

Ash Wednesday Devotional Message 2/13/2002–LOL, Westfield

Title: “Let this cup pass”

Text: Mark 14:32-36--³²Then they came to a place called Gethsemane. He said to his disciples, "Stay here while I pray." ³³He took Peter, James, and John with him and began to feel distressed and anguished. ³⁴He said to them, "My anguish is so great that I feel as if I'm dying. Wait here, and stay awake." ³⁵After walking a little farther, he fell to the ground and prayed that if it were possible he might not have to suffer what was ahead of him. ³⁶He said, "Abba! Father! You can do anything. **Take this cup of suffering away from me.** But let your will be done rather than mine."

Introduction: *Ills.: The Serpent in the cup*

Theme: Praying for deliverance from our woes of life and praying for God's will are not mutually exclusive; yet, there is a grace behind learning how to pray "Thy will be done" and then let go and let God.

What, when, and how should we pray about our problems?

- Always!
 1. Jesus did not see prayer for deliverance as a last resort but as a first response
 2. *"For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord."* Romans 8:38-39
- With Christian friends
 1. Jesus, in his hour of agony, looked to the disciples—believing brothers around him for God's support and strength
 2. Some of God's answers of mercy are all around us—if we will only look and use them
- When we are at our wits end
 1. Often when we are helpless and hopeless, we are ready for God to deliver
 - a. Jesus, in his humanity, facing a mountainous challenge bigger than his ability (die for world's sins/paying hell)
 - b. *"At the right time, while we were still helpless, Christ died for ungodly people."* Romans 5:6
 2. We often have run from God; yet he recalls us to repentant faith—we often have tried & failed; yet God is willing, in his mercy, to scoop us up and rescue us—that is what **grace in Jesus Christ is all about**

Can you be sure the God heard and will answer?

- Yes, in Jesus
 1. When Jesus prayed to the one who could save him from death, he did not get that salvation; he got instead the salvation of the world.
 2. When we suffer, we see God's hand and promise still at work in the midst of it for Jesus sake
 3. **Ills.: Handling the horizontal pressure of life**
 4. *"For no matter how many promises God has made, they are "Yes" in Christ. And so through him the "Amen" is spoken by us to the glory of God."* 2 Cor. 1:20
- Even before you pray
 1. *"Before they call I will answer; while they are still speaking I will hear."* Isaiah 65:24
- So that you will see and trust in him and honor him even more
 1. *"Call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you will honor me."* Psalm 50:15

Seeing the Serpent in the Cup

I've not seen this myself, but in the Topkapi Museum in Istanbul, they have a very precious goblet. In the center of the inside of that goblet is carved, in gold, a serpent. It has ruby eyes and diamond fangs; its mouth is open and ready to strike. When the goblet is filled with wine, the ruby-red liquid covers the snake. You cannot see it, but as you drink the wine, suddenly the presence of the serpent with all of its menacing appearance is revealed. Now Jesus, when he came to live life with us, drank the cup of life to the full. But here in Calvary he is at the depths of that cup. And suddenly the serpent, which had been lingering in all of it, through all of it, was revealed in all of its menacing nature. The intensity of evil--and Jesus saw it.

Handling the Horizontal Pressure of Life

In a driver's ed class the following scenario was created: "You're stopped at a stop sign. You look in your rearview mirror and see a car careening toward you that you realize is going to rear-end you. What should you do?" Almost everybody in the class said you should keep your feet off the brake, so that when that car hits you, you would go forward, absorbing some of the shock. That was the wrong answer. We were told: Put your brake on as tight as you can and brace yourself for that collision. If your car is rigid and braced—if it's on its foundation, in other words—then when that horizontal pressure hits, there will be less damage to your car and to the occupants. If your car is not braked, you get the whiplash effect. I thought to myself, What our Lord has said is that when our lives are anchored into the rock—when we have found his faithfulness and his love, and we have a strong vertical foundation for our life—then we're better able to handle the horizontal pressures of life.