

WILLING

Luke 22:41-53

What would any of us do if there was something we convincingly knew we really ought to do, but this particular thing is just **so** inconvenient and **so** costly that we have a great reluctance to go on with it? No one is going to make us do it; however, we know it really needs to be done and no one else can actually do the job. People face such challenges in their lives from time to time. Sometimes we look at that probable path and we wonder if we really have the ability or the strength to walk down that road.

The real question in a lot of cases is not one of strength but is one of commitment. We know that commitment involves making and sticking to a decision. As it turns out, making decisions and keeping commitments take a lot less strength the further away from the time of the actual experience that we are. This is especially true when there are high costs involved that are necessary to accomplish the purpose or goal.

As we look back on the life of Jesus, we have a clear picture that He came to earth as God Incarnate and lived among His people with the ultimate purpose of providing the way of salvation for a lost world. We realize (with our 20-20 hindsight) that the path involved suffering and death. Jesus knew that these were necessary steps in the process prior to it happening. He had already made many decisions that moved Him closer to the place and the time when all the alternatives except a major miraculous event could change the outcome. The decision to go back to the Jerusalem area when Lazarus had died was one such step. The decision to ride into Jerusalem on the colt of a donkey was another. The decision to chase the moneychangers and vendors out of the Temple area, relating the three parables that were direct confrontations of the religious authorities, and the overt criticism of them in the discourse that we know as the “Seven Woes” were all decision points that moved Him closer to the completion of the purpose of His earthly mission. There were other points where the direction could have been changed such as keeping the identity of the betrayer from the rest of the disciples. He could have made a decision to go somewhere else other than the Mount of Olives after the Passover meal. All of these decisions could have changed the outcome and saved Him from the pain and suffering that He knew would result from what He came to do.

The Passover meal had ended, Judas had left to carry out the betrayal, and Jesus had shared with His disciples critical teaching about the coming of the Holy Spirit and the ministry of the Spirit in the life of the believers. Jesus then prayed a prayer for Himself and the disciples and for the church. Following this, Jesus and the eleven disciples made their way toward the Garden of Gethsemane.

In Prayer – 22:41-46

⁴¹ And He withdrew from them about a stone’s throw, and He knelt down and began to pray, ⁴² saying, “Father, if You are willing, remove this cup from Me; yet not My will, but Yours be done.” ⁴³ Now an angel from heaven appeared to Him, strengthening Him. ⁴⁴ And being in agony He was praying very fervently; and His sweat became like drops of blood, falling down upon the ground. ⁴⁵ 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.” Luke 22:41–46 (NASB95)

Jesus left eight of the disciples with instructions to wait and took Peter, James and John further into the garden area with Him. These three had witnessed the Transfiguration and they had also been with Jesus when the daughter of Jarius was brought back to life. We can speculate that these three were more spiritually sensitive and perhaps had shown a greater understanding of what Jesus had been teaching them for the past three and a half years.

Jesus gave His disciples some good advice that night in the garden: “Pray that you enter not into temptation.” There were going to be many challenges that night and they would be tested regarding how they would respond. The first temptation was to give in to their desire for physical comfort. They had just had a meal and it was getting late in evening, it was dark, and they were exhausted. The predictable happened: they fell asleep.

At that same time, Jesus was being tempted. That which was ahead of Him in the immediate future would involve intense and immense physical pain. We’ve heard the expression that Jesus was fully God and fully man. He was experiencing the conflict of spirit versus flesh in what He knew was going to happen. In addition to the physical suffering, He realized the great emotional pain and the agony of spirit He would undergo as He would take on the burden of the sins of humanity.

Listen to His plea: “If You will Father, let Us find another way for salvation.” This plea was in no way related to any desire to change “what” was to be accomplished – a way of salvation for humanity in order to restore them to the purpose for which mankind was created. The request was to reexamine the possibilities of “how” that purpose could be accomplished. People, even today, are saying there are other ways of salvation. What was happening there in the garden of Gethsemane is confirmation that even God Himself could not come up with an alternative way. Without the shedding of blood, there is no remission of sin. The blood of bulls and rams could not permanently cleanse us from our sin and our sins. It had to be done over and over. However, what Jesus did was “once and for all.” There was NO other way.

There are many situations we face in life where we would like another way to accomplish what we know must be done, and we sometimes settle for less than the best. How did Jesus handle the situation He was in? “Nevertheless, not My will, but Thine be done.” The bottom line for our ultimate benefit is to follow what we know to be God’s will for our lives.

It was not that Jesus didn’t know what God’s will was. At issue was an alternative to accomplish that will. So many times we hear people pray and say, “Lord, do this or do that, if it be Your will.” Sometimes this is somewhat of a cop out. If possible, we need to find out what God’s will is, then pray according to that will. It may cause us much grief to give up our own plans to be in touch with God’s plan for our lives. However, we can never be all that we should be if we do not let go of our plans and follow what God has for us.

Notice that when Jesus came to accept God’s way, God’s will, God’s method; he then still agonized over what He knew was going to happen. It was an intensely stressful time and Luke told us that He sweated profusely because of the intensity of the situation.

Luke was the only one of the Gospel writers that mentioned the appearance of a divine messenger that came to strengthen Jesus. This teaches us that the humanity of Jesus needed the communication of divine help just as we do. In our situations, we probably will not be seeing a winged spiritual entity that brings us a spoken message but we are more likely to find a word spoken by another person, an incident that happens or perhaps even the timely recall of a passage of Scriptures that strengthens us in difficult or even in uncertain situations.

We instinctively withdraw or pull back from suffering and pain and we should not be surprised to see that in His humanity the reluctance would be there for Him. Some may make an argument that since He was God that it was different for Jesus. That fact did not lessen the physical and emotion pain that He experienced. Alexander MacLaren has noted that for Jesus to be our substitute that He would have to have “the same humanity that we have and would have suffered as any human would have. Without the suffering there would have been no atonement.” The reluctance shows His humanity and the resolute commitment (even in full knowledge of what would happen) was evidence of His divinity. The outcome of His prayer was an

affirmation of the alignment of Jesus's will to the will of His Father. Having reached such a point of commitment and reaffirmation of doing nothing from personal motivation but doing only the will of the Father, He went to check on the three disciples.

When He came back to where His disciples were, He found them asleep. We may think that is a terrible thing for them to do. What are His disciples doing today? Are we sleeping while Jesus is still sweating with agony over a lost world? If we were spending more time in prayer for the lost, then we would have less time to be tempted to do the wrong thing.

In Betrayal – 22:47-50

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. ⁴⁸ But Jesus said to him, "Judas, are you betraying the Son of Man with a kiss?" ⁴⁹ When those who were around Him saw what was going to happen, they said, "Lord, shall we strike with the sword?" ⁵⁰ And one of them struck the slave of the high priest and cut off his right ear. Luke 22:47-50 (NASB95)

This was it! There was no turning back now. The battle for men's souls was underway and the powers of death and darkness were going to be defeated by the plan God had laid out before the foundation of the world.

Judas led the group of temple authorities right up to where Jesus was and identified Him with a kiss. Whether Judas' action in greeting Jesus with a kiss was anything other than a way to identify Jesus to the temple guards or if it was a natural expression of one person encountering a close acquaintance, we may never know. It is possible that Judas had rationalized what he was doing and thought that he was helping implement his idea of the "kingdom of God" by provoking Jesus into calling the angels of heaven to come to His rescue and overthrow the Romans. It is easier for us to think that Judas hated Jesus, but that was probably not the case. He was likely ambivalent in his emotional feelings and simply viewed Jesus as many people do today – He was a means to an end. The problem was that the outcome that Judas wanted to accomplish was not aligned with God's will. It would have been to Judas' advantage if he had prayed to God before he acted to betray Jesus to the Jewish authorities.

We see a major difference in the demeanor of Jesus at that point and His situation several minutes earlier. Before, He was in severe stress (spiritual, emotional, and physical) and at the point of interacting with the crowd, Jesus was calm, at peace within Himself, and displayed a sense of dignity and control. We may find that we display a wide range of our demeanor in times of great stress. This is all part of our humanity. When we are sheltered from the world or find ourselves in the presence of those who really care about us, then the deep innermost feelings find expression. However, when there is a need for calmness and serenity in the midst of a crisis, then there comes an inner strength that allows us to rise above the emotions that can engulf us. That inner strength begins with alignment of our wills with what we understand to be the good and perfect will of God.

The disciples quickly figured out what was happening and then they encountered the second major temptation for themselves that night. The previous temptation involved their physical comfort and this temptation was related to whether they would follow the way of the world or the way of the Kingdom of God. Unless we are challenged with difficulty, then we have little problem following God's way. The tests come in the challenges we face. The way of the world is "draw your sword when challenged." That is exactly what one of them (we are told by John that Peter cut off the ear of the servant) did.

In Action – 22:51-53

⁵¹ But Jesus answered and said, "Stop! No more of this." And He touched his ear and healed him. ⁵² Then Jesus said

to the chief priests and officers of the temple and elders who had come against Him, “Have you come out with swords and clubs as you would against a robber?”⁵³ “While I was with you daily in the temple, you did not lay hands on Me; but this hour and the power of darkness are yours.” Luke 22:51–53 (NASB95)

Jesus’s response was quick and it is advice that we all need to hear. He said “No more of this!” Those words need to be engraved on our minds: When it comes to the way of the world, no more of this. We should take note of how readily and easily the disciples slipped back into the conditioned response of doing what comes naturally. This is why the admonition of Paul in Romans 12 (be transformed by the renewing of your minds) is still so important for us. All of us have been imprinted with the way of the world and our first response (even after we have been saved) may be exactly what Peter did to the servant.

Notice how Jesus continued to challenge the crowd’s position and their actions. He did not back away from the confrontation. He did not put up a battle against them and had been “available” to be arrested during that week. He was not a thief or a dangerous criminal, yet, they approached Him as such. They needed the power of “darkness” to be able to do their deed. We could argue that Jesus’ question was an accusation of cowardice of the chief priests, officers, and elders.

There is significance in Jesus words regarding this being “their hour.” Throughout His earthly ministry, Jesus would occasionally say that “this is not My hour” regarding certain actions He would be asked to take. We can appreciate that “timing” is certainly important in doing things. In God’s overall Sovereignty certain things are destined to happen and times of when these are to happen may also be fixed. The chief priest, rulers and elders were being given a window of unhindered opportunity to do what they willed to do. They, in effect, could exercise their free wills. Not only could they exercise their wills, they would be enabled in their efforts by the powers of darkness. (That is frightening!) Nowhere in any of the accounts was there any hint that these people ever prayed to God to seek His council as to what they should do about or with Jesus. Since they did not seek to know God’s will, they were at the mercy of the powers of darkness. We could argue that the guilt of what they were about to do was shared by “the Jewish leaders” and the “powers of darkness.”

A lesson that all humanity should learn from this is that even when we firmly believe that we are totally free, and we are carrying out our own purposes that are contrary to God’s will, we are simply the slaves of impulses that come straight from the world, the flesh and the devil. A sobering thought for all of us is to think about “When is it ever ‘our hour’?” The answer might be that it is “our hour” every time we have a decision to make.

It is amazing that these people were so close to the “Light of the World,” yet they chose darkness rather than light. What about us? As Christians we have the “Light of the World” residing in us – that’s about as close as it gets.

It is our responsibility to show the Light to the world. You see, many others would choose the light if they could just “see the light.” They need a good real-life example. You and I can be that example. We must let our light so shine that others may see our good works and glorify our Father in Heaven.