In the Garden

Mark 14:27-52

Key Verse: 14:36 “’*Abba*, Father,” he said, “everything is possible for you. Take this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will.”

In the Bible two main things occurred in the two different gardens which had changed human history. The first one occurred in the Garden of Eden, the second, in the Garden of Gethsemane. In the Garden of Eden the history of sin and death started. In the Garden of Gethsemane the history of life and love started. Today we will see what happened in each garden, especially in the Garden of Gethsemane. Today’s passage contains three separate parts, but is focused on Jesus’ prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane. May God open our spiritual eyes to see Jesus and hear his prayer through this passage. Amen

First, Jesus predicts Peter’s denial (27-31) After eating the Passover meal, Jesus and his disciples went out to the Mount of Olives. Jesus often went to this mountain to pray. Suddenly Jesus predicted his disciple’s falling away. “***You will all fall away, for it is written; “I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered.” But after I have risen, I will go ahead of you into Galilee.***” (27-28) Jesus told them that their falling away had been written in the prophecy of Zechariah. (Zec 13:7) What was Peter’s response? In verse 29 he said, “***Even if all fall away, I will not***.” Peter was confident in his loyalty and love for Jesus. Indeed three years ago, he left everything and followed Jesus. He saw God in Jesus. He confessed to Jesus not long ago, “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.” So, it was impossible for Peter to accept Jesus’ words. But Jesus repeated Peter’s denial in detail when and how he would disown Jesus in verse 30. “***Truly I tell you, today—yes, tonight—before the rooster crows twice you yourself will disown me three times***.” Why did Jesus predict Peter’s denial in advance even hurting Peter’s pride? This is to help Peter to remember Jesus’ words and repent. Jesus wanted to protect Peter from Satan’s accusation later when he realized his failure. Later Peter wept aloud when the rooster crowed twice. He realized that he was wrong and Jesus was right. Jesus knew Peter’s weakness. Jesus protected Peter from the result of his weakness. Jesus is the mindful shepherd who knows his sheep. Jesus also knows that we love him. Still, he wants us to realize our weakness and humbly to depend on him in all situations.

Second, yet not what I will, but what you will. (32-42) Look at verses 32-34. “***They went to a place called Gethsemane, and Jesus said to his disciples, “Sit here while I pray.” He took Peter, James, and John along with him, and he began to be deeply distressed and troubled. “My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death.” he said to them. “Stay here and keep watch.***” Jesus knew that the hour of his death had come that very night. His heart was very heavy and troubled. Even though he was the Son of God, he was also the Son of Man who shared flesh and blood like one of us. His soul was overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death. What can you do at this moment? Jesus prepared the hour through his prayer. Prayer is a spiritual battle between God’s will and my will. Jesus prayed to choose God’s will. Prayer is a powerful weapon for Christians to defeat Satan’s temptation and to overcome the power of death. Recently my heart was troubled and heavy because of health issue. Satan tried to overwhelm me whenever I became weak. But prayer is my weapon. When I prayed, suddenly fear was gone and faith came back. I believe that in all things God works for good for those who love him. Amen.

**Going a little farther, Jesus fell to the ground and prayed that if possible the hour might pass from him*.*** (35) He prayed, “***Abba, Father, everything is possible for you. Take this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will.***” (36) If possible, Jesus wanted to avoid the cup of death because he knew how painful the death on the cross was. His will was to avoid the cross, but he prayed for God’s will. He did not pray to ask what God’s will is, but he prayed to obey God’s will. What were his disciples doing while Jesus was praying? Look at verses 37-38. “***Then he returned to his disciples and found them sleeping. “Simon,” he said to Peter. “Are you asleep? Couldn’t you keep watch for one hour? Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.***” (37-38) Jesus asked Peter and his disciples to join his prayer. But they slept while Jesus prayed. This is because their spirits were willing, but their flesh was weak. Jesus warned them to watch and pray so that they might not fall into temptation. This is because Satan always tempts us to submit ourselves to our fleshly desire, not spiritual desire.

Let's go back to the Garden of Eden to understand this. Jesus is known as the second Adam. Our first Adam was tempted in the Garden of Eden and he failed to the temptation. Satan tempted the woman to eat the fruit from the tree of knowledge of good and evil. Genesis 3:6 says, “*When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it.*” Good for food and pleasing to the eyes was her fleshly desire. God’s will was to obey his command and not to eat the fruit. Satan tempted the woman to obey her fleshly desire, not God’s desire.

When God created men, God had a great plan for the world through them. God made man in his own image and commanded them to rule over the world. To live as man with the image of God and as the ruler of God’s creation was God’s will and purpose for his creation. But, since Adam’s fall, man’s desire has degenerated. A man’s desire is to eat three meals a day, and a woman’s desire is for her husband. All human beings became the slaves of Satan who followed their fleshly desire. But God sent Jesus to restore God’s original purpose and plan for human beings. This is the reason why Jesus struggled with prayer between God’s will and his will. Jesus’ will was to avoid the hour if possible. But God’s will was to obey the cross for the sins of the world. Jesus chose to obey God’s will.

In Bible history God always challenged his people to follow God’s will. Abram’s will was to become a noble father. He wanted to live as a good grandfather with several children. But God called him to be a blessing for the whole world. God even changed his name from Abram to Abraham so that he might follow God’s will, not his own will. Moses was a prince of Egypt. He could have lived as a promising Pharaoh. It might have been his desire before he was called by God. God challenged him to follow God’s will as a deliverer for his suffering people. Gideon was an ordinary person who lived following his fleshly desire. But God sent his angel and called him saying, “The Lord is with you, mighty warrior.” (Jud 6:12) Gideon’s will was to live as a petty man who lived only for himself. But God’s will was to raise him up as a great warrior who rescued his people out of his enemies. Jesus did the same for his disciples, too. Remember Jesus who called fishermen for fishers of men. Jesus called a tax collector Levi to become a great St. Matthew.

Around 10 years ago, I encouraged Ben West to become a great spiritual leader like Rev. Billy Graham. Whether he believed it or not, I prayed for him to be like that. These days I pray for Taylor Gao to become a spiritual leader like Moses who leads his people Chinese to the kingdom of God. I pray for my daughter Grace to become a shepherd doctor who cares for the body and soul. I pray that God may help them to follow God’s will and become great spiritual leaders and doctors like Billy Graham and Moses. Amen!

Satan always tempts men to follow their selfish and fleshly desire. Satan tempted Jesus in the beginning to make stones into bread. Satan tempts us too in the same way because he knows that our spirit is willing but our flesh is weak. Now not in the Garden of Eden, but in the Garden of Gethsemane Jesus prayed in order to restore Adam’s failure. Hebrews 2:14-16 says, “*Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might break the power of him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil—and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death. For surely it is not angles he helps, but Abraham’s descendants*.” Amen. It continues, “*Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted*.” (He 2:18) Amen!

What was God’s will? How do we know what God’s will is? Jesus taught his disciples what God’s will is in the Lord’s Prayer. “*Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come and your will be done.*” (Mt 6:9,10) God’s will is to glorify God’s name and to bring his kingdom to this world. Jesus prayed that God’s name may be glorified in John 17. In John 17:1 Jesus said, “*Father, the hour has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you*.” Adam defamed God’s glory through his disobedience. Jesus glorified God’s name through his obedience. Jesus earnestly prayed to glorify God’s name by obeying God’s will. God’s will is also to bring his kingdom to this world. This is the same God’s will in Genesis 1:28, which says, “*Be fruitful and increase in number, fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish*....” This is the same as Jesus’ greatest commission in Matthew 28:19-20. “*Therefore go and make disciples of all nations*...” Satan tempts us to live as physical men who only follow our fleshly desire as he did in the Garden of Eden. But God encourages us to live as spiritual men who follow God’s will for world salvation.

What did his disciples do while Jesus was praying as a matter of life and death? Look at verses 39-42. “***Once more he went away and prayed the same thing. When he came back, he again found them sleeping, because their eyes were heavy. They did not know what to say to him. Returning the third time, he said to them, ‘Are you still sleeping and resting? Enough! The hour has come. Look, the Son of Man is delivered into the hands of sinners. Rise! Let us go! Here comes my betrayer***!” What was the result when the disciples obeyed their fleshly desire? They slept again. When they did not watch and pray, Judas Iscariot sold Jesus to his enemies. When Peter didn’t pray, he cut a man’s ear out of fear. (47) When they didn’t pray, a young man fled naked when Jesus was arrested. (52) We must keep watch and pray so that we may not fall into temptation. Amen!

In the Garden of Eden, the first man Adam saw the tree of knowledge of good and evil and disobeyed God. In the Garden of Gethsemane, the second Adam Jesus saw the cross, the tree of life and death and obeyed God. Which one, which tree, and which garden are you looking for? I pray that we may all go up to the Garden of Gethsemane and see Jesus, who was hung on the tree. For as in Adam all die, so in Christ we all be made alive! (1 Cor 15:22) Amen