

10-8-23

Text: Matthew 26:36-42

Pastor Priewe

Theme: 1) Faithful for You 2) Faithful to You 3) Faithful through You.

Let me take you to a peaceful looking place. Here the flowers and olive trees create a serene garden, a place where people for centuries and still to this day have gone to find a quiet place to be with God in prayer. This place appears serene and peaceful, but make no mistake, this is the sight of perhaps the most dreadful battle this world has even known. No, not a battle of weapons and armies, not a battlefield scarred by fire and stained with blood, instead a battle of mental anguish so crushing it made sweat look like blood. This is the place where Jesus' obedience to his Father's will fought against the most agonizing temptation to escape the pent-up wrath of God just waiting to be poured out on him on the next day.

They call this place Gethsemane, a word that means "olive press," named for the pressing of the olives into olive oil that took place on slope of the Mount of Olives. It seems a fitting title then for the place that witnessed the crushing weight of the sin of the world press down upon the mind and soul of the one Man who didn't deserve it. It was the place where Jesus fought the battle to uphold the faithfulness of God, and his own faithfulness to his mission to do his father's will. All of this he had to do alone, in the face of the faithlessness of the people he was doing it for.

In our text today, the gospel writer Matthew brings us to Gethsemane and gives us the account of the battle Jesus fought that night. In this account we'll see Jesus prove that he has been **1) faithful for you, 2) and that God has been faithful to you.**

After leaving the upper room, Jesus crosses down through the Kidron Valley with his disciples and starts up the Mount of Olives into the Garden of Gethsemane. This was a normal place for him to go to pray and so the disciples likely don't think much of it when he stations most of them, and goes a little farther with Peter, James, and John. Those were the three he let see him in his glory and now they were the three he let see him in his deepest distress. **"My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch with me."** (Matthew 26:38 NIV 11).

Then he goes a little farther from them and falls on his face and prays, **"My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will."** (Matthew 26:39). Jesus had known all along what his Father's will was—that the **"Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes may have eternal life in him."** (John 3:14,15). And he'd been reminding the disciples all week in even more blunt terms, **"The Son of Man will be handed over to be crucified."** (Matthew 26:2). But now it's the night before, and you know how hard it is to sleep the night before an early flight or a big test. But Jesus has an appointment with death in the morning and in his distress and anticipation, he displays for us his true humanity. He is longing and praying for a way to do his Father's will that doesn't involve the agony of his innocent suffering and death on the cross.

But the Father had written his Son's death into his promises; he had destined his Son to die all the way through the Old Testament: the ram sacrificed instead of Isaac, the Passover Lamb sacrificed in place of the Firstborn, the Bronze Snake lifted up on the Pole, the Scape Goat who takes the people's sin away from them on the Great Day of Atonement. All the pictures were painted clearly, yet Isaiah is even more clear. **"It was the Lord's will to crush him and cause him to suffer; the Lord makes his life an offering for sin."** (Isaiah 53:10)"

And so, Jesus, on the eve of the Passover, is faced with the terrible reality. He must be led that very night as the Lamb to the slaughter or every promise of God made since the dawn of time would be left unfulfilled and broken. The seed of the woman who would crush the devil's head would himself be crushed under the pressure. The offspring of Abraham, through whom all

peoples on earth would be blessed would be a blessing to no one. That same promise passed down to Isaac and Jacob would simply become a myth passed down from father to son. The lion of the tribe of Judah would never triumph and the Prince of Peace would bring no peace and the royal king from David's line would never rule on a throne that lasts forever. Every promise of God hinges on Jesus this night, and whether or not he submits to his Father's will and offers his life as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. If not, God becomes a liar and every promise a lie, and Jesus is proved to be the deceiver that they thought he was.

So eternity hangs in the balance in the Garden of Gethsemane that night. Yet God has not left our salvation to chance. He has not left it up to the whim of a flakey sinner as if, "Maybe he will, maybe he won't." He has not entrusted so great a task to fickle, sleeping disciples, or the likes of you and me, but only to his beloved Son, Jesus Christ, who prays that night, "**Not as I will, but as you will.**" (26:39)

Here you must see Jesus, the one with whom God is well pleased, endure the most agonizing temptation and continue to be pleasing to God as he submits himself to his Father's will. Behold him here in the garden, the only One who has been faithful, and watch him continue to be faithful even to the point of death. And see him in contrast to the people he was going to die for—betrayers, rejectors, and sleepers. One request he makes of his disciples to "**Keep watch,**" which they couldn't do even for an hour.

And again he pleads with them, "**Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.**" (26:41) And indeed, their flesh was weak, as is ours—totally unable to fulfill the simplest of requests like "watch and pray," much less the entirety of God's perfect will which demands perfection of us. So Jesus goes to pray again, "**My Father, if it is not possible for this cup to be taken away unless I drink it, may your will be done.**" (Matthew 26:42)

Since there was no one else who does good, not even one, Jesus accepts the reality that it had to be him. No one else can drink the cup. It had to be Him, the Righteous One, the One God sent to obey his perfect will, "**so that through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous.**" (Romans 5:21). Not only with his active obedience of choosing to obey His Father throughout his life, but also with his passive obedience of becoming obedient to death on the cross, Jesus was proving himself to be faithful on your behalf. Paul tells us in Romans 8:5,6, "**For what the law was powerless to do because it was weakened by the flesh, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in the flesh in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fully met in us.**" Did you hear that? God's requirements are met in you because of him!

Jesus proved himself 1) faithful for you, on your behalf, and in doing so he also proved that 2) God is faithful to you and to every one of his promises. He was proving that God had indeed "**so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son that whoever believes in him shall not perish, but have eternal life.**" (John 3:16). God had indeed sent the Son he promised, the seed of the woman, the offspring of Abraham, the Prince of Peace, the Lion of the Tribe of Judah, the King of all Kings to reign on David's throne forever. See in that garden battlefield Jesus the answer to every one of God's promises!

What did Paul say in our second lesson, "**No matter how many promises God has made, they are "Yes" in Christ.**" (1 Corinthians 1:20). Has Jesus crushed the devil's head? Yes! Did he suffer the punishment you deserved? Yes! Has he brought the blessing of the forgiveness of sins for all people. Absolutely yes! Did he rise from the dead to guarantee eternal

life for everyone who looks to him in faith? Yes, he has risen from the dead and lives and rules eternally. This is most certainly true! **“And so through him the “Amen” is spoken by us to the glory of God.” (1 Cor. 1:20).** We say, “Amen! Yes! It’s true!” to every one of the promises of God, because we know that Jesus Christ has proved himself 1) faithful for you 2) and proved that God is faithful to you.

And you know, as if his faithfulness hasn’t done enough, it doesn’t even stop there. 3) His faithfulness also carries through us, who are now considered faithful in God’s eyes on account of him. God’s righteous requirements are fully met in us because his faithfulness covers us, and so too it begins to soak into us, through us and out of us, even while we live now in the struggle against the devil, the world, and our sinful flesh. So how do you remember the fact that his faithfulness is in you when you need it the most, in the face of temptation, when the spirit may be willing but the flesh is weak?

The Bible has this awesome formula for declaring God’s faithfulness, and then telling us what that does for us, to us, and through us. You’ve just got to hear them one after another, but more than that, you the people of God have to say **“Amen!”** to them. Now I know that generally we are not in the habit of yelling out “Amen”, but you’re all going to do it together. Are you ready? Practice with me once. Here’s your line **“Amen! Yes! It’s true!”**

- *“God is faithful, who has called you into fellowship with his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.” (1 Cor 1:9). “Amen! Yes! It’s true!”*
- *“If we confess our sins, God is faithful, and will forgive our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.” (1 John 1:9). “Amen! Yes! It’s true!”*
- *“If we are faithless, God remains faithful, for he cannot disown himself.” (2 Timothy 2:13). “Amen! Yes! It’s true!”*
- *“God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it. (1 Cor 10:13). “Amen! Yes! It’s true!”*
- *The Lord is faithful, and he will strengthen you and protect you from the evil one. (2 Thessalonians 3:3) “Amen! Yes! It’s true!”*
- *“As surely as God is faithful... it is God who makes both us and you stand firm in Christ.” (1 Cor 1: 21). “Amen! Yes! It’s true!”*

Realize, dear people of God, what you have just declared to be true! God has been, is, and always will be faithful 1) for you, 2) to you, and 3) through you as you faithfully carry out the callings you have received as Christians, as fathers, mothers, sons, daughters, single people and married people, pastors, teachers, employees, and friends. God is faithful and he has declared you to be faithful as well, for Jesus’ sake. Amen. (There’s one more chance to say your line at the end)

- *May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do it. “Amen! Yes! It’s true!”*