought to be singing, “*Some to Jesus I surrender, some to him I freely give...I will *sometimes* love and trust him, in his presence *once in a while* live!*” I’d say Christ deserves better than that. He willingly gave all for us.

We’ve seen his emotional suffering, his physical suffering, and his spiritual suffering. We’ve seen his surrender: “*Yet not what I will, but what you will.*”

Then...His Submission. “*The men seized Jesus and arrested him. Then one of those standing near drew his sword and struck the servant of the high priest, cutting off his ear. “Am I leading a rebellion,” said Jesus, “that you have come out with swords and clubs to capture me?”* (Verses 46-48). Jesus knew they were coming. Just a few verses earlier Mark records: “*Just as he was speaking, Judas, one of the Twelve, appeared. With him was a crowd armed with swords*

and clubs, sent from the chief priests, the teachers of the law, and the elders” (v. 43). He could probably feel the ground shake from the trampling of marching feet, or hear the shouts of the mob, or see the lights of torches, or hear the clanging of their swords. But Jesus didn’t run or resist. He did what he already committed to do. He surrendered to the thugs sent by the chief priests, the teachers of the law, and the elders, because he had already *submitted* to God. It was a great multitude, some would say perhaps 1,000 armed soldiers that came out to arrest a carpenter, the Prince of Peace! He is betrayed with a kiss...and finally Peter, James and John are awake...which might explain why Mark writes, *“Then everyone deserted him and fled”* (v. 50). They had been sleeping when they were supposed to be watching and praying!

Robinson Crusoe once found himself on a desert island. When darkness fell, he retreated to the beach, built a fire, and huddled close to it. His security extended only to the outer edge of the campfire’s light. Beyond that, as he looked into the darkness towards the jungle, his soul shuddered with fear knowing that if he stepped beyond the flickering light of his campfire his terror would be compounded by the distress of being out of his realm and not knowing how to cope with the situation. In effect, Jesus stepped beyond the circle of light cast by God’s presence into the evil darkness of the jungle. Before this, Jesus enjoyed unbroken fellowship with his Father. Now he realizes that he must die alone. His friends will deny him, and his Father must leave him. The combined weight of sin and loneliness is almost more than he can stand. He confesses, *“My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death”* (v. 34). *“Take this cup from me”* (v. 36).

What’s in your cup? Is it sorrow or suffering? Is it emotional, physical, or spiritual? Will you surrender to God? *“Yet not what I will, but what you will”* (v. 36). It is God’s will for every one of us to be saved by his grace...but it takes *submission* to make our faith more than words—a lifestyle, a way of life.

As we approach Palm Sunday and as Easter draws near, let us thank God for restraining evil and giving us his abiding presence in our lives. And let us remember the sorrow, the surrender, and the submission of our Lord.

The Lord bless this simple witness to his word. Amen.