

Tuesday, June 9, 2020
Devotional Thoughts from Pastor Jim Murr...

"And he withdrew from them about a stone's throw, and knelt down and prayed, saying, 'Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but yours, be done.'
And there appeared to him an angel from heaven, strengthening him.
And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly;
and his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground."

Luke 22: 41-44

From the time I was a kid, beginning to learn about Jesus, this passage has been of great comfort to me. You will remember that this took place when Jesus was praying in the Garden of Gethsemene just before he was arrested. He was anticipating going to the cross. He knew this was the reason that he came into the world, but he still wanted to ask his Father if there might still be another way to accomplish the salvation of the world.

I believe this to be the most powerful and amazing prayer recorded in the Bible, as well as the most fervent prayer ever prayed by anyone in the world. Jesus was under so much stress about his upcoming suffering that the strain produced a real condition called "hematidrosis." This is when great emotional stress causes the blood vessels in the forehead to burst, and the blood becomes intermingled with one's sweat.

Jesus knew the cross would be a big deal, and so he prayed that, if possible, your salvation and mine might possibly be accomplished some other way. We know the answer to his prayer. There was no other way. In order for us to be forgiven for our sins, Jesus had to go through with the plan. He had to "drink the cup" that the Father had given him. The Father did, however, provide Jesus with the strength to go through with it. Luke tells us that an angel from heaven appeared to him and strengthened him.

Even though this account is the greatest example of prayer that there is, at least in my opinion, it has never been just meaningful to me as an example of prayer, but rather as an example of what great faith looks like. Great faith recognizes the reality of the "cups" that we are sometimes given to "drink" in life, while at the same time, great faith falls to the ground before our heavenly Father, looking to Him for the ability to go through with it.

I don't know what your "cup" might be. I don't even know if I have yet experienced my biggest "cup" in life. I'm guessing not. But when it comes, for me and for you, I know where we belong, and in what posture we should be: on our knees, in prayer, looking to God for the strength to get us through. This example of Jesus praying in Gethsemene should show us that just because God allows us, and even calls for us, to drink a challenging "cup" in life, it does not mean that He has abandoned us, or that we are being punished. Jesus was abandoned and punished on our behalf. Sometimes a "cup" just needs to be drunk in order for God's big picture to come to fruition.

But whatever the cup may be, we know this for sure: God will be right there to give us the strength we need to get through it.

God's peace!
Pastor Jim