

Sermon Luke 22 39 53 3rd S in Lent Series C

Sermon: 3rd Sunday in Lent

Text: Luke 22:39-53 (v. 53b) - Gethsemane

Theme: When darkness reigns – PRAY!

Goal: To protect ourselves from temptations in dark hours by praying and trusting the LORD.

Dear Friends,

Introduction: Do you pray before falling asleep? It's a good habit to finish the day talking to our heavenly Father and to commend our lives into His gracious hands. It can be our last night...– How many times have you fallen asleep while praying? Maybe in the midst of the Lord's Prayer? It happens to me very often, especially after a very busy and tiring day. -

The disciples were "exhausted from sorrow", and they were not able to stay awake praying to give support to Jesus in His anguish and to protect themselves against temptation, as Jesus warned them twice: "Pray so that you will not fall into temptation."

I – Jesus' anguish

Jesus had celebrated the Holy Communion with His disciples for the very first time that night (Maundy Thursday), sharing in anticipation His body and blood at the Passover Table. He had had a good conversation with them giving them guidance and strength for the future (John 14,15,16); and He offered a long prayer for Himself and on behalf of the disciples and of all who would believe in Him - on our behalf as well! (John 17). They sang a hymn and then they went out into the darkness to the Mount of Olives, where they used to spend the night resting under the trees.

Jesus was aware of what would happen. He had prepared His disciples for this hour, but they were not ready for it. He asked for support in prayer, but the disciples failed. They couldn't imagine

what was to happen in just some minutes. Jesus had prayed for them, and they didn't pray for Jesus. Jesus had even prayed specifically for Peter, when he said: "Simon, Simon, Satan as asked to sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail" (Luke 22:31). But Peter was too tired to pray for Jesus...

Jesus spent these last minutes talking to His Father in heaven in prayer. : "Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me, yet not my will be, but yours ne done!" . He knew that the dark hours of His life had come. *What Jesus dreaded was not death as such, but the burden of His death as the one who was taking the sin of mankind upon Himself* (CSSB Mark 14:36). The cup of bitterness was a symbol of God's wrath upon the sinners. Many kings were murdered drinking a cup of wine mixed with poison. Even the famous philosopher Socrates was condemned to death by drinking a cup of hemlock. So, Jesus referred to His suffering and death as drinking a cup of bitter poison.

His anguish became so extreme that "his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground". Prophet Isaiah (53:4,5) explained why this anguish and suffering, that culminated on His dying on the cross, was necessary: "Surely he took up our enfermities and carried our sorrows. He was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed". This was a heavy burden to Jesus.

II – Jesus betrayed

When Jesus came back to the disciples, He found them sleeping. The other Evangelists report that Jesus went for prayer three times, and always found the disciples sleeping when He came back to them. After the third time, the betrayer came bringing a crowd with him, carrying torches, swords and clubs. And the betrayer was one of the Twelve: Judas Iscariot. Due to the darkness and in

order not to make a mistake, he “had arranged a signal with them: The one I kiss is the man; arrest him” (Mark 14:44). And “he approach Jesus to kiss Him, but Jesus asked him: Judas, are you betraying the Son of Man with a kiss?”

I guess that the fact that one of the Twelve betrayed Jesus hurt Him as much as all the other sufferings. Jesus had chosen Judas to be one of the privileged people to follow Him very close for three years and to learn from Him. The Twelve were destined to be the representatives of Jesus to the entire world, proclaiming His Word and His Kingdom. But one of them loved money more than his Master. - This fact takes us to the Epistle for today, where Paul warns: “So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don’t fall” (1 Corinthians 10:12). Paul is talking about temptations. - Don’t allow, dear friends that monetary matters take you away from Christ or cause problems to your faith and to your fellowship with your brothers and sisters. “Darkness reigns” nowadays in our lives as well; but we have a Light to follow: The resurrected Jesus. Pray earnestly: “And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.”

III – Jesus arrested

Jesus’ enemies could have arrested Jesus several times when he was preaching in the temple. When He accused the Pharisees and Teachers of the Law face to face and called them hypocrites, they could have called the guards of the temple to arrest Him. But it was not God’s time. Now, “this is your hour – when darkness reigns”, said Jesus to His enemies. And He didn’t offer any resistance when He was arrested. Peter tried to defend the Master by using the sword and he “struck the servant of the high priest, cutting off his right ear. But Jesus answered: No more of this! And He touched the man’s ear and healed him.” Amazing!

Being arrested, Jesus showed compassion to one of His enemies and healed him! - The Apostle John tells us that the name of that guy was Malchus (John 18:26). Usually when names of ordinary people are mentioned in a record of the New Testament, this means that the guy was known by the readers and probably became a Christian after Jesus's resurrection. Having received a healing in the last minute, it's no wonder that Malchus converted.

The passivity of Jesus when He was arrested helps to understand that everything was happening according to God's plan. Jesus had said: "No one takes my life from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again. This command I received from my Father" (John 10:18). And the hour had now come. He was in charge of what was happening; not the enemies. And Jesus was taken during the dark hours of that night to the palace of the High Priest, where He was judged in the early hours of the next day by the Sanhedrin and after this He was judged and condemned by Pontius Pilate- for us and for our salvation!

Conclusion: Dark hours of temptations and suffering assault us several times in our lives. Many times we stumble in the darkness and fall. We are weak and we don't pray as we ought to. We are so overloaded with our work, family, health issues, the worries of this life and other stuff that God's matters are many times postponed for *"when I have time"*. Take care! We cannot fight against temptations with our own weapons, as Peter tried with his sword. We need to persevere in prayer and to be strengthened by Jesus' Word and by His body and blood. Don't be desperate in dark hours, but let God guide your life. After the three days when "darkness reigned" in Jesus' life, the Sun of Easter shone brightly over the disciples and over the world! There is hope! There is life! "Pray that you will not fall into temptation." Amen. Pastor Carlos Walter Winterle, Cape Town 28 February 2016