

WHAT WOULD JESUS DO?

ONLY WHAT HIS HEAVENLY FATHER WANTED -- JESUS' WILL WAS GOD'S WILL.

Matthew 26:36-39

TEXT: *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." He took Peter and the two sons of Zebedee along with him, and he began to be sorrowful and troubled. Then he said to them, "My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch with me." Going a little farther, he fell with his face to the ground and prayed, "My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will."*

In Jesus' name, fellow redeemed:

Jesus' agony in the Garden of Gethsemane has been the object of many great artists' imaginations. One of the most well-known paintings of Jesus in Gethsemane is the one on the front of today's bulletin cover. It was painted by Heinrich Hofmann in 1890. The original is in Riverside Church in New York, and they claim that it is one of the most copied paintings in the world.

While Hofmann's painting of Jesus praying in Gethsemane portrays a Jesus who appears quite in control of his emotions, the Bible reveals what was going through our Lord's heart and mind: ***(Jesus) said to them, My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch with me. Going a little farther, he fell with his face to the ground and prayed...*** I don't believe that Jesus was speaking hyperbole, that is, exaggerating what he actually felt. The stress was indeed so overwhelming that it was killing him. Luke even adds the fact that his sweat was mixed with blood. So great was the stress of what he was about to do to win the victory for which he was sent!

What would Jesus do? According to his prayer, He would do what his Heavenly Father wanted him to do. According to Jesus' prayer, his will was God's will.

God's will was first revealed to mankind when after Adam and Eve fell the Lord turned to Satan and declared: ***I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will crush his heel.*** Ge 3 For some 4-5 thousand years, the sins of humanity piled up in the mind of God. If anyone ever thought that God was being too finicky in regard to Adam and Eve eating a piece of fruit, consider what caused his wrath to burst forth when he told Noah to build the Ark before he would destroy all mankind except those few believers whom he would preserve in the Ark. God's wrath was piling up, higher and higher!

Finally, God's appointed time had come! The Bible says: ***... when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, ...*** Ga 4 That was Jesus. Then Scripture says about Jesus: ***God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood. He did this to demonstrate his justice, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished- he did it to demonstrate his justice at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus.*** Ro 3 While it appeared that God hadn't been letting a lot of sinning go unpunished for several thousand years, he would suddenly, and finally, demonstrate his justice by declaring his Son Jesus, to be the object of his wrath. He declared Jesus to be sin for us so that through faith in Jesus men, women and children would be declared justified.

Was there any other way to accomplish this awesome work? Jesus himself asked the question in Gethsemane: ***My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me.*** It is for our ears to hear and for our minds to comprehend God's answer. For as Jesus suffers on the cross and cries out: ***My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?...*** and God's silence gives us the answer. No! There is only one way for man's sin to be atoned for. It must be by the innocent suffering and death of my son in payment for the sin of all mankind!

All this is for us to hear. God forsakes the Son of God whom he has made to be the sin of all mankind. The punishment is incomprehensible, for hell is to be forsaken by God. Yet Jesus suffers for no sin of his own, but for the sins of all! That's why Jesus told his disciples on the night before: ***I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life. NO ONE comes to the Father but by me!*** Jn 14.

We might ask ourselves, "Was Jesus weakening in his resolve to be our Sacrifice? After all, he asks if there might be another way to do this. Would he take that "other way out" if it were indeed offered? The answer is NO, because Jesus is a true man who is also true God. Jesus' will is identical to that of his Heavenly Father.

Why, then, does Jesus pray: *Yet not as I will, but as you will.* Again, it is for our ears to hear and for our hearts to believe. Jesus is both true God and true man in one person. Here is a perfect sinless human being. He is what God created our first parents to be: sinless. He did not inherit a sinful nature since he was conceived in the womb of his mother by the power of God, the Holy Spirit. The righteousness of the man, Christ Jesus, is indeed the very righteousness of God.

And so, it is that as the hour approaches when God will declare Jesus to be our sin, his sinless human nature begins to recoil under the stress of what God is going to make him to be: the sin of all humanity. His own human body and soul feel that stress of sin, and as Jesus declares: It's about to kill me! *My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death.*

You see, you and I are used to feeling the consequences of sin. Throughout my ministry I've heard the elderly say: Pastor, it's no fun getting old. The "Golden Years" aren't so golden. But we know that the alternative isn't easy either. The alternative, that is, to die young, is even more sad and painful. So each of us must feel the overwhelming sorrow that is death. But each of us will suffer for our own sins and sinning. Jesus suffered and died for the sin of ALL mankind!

A number of years ago it was a popular thing to say: "What Would Jesus Do?" Young people were wearing plastic bracelets with the letters WWJD, standing for What Would Jesus Do? They put it on their T-shirts and sweatshirts: WWJD.

Well, here we are at Gethsemane in the agony that is his for being our Savior. Did Jesus' disciples watch and wonder: What Will Jesus Do? No! They slept through the entire event, not even aware of what it was that the Heavenly Father was requiring of his Son. If they were awake, had they been listening and recalling what the Scriptures said, they would know what Jesus was about to do! The Bible says: *Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.* He 12 Instead of wondering WHAT WOULD JESUS DO we should be and must be studying, teaching, believing and preaching WHAT DID JESUS DO!

The apostle writes: *Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith...* Heb 12 Those who do that, who listen to the preaching of the Gospel, who hear the Word and keep it in their hearts, will have the Holy Spirit working our spiritual eyesight so that we will not fall asleep and lose the salvation that our Savior painfully, yet joyfully won for us.

But let us ask just once: What would Jesus do? If he were walking among us today? He would lead us and our children each and every Sunday to church to hear the Gospel so that the blood that he shed for our salvation will not for anyone of us be blood that was shed in vain! For our salvation and that of our children, may we always lead them, and teach them to fix our eyes on Jesus! Amen.