

Doing and Saying – a Christian Pilgrimage

Week 78: The Passion Starts

Day 539: Overwhelmed and tired out

Then he came to the disciples and found them sleeping. He said to Peter, “So, couldn’t you stay awake with me for one hour? Stay awake and pray that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.” He went away a second time and prayed, “My Father, if this cup cannot be taken away unless I drink it, your will must be done.”

He came again and found them sleeping; they could not keep their eyes open. So leaving them again, he went away and prayed for the third time, saying the same thing once more.

Then he came to the disciples and said to them, “Are you still sleeping and resting? Look, the hour is approaching, and the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Get up, let us go. Look! My betrayer is approaching!” (Matthew 26:40-46)

He found them sleeping. He found them sleeping again. He found them sleeping a third time. The flesh is weak, even if the spirit is willing. Even when we take care of ourselves as best we can, sometimes we are just overwhelmed and must recover, physically as well as spiritually.

I if I don’t get regular sleep and “downtime”, I end up getting physically sick.

Yes – we are frail creatures in many ways.

Sometimes, I feel unable to do what I think is needed, because I cannot think properly, or my body is too tired or feeling unwell, or I am just emotionally unable to cope.

I can relate to that as well. God is understanding of that, because He created us as we are, and Jesus lived in the same way – as we’ve gone through the Gospel of Matthew, we’ve found numerous times where He tried to take a break or get away by Himself.

We need to recharge. We need sleep, we need to eat and drink, we need sustenance. We need breaks from stress; we need communion with God. And sometimes, we are just unable to cope.

What do we do then?

We do the best we can and ask for God to bless it. We keep trying, knowing that Christ is with us. And we take breaks, knowing that Christ is with us on them too. We are in a marathon, and Christ is with us no matter much energy or capability we have. We need to rely on Him, using the gifts and capabilities He supplies us with, in humility and love.

List when you’ve been overwhelmed and unable to cope – and yet, you’ve gotten through it. Christ is like that.

Share with those you trust.

Day 540: Seeking another way

Then he came to the disciples and found them sleeping. He said to Peter, "So, couldn't you stay awake with me for one hour? Stay awake and pray that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak." He went away a second time and prayed, "My Father, if this cup cannot be taken away unless I drink it, your will must be done."

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Jesus asked that the "cup pass from Him" (He not have to do what our heavenly Father was asking of Him), once, twice, thrice. And each time, He concluded, "Your will be done."

Sometimes God asks us to do things we do not want to do.

Like what?

Going into a dark place and offering light may sound poetic and nice and abstract, but in the reality, it often hurts. It means knowing and intentionally going into a place where there is no love, and bringing love. If there is no love, what will there be?

Hate? Apathy? Selfishness? Death?

Yes. There will be hate; you may be hated. People may be apathetic. Selfishness may reign supreme. Death may be embraced by all.

Like where?

Where someone is selling drugs that will cause addiction and death to another person – and both want the addiction satisfied, though it is embracing death.

Where people are killing each other, physically in war or inter-personal violence, or verbally with words, insults, and accusations (the name "Satan" means "Accuser").

Where people are dying, or being killed, and nobody seems to care.

Where people are seeking fortunes, or fame, or the use of force – and uncaring how it affects others. Perhaps even rejoicing if it places them "above" others.

Yet, for God's vision to come to realization, love must be brought to every dark valley, every place of evil. Healing must be offered.

Are there things that God wants you to do, that you are resisting? Actions which would bring the light of Christ, though it may cause discomfort or pain? List some of them here:

Share with those you trust.

Day 541: True Freedom

In Matthew 26:39-46, three times Jesus said, “**Father, let this cup pass from me. Yet not what I will, but what You will.**”

And three times, Father said, “This is my will.”

Jesus was showing He was truly free.

What?

What is freedom?

According to my web dictionary, “freedom is the condition of being free of restraints, especially the ability to act without control or interference by another or by circumstance.”

Isn't Jesus being constrained by the desire of His (and our) Father?

Not at all. Like any of us, Jesus could have heard the desire of our Father, and decided, “well, that’s not for me. Thanks, but no thanks.” The Father does not force. Jesus could have refused at His baptism, His temptation, His many requests for healing, His attacks from others, His frustrations with His disciples; but He did not. Here is one final time for Jesus to constrain Himself by His desire for comfort, for peace, for ease, for force or fortune or fame – and He gives it all up, all that may constrain Him, to obey His Father.

As Jesus had said to His disciples, the Son of Man was to be killed so He could rise again (Mark 8:31, 9:31, Matthew 17:23, Luke 24:7) – Jesus had to demonstrate, yet again, was He that person? Or was He bound by fear, ego, selfishness, pride, the fallen nature of humanity? In His decision, He showed the freedom to be one with God, unconcerned with what we as fallen humanity worry about. He is truly free.

The ultimate freedom is to be free of the idolatry of your own ego, for it tries to restrain us in so many ways.

What would you do if you were free of your ego? How would you follow God?

Share your thoughts and wonderings with your fellow explorers.

Day 542: Prophecy being fulfilled

While he was still speaking, Judas, one of the twelve, arrived. With him was a large crowd armed with swords and clubs, sent by the chief priests and elders of the people. (Now the betrayer had given them a sign, saying, "The one I kiss is the man. Arrest him!"). Immediately he went up to Jesus and said, "Greetings, Rabbi," and kissed him. Jesus said to him, "Friend, do what you are here to do." Then they came and took hold of Jesus and arrested him. But one of those with Jesus grabbed his sword, drew it out, and struck the high priest's slave, cutting off his ear. Then Jesus said to him, "Put your sword back in its place! For all who take hold of the sword will die by the sword. Or do you think that I cannot call on my Father and that he would send me more than 12 legions of angels right now? How then would the scriptures that say it must happen this way be fulfilled?" At that moment Jesus said to the crowd, "Have you come out with swords and clubs to arrest me like you would an outlaw? Day after day I sat teaching in the temple courts, yet you did not arrest me. But this has happened so that the scriptures of the prophets would be fulfilled." Then all the disciples left him and fled.
(Matthew 26:47-56)

"One of you will betray me." Now is Judas' time. And oh, the irony! An expression of love becomes the signal for death – instead of a holy kiss, a death kiss. Jesus calls him 'Friend', though He brings Jesus' death. Jesus, the light of the world and life-bringer, is counted among the outlaws.

And, as Jesus predicted, all His disciples flee.

12 legions of angels are somewhere between 48,000 - 72,000 angels. Jesus is basically reminding His disciples who was in charge, and what was being done was necessary, and in fact was foretold by the prophets.

But no one was happy.

Share your thoughts with your fellow explorers.

Day 543: I will never fall away!

Now the ones who had arrested Jesus led him to Caiaphas, the high priest, in whose house the experts in the law and the elders had gathered. But Peter was following him from a distance, all the way to the high priest's courtyard. After going in, he sat with the guards to see the outcome. The chief priests and the whole Sanhedrin were trying to find false testimony against Jesus so that they could put him to death. But they did not find anything, though many false witnesses came forward. Finally, two came forward and declared, "This man said, 'I am able to destroy the temple of God and rebuild it in three days.'" So the high priest stood up and said to him, "Have you no answer? What is this that they are testifying against you?" But Jesus was silent. The high priest said to him, "I charge you under oath by the living God, tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God." Jesus said to him, "You have said it yourself. But I tell you, from now on you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power and coming on the clouds of heaven."

Then the high priest tore his clothes and declared, "He has blasphemed! Why do we still need witnesses? Now you have heard the blasphemy! What is your verdict?" They answered, "He is guilty and deserves death." (Matthew 26:57-66)

"From now on you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power and coming on the clouds of heaven." This refers to Daniel 7, which portrayed a vision of God into the future. Jesus had basically said, "Yes. You finally get it."

But they didn't get it – they still didn't believe that Jesus was the Son of God, the Messiah, the Christ. And now, they were determined to kill Him for admitting it.

Do you believe Jesus is the Son of God? Why or why not?

Share with your fellow explorers.

Day 544: Playing Games

Then they spat in his face and struck him with their fists. And some slapped him, saying, "Prophecy for us, you Christ! Who hit you?" (Matthew 26:67-68).

The soldiers were playing a cruel game. It was a parody of a cruel children's game, in which children would slap one who was blindfolded – if the blindfolded one guessed who had last slapped them, they switched places.

In fact, everything they did to Jesus that night was a cruel game, literally. According to <https://bibleland.blog/the-mocking-of-jesus-by-the-soldiers-the-roman-game-of-kings/>, *"The King Game (known as Basileus in Greek) was commonly played throughout the Roman Empire by soldiers. The soldiers preferred to play using a condemned prisoner, but it is thought that a non-violent version of the game could be played amongst the soldiers themselves when a prisoner was not available. In the double-square, sheep knuckles were thrown as dice and the prisoner's experiences would move along the stone game board until finally reaching the end of the lifeline, when they would be executed."*

The Game of Kings follows so closely to the scriptural account of the Lord's mocking and torture by the Romans that the soldiers were surely playing the game."

In their minds, Jesus was no more than a plaything, a plaything which would soon be discarded like they had done so many times before. The inhumanity of man to man was on full display.

We may feel persecuted, we may feel used, we may feel abused and objectified – and Jesus was subjected to being persecuted, used, abused, and objectified. Among the worst that humans can do to each other was now being focussed on Him. Any evil which we encounter, we can be assured that God, through Christ, knows to the depth of His being what encountering evil is like.

What we shall witness together regarding what is called the Passion (or Suffering) of Christ will be hard. It was hard for Jesus, it was hard for the disciples, and it will be hard for us.

Offer all the hard times you have encountered up to Christ, knowing that He can relate through shared like experience. Let Him place His wounds with yours, cry with you, and heal you.

Share with Christ as you feel appropriate.

Day 545: Rest

Rest, receive nourishment, feed both body and soul. Reflect on the past week and care for your needs (body and spirit). Pray. Dedicate this day to God. Worship! Fill yourself with Light. In the evening get together with a group you trust and share what you would like to from the previous week – good points, hard points, what you've learned, what you've struggled with, etc. Decide again if you wish to continue journeying together or want to stop.

Know that God loves you. Celebrate, Rejoice, Give thanks, talk and walk with God. Be in shalom. Love. Pursue what is healthiest. Order your life as one pursuing facilitating as many people as possible to find the Kingdom of God. Be brave, trust God, Love.