

## 1 Sermon, March 18, 2012

Texts: Psalm 23, Mark 14:32-40

Title: "A Journey to Hope – Refueling"

### 1. Jesus was tempted – he wrestled with God

You can feel the tension.

Jesus – the human Jesus – doesn't want to die, doesn't want to suffer.

Christ – the divine Christ – wants to do God's will.

And so Jesus has an inner argument with himself. Not just an intellectual argument or even a heated debate – no, Jesus threw himself on the ground to pray. It was like he was physically wrestling with himself. Reading the story, you can almost smell the tension.

This moment in the garden of Gethsemane helps make Jesus real to us. At other moments in the gospels, we might imagine Jesus as a calm, wise figure, dispensing wisdom. Not here.

Here we see Jesus in all his humanness. We see his temptation and grief, and we know that he's been through everything we've been through – and more.

Jesus had been on a long journey; he'd come so far. He had taught and healed so many, he had made God's kingdom real, he had given people new hope.

Yet there was this one step to go, which was equal to all he had yet done. This one step – the suffering and death on the cross – that was harder than all the rest.

### 2. If Jesus can get tempted and discouraged, so can we.

The moment in the Garden of Gethsemane is a moment we've all faced to some extent. A moment of a big decision. A moment of friends who are with us, but can't understand all of what we're going through.

You can tell that, there in the garden of Gethsemane, Jesus was stressed & weary. His disciples couldn't keep their eyes open, and Jesus must have been equally weary. Jesus had been leading them, and leaders get drained by the demands of leading.

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When we get tired and drained on the journey, we are most susceptible to temptation. Wouldn't it be nice to just take a vacation, or escape into some other place?

You can see why some feel they can't escape the stress, so they turn to the temporary relief of drugs, either legal or illegal. So many turn to alcohol just to dull the pain of the demands and the loneliness. Some turn to pornography as a sort of painkiller. Some become workaholics, and dull their perceptions of the world around them by a constant flow of activity. Some seek out risky behavior, strictly for the excitement it offers as a temporary distraction from the stress and loneliness.

These momentary pleasures can bring long-term pain – not just for the one seeking to escape, but for others, too.

When we seek to escape the stress, we can easily get off the path of following Jesus. How can we stay true to the path even when we are tired, distracted or discouraged?

Jesus was tempted to give it up, to throw in the towel.

But he instead turned to prayer. It was a very honest prayer, acknowledging his personal struggle and still remembering big picture. Jesus prayed: "Abba, Father, for you all things are possible; remove this cup from me; yet, not what I want, but what you want."

The word "abba" is best translated as Daddy, or Papa. Jesus didn't just pray a formal prayer, but prayed with words of trust. Jesus prayed like a child who trusts his father to provide what is necessary,

Jesus prayed talking about the cup he was to drink. The cup was a cup of suffering. Isaiah says:

"Rouse yourself, rouse yourself! Stand up, O Jerusalem, you who have drunk at the hand of the LORD the cup of his wrath, who have drunk to the dregs the bowl of staggering." Isaiah 51:17, NRSV.

"Therefore hear this, you who are wounded, who are drunk, but not with wine: Thus says your Sovereign, the LORD, your God who pleads the cause of his people: See, I have taken from your hand the cup of staggering; you shall drink no more from the bowl of my wrath. And I will put it into the hand of your tormentors, ~~who have said to you, "Bow down, that we may walk on you"; and you have made your back like the ground and like the street for them to walk on.~~" Isaiah 51:21-23, NRSV.

So Jesus' very honest prayer speaks of suffering, yet he yields himself to God's will. "Not my will, but yours be done."

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#### 3. What did Jesus do to help himself in a time of temptation?

That prayer sustained Jesus. Or I should say that time of prayer sustained Jesus - because it was not in the words themselves, but in giving himself over to God in prayer.

It was a prayer of surrender to the will of God. And there can be no greater kind of prayer. When we are able to say, "Lord, I'm not in control - you take over," we are very close to what Jesus himself prayed.

Think about it. When you are severely tempted, it would be easy to ask God to bless your plans. But that still has you pretending to be in the driver's seat. A much more honest prayer is to admit that you're not in charge, and you need God to be.

Jesse Felland put me onto a quote from the movie Days of Thunder, a car racing movie with Tom Cruise. In it, a Female Doctor asks Tom Cruise's character: "Tell me what you love so much about racing."

He answers, "Speed. To be able to control it. To know that I can control something that's out of control."

The doctor replies: "Control is an illusion, you infantile egomaniac. Nobody knows what's gonna happen next: not on a freeway, not in an airplane, not inside our own bodies and certainly not on a racetrack with 40 other infantile egomaniacs."

That's what real prayer is about, admitting that control is an illusion, and we need God to lead us in the path to take.

Yes, we are not in control, but we can find our way to prayer. We can find our way to a deep well we can draw from at any time. At that well there is living water. At that well is Christ himself, serving us living water.

When we go there, and seek the refreshment that Christ can give, the One who knows us from the inside out and can help us in a way no other can.

That's also what the 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm is about -- refreshment.

#### 4 Sermon, March 18, 2012

"The LORD, my shepherd, makes me lie down in green pastures; he leads me beside still waters; he restores my soul.

Psalm 23 is about God's leading, not our own initiative. God refreshes if we allow God to lead us.

God leads us in right paths for his name's sake.

Even in the darkest valley, we can walk without fear; because God's sustaining presence and power hold us up and keep us going.

And it's interesting that in the Gospel of Mark, the cup was a cup of suffering. But in Psalm 23, it is transformed into a cup of blessing, overflowing with goodness and mercy.

In your journey of faith, you will certainly encounter weariness and temptation.

May you be blessed with refreshment in your journey, as you turn over the leadership of your life to Christ. Amen.

"They went to a place called Gethsemane; and he said to his disciples, "Sit here while I pray." He took with him Peter and James and John, and began to be distressed and agitated. And he said to them, "I am deeply grieved, even to death; remain here, and keep awake." And going a little farther, he threw himself on the ground and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him. He said, "Abba, Father, for you all things are possible; remove this cup from me; yet, not what I want, but what you want." He came and found them sleeping; and he said to Peter, "Simon, are you asleep? Could you not keep awake one hour? Keep awake and pray that you may not come into the time of trial; the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." And again he went away and prayed, saying the same words. And once more he came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were very heavy; and they did not know what to say to him." Mark 14:32-40, NRSV.