

Rev. Todd R. Lattig / General

THROUGH THE VALLEY / Lament; Submission / Matthew 26:36–46

Jesus did not always love his options and in the midst of lament, he still freely chose to surrender to God.

Focus Statement

- Jesus did not always love his options
 - *and* in the midst of lament, he still freely chose to surrender to God.

Things to Consider

- We all have situations that we wish would go a certain way,
 - especially the kinds of painful situations that lead us to lament.
 - It is hard to let go and give it up to God.
 - As disciples, we are always going to be tempted by something easier, quicker, more aligned with our own desires, etc.
 - Are there times when we have been helpful in someone else's process of letting go of something
 - or have we gotten in the way of their surrender?

What Scripture Says

- In this passage, we see how Jesus laments, cries out to God in prayer, in the face of his impending suffering and death.
 - Notice how, even for Jesus, coming to a place of surrendering to God's will is a process.
 - Jesus acknowledges his grief and emotion (v. 38-39),

- moves into negotiation,
 - honestly bringing his fear and request before God,
 - and then he finally surrenders.
- Jesus prayed the same prayer three times before he got to that point of surrender.
 - It can take time...it's a process to be able to surrender.
 - Lament can be part of the process that gets us there.
- Jesus laments *and* ultimately surrenders to God's will.
 - Lament and surrender do not cancel each other out.
 - To surrender our lives and our situations to God
 - does not mean we have to be cheerful or dismissive in the face of pain and sorrow.
- As Jesus grows closer to God's will,
 - it becomes increasingly clear that the disciples are unable to support him in the way he had hoped and asked them to (v. 40-41, 43 & 45).

There is much we can learn from this:

1. Jesus laments (and ultimately accepts) "the cup" he must drink but there is a secondary lament here too.
 - a. Jesus laments his disciples' inability to stay awake with him and support him.
 - i. Sometimes when we are going through deep difficulties,
 1. we are also disappointed by the inability or unwillingness of people to support us how we wish they would.
 - ii. It is okay to lament this lack of support as well.
 - b. Ultimately, surrender is a strong, accepting choice we each must make for ourselves.

- i. Let's consider the lyrics to the folk hymn, "Jesus Walked This Lonesome Valley," *The Faith We Sing* #2112

Jesus walked this lonesome valley;
he had to walk it by himself.
Oh, nobody else could walk it for him;
he had to walk it by himself.

We must walk this lonesome valley;
we have to walk it by ourselves.
Oh, nobody else can walk it for us;
we have to walk it by ourselves.

You must go and stand your trial;
you have to stand it by yourself.
Oh, nobody else can stand it for you;
you have to stand it by yourself.

2. The disciples provide a contrast to Jesus.
 - a. While they (specifically, Peter) promised not to abandon him (see [Matt. 26:31-35](#)) and to even to face death with him,
 - i. they do not even stay awake to support him in prayer.
 1. They fall asleep.
 - b. They did not face the reality of the suffering Jesus was facing
 - i. but Jesus did face it, lamented, and surrendered.
 - c. Let me ask you do you find yourself more like Jesus or more like the disciples when you face suffering?
 - i. Let me quickly note:
 1. though Jesus was upset with his disciples for their lack of urgency,
 - a. he also had compassion on them.
 - i. He did not wake them the second time he found them, but he did wake them up when the time came for action.
3. Finally, what kind of support did Jesus need in his time of trial?

- a. What would it have looked like for the disciples
 - i. to stay awake with him?
- b. For those of you who are not currently personally experiencing suffering,
 - i. the message for them this week might be about how to support those who *are* in the midst of suffering and lament.
- c. Let's learn from where the disciples fell short.
 - i. We have to be patient as we listen and walk with people.
 - 1. We have to do more than eagerly promise we'll be there for them (see gain [Matt 26:35](#)) and then fail to follow through.
 - 2. We must actually stand in solidarity with them.
 - ii. Remember, we need to be honest in lament, as well as in responding to lament.
 - 1. Sometimes it is easier for us jump in to try and solve others' problems or point out where we think they need to surrender...
 - a. but again, surrender is a process and often what is most needed is someone who stands alongside, "stays awake" to others' suffering and laments along with them.
- The end of the passage shows urgency. There is a new chapter.
- The experience will be very different from here forward.
 - To move forward, there had to be a surrender.
 - *Jesus did that by freely choosing to accept the difficult thing. If applicable, you might circle back to your opening personal story and share how surrender played a role in moving forward.*
- Surrendering to God may be for a reason that we don't have the ability to understand, at least in advance.

What this Means for You

- Sometimes we are called to accept (or freely choose)

- the difficult thing before us to move forward
 - or to support others in their acceptance of the difficult thing before them.
- Our ability to surrender may change with age, experience, and wisdom.
 - We can learn from others' wisdom
 - but also trust that for us or others who may be struggling, it can feel impossible to let go.
 - Again, I cannot stress the importance of our spiritual disciplines
 - Today we will be participating in Holy Communion, a means of Grace, along with the fact that we are actively worshiping together.
 - For Lent:
 - Practicing fasting (from anything...not necessarily only food, prayer, quiet/silence... can ground people in the moment.
 - As we focus on either the future or the past,
 - surrender becomes more difficult.
 - Being grounded in the moment can help move us toward acceptance.
- I want to encourage you to practice surrender by surrendering some time and focus to God,
 - by disconnecting from the other things that distract and keep you bound.
- Friends, surrender is an important practice for us disciples as we learn to give more areas of their lives over to God.
 - But the concept itself is frightening.
 - What will God do with my surrender?
 - What are the implications of such surrender?
 - Let me remind you that with surrender comes freedom –

- freedom to follow God fully, to become more of who God has created you to be.

What This Means for Us

- We've seen what Jesus did;
 - as people who place ourselves under his lordship,
 - and individually seek to surrender better,
 - how can we, as leaders, encourage the people in our church and in our lives to embrace the power of surrender,
 - including not always trying to make it more easy for comfortable (which can be hard, we don't like to see people suffer!)?
 - How can we get out of the way while remaining supportive?
 - What and how we surrender can be different for different people and their circumstances.
 - What does it look like for our church to surrender to God's will
 - even as we grieve and lament changes we don't like to see, conflicts, and painful situations?
 - We are currently going through one such now...
 - A PASTORAL CHANGE is coming this July and that means other things will change along with that.
 - How are we going to respond to that? How can we surrender to what God has in store,
 - even as those changes have us on edge?
 - Perhaps we can be graceful toward each other even as we feel pressure and anxiety caving in on us.
 - Perhaps we can communicate honestly with each other so that everyone has the benefit of context...
 - knowing each other's heart and feelings.

- Perhaps we can learn to grieve together...to be honest about our feelings and honestly open to learning how others feel...
 - rather than seeing ourselves as the only ones with grief.
- Friends, together, we can surrender to Jesus and allow him to guide us from where we are to where he is calling us to be. Amen? Amen.