

Hanging Out with Jesus

Stories about Jesus from the Gospels

The Fully Surrendered Life

Unedited Transcript

Matthew 26:26-36, Mark 14:32-42, Luke 22:40-46

Good morning, men! Please go in you Bibles to Matthew 26:26 as we begin this morning by welcoming a relatively new group to our Bible study. We'll do a shout out to Men's Life Care of Church of God, East New York in Brooklyn, NY. 12 men who have been meeting for 5 months on Wednesdays at 8:00 pm at the church using the Video Bible Study. Led by Charas Ebron and we are looking for a Field Representative for the Brooklyn area. I looked that up on the map. You got Brooklyn and you've got JFK, and then east New York is right there. You guys are really New Yorkers! I looked that up Charas, too. It's Irish, and even Welsh, so a little background there. This group is also very into men's life care. They are doing a 5k run walk once a month, have 2 hour exercise, cardio vascular, weight loss thing going on. They're doing healthy eating things, and then they're starting to boot camp young men ages 13 and up, so really a lot going on. I wonder if you would join me and helping to welcome the Men's Life Care Group from Brooklyn. One, two, three, hoorah! Welcome guys, we are very glad to have you with us!

Okay. The name of the series, Hanging Out with Jesus, going through the stories and the gospels chronologically, one at a time. We all have things that are not turning out the way that we want them to turn out. She said no, she doesn't want to marry you. You didn't get the promotion that you wanted. It went to somebody else. There's no chance to retrieve it. You can't have children of your own. You're caught in someone else's storm. Someone else is living out a life of sin and it's pulling you down, or at least you're in the storm with them. The deal is not going through. The doctor says that the disease that you have is not curable, or the disease that somebody you love has in incurable. The relationship is beyond repair. She's gone and she's not coming back.

The Suffering and Example of Jesus

The question today is "How do we make peace with the will of God when it's not really what we want? How do we make peace with the will of God when it's not really what we want?" Today, we're going to talk about the fully surrendered life, and the first thing we're going to look at is the suffering and example of Jesus. The story today is Jesus in the garden at Gethsemane, where he makes 3 prayers to the Lord. Let's read the text together, beginning at verse 36. I said 26 earlier I think, 36. Chapter 26, verse 36. "Then Jesus went with his disciples to a place called Gethsemane, and he said to them, Sit here while I go over there and pray."

The 11 disciples went with him. He told them to sit over there and Jesus then took Peter and the 2 sons Zebedee, James and John, along with him. He began to be sorrowful and troubled. He pulled his 3 closest associates out of the 11 with him. Then he said to them, and I'm assuming it's the 3, "My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch with me." When you have a

situation that's not turning out the way that you would want it to turn out, it is interesting how we want to have some people around us that really care about us, some friends. That's what Jesus was doing. In his truly human, fully-human nature, Jesus understood that it would be good to have some friends around him.

Verse 39, going a little further, "He fell with his face to the ground and prayed." Have you ever fallen with your face to the ground and pray? Have you ever had that much agony, that much sorrow, that much suffering where you literally fell on the ground face down? I have. I think I've probably done it more than once. I remember one time, and that was when a deal wasn't turning out the way that I planned. I shouldn't have done the deal. I was driving by the property one day, and we had one tenant in an 80,000 square foot property, one small tenant. That was it. The market had collapsed around the area, long story. Months, and months, and months and nothing had happen. I was in real trouble.

I remember driving by the building and driving around to the back of the building where nobody could see me, nobody could see me anyway because there were no tenants, so I could've did it right at the very front if I wanted to, no one even cared. I drove around to the back and I fell on a patch of grass. I remember lying prostrate, face down on the grass and crying out to God. That's what Jesus is doing here, and this is what he prayed. "My Father, if it is possible, may this cup", meaning this suffering, "be taken from me, yet not as I will, but as you will, or not as I want but as you want." Remarkable.

We learn something from this text that we could learn nowhere else in the Bible. There's something we learn from this text that can be learned no other way. Here it is; Jesus struggled with the will of God. Do you get that? Do you see that? In his truly human, fully human nature, Jesus Christ himself struggled with the will of God. When you struggle with the will of God, it's not a sin. Jesus was our sinless savior. There's a temptation that comes with struggling with the will of God, and that is to disobey and to go the other way, but there is nothing abnormal about struggling with the will of God. We learn from this text and we learn it nowhere else in the Bible, that Jesus struggled with the will of God.

Reading on, verse 40. "Then he returned to his disciples and found them sleeping. Could you not keep watch with me for one hour?" It's interesting, because it's one hour here and then he goes back and prays 2 more times, so it's at least an hour. Is Jesus talking about a little 60 minute hour? Probably not, but he's talking about a period of time that resembles an hour. What would Jesus pray in an hour? He didn't just pray this one sentence that we just read. He prayed a lot of things. Jesus probably, we don't know, but Jesus probably recounted all of the history that he had with the Father. "Father, I was with you from the beginning. You made me the one who is the creator, all things have been created through me. You have assigned me to be the savior. You have assigned me the task of dying for the sins of the men who are now condemning me. I'm aching here. I'm hurting here. I don't want to go through this. In my truly human, fully human nature, God, I don't want this. This is not what I want. I don't want her to leave. I don't want to not be able to have children. I don't want to be relocated, to not have the career success that I want. I don't want to be in a relationship that's always so contentious. I don't want this."

All these prayers that we have, Jesus had prayers like this too. In this one hour, Jesus no doubt summarized his entire ministry of three and a half years. He probably summarized his entire experience of eternity between He and the Father. The distilled essence of that is, "My Father, if it is possible, please takeaway this cup. Yet not what I want, but what you want." Let's go ahead and finish off the text. "Could you not keep watch with me for one hour?" he asked Peter. "Watch and pray, so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh, the body is weak." He went away the second time and prayed, "My Father, if it is not possible ..." The first time he prayed, "Father, if it is

possible, please take away this cup." Now he prays, "Father, if it is not possible for this cup to be taken away unless I drink it, may your will be done."

Then when he came back, he again found them sleeping, because their eyes were heavy. Hey, these guys fell asleep, not because they were bad men. They fell asleep because ... Thinking about all of the things that have taken place this day, the message that Jesus delivered to them in John 14, 15, and 16, and 17. In the upper room and the last supper, it's been a long day. Now it's late in the night and Jesus already went out and wants to pray for an hour, and now he went out again. They fell asleep. It's not a big deal that they fell asleep. It's not a big deal. It's not a big deal if you have a weak body and you can't be Mr. Super Christian, Mr. Super Dad, Mr. Super Everything all the time, all the way, every place. It's okay.

He left them and went away once more and prayed the third time, saying the same thing, "My father, this cup, yet not my will, not what I want, Lord, but what you want." Then he returned to the disciples and said to them, "Are you still sleeping and resting?" There was no pejorative there. Who knows? It may have even been humorous I don't know. We don't know. Nobody knows. "Are you still asleep? My gosh." "Look, the hour is near and the son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise, let us go. Here comes my betrayer."

Why is there such agony in this? It's the zenith of Satan's power. It's so interesting, because Satan has his finest moment. In a few hours he's going to have his complete destruction. You've known people who were doing bad things, evil things, simple things, and you could tell them exactly what was going to happen and when it was going to happen, because of their simple behavior. What do they do? They kept right on doing it. That's what Satan is doing. Satan knows the plot. He knows that if he goes through with this, his destruction is sealed, and yet he goes ahead with the plan. Because of that, there's this incredible agony. It is agony. I think it's found in the John passage where he sweats drops of blood. This agony is the Greek word, this terrible suffering that Jesus is going through, but it's for God's greater purpose.

What is obvious in this text? What is obvious about what's going on here? Here's what's obvious that sometimes we have to suffer in order to accomplish God's greater purposes. Sometimes suffering is required to accomplish God's greater purposes. This is the way the cosmos has been organized by its creator. That sometimes suffering is required to accomplish God's greater purposes. That's what Jesus is trying to make his peace with. He's trying to make his peace with this. He knows the greater purpose. You, in many cases, know the greater purpose that God has for your life. Many times you don't, but many times you do. Even though you know what God's greater purpose is for your life, it's still hard to make peace with that, because it's not what I want.

In his truly human and fully human nature, that's exactly what's happening to Jesus in this text. His suffering, it's his suffering, but it's also an example for us as well. How was Jesus able to embrace the will of God? How was Jesus able to finally embrace the will of God? How was Jesus able to make peace with the will of God? How can you and I make our peace with the will of God? The answer is the fully surrendered life. The Big Idea for today, the way that we can embrace and make our peace with the will of God is this: **The key to embracing God's will is to fully surrender any will of my own.** The key to embracing God's will is to fully surrender any will of my own.

In the garden at Gethsemane, that's what Jesus was doing. When he said, "Father, if it is possible, please take away this thing that I don't want, yet not what I want, but what you want." Then he said here ... It's

the idea that three times he prayed in order to bring into alignment his will with the will of God. He was trying to figure out how to fully surrender in his truly human, fully human, truly human nature. He was trying to figure out, "How can I fully surrender what I want, my will?" That's what happened. Let's talk then about making peace with the will of God or embracing the will of God.

Making Peace with the Will of God

The first thing that we see is that Jesus recognize God's greater purpose for his life. Jesus understood that by his grisly and tragic death, that many people would be saved. Our suffering, our agony, the thing that we're going through, God has a greater purpose for that too, and it is not going to be the same scope of course as our Lord the savior Jesus, but many people in many cases, many people will be saved and come to analogy of the truth out of the ashes of your suffering. When they see your submission to the Holy God, and how the peace of God has sustained you through that difficult time, curiosity is aroused. Let me say that having to have cancer is certainly ... I'm not going to be excited about having cancer just so that some people can get saved. That'd be crazy. Nobody should want these things, but these things still come. Yes, these things still come.

Just recognizing part of the way that we make our peace with the will of God is just to recognize that there are greater goods. God has greater goods. Here's the deal. You and I, we have seats with an obstructed view. You understand? There's a big pole right in front of us where the chief sees. We have an obstructed view. It's good to have somebody next to us, reading the Bible, calling out what's going on in the real field of play. You have an obstructed view. You can't see what's really happening. Just to recognize that "Yeah, if I could see around the pole, I would see God's greater purpose, but I can't, so I'm going to, by faith, accept it." Then you can do it by experience as you walk a lot, because the longer you walk with Christ, the more you see that, "Yeah, I had obstructed view and I couldn't see the greater purpose, but now in the rear-view mirror, I can see it really very well."

Then the real thing that ... This would be like the elephant in the living room. This is another obvious thing in the text. What changed Jesus's perspective on this, what changed his heart was prayer. It is by prayer that we make peace with the will of God. "Father", he prayed. "Father", he prayed. "Father", he prayed. Three times he prayed, and then the peace came. I was talking to someone recently who's going through a divorce, and at the same time, developed cancer. This person was trying to make peace with God, trying to embrace this as God's will for him. He was walking around the block, and day after day, after day, and praying, and praying, and praying.

One day he said, "One day, I found my peace." The peace of God came over him, but it was through prayer. It was through not a single prayer. Like Jesus is demonstrating, giving his example here, it was repeated prayer. You know what? When I prepared this message, okay, the worst part of preparing a message for me, or the hardest part of preparing a message for me is I've done all of the study, hours, and hours, and hours of study, and then from 5 to 6 pm on Thursday evening, so last night, I write out ... I don't write out, but outline the message. I use the same little blobs that are on the thing there. I write down catch words to make me remember the thing that I think the Lord might want me to say. That is the worst hour of the day, walking up to my study to prepare my message, because I'm walking up to a blank sheet of paper.

I've done all the study, but I'm still walking up to a blank sheet of paper. It's terrifying. Every single time I do it, I wonder, "Is the Lord going to be with me this time, or he's going to leave me behind?" After all these years, I've never stood up and not been able to have words to come out of my mouth. You think

I'd be over that by now. The most joyful time ... This morning, the most joyful time was as I sat down and I prayed my prayer, "Lord, I repent of any self-sufficiency to prepare and deliver this message." I sensed the presence of God come over me. I think it happened that way this morning because I'm giving this message.

Multiple times, I pray that prayer about self-sufficiency. When I prayed this morning, I sensed the peace of God come over me. Usually, it happens later in the morning at some moment, but today it happened right away. I was thinking, "You know? I probably should just pass that along as an illustration of this idea of repeatedly praying until the peace of God comes, giving God the anxiety, just in the same way that Jesus did in his example."

Another thing that's obvious, a lot of things obvious in this thing, is that hey, guess what? Jesus found his peace, but his circumstances didn't change, he still died. God makes no promise that he's going to spare us. You can have peace and still die, but he does fulfill his promise to save Jesus and he will fulfill his promise to save us. Surrender is peace. It's not getting what we want. It's not Jesus changing our circumstances that gives us peace. It's surrender that gives us peace. In other words, we can experience the peace of God, whether we get what we want or we don't get what we want, whether we're cured of cancer or die of cancer, whether our child comes to faith or our child rejects us and never talks to us again. Some of you have that going on.

The way we find this peace, the way we are able to embrace the will of God and find peace with the will of God, the key to embracing God's will is to fully surrender any will of my own. I just told you how you can do it, but let's finish up by making that full surrender. Okay. Let's finish up by making that full surrender.

Making that Full Surrender

All right. Surrender doesn't mean that you don't have a will of your own. Surrender doesn't mean that you don't want something really, really bad. Surrender doesn't mean that what you want is not something really, really good that would be, really, really good to have. What surrender does is it's an acknowledgement that I have an obstructed view. That's the first step in making a full surrender is to realize and acknowledge and accept, resign yourself if you have to, that you have an obstructed view of what's really going on, and that God has a greater purpose. That is a point of view, that is a mindset, that is an attitude, that is a decision that you can make. You can kick against the goads that "It's not fair that I have an obstructed view. I should've had a better seat", but accepting this is the first step. It really is the first step.

You know what it is? It is the step of humility. I'm not God. It's the step of humility, just humbling ourselves. God opposes the prideful, but he gives grace to the humble, and then ... A chief characteristic of Jesus is that Jesus made a full total complete surrender to the will of God, to the Lordship of God. We need to make ... Also, if we want to follow the example of our model, we need to also make a full total complete surrender of our will to the will of God. "Father, not what I want, not what I will, but what you want, what you will." The way we do this is through prayer, repeated prayer. I almost put repeated in the Big Idea somewhere, but it's just too many words. The idea of repeatedly praying until the peace that surpasses all comprehension over takes us. It's prayer, that's how we surrender. We surrender through prayer.

Should we pray for deliverance? Yes. Jesus prayed for deliverance. "If it's possible, please take away this cup, this suffering." Pray for deliverance, yes, but then pray the prayer of surrender. "Father, not what I want, but what you want. I still want it, but not what I want, what you want." That's what it means to live a fully surrendered life. The Big Idea today, the key to embracing God's will is to fully surrender any will of my own. Does it mean I don't still have a will? Does it mean I don't still want what I want? It means that by faith, because I know, because I realize I've got obstructed view seats that if I could see what God sees, the I would have God's will too on my own.

What I'd like to do for ... On any given day, half of us are going to have a sucking chest wound, something that we're carrying around that is just ... If we could just get this burden off of us. You may need to pray many, many times to get to the place where you have the peace of God. This might be the very moment, this might be the very prayer that gives you that peace. Even if it's not, it's going to be a key step for you to be able to embrace God's will fully, if you will fully surrender your will to his will.

Closing Prayer

We're going to close in prayer now. I'm just going to lead us into a prayer of full surrender. Just pray this along with me, silently to yourself. Father, if you are willing, if it is possible, please, oh please take away this cup. Father, if it is not possible, not what I want, but what you want. Father, I acknowledge that I have an obstructed view. Father, I acknowledge that you have greater purposes. Father, I acknowledge that if I knew what you knew that I would will what you will. For those reasons, I now yield my will in full surrender to your will. I embrace your will. Father, right this moment, father, please give me peace. Lord, if not, then lead me to keep praying without ceasing until your peace comes, not because my circumstances are changed, but because I am willing to embrace your will, whatever it is. I fully surrender my life to you right now. In the name of the one who died for my sins, the loving name of Jesus, and everybody said, Amen!