

“Gethsemane”

Long before Jesus, and the night on which He was betrayed – one of Israel’s greatest kings went up on the Mount of Olives, where he weeps uncontrollably. He goes up on the mount to find shelter and protection – to pray to the Lord – praying that the Lord’s will would be done.

It is one of the darkest days in Israel’s history. The king’s own son has become his enemy. The son declares himself to be king and leads a rebellion. And if that were not bad enough, one of the king’s most trusted advisors (one close to him) – has deserted him, and betrayed him, and thrown his support behind the rival.

King David’s suffering on the Mount of Olives was intense. He’d been double-crossed, betrayed, and chased into exile. His life was in danger – and yet – he willingly suffers it all.

Eventually the rebel and his forces were defeated. The trusted advisor despairs, believing that he will get what he deserves for his betrayal – and so he takes matters into his own hands, and goes and hangs himself.

Tonight, we hear of David’s descendent – Jesus, the promised Messianic King. He crosses the Kidron Valley and goes into the garden called Gethsemane on the Mount of Olives to pray. This greater One than David, willingly suffers the darkest day in the history of the world.

This King, Jesus, will also be betrayed – by His spiritual son, Judas! Think about that. Judas has been with Jesus from the beginning – hearing His teaching, seeing His miracles. Jesus has placed him into the holy office of an apostle. Judas is one of Jesus’ “sent ones” – to preach the good news of the kingdom of God. He is given God’s own authority to drive out demons and to heal the sick. This is the Judas who betrays Jesus.

The devil possesses Judas and uses him. The devil has become his master – turning this “sent one” against the One who sent him. He leads Judas to follow in his own rebellious footsteps – to overthrow his spiritual father, King Jesus – and to do so with a deceptive and lying kiss.

As it was “in the beginning” – so it is again – that there is a war in a garden. The betrayer comes with military might and the backing of the religious authorities – but the little band of apostles will be of no help when King Jesus comes under attack. Despite their bragging about putting their lives on the line for Jesus – their lives are filled with sleep, childish swordplay, and eventually desertion.

It’s been a long day for Jesus ... a long week ... a long life. Even before His betrayal, the Holy One suffers intensely. There is another matter on His mind – and it shakes Him to the core. His heart is heavy. His sweat falls to the ground like great drops of blood.

What is the cause of such distress? Why does the Father send an angel from heaven to strengthen His Son? You heard Him. Jesus says, “My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even to death.”

Jesus is terminal. He knows that His death is coming quickly. The time has come to drink from the Father’s chalice – to drink down to the dregs the cup of God’s wrath against every sin, and all sinners.

Jesus is The Apostle – the One sent by the Father to bear the sin of the world in His flesh – to become sin for us – to be treated as THE lost and condemned sinner. He receives what you and I deserve because of our betrayal, our denial, our scattering, our rebellion, our sin. In our place He endures it all. He will be put to death, and damned.

The King suffers the agony of hell for man’s sin. The gates of hell, death, and the devil – will be unleashed against the Christ. God’s wrath and punishment come crashing down on Jesus who carries the debt of the world to the cross.

He MUST drink the cup – consume the wrath reserved for all sinners. This is the Father’s will. “God made Him who had no sin to be sin” – so that in Jesus, it might be declared, that God’s wrath at sin “it is finished.”

You may be wondering – “Can this be the Father’s plan? Is this really what He wants?” And you’re not alone. Jesus prays repeatedly: “Father, is there another way? Can this cup pass me by? Will you remove it, or do I really have to drink it all?”

“But not my will be done. Your will be done, Father.”

Perhaps all of this offends you. What kind of Savior is this? What kind of King does not fight back, but allows this to happen? How dare the Father do this to His one and only Son! Maybe you’ll join your voice to the mob that claims this is nothing other than “Divine child abuse”!

Be careful! Be careful that you don’t let your emotions and reasoning get in the way, and keep King Jesus from His royal service. Be careful that you don’t separate Jesus from your sin – divorcing Him from your transgressions.

In your desire to spare Him this agony and affliction – from being treated as THE SINNER – to deliver Him from God’s wrath and damnation --- you are imposing YOUR WILL on God.

This IS the Father’s will. This is what is necessary to redeem lost and condemned people – to redeem you and me, and the whole world. IF Jesus doesn’t die and be damned with all of your sin – THEN you will die and be damned in them. You will have to bear the Father’s wrath, and curse, and drink the cup – and hell will be your end.

Dearly beloved, that is NOT the Father’s will. He doesn’t want you to wallow in your sin – to bear the burden of guilt and shame – to suffer unrighteousness – and end up in hell, separated from Him for all eternity.

So He sends His Son – to endure all of this in your place – for your salvation, to release you from sin and wrath and death and hell. The One greater than King David moves from the Mount of Olives to Mount Calvary, to do the Father’s will.

Jesus drinks the cup – redeeming you, a lost and condemned person – with His holy precious blood and with His innocent suffering and death – so that you can bask in God’s eternal favor. Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding, guards your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.