

The Great Sayings in the Gospels
Message 155
Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane 02
The Comparisons and Contrasts

Mark 14:32-36

- 32 And they came to a place which was named Gethsemane: and he saith to his disciples, Sit ye here, while I shall pray.
- 33 And he taketh with him Peter and James and John, and began to be sore amazed, and to be very heavy;
- 34 And saith unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful unto death: tarry ye here, and watch.
- 35 And he went forward a little, and fell on the ground, and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him.
- 36 And he said, Abba, Father, all things are possible unto thee; take away this cup from me: nevertheless not what I will, but what thou wilt.

Luke 22:43-46

- 43 And there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him.
- 44 And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground.
- 45 And when he rose up from prayer, and was come to his disciples, he found them sleeping for sorrow,
- 46 And said unto them, Why sleep ye? rise and pray, lest ye enter into temptation.

Mark 14:39-42

- 39 And again he went away, and prayed, and spake the same words.
- 40 And when he returned, he found them asleep again, (for their eyes were heavy,) neither wist they what to answer him.
- 41 And he cometh the third time, and saith unto them, Sleep on now, and take your rest: it is enough, the hour is come; behold, the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners.
- 42 Rise up, let us go; lo, he that betrayeth me is at hand.

John 18:2-12

- 2 And Judas also, which betrayed him, knew the place: for Jesus oftentimes resorted thither with his disciples.
- 3 Judas then, having received a band of men and officers from the chief priests and Pharisees, cometh thither with lanterns and torches and weapons.
- 4 Jesus therefore, knowing all things that should come upon him, went forth, and said unto them, Whom seek ye?
- 5 They answered him, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus saith unto them, I am he. And Judas also, which betrayed him, stood with them.
- 6 As soon then as he had said unto them, I am he, they went backward, and fell to the

ground.
7 Then asked he them again, Whom seek ye? And they said, Jesus of Nazareth.
8 Jesus answered, I have told you that I am he: if therefore ye seek me, let these go their way:
9 That the saying might be fulfilled, which he spake, Of them which thou gavest me have I lost none.
10 Then Simon Peter having a sword drew it, and smote the high priest's servant, and cut off his right ear. The servant's name was Malchus.
11 Then said Jesus unto Peter, Put up thy sword into the sheath: the cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?
12 Then the band and the captain and officers of the Jews took Jesus, and bound him,

Mark 14:48-50

48 And Jesus answered and said unto them, Are ye come out, as against a thief, with swords and with staves to take me?
49 I was daily with you in the temple teaching, and ye took me not: but the scriptures must be fulfilled.
50 And they all forsook him, and fled.

Introduction:

Before we leave the scene of the Garden of Gethsemane there are some assorted pictures and events here that we do not want to leave out. Particularly, I want to focus your minds on some very interesting and instructive comparisons and contrasts which are here.

I will list the contrasts that I see and then we will work through them one at a time.

In Mark 13:24 we see the incredible distress of the Savior contrasted with the seeming apathy of the disciples. They just seemed to be unable to put together the incredible magnitude of this night.

Mark 13:26 shows us a very interesting contrast of the 'will' of Jesus and the Will of the Father. (How could Jesus have two wills?)

Luke 22:43 give us an angel coming to strengthen Jesus. (How does an angel 'strengthen' his Creator?)

Mark 14:41,42 shows us a very serene and composed Jesus as contrasted against the awful agony of Luke 22:44.

Mark 14:41 also shows us the compassion of Jesus for the lazy and dull disciples and we cannot help but compare that with what our own reactions would be in some similar situation.

In John 18:4-9 there is a visible but unmentioned comparison of the great disparity in power between the One being arrested and those arresting Him.

We are forced as well to compare the Jesus Who faced the soldiers with the Jesus Who had entered the garden.

Herein we have the explanation that I always wrestled with as a child and as a young student of the Word, “why pray three times?” The prayers had changed nothing except for the One praying, and, so, do prayers function for the most part.

Another comparison that arises here and is finished later than night is the relative fierceness of Peter’s defense of Jesus in the Garden and the weakness that fell upon him around the fire at the High Priest’s house.

We see a contrast between the intentions of those who came to arrest Jesus and His compassion that was shown to Malchus, whose ear Peter cut off.

Finally, there is the contrast that Jesus drew between His Own behavior and the manner of His arrest.

Some of these are obvious and some of them require some thought and discussion. Consider, for example, the matter of Peter and His defense of Jesus. He had rejected the notion when Jesus had brought it up earlier that Peter would deny Him.

Matt 26:33-35

33 Peter answered and said unto him, Though all men shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended.

34 Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, That this night, before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice.

35 Peter said unto him, Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee. Likewise also said all the disciples. KJV

Then, when the soldiers actually came, Peter endeavored to do what he had pledged that he would, die in defense of Jesus. He could not possibly have thought that himself and one other man with a sword would fight off the soldiers that came to arrest Jesus. It was, beyond question, a hopeless task which would only get him killed, yet he stepped up and would have fought to the death had Jesus not restrained him.

So, why would he have so much trouble just a few hours later simply acknowledging that he was indeed a disciple of Jesus? Many explanations have been given, no doubt, but let me suggest one to you. There are two types of battles and two kinds of courage. One is primarily physical and human, and Peter was quite full of human courage and willing to do physical battle. The other is spiritual, both battle and courage, and Peter lacked what he needed for that.

But, lest we be too critical of Peter, let us consider ourselves. How often have we been willing to discuss spiritual things at church but then gone suddenly tongue-tied when faced with an opportunity to speak for Christ with no support around us? What was the difference? One required a level of spiritual courage that was greater than required by the other and we simply did not have it.

Then, there is the issue of the manifest power of Jesus as the men approached Him to arrest Him.
John 18

- 4 Jesus therefore, knowing all things that should come upon him, went forth, and said unto them, Whom seek ye?
- 5 They answered him, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus saith unto them, I am he. And Judas also, which betrayed him, stood with them.
- 6 As soon then as he had said unto them, I am he, they went backward, and fell to the ground.

This declaration of Jesus was, literally, "I AM." It is the identical expression in Greek as that Word spoken to Moses so long ago at the burning bush.

Ex 3:13-14

- 13 And Moses said unto God, Behold, when I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say unto them, The God of your fathers hath sent me unto you; and they shall say to me, What is his name? what shall I say unto them?
- 14 And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you.

This self-declaration of Christ was carefully measured so as to merely demonstrate to these men their need to be respectful of the One in their custody. He Who knocked them down could have, just as easily, evaporated them with those words.

It was far more useless to bind Him with cords than it was to bind Samson with new ropes. Yet He Who controlled all things went quietly with them because there were some of them whom He had determined to redeem and their redemption required His crucifixion.

Compare also the Jesus Who left the Garden with the One Who entered it. At the beginning He was in great distress, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful unto death," He told the disciples in Mark 13:34. As He left the garden, He was serene and calm, resolved and determined. And, what was the difference? He prayed, and 'and angel strengthened Him.'

This opens the discussion of why did Jesus pray in the first place and, then, why did He pray three times? We will never fully resolve the issue of the humanity of Christ as it functioned in relation to His Deity. We simply cannot understand it. But, what we can understand is that, for the most part, Jesus was functioning in the Garden as a man, as a human. Never had He so fully distanced Himself from His position as one of the Trinity as He did from the Garden to the Tomb. Here was a man in distress, a man in need of God, in need of strength, so He prayed.

But, why pray three times the same prayer? And, why stop after three? There are those who suggest that a person should only pray about a matter once and then leave it in the hands of God. Anything further, they say, shows a lack of faith and trust. But it certainly could not have been the case with Jesus Who fully trusted the Father. So, what was the issue after the first and second prayer that sent Him again to His face before the Father? And what was it after the third prayer that ended the sense of pressure to pray and left Him fully calm and composed for His

arrest and the subsequent abuse? I will admit that I am guessing here but I believe that it is an educated guess.

Remember Elijah on top of Mt. Carmel after the encounter with the prophets of Baal and the Grove? Remember how he prayed that God would end the drought and send rain?

1 Kings 18:42-44

- 42 So Ahab went up to eat and to drink. And Elijah went up to the top of Carmel; and he cast himself down upon the earth, and put his face between his knees,
43 And said to his servant, Go up now, look toward the sea. And he went up, and looked, and said, There is nothing. And he said, Go again seven times.
44 And it came to pass at the seventh time, that he said, Behold, there ariseth a little cloud out of the sea, like a man's hand. And he said, Go up, say unto Ahab, Prepare thy chariot, and get thee down, that the rain stop thee not.

After the first prayer, there was no evidence that the prayer was being answered, nor after the second or the third. But after the seventh prayer, the servant saw a small cloud rising out of the sea and Elijah knew that God had heard and that rain was coming. I would suggest to you that after the first and second prayers Jesus had no sense of enabling to face the coming suffering, no peace with “thy will be done.” However, it seems that after the third prayer, which may have been the one when the angel came and strengthened Him, He sensed Himself ready for all that was coming.

The encouragement to you and me is to continue praying about any matter until there is either evidence that the prayer is being answered or peace, one way or the other, with God concerning the resolution of the matter. It is not a lack of faith but the proof of faith that we continue to present our needs before God until some sense of an answer comes to us. This is the lesson that Jesus taught concerning the woman and the unjust judge as well as the man and his neighbor concerning bread for a visitor. Pray until your heart is settled that God has heard or denied the request, even if that means repeating the same request thousands of times.

Next, we want to think for a minute about the two ‘will’s that are in consideration in Jesus’ prayer. “Not *my* will but *Thine* be done.” As a kid and then as a young Bible student, I often thought about that prayer and wondered how Jesus, the Son of God, could have had an opposing will to the Father. Finally, I realized that it was not Jesus, the Son of God, that had the contrary will but Jesus, the son of Mary, the daughter of Adam and Eve who had the opposition to what was about to occur. And, I also realized that this was not a wicked opposition to the Will of God but merely the human nature desiring to survive and not die.

God gives that will to all of His creatures. It is necessary for life to happen and it is only when something goes terribly wrong within a creature that this will to live, to survive, dies. Jesus was a man, a normal human person, in addition to being Deity. And that man, that person, did not want to die. He had an instinct to survive just like you and I, and it was this ‘will’ that Jesus was referencing and submitting to the Father as He prayed. Let us never think that there was any resistance within Him to righteousness but only that desire to live that was natural.

Finally, we want to look at the contrast between the concern and agony of Christ and the seeming lack of concern of the disciples as the Garden experience began.

Mark 14

- 33 And he taketh with him Peter and James and John, and began to be sore amazed, and to be very heavy;
- 34 And saith unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful unto death: tarry ye here, and watch.
- 35 And he went forward a little, and fell on the ground, and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him.
- 36 And he said, Abba, Father, all things are possible unto thee; take away this cup from me: nevertheless not what I will, but what thou wilt.

Luke 22

- 45 And when he rose up from prayer, and was come to his disciples, he found them sleeping for sorrow,
- 46 And said unto them, Why sleep ye? rise and pray, lest ye enter into temptation.

Some questions present themselves to our mind. Was there any way to miss the fact that this was a serious night? Did it not seem urgent that the Savior said, “pray that ye enter not into temptation?” Were they not concerned that He had sternly told them that they would all forsake Him and that Peter would deny Him three times before the morning broke the next day? In one sense it almost boggles the mind that they could be this dull and insensitive to what was going on. Surely, if ever one stayed up all night to pray, this would be the night, correct?

Yet a heavy dullness settled upon their senses so that they could not keep their eyes open. I never really understood this until I became serious about serving God, reading the Bible and praying. I had no problems with staying awake to do what I wanted to do. I could read all night, talk all night, watch TV all night whenever I wanted. But when I tried to read the Bible or pray, especially about some serious matter, or do anything that was purely spiritual, my mind would absolutely revolt on me and I would find my eyes heavy and my energy gone.

At first, I thought that maybe it was just that I was starting too late at night, so I tried it at different times of the day and mostly found the same thing. Not long into reading, or meditating, or studying, or praying drowsiness would begin to overtake me and I would be in a battle with myself. It seems that Jesus knew that this would be the case with the 11. The first thing that tells me that is His admonition “watch,” which means, of course, stay awake, fight the urge to sleep, do not succumb to dullness and sleepiness. The other is His gentleness with them when He found them asleep the third time, “And he cometh the third time, and saith unto them, Sleep on now, and take your rest...” Mark 14:41.

I have learned to fight it and win, most of the time, but the battle never goes away. It is as consistent as the morning. I know that I will fight it every time. The only time that it is not a problem is when I finally break through to a good place either in prayer or study, and those are indeed blessed times.

I have learned to have some compassion for those men as they sought to enter in to the concerns of the Savior and maybe even to prepare themselves so as not to betray Him but the sleepiness go

the better of them. It has often occurred to me that maybe this is a work of the Evil One. Jesus never said so directly but there are many connections in scripture between spiritual dullness and sleepiness.

Rom 13:11-12

- 11 And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed.
- 12 The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light. KJV

Eph 5:14-16

- 14 Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.
- 15 See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise,
- 16 Redeeming the time, because the days are evil. KJV

1 Thess 5:6-8

- 6 Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober.
- 7 For they that sleep sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night.
- 8 But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation. KJV

The great admonition that comes out of the Garden of Gethsemane to all the people of God everywhere and in every time is “Watch (fight off sleepiness), and pray that ye enter not into temptation.”

If we allow laziness and sleepiness concerning spiritual things to rule our lives we shall suddenly awake as did the disciples that night to testing for which we are not prepared and we may forsake the Lord as they did. We should not be arrogant nor presumptive. We should ‘watch and pray.’ “In a sense not true of Christ, our “flesh lusts against the Spirit.” Even were we like our Lord in purity, we must, like Him, watch and pray. How much more, being what we are! The spirit will only be willing by prayerfulness; the flesh, in its weakness, will only be kept from wickedness by watchfulness.” Newman Hall “Gethsemane: Leaves of Healing in the Garden of Grief” Location 960 in the book, a quote, an example, of the danger of sleepiness. Bookmarked

Location 992, “The greatest peril is the slumber which renders us indifferent to all temptation.”

Sin is a problem. Yielding to temptation is a thing to be always and forever avoided at all costs. The consequences for ourselves, for others, and for the testimony of the gospel through our lives can be devastating. Yet we live in a so-called ‘Christian culture’ that minimizes sin to the degree that the Grace of God is essentially turned into a permission slip for us to avoid giving our best effort toward personal holiness. It is all right with us if someone really wants to pursue that but he should keep his ‘extreme opinions’ to himself and not bother us with his diligent service to God. We have absorbed the idea that God is perfectly complacent with half-hearted service and our frequent excursions into our temptations.

Can you imagine what a horrific memory these men carried with them for the rest of their lives? Jesus was agonizing there in the Garden, imploring God for help and they were sleeping. How does one wipe that picture from his mind? We know that Paul could never forget the faces of those whom he persecuted, imprisoned and even executed. Have you ever forgotten some of the things that you have done that were wicked? The damage done to a soul by succumbing to temptation is hideous and sometimes devastating.

How often have we lain down to sleep when there was someone whom we knew was struggling with sin, in a bad place, and in profound need of prayer? How many souls lay strewn along the path of the history of our lives whose spiritual condition might have been bettered if we had been more concerned for them? How many are in our lives right now for whom we should be praying more than we ought?

Now, I am not suggesting that we forgo sleep. We cannot. Making ourselves ill for the lack of it will help no one. But an hour of prayer rather than a movie? Taking those moments when we lie in bed awake to lift up our voices to God for a needy soul? Taking advantage of moments of idleness to speak with the Lord that He help us avoid temptation?

One can only speculate on how the story of Gethsemane would have been different if the Savior had come to the disciples and found them deep in prayer, agonizing with Him over the situation, imploring God that they be spared from the temptation to abandon Him. And what if He had looked up from that spot where He had gone alone to pray and found all eleven of them on the ground around Him in such prayer? Our entire view of this situation would be different, would it not?

I have times of speculating now on how the story of my life would be different if I had “watched and prayed” so as not to enter into temptation more faithfully and earnestly and I know that standing there awaiting my turn to give answer at the Great Judgment I shall have an even more profound perspective on all of the “if only’s” of my life.

Let us heed the words of the Savior as He entered into His suffering to secure forgiveness and salvation for us, “Why sleep ye? rise and pray, lest ye enter into temptation.”