

NEVER GIVE UP
Series: "Christ in the School of Prayer"
Maundy Thursday Communion --March 24, 2016 --Luke 22: 39-48
The Church of the Covenant

Over the past several weeks we have studied together the prayer life of our Lord Jesus Christ and have sought to learn of HIM in "Christ in the School of Prayer". On this Maundy Thursday, when Jesus and His disciples gathered in the Garden of Gethsemane, and He bid them to "watch and pray" with Him, we see in many ways the conclusion of His earthly life of prayer. Jesus knows something is up. He senses the Lord is about to do something. From the time He prayed in the wilderness and was tempted by the evil one He knew that the way God was bidding Him to walk was not the easy way. It was a hard way. In prayer Jesus was to discover again it is God's will and God's way. So Jesus enters into the olivepress, about to be bruised for our iniquities. Gethsemane means olivepress, the place where olives were squeezed by a vice until they gave up their oil. Jesus, on His knees in prayer, was about to be squeezed, and pressed, and compressed in such a way that He was to sweat blood and sweat and tears. He was pressed in from every side and in the pressure cooker that was Holy Week. I don't know about you, but I have never prayed until I sweated blood...

He did not easily nor quickly get to the conclusion of His prayer –*"nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done"*. (Luke 22: 42) No. He prayed continuously, all night, for hours and hours in prayer on His knees. And He did not give up. He knew He needed to pray it through until He had His answer. Like the disciples of old we too often give up in prayer before we receive our answer. We are to watch and pray but we are tired, lack time, lack the spiritual fortitude to pray it through. We fall asleep, spiritually as well as physically. But Jesus knew He had to NEVER GIVE UP. And sometimes we miss how fervently He prayed and how long He prayed and how entirely focused He was in prayer. And so He prayed all night. And He prayed until His knees were raw. And He prayed until He was stiff from being on His knees too long. And He prayed until He sweat blood. And He had His answer when the soldiers came to haul Him away. And He had His answer when His best friends, the disciples, all deserted Him, and He was hauled off to Calvary to die. But HE NEVER GAVE UP.

I have one key observation on Jesus' prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane. Jesus' prayer life always asked for things for others and never for Himself. Jesus' prayer life up until the Garden were always prayers of intercession for others. We never hear Him ask for anything for Himself. He is the Son of God but He never asks His heavenly Father for even one thing. Until Maundy Thursday and until the Garden of Gethsemane and until Jesus is in the spiritual olivepress, so pressed that droplets of blood came from His brow. Our prayer life is us mostly asking things for ourselves, or our close family, or things that impact us directly. But Jesus' prayer life was always asking for someone else. His was a ministry of intercessory prayer, interceding on behalf of others. So He gets to the end of His earthly life, and He asks one thing, just one thing, of His heavenly Father. Just one, that's all. In the Garden of Gethsemane Jesus finally asks for something for Himself. He prays, *"Father, if thou art willing, remove this cup from me..."* (Luke 22: 42) But, of course, Jesus' Father did not remove the cup, but Jesus had to drink the cup of Calvary and death and the cross. God didn't answer His own Son's prayer the way the only begotten Son of God had requested. The only thing Jesus had requested of His heavenly Father in His lifetime ministry for Himself, God did not answer the way Jesus had requested. That is my one key observation of Jesus in the olivepress on His knees in prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane.

So Jesus is hauled away by the soldiers. But HE NEVER GAVE UP. And He is deserted by His best friends and disciples. BUT HE NEVER GAVE UP. And He is humiliated before the Sanhedren and He is judged

falsely by the Romans. BUT HE NEVER GAVE UP. And He is whipped and beaten and scourged. BUT HE NEVER GAVE UP. And He had to carry His own cross to Calvary in weakness. BUT HE NEVER GAVE UP. And He was mocked by His enemies who seemingly triumphed over Him. BUT HE NEVER GAVE UP. And He was in excruciating pain on the cross, pain coming ex-crucis, out of the cross. BUT HE NEVER GAVE UP. He thirsted and forgave and quoted scripture to Himself for all the world to hear on the cross. BUT HE NEVER GAVE UP. And Jesus even felt god-forsaken, forsaken by His Father in heaven. He cried out, "Why hast Thou forsaken me?" to His Father from the cross. BUT HE NEVER GAVE UP. And even when His great heart of love burst on the cross, weighed down by our sin. HE NEVER, NEVER, EVER GAVE UP...

Why did Jesus Never Give Up? Because from all of His time, spent on His knees in prayer, spent parking His heart in front of the heart of the Almighty, in all of the time He had spent watching God's ways and watching God's plan for Him unfold in His life, because on every day of His life He had seen that God always had a better, more wonderful, more amazing plan for His life, even better than the Son of God could have for His own. Because Jesus had observed the will and the way of God and knew that God was up to something bigger and better than the answer He had sought in prayer, on His knees, in the olivepress, in the Garden of Gethsemane. So He drank the cup He had asked His Father to take away. And HE NEVER GAVE UP ON GOD. He trusted that there was a larger better plan. He trusted in the love that God always had for Him. He trusted through the pain and through the humiliation and through the disappointment and even through the feelings of god-forsaken-ness. And HE NEVER GAVE UP. Not in the Garden and not on Good Friday and not on a cross and not in a stone cold tomb. Jesus NEVER GAVE UP.

He drank the cup that He had asked His Father to remove...that led Him to the cross and death. That tonight, we, you and I, might drink another cup...that leads to Easter and abundant life.

Beloved, whatever olivepress you may find yourself in this night. Pray your way through. Trust your way through. Remember the heart of Jesus. And NEVER, EVER, NEVER, NO EVER, NEVER GIVE UP...Amen and Amen.

*By: The Reverend Dr. Stuart D. Broberg, The Church of the Covenant, Washington, Pennsylvania
IF THIS HAS BLESSED YOU, PLEASE PASS IT ALONG TO A FRIEND!*