

**Just Like Jesus:
Just Like Jesus in Difficult Circumstances
Luke 22:39-46**

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Text Introduction: As believers in Jesus Christ, we are called to be just like Jesus. Now, understand that God loves us all just the way that we are, but He loves us too much to leave us just the way we are, He wants us to be just like Jesus. That's not just in some areas of our lives, but in every area of our lives. What I want us to do in these weeks leading up to Easter is to see Jesus again in the last days of His life. We will see Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane, being kissed by Judas, then ultimately dying on the cross. All of these experiences give us real examples for us as we strive to be Just like Jesus. This morning, we will see Jesus as He faces the most agonizing experience on a human level. The example for us is how to react in our most difficult circumstances.

Text: ³⁹ He went out and made His way as usual to the Mount of Olives, and the disciples followed Him. ⁴⁰ When He reached the place, He told them, "Pray that you may not enter into temptation." ⁴¹ Then He withdrew from them about a stone's throw, knelt down, and began to pray, ⁴² "Father, if You are willing, take this cup away from Me—nevertheless, not My will, but Yours, be done."

[⁴³ Then an angel from heaven appeared to Him, strengthening Him. ⁴⁴ Being in anguish, He prayed more fervently, and His sweat became like drops of blood falling to the ground.] ⁴⁵ When He got up from prayer and came to the disciples, He found them sleeping, exhausted from their grief. ⁴⁶ "Why are you sleeping?" He asked them. "Get up and pray, so that you won't enter into temptation."

Introduction: I have often remarked to no one in particular that I am sure to get a large response anytime that I preach on any subject having to do with suffering. Last week was no exception as I preached on the subject of the peace of God. Although meant to stand alone, last week's message did serve as a good springboard for us to continue that discussion of difficult circumstances. Remember our theme: We want to learn to live just like Jesus. Today, we see Jesus' struggle in the Garden of Gethsemane just moments before His arrest as we consider how to be just like Jesus in "Difficult Circumstances."

If we use this scene of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane as our example, how do we handle our most difficult circumstances of life?

1. We handle difficult circumstances with prayer, not panic.

Don't think that Jesus' difficulty was less real just because He was Jesus. Remember the mystery of His being fully God and fully human at the same time. His difficulty was the pain he felt as He contemplated His loneliness, His pain, and His taking upon Himself the sin of the whole world. What did He do? He prayed.

I know that you probably wanted to hear something else. You wanted to hear that the difficult circumstances are going to just go away. Instead, we see Jesus praying. Matthew and Mark tell us that Jesus prayed this similar prayer three times. What do we learn from this Garden Prayer?

Characteristics of Jesus' Prayer

- Habitual—He made His way “as usual.”
- Honesty—He was honest with God about the pain of the cup. We understand “this cup” to mean not only His death, but the way that He was to die.
- Humility—Even in the pain, He submitted Himself to God, the Father, and to the will of the Father.
- Hard-Work (Agony)—The prayer was so intense that “His sweat became like drops of blood falling to the ground.” There is debate as to whether He sweated blood or if His sweat became like blood *falling* to the ground. Regardless of the way that you choose to interpret this phrase, the effect is the same—there is intensity to this experience.

Jesus' One Concern in His Prayer

- The Will of God—Henry Blackaby, author of the classic book on this topic *Experiencing God*, said that “The first step in discovering the will of God is removing any will of your own.” We see agony in His prayer, but we also see the desire for the will of God. The request is bracketed on either side with a plea for the will of God to be done.

2. **When we handle our difficult circumstances with prayer, we will experience power instead of panic.**

Some might say that God did not answer the prayer—He did! He provided strength for the situation. Sometimes God calms the storm; other times He calms the sailors. Sometimes God removes the mountain; other times He gives strength to the mountain climber.

God's answer becomes our assurance. We know that God answered the prayer because of the transition that occurs.

Note the Transformation that takes place:

Sorrow → Struggle → Strength

The garden times will move us from sorrow to struggle to strength.

Two prisoners were in a Soviet prison camp cell. One is praying. The other scoffs and says, “Prayers won't help you get out of this dreadful place any faster.” Opening his eyes, the person praying answers, “I do not pray to get out of prison but to do the will of God.”

We need to arrive at that place where we would rather know the power of God more than the elimination of the problem. Daniel and the three Hebrew children experienced this. They could have been spared from the fiery furnace, but if so, they would have never experienced the presence and power of God for that occasion. Jesus could have called the angels down to save Him from this agonizing experience, but instead the angel came to minister unto Him strength. Why? Why did He need strength? To show us an example that when we encounter difficult circumstances we call on God in prayer and He supplies His power.

3. When we couple our praying with God's power, we experience peace instead of panic.

Ultimate peace comes in knowing...

- I am in the plan of God.
- I have been in the presence of God.
- God's power is sufficient.

What a contrast we observe in Jesus' response and the response of the disciples. They are overcome with grief. Jesus is overcome with peace so much so that He is now ready (in verse 47) for the mob to arrest Him.

Someone asked C.S. Lewis once, "Why do the righteous suffer?" "Why not?" was his reply. "They are the only ones who can take it."

The bottom line here is that we have a wonderful Heavenly Father. That's why we can experience peace. We must trust him like a young college student named Peter Wirth trusted his earthly father. Peter, 21 at the time, began to have a severe pain in his shoulder. He called his father to see what to do. That's not altogether surprising; many college students would first call home to see what to do. But, for Peter, calling home was different. Peter's dad is one of the world's leading orthopedic surgeons, even specializing in shoulders. As the two talked, Peter's dad began to suspect that his son had a condition called deep venous thrombosis, which means that a clot was forming dangerously close to his heart. Dr. Dad had written a paper on the proper way to treat this condition. He instructed his son to go immediately to the emergency room. Turns out that the Dr. was right and Peter's clot was dissolved—his earthly life extended? Wouldn't it be great to have such a father? We all have such a Heavenly Father, and therefore we can trust Him with everything that we need.¹

¹ Max Lucado, *Fearless*, 160.