

Text: Mt 26.36-46

I realize that today is our communion service. Normally I write a sermon more directly related to redemption, but today I want to work on the theme of prayer.

Why You Should Always Pray

I was reading in the Gospels recently about the crucifixion and the passages related to that. I noticed something that I hadn't thought much of before as Jesus and the disciples were in the Garden praying.

Well, at least Jesus was praying!

We will start with Mt 26.36-46, but there are several other passages we need to bring into the message.

I. Why does Jesus want the disciples to pray?

Read Mt 26.36-46

- A. The major emphasis of the passage is Jesus and what he wrestles with in the Garden, preparing for arrest and crucifixion
- B. The minor note is in vv. 40-41

Mt 26.40-41 And He came to the disciples and found them sleeping, and said to Peter, "So, you *men* could not keep watch with Me for one hour?"⁴¹ "Keep watching and praying that you may not enter into temptation; the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak."

1. Jesus is also concerned for his disciples
2. Notice that he tells them to pray "that you may not enter into temptation"
3. What temptation?
 - a. Is it like the Lord's prayer? "Lead us not into temptation"
 - b. Is it the temptation to fall asleep while Jesus is praying?

C. Compare the other Gospels

1. Luke condenses the action, but asks the question

Lk 22.45-47 When He rose from prayer, He came to the disciples and found them sleeping from sorrow, ⁴⁶ and said to them, “Why are you sleeping? Get up and pray that you may not enter into temptation.” ⁴⁷ ¶ While He was still speaking, behold, a crowd *came*, and the one called Judas, one of the twelve, was preceding them; and he approached Jesus to kiss Him.

2. Mark parallels Matthew closely

Mk 14.37-43 And He came and found them sleeping, and said to Peter, “Simon, are you asleep? Could you not keep watch for one hour? ³⁸ “Keep watching and praying that you may not come into temptation; the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.” ³⁹ Again He went away and prayed, saying the same words. ⁴⁰ And again He came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were very heavy; and they did not know what to answer Him. ⁴¹ And He came the third time, and said to them, “Are you still sleeping and resting? It is enough; the hour has come; behold, the Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of sinners. ⁴² “Get up, let us be going; behold, the one who betrays Me is at hand!” ⁴³ ¶ Immediately while He was still speaking, Judas, one of the twelve, came up accompanied by a crowd with swords and clubs, *who were* from the chief priests and the scribes and the elders.

II. Consider a prophecy Jesus gave earlier that very evening

Mt 26.31-35 Then Jesus said to them, “You will all fall away because of Me this night, for it is written, ‘I WILL STRIKE DOWN THE SHEPHERD, AND THE SHEEP OF THE FLOCK SHALL BE SCATTERED.’” ³² “But after I have been raised, I will go ahead of you to Galilee.” ³³ But Peter said to Him, “*Even* though all may fall away because of You, I will never fall away.” ³⁴ Jesus said to him, “Truly I say to you that this *very* night, before a rooster crows, you will deny Me three times.” ³⁵ Peter said to Him, “Even if I have to die with You, I will not deny You.” All the disciples said the same thing too.

A. The temptations that were to come on them

1. The temptation to scatter, and fall away
2. The temptation (for Peter at least) to deny him

B. The word “fall away” is “be scandalized”

1. Lit meaning: A “scandalon” is the trigger of trap
2. The verb means in the literal sense, “trapped, caught in the trap”
3. When Peter swore that he wouldn’t let Jesus die, the Lord rebuked him as a “stumbling-block” — a “skandalon” — to him (the trigger of a trap)
4. Here, Jesus says, in effect, “I am the trigger of the trap for you — you will fall into a trap (fall away) because of me”
5. Peter, in his vehemence, is warned further: “you will deny me”

Final note: They all swear they will not be trapped for his sake, they are ready to die with him.

C. Recall Jesus to them in the Garden

Mt 26.40-41 And He came to the disciples and found them sleeping, and said to Peter, “So, you *men* could not keep watch with Me for one hour? ⁴¹ “Keep watching and praying that you may not enter into temptation; the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.”

1. Notice that Matthew directs this to Peter, but the pronouns are plural, so it is for all of them
2. Pray that you may not enter into temptation – he is urging them to pray for themselves, not for him

Question: why should they pray against something he already predicted would happen?

- You will all fall away because of me
- Peter, you will deny me three times

III. What happened after they prayed?

(Quoting Mark for brevity)

Mk 14.43-50 ¶ Immediately while He was still speaking, Judas, one of the twelve, came up accompanied by a crowd with swords and clubs, *who were* from the chief priests and the scribes and the elders.⁴⁴ Now he who was betraying Him had given them a signal, saying, “Whomever I kiss, He is the one; seize Him and lead Him away under guard.”⁴⁵ After coming, Judas immediately went to Him, saying, “Rabbi!” and kissed Him.⁴⁶ They laid hands on Him and seized Him.⁴⁷ But one of those who stood by drew his sword, and struck the slave of the high priest and cut off his ear.⁴⁸ And Jesus said to them, “Have you come out with swords and clubs to arrest Me, as *you would* against a robber?⁴⁹ “Every day I was with you in the temple teaching, and you did not seize Me; but *this has taken place* to fulfill the Scriptures.”⁵⁰ And they all left Him and fled.

Mk 14.66-72 ¶ As Peter was below in the courtyard, one of the servant-girls of the high priest came,⁶⁷ and seeing Peter warming himself, she looked at him and said, “You also were with Jesus the Nazarene.”⁶⁸ But he denied *it*, saying, “I neither know nor understand what you are talking about.” And he went out onto the porch, and a rooster crowed.⁶⁹ The servant-girl saw him, and began once more to say to the bystanders, “This is *one* of them!”⁷⁰ But again he denied it. And after a little while the bystanders were again saying to Peter, “Surely you are *one* of them, for you are a Galilean too.”⁷¹ But he began to curse and swear, “I do not know this man you are talking about!”⁷² Immediately a rooster crowed a second time. And Peter remembered how Jesus had made the remark to him, “Before a rooster crows twice, you will deny Me three times.” And he began to weep.

A. What happened?

1. They scattered
2. Peter denied him

Just as Jesus said would happen.

Why, then, did Jesus urge them to pray?

B. What didn't happen?

1. None of them (but Judas) abandoned him completely

Two lesser disciples (not of the twelve) attempted to leave, but Jesus brought them back: Luke 24

2. Peter didn't abandon him (though he denied him)

C. Jesus restored them all: including Peter

Jn 21.15-17 ¶ So when they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, *son* of John, do you love Me more than these?" He said to Him, "Yes, Lord; You know that I love You." He said to him, "Tend My lambs." ¹⁶ He said to him again a second time, "Simon, *son* of John, do you love Me?" He said to Him, "Yes, Lord; You know that I love You." He said to him, "Shepherd My sheep." ¹⁷ He said to him the third time, "Simon, *son* of John, do you love Me?" Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, "Do you love Me?" And he said to Him, "Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You." Jesus said to him, "Tend My sheep.

Jn 21.18-19 "Truly, truly, I say to you, when you were younger, you used to gird yourself and walk wherever you wished; but when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands and someone else will gird you, and bring you where you do not wish to *go*." ¹⁹ Now this He said, signifying by what kind of death he would glorify God. And when He had spoken this, He said to him, "Follow Me!"

1. Peter never wavered after that
2. Peter followed Jesus until they took him and bound him to a cross, too
3. Then Peter followed Jesus into heaven

Conclusion:*Why Should You Always Pray?*

Because even when you know something of what God plans for you, you don't know everything.

Because your soul needs to draw near to God so he can draw near to you.

Because there is a dynamic between you and God that affects the outcome (somehow) even of known events.