

"O Lord God, Thy Will Be Done" -- Matthew 26:36-46

Our Redeemer Lutheran Church -- April 1, 1998

Memorial Service for Jim Geiser

Pastor Michael L. McCoy

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Dear family members of Jim, friends, neighbors, members of the family of God here at Our Redeemer, and especially you, Sharon,

On this day when we gather here, we do so with mixed emotions ... sadness at the death of Jim, joy at the life Jim now has. The temporary separation is one that causes hearts to hurt. The promised reunion in heaven is one that causes hearts to be glad. The recent weeks passed have been difficult in one way. The weeks ahead will be difficult in another way. In the midst of all of this, we have the clear Word of hope that God gives us in His Son. Focusing the eyes of our souls on the Good News of Jesus gives meaning for the past, peace for the present, and assurance for the future.

We are in the season of Lent; a time when the church focuses on and follows the Lord Jesus during the days and nights when He was journeying to the cross where He would die for the sins of all people -- Jim's sins, my sins and your sins. We follow Him; watching Him carry His cross through the streets of Jerusalem; beholding Him crowned with thorns and beaten with a whip; seeing Him spit upon and mocked; viewing the Lord of Life suffering the wrath of God against all sin and bearing the weight of all that would keep people from being with Him in Paradise;.

One of the Lenten hymns declares the seriousness of sin and the Savior's work quite explicitly ...

Ye who think of sin but lightly, Nor suppose the evil great,

Here may view its nature rightly, Here its guilt may estimate.

Mark the Sacrifice appointed, See Who bears the awful load;

'Tis the Word, the Lord's Anointed, Son of Man and Son of God.

Therefore, on this day where we celebrate Jim's life and the new life that he has with the Lord, the sermon text is Matthew 26:36-44. Please listen to that text under the theme ...

... O Lord God, Thy Will Be Done!

Then Jesus went with them to a place called Gethsemane, and He said to His disciples, "Sit here, while I go yonder and pray." And taking with Him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, He began to be sorrowful and troubled. Then He said to them, "My soul is very sorrowful, even to death; remain

here, and watch with Me." And going a little farther He fell on His face and prayed, "My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt." And He came to the disciples and found them sleeping; and He said to Peter, "So, could you not watch with me one hour? Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation; the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." Again, for the second time, He went away and prayed, "My Father, if this cannot pass unless I drink it, Thy will be done." And again He came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were heavy. So, leaving them again, He went away and prayed for the third time, saying the same words. Then He came to the disciples and said to them, "Are you still sleeping and taking your rest? Behold, the hour is at hand, and the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise, let us be going; see, My betrayer is at hand."

Thus far the Word of the LORD our God.

Being with, helping and encouraging a loved one who is hurting, suffering and dying is both a difficult thing and a blessed privilege. To varying degrees, God calls Christians to do just that. Those closest to the dying one are expected to stand by because dying is not an easy thing to endure. While the dying one knows where he is going and what the end result will be, it is that process of getting there that is so difficult as to make one sorrowful and troubled. And so the Dying One says with the deepest feeling, *My soul is very sorrowful, even to death; remain here, and watch with Me.*

And so James, along with Peter and John, are asked to remain and watch with Jesus as He faces His own death ... a death that involves the complete pangs of hell, the cruel crucifixion by man, the vicious assaults of the evil one, and the complete forsakenness of God. Dear people, no one has ever faced that death. Jesus, the Son of God, did and *going a little farther He fell on His face and prayed, "My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt."*

Jesus looked at that death and did not desire it. "Dear Father, if there is any other way for the people of this world to be redeemed, let it be that way. Let this cup pass from Me. But if there is no other way for people to have their sins paid for and their salvation secured than by My going to the cross, then let Your will be done."

Why? Why in the world would Jesus pray, "Thy will be done" ? One of the reasons was to give a man hope when he had to have emergency surgery for appendicitis -- that whether he survived the operation or died while on the operating table, his sins were forgiven, salvation was his gift, and eternal life was his. O Lord God, Thy will be done!

Thus, the church sings the Lenten hymn stanza ...

Go to dark Gethsemane, Ye that feel the Tempter's pow'r;

Your Redeemer's conflicts see, Watch with Him one bitter hour;

Turn not from His griefs away, Learn of Jesus Christ to pray.

Jesus came to the disciples and found them sleeping; and He said to Peter, "So, could you not watch with me one hour? Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation; the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." In our Lord's greatest hour of need, a time when He wanted those closest to Him to be with Him and watch with Him, they failed Him. They fell asleep.

What would the Incarnate Son of God do to those who fell asleep and would not watch with Him in His most difficult hour ... the time when He faced the impending reality of His own special death? Would He blast those ungrateful people out of existence? Would He tell them to go to hell? Listen to our Redeemer did. *Again, for the second time, He went away and prayed, "My Father, if this cannot pass unless I drink it, Thy will be done."*

Why? Why in the world would Jesus pray, "Thy will be done" ? One of the reasons was to give a man peace when he woke up from appendicitis surgery to discover that he was filled with cancer and that he had to have another surgery -- this time for the removal of a large cancerous tumor -- and that whether he survived the operation or died while on the operating table, his sins were forgiven, salvation was his gift, and eternal life was his. O Lord God, Thy will be done!

What an absolutely loving, caring, gracious, kind, and benevolent God the Lord is. Certainly He is the God Who may be trusted -- the God Whom one may follow and do what He desires. This is most certainly true. So, following His prayer, Jesus again *came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were heavy*. Really one might excuse someone who had fallen asleep once, but what about twice? In an hour when the Lord Jesus was sweating great drops of His precious and holy Blood, they fell asleep for a second time. What would God do this time? The Bible tells us, that Jesus, *leaving them again, ... went away and prayed for the third time, saying the same words*.

Why? Why in the world would Jesus pray those same words, "Thy will be done" ? One of the reasons was to give a man comfort when he woke up from cancer surgery to discover that he would need to go through extensive chemo-therapy treatments -- that whether he survived the chemo-therapy or died while in the process of receiving the treatments, his sins were forgiven, salvation was his gift, and eternal life was his. O Lord God, Thy will be done!

When the Lord returned from His third prayer asking to have the cup of suffering removed from Him if it was God's will, and if not, then God's will be done, *He came to the disciples and said to them, "Are you still sleeping and taking your rest?"* It's almost embarrassing, isn't it? What does Jesus do? He looks at these weak human beings, these people who, contrary to His express and sincere desires, were not able to stay awake for one hour, and He declares His will and purpose -- that He is going to the cross for them. He says, *Behold, the hour is at hand, and the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise, let us be going; see, My betrayer is at hand*.

Why? Why in the world would Jesus continue His journey to the cross for such people? One of the reasons was to give a man assurance last Saturday that enabled him to be at peace with God and to eliminate any terror of dying. Such an assurance enabled that man to enjoy his last day on this side of eternity in calm assurance and spiritual comfort. He could talk with his wife knowing that whether he lived or he died, he belonged to the Lord. Jim's life became, if you will, a living prayer, O Lord God, Thy will be done. Early on Sunday morning, while it was still dark, Jim's prayer was answered.

Now let's go, each one of us, to our personal gardens ... go to that last day you will spend here on this earth. There are many questions you are not able to answer about that day. When will it be? You don't know. It could be today; it could be years from now. Will your death be sudden and unexpected, or will it a gradual decline from a disease like cancer? You don't know. Will your last day be in a hospital bed, at your house, at work, or in the car on your way home from a memorial service? Again, you don't know.

Will the Lord be with you when you face death, when you are troubled and you pray, "O dear Jesus, *my soul is very sorrowful, even to death; remain here, and watch with me.* Jesus had His hour of need and His own closest followers slept while He suffered in the Garden of Gethsemane. When your day comes, and it most certainly will arrive, will He sleep while you are in your greatest hour of need?

No, for just as in the Garden of Gethsemane, He can not deny Who He is and what He has promised. The Lord has said, *I will never leave you nor forsake you (Hebrews 13:5). Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest (Matthew 11:28).*

Here, dear people, is the God you may trust. When He was in the Garden, He was suffering for you. When He was on the cross, He was dying for you. When He rose again from the dead, He was victorious for you. Behold, *He is with you always even to the end of the age (Matthew 28:20).*

Since then we have a great High Priest Who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we have not a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but One Who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need (Hebrews 4:14-16).

Truly you and I are able to pray confidently, O Lord God, Thy Will Be Done! Amen.