NOT MY WILL BUT YOURS BE DONE

Luke 22:39-62

Key Verse: 42

“Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done”

Thank and praise God for the new covenant which was made at the last supper. It was through the body and blood of Christ. The last supper was the final Passover with the old covenant gone and the beginning of the Lord’s communion in the new covenant. That was a tremendous change from the covenant of law and condemnation to the covenant of grace and forgiveness leading to salvation. May we know the blessing, joy, freedom, devotion and hope of the people of the new covenant. At the last supper Jesus was so gracious and victorious amid troublesome things. Yet, in today’s passage Jesus had to engage in prayer battle to overcome himself and obey the will of God. Through this prayer he was ready to be arrested in the midst of the reign of darkness. And even such a time the Lord Jesus restores Peter who denies his master three times, bearing all the pains.

Verse 39 says, “Jesus went out as usual to the Mount of Olives, and his disciples followed him.” Jesus went out of the upper room where he had the last Passover meal with his disciples having much and rich conversation. He was heading to the Mount of Olives, particularly to the garden of Gethsemane to engage in the greatest prayer with the greatest anguish in his life. Yet, Luke wrote “as usual.” Here we see importance of the usual prayer. Usual prayer leads to emergent and special prayer. Without prayer at usual times, it is hard to pray at time of emergency in great agony. Luke 21:37 says, “Each day Jesus was teaching at the temple, and each evening he went out to spend the night on the hill called the Mount of Olives.”

Luke portrays praying Jesus more than other gospel writers. Jesus prayed at the time of baptism: “When all the people were being baptized, Jesus was baptized too. And as he was praying, heaven was opened and the Holy Spirit descended to him in bodily form like a dove…” (Lk 3:21-22). After healing many Jesus prayed and got a direction: “At day break Jesus went out to a solitary place. The people were looking for him… But he said, ‘I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to other towns also, because that is why I was sent” (Lk 4:42-43). Before asking his disciples, “Who do the crowds say I am” and “But what about?” Jesus prayed: “Once when Jesus was praying in private and his disciples were with him…” (Lk 9:18-20). Jesus prayed on a mountain before being transfigured: “…Jesus…took Peter, John and James with him and went up onto a mountain to pray. As he was praying, the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became as bright as a flash of lightning.” (Lk 9:28-29). And as we studied, Jesus prayed for Simon while Satan’s work was rampant: “Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers” (Lk 22:31-32). And Jesus prayed even on the cross, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing” (Lk 23:34) and “Father, into your hands I commit my spirit” (Lk 23:46).

In Luke’s gospel Jesus also well teaches about prayer. Jesus wants us to pray for the Holy Spirit:

“If you then, though you are evil, know who to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!” (Lk 11:13). Jesus wants us to pray persistently not giving up: “Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up…And will not God bring about justice for his chosen ones, who cry out to him day and night? Will he keep putting them off? I tell you, he will see that they get justice, and quickly. However, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?” (Lk 18:1-8). He wants us to pray humbly like a tax collector, “God, have mercy on me, a sinner”, while a Pharisee prayed about himself, “God, I thank you that I am not like other men…” (18:11-13)

God wants us to form a prayer habit until it comes as usual. We also remember Daniel’s usual prayer: “Now when Daniel learned that the decree had been published, he went home to his upstairs room where the windows opened toward Jerusalem. Three times a day he got down on his knees and prayed, giving thanks to his God, just as he had done before” (Da. 6:10). In such usual prayers he could pray for the liberation of his people from Babylonian captivity finding the words of God’s prophecy in Jeremiah that the desolation of Jerusalem would last seventy years” (Da. 9:2-3). Then God heard his prayer and revealed through an vision the future of his people to the end the age: “seventy ‘sevens’ are decreed for your people and your holy city to finish transgression, to put an end to sin, to atone for wickedness, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vison and prophecy and to anoint the most holy” (Da. 9:24). May we form the habit of prayer so that we can also engage in an emergency prayer.

Verse 40 says, “On reaching the place, he said to them, ‘Pray that you will not fall into temptation.’” We also remember Luke’s version of the Lord’s prayer which is shorter than Matthew’s. It ends with these words, “…And lead us not into temptation” (Lk 11:4). The way to overcome the devil’s temptation is by prayer. Before engaging in prayer by himself, he told his disciples to pray for them selves to overcome the temptation of the devil. In the previous lesson Jesus would pray for them, particularly for Simon Peter, for his restoration, yet now he told them that they had to pray for themselves. It is about God’s sovereignty and human responsibility.

Now let’s see Jesus’ prayer: “He withdrew about a stone’s throw beyond them, knelt down and prayed. ‘Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me, yet not my will, but yours be done.’” Jesus made a personal space to God even withdrawing from his disciples. His kneeling down shows his submission to God. His prayer is concise and very clear: “Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me, yet not my will, but yours be done.” The cup is the cup of God’s wrath. He would be the object of God’s wrath, because he would be a sin offering for the sin of mankind, even sin itself. God’s holy and righteous anger would be poured out on him, the innocent Son of God. We struggle to grow in God’s holiness against our sinful nature of unholiness. But Jesus would be sin itself to bear all the punishment of God for our sins to bring forgiveness to all sinners. How can we imagine the agony and anguish of Jesus as the holy Son of God to be the very object of the Father’s wrath and hatred on top of the unbearable pain of crucifixion! So he prayed, “Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me.” However, the bottom line of his prayer was, “Yet not my will, but yours be done.” It was to bring the utmost blessing of the new covenant.

His obedience to God and his will was so precious. According to Philippians 2, when Jesus obeyed God unto death, even death on a cross, God exalted to the highest place. And Hebrews 5:8-9 says, “Although he were a son, he learned obedience from what he suffered and, once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him.”

The bottom line of Christian life is whether we obey God’s will against our own will. This can be the true victory in our Christian life. 1 John 2:17 says, “The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever.” God wants us to have the true and final victory in life through the obedience to the will of God. Abraham’s life was beautiful and truly great when he obeyed God’s command of offering his son Isaac as a burning offering and thus proved that he loved God more than his son Isaac, fearing God by not withholding from God his son, his only son (Ge 22:2, 12). According to Romans 4:12, Abraham’s life was the footsteps of the faith in which we are to walk. We have many problems in life: financial problem, health issue, relationship, raising children, etc. Amid all these problems, “not my will, but yours be done” be our prayer in our deep hearts.

In verse 43 it says, “An angel from heaven appeared to him and strengthened him.” We may recognize this spiritual reality of help from heaven in our spiritual warfare. Hebrews 1:14 says, “Are not all angels ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation?” Also, when Jesus confronted the devil at the first temptation, angels attended him (Mk 1:13). And verse 44 says, “And being in anguish, he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground.” We see a vivid picture of the spiritual battle in prayer. Though he was the Son of God, it was not an easy battle at all. It was a blood-shedding battle. We are to remember that this battle was for the salvation of our souls. Paul compared prayer to wrestling and said of his coworker, Epaphras, “He is always wrestling n prayer for you, that you may stand firm in all the will of God, mature and fully assured.” (Col 4:12).

Then in verses 44 and 45, “When he rose from prayer and went back to the disciples, he found them asleep exhausted from sorrow. ‘Why are you sleeping?’ he asked them. ‘Get up and pray so that you will not fall into temptation.” In Luke’s gospel Jesus mentioned two times that the disciple had to pray not to fall into temptation. We should not make light of the devil’s temptation. We are again reminded of Peter 5:8-9, “Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith.” Peter also said in 1 Peter 4:7, “The end of all things is near. Therefore be clear-minded and self-controlled, so that you can pray.” May we faithfully and fervently pray!

Through his prayer Jesus is ready to be arrested. In verses 47-51, “While he was still speaking a crowd came up, and the man who was called Judas, one of the Twelve, was leading them. He approached Jesus to kiss him, but Jesus asked him, ‘Judas, are you betraying the Son of Man with a kiss?’ When Jesus’ followers saw what was going to happen, they said, ‘Lord, should we strike with our swords?’ And one of them struck the servant of the high priests, cutting off his right ear. But Jesus answered, ‘No more of this!’ And he touched the man’s ear and healed him.” This excellently shows who Jesus is. Of course, Jesus is the mighty healer. More than that he is the mighty warrior of love, healing a servant of those who sent for his arrest to get rid of him. He was not a revolutionary/activist at all. We see a picture of the Saviour of all.

In verses 52-53 it says, “Then Jesus said to the chief priests, the officers of the temple guard, and the elders, who had come for him, ‘Am I leading a rebellion, that you have come with swords and clubs? Every day I was with you in the temple courts, and you did not lay a hand on me. But this is your hour when darkness reigns.” At this time of darkness reigning one person Jesus was shining through his fortitude in obedience to God. Although the darkness seems to reign the whole world, it cannot overcome the light of Jesus.

Now then let’s see Peter’s terrible declining and Jesus’ restoration of him. In verses 54-60, “Then seizing him, they led him away and took him into the house of the high priest. Peter followed a distance. But when they had kindled a fire in the middle of the courtyard and had sat down together, Peter sat down with them. A servant girl saw him seated there in the firelight. She looked closely at him and said, ‘This man was with him.’ But he denied it. ‘Woman, I don’t know him,’ he said. A little later someone else saw him and said, ‘You also are one of them.’ ‘Man, I am not! Peter replied. ‘About an hour later another asserted, ‘Certainly this fellow was with him, for he is a Galilean.’ Peter replied, ‘Man, I don’t know what you’re talking about!’ Just as he was speaking, the rooster crowed.” When we refer to others gospel accounts, Thre seem to be many accusers now, there are three denials as our Lord said. We can hardly imagine that Peter fell into such a terrible state. Yet, this was a spiritual reality when one was overconfident and did not pray, ignoring the word of Jesus. Paul said in in 1 Corinthians 10:12, “If you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don’t fall.” He also said in Romans 11:22, “Consider therefore the kindness and sternness of God: sternness to those who fell, but kindness to you, provided that you continue in his kindness.”

Now Peter fell to the lowest point of his life. Then what happened? Verse 63 says, “The Lord turned and looked straight at Peter.” What an amazing description! Seeing Peter’s denial, complete denial of his master, Jesus could have turned away from him out of his too pained heart, not wanting to see this guy anymore. That was not the case for Jesus. He is still the Lord. The Lord purposely turned to Peter and looked straight at Peter. The eyes of the two met. We can imagine that Jesus’ face must have been covered with spittle and swollen and bruised yet his eyes shining. The eyes of his look were not staring him, but the look was the look of love, the look of trust and hope. 1 Corinthians 13:7 says, “Love always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.” Hebrews 13:8 says, “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.” When Jesus had called Simon Peter, Jesus had a hope for him, saying, “You are Simon son of John. You will be called Cephas” (which, when translated, is Peter) (Jn 1:42), and “From now on you will catch men” (Lk 5:10b). This hope had not been changed at all. This hope was the same when Petre disowned him. 2 Timothy 1:13 says, “If we are faithless, he will remain faithful, for he cannot disown himself.” This Lord we believe and trust. In this Lord we are to serve his flock of sheep.

What happened to Peter here? Verse 61 continues, “Then Peter remembered the word the Lord had spoken to him: ‘Before the rooster crows today, you will disown me three times.’ And he went outside and wept bitterly.” This was his bitter cry of repentance. What a beautiful fruit Jesus’ love bore! Indeed, Peter’s faith did not fail. He repented and was restored to strengthen his brothers.

In this passage we see our wonderful Lord Jesus, who prayed to obey the will of God praying more earnestly in agony until his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground. He healed the ear of a servant of his enemies and restored Peter despite his heart-breaking pain. May we live in this grace of Jesus and follow him with full trust and obedience and hope in him.