



Prayer in the Garden

Mark 14:32-42

They went to a place called Gethsemane; and he said to his disciples, 'Sit here while I pray.' He took with him Peter and James and John, and began to be distressed and agitated. And he said to them, 'I am deeply grieved, even to death; remain here, and keep awake.' And going a little farther, he threw himself on the ground and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him. He said, 'Abba, Father, for you all things are possible; remove this cup from me; yet, not what I want, but what you want.' He came and found them sleeping; and he said to Peter, 'Simon, are you asleep? Could you not keep awake one hour? Keep awake and pray that you may not

come into the time of trial; the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.' And again he went away and prayed, saying the same words. And once more he came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were very heavy; and they did not know what to say to him. He came a third time and said to them, 'Are you still sleeping and taking your rest? Enough! The hour has come; the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Get up, let us be going. See, my betrayer is at hand.'

Someone has said that the most convincing testimony of God's love for us is not that Jesus died on the cross, but that Jesus *went* to the cross willingly. I think the way it was put is that he was not dragged to the cross "kicking and screaming." Everything within the human soul would resist what lay before Jesus, and one side of Jesus wanted an escape—"Abba, Father, for you all things are possible"—but not without the Father's permission. Jesus, who pledged to obey the Father come-what-may, gives even his desire to be spared this pain and humiliation into the Father's hand: "Yet, not what I want, but what you want." If, it is your will . . .

That may be the hardest of all prayers to offer. What we fear may be God's will is not at all always what we will. We pray for healing, but healing does not come. We pray for release from burdens, but the weight remains unrelieved. We pray for new beginnings but all we see are more closed doors. To be graced to pray: "Yet not what I want, but what you want," is liberating in some respects because it frees us from the responsibility of fully determining our future and placing that in the hands of a loving God who may not always bring us what we want but what we need and what, in the long run, is best. It may even lead us to a cross, but beyond that cross is the promise of resurrection.

Prayer

In this day and in every day, O Lord, may *your* will be done in and through me. Amen.