



Sermon for the Lenten Service 3 (2nd March 2018)

• The Reading for this Devotion is written in Mk 14, 26-42:

- ^{ESV} 26 And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.
- 27 And Jesus said to them, "You will all fall away, for (*because*) it is written, 'I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered.'
- 28 But after I am raised up, I will go before you to Galilee."
- 29 Peter said to him, "Even though they all fall away, I will not (*but not I*)."
- 30 And Jesus said to him, "Truly, I tell you, this very night, before the rooster crows twice, you will deny me three times."
- 31 But he said emphatically, "If I must die with you, I will not deny you." And they all said the same.
- 32 And they went to a place called Gethsemane. And he said to his disciples, "Sit here while I pray."
- 33 And he took with him Peter and James and John, and began to be greatly distressed and troubled.
- 34 And he said to them, "My soul is very sorrowful, even to death. Remain here and watch."
- 35 And going a little farther, he fell on the ground and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him.
- 36 And he said, "Abba, Father, all things are possible for you. Remove this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will."
- 37 And he came and found them sleeping, and he said to Peter, "Simon, are you asleep? Could you not watch one hour?"
- 38 Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."
- 39 And again he went away and prayed, saying the same words.
- 40 And again he came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were very heavy, and they did not know what to answer him.
- 41 And he came the third time and said to them, "Are you still sleeping and taking your rest? It is enough; the hour has come. The Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners.
- 42 Rise, let us be going; see, my betrayer is at hand."

• (*Here ends the reading: O Christ, the Lamb of God, ...*)

• ***Dear Brothers and Sisters under the Cross of Christ!***

• Isn't it such a great thing about the biblical liturgy of the church. In such circumstances as Jesus found Himself, everybody waiting to pounce on Him. He knew it well. The circumstances according to the eyes of the world, loomed pitch black for Him. And yet, a hymn of praise sounded in the upper room concluding the last passover meal and especially the first Lord's Supper!

• Jesus had given of Himself for the New Testament to be sealed with His death on the following day. The New Testament was inaugurated by the meal of the new covenant. Looking at the circumstances informed by the Word of Jesus makes it perfectly

appropriate that a hymn of praise sounded at that very point.

• This however did not soften the stern situation Jesus and His disciples found themselves in. Satan had other plans for that night! But Jesus knew about them. They had been written many years in advance in the Holy Scriptures. Jesus warns His disciples, *“You will all fall away...”*. That is Jesus will have to drink the cup of suffering alone. He alone is left in God’s Israel. All, even His disciples, the last eleven standing, will forsake Him!

• Please note the reason Jesus gives for this prophecy. He could have said, “because I know”, yet He says: *“because it is written”*. Something very significant is revealed by this. God’s Will is revealed and written in His Word. When God speaks it, it is as good as already happened, although there could be thousands of years between when he first spoke it and when it actually happens. But, once He has spoken something, there is a necessity that it *must* happen.

• God said, recorded in Zechariah 13,7: *“Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, against the man who stands next to me,” declares the LORD of hosts. “Strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered; I will turn my hand against the little ones.”* Jesus applies this prophecy to what was going to happen that night and the following day.

• This reasoning of course only helps those who, like Jesus, trusts in the Word of God. We know that it did happen. And the Gospel reveals to us, just how true this Word was. What happens signifies its trustworthiness.

• Jesus says, the Shepherd, referring to Himself, will be struck and the sheep will be scattered. They will scatter away from the shepherd. But, it will be for a short time only, because soon, He will be raised up and will go before them to Galilee. He, Himself, then resurrected, will gather them and lead them to Galilee. So, we see the whole outline of what will happen with the Shepherd and His sheep is given by Jesus before it happens, because He knows the Will of the Father. Jesus needs no sign from heaven. He has the Word of His Father, written.

• His disciples at this stage, don’t know the Will of the Father, or we have to say, although Jesus revealed the prophecy to them- now they know about it- but they rebel against it. Peter, being something like a spokesman for them, resists the prophecy of God, because it insults him, it puts the disciples in a bad light, implying

that they are all cowards, who will desert their Master! Its their own ego, their own will and desires that opposes God's Word!

- Important thing to note: If the prophecy is right and going to happen, it will do so against the resistance of Jesus' disciples, even against a strong-willed disciple like Peter. And he means it good, if one only looks at it from a human perspective. Peter boasts [29]: *"Even though they all may fall away, but not I."* There is the "but" of rebellion. It might be true for all others, but ***not*** !
- It is then that Jesus announced to Peter, that he would deny Jesus not once, but three times! Unthinkable, out of the question, for Peter. He has made up his mind- it will not happen!
- Decidedly, with full conviction Peter proclaims his sermon for the night [31]: *"If I must die with you, I will not deny you. And they all said the same."* Peter had more followers that night than Jesus. One can imagine the other disciples applauding Peter in their hearts for this zealous confession of faith ... in himself.
- How wrong disciples of Jesus can be, if they go against the Word of God interpreted by Jesus! If they follow their own interpretation, if their own ego's and zealotness come in to interfere with God's prophecies!
- Failure is already lurking, is close by. Here it comes. They went to the garden Gethsemane. There Jesus asked three of them, Peter, James and John- the same three He took with Him onto the mountain where He was transfigured before them- to come with Him to watch and pray!
- Jesus began to be greatly distressed and troubled and He said so. He did not hide it. And He prayed a remarkable prayer: *"Abba, Father, all things are possible for you. Remove this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will."* Troublesome words. One might reason, this is the kind of information one should not allow to get into anti-Christian ears. Isn't this what they want to hear? What kind of hero do you guys have, I can hear them asking? This is like over-sharing. This is seriously troubling to our ears and minds! Jesus was asking His Father, to not continue with the mission, to be let-off from drinking the cup of death for the salvation of all people.
- But, crucial, He submitted His own will under the Will of the Father! Now, it was all

in the hands of the Father. Did God the Father really wanted your and my salvation? Or, if someone should reason, maybe Jesus was pulling off His own thing, he would be refuted. It all depended on the Father's Will. Jesus submitted Himself under the Father's Will. We know, that God's Mission proceeded. In other words, we have absolute certainty that it was, is and will always be the Father's Will that Jesus drank the cup.

- On the other hand, this also reveals to us, how difficult it was for Jesus to die. He, who had never tasted sin, never tasted evil, contrary to us, who know evil, would now be given into the hands of the sinners, and what's more, would be forsaken by God the Father! He would experience and get the full brunt of God's Wrath, He the only begotten Son, of the Father.
- It is truly amazing that Jesus shares with us very personal, intimate appeals between Himself and His Father in those absolutely critical moments. Two things are absolutely certain, the Father wanted Jesus to drink the cup and Jesus genuinely suffered! It was no game! He did not make use of His divine powers to soften the suffering.
- And while God was suffering, what were the disciples doing: sleeping, couldn't keep their eyes open. The claiming- to- be- heroes- of- faith slept while the real battle was raging. Now, when they woke up and thought that the battle would begin, it was already over. They had failed and would only realise it when it was too late. The Holy Scriptures were being fulfilled!
- That ultimately meant good news for them although they failed. It means good news for us, although we too so often still fall into sin. It means good news for all people, although they often fall into sin. Certainty of salvation depends completely on Christ Jesus. This is the best news for real failures, for real sinners. Therefore, have no fear in sharing this Word of the Cross with those you know. God promises, that His Word does not return empty!
- Glory be to Jesus! **Amen.**
- *The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the Love of God and the Communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen.*