

Reeks: Om Saam met God te Werk

Titel: *Not my will*

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Good Morning friends, it is good to be with you this morning and you may want to turn to your folder and just pull out this leaflet which has the readings for today on it, there is also some space there for you to maybe make one or two notes if you have a sense of maybe God saying something to you that you want to take with you into the new week. I want to read our gospel reading for this morning, that comes from Matthew Chapter 26, it is versus 36 to 45, 'And 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 and 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 further, he fell with his face to the ground and prayed, my father, Abba, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me, yet not as I will but as you will.

And then he returned to his disciples and he found them sleeping, could you men not keep watch with me for one hour, he asked Peter, watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation, the spirit is willing but the body is weak and then he went away a second time and prayed again, Abba, my father, if it is not possible for this cup to be taken away unless I drink it, may your will be done. When he came back, he again found them sleeping because their eyes were heavy and so he left them and he went away once more and prayed the third time, saying the same thing and then he returned to the disciples and said to them, 'Are you still sleeping and resting, look the hour is near and the son of man is betrayed into the hands of Silus'.

We thank God for this word that comes to us in the gospel of Matthew, friends I want to begin this morning by asking you a deeply personal question, I want to ask you this morning whether you have ever been to Gethsemane, have you ever been to Gethsemane? Now let me make it clear, I am not asking you today whether you have ever been to the holy land, whether you have ever been to Galilee or whether you have been to Jerusalem, that is not what I mean, that is not what I mean, when I ask you this morning whether you have been to Gethsemane, I am asking you whether you have ever faced anything so painful that it has threatened to overwhelm you, that is what I am asking you because that is what Jesus experienced when he went to Gethsemane himself.

Now of course, let me make this also very clear, we can never go through what Jesus went through, the suffering, the anguish, the agony, that he went through was absolutely unique to his life and to his calling as God's messiah, we will never have to go to Calvary like he did, never, we will never have to carry the burden of this world's sorrow and sin and suffering, like he did, never, thank God, thank God. But would you not agree with me this morning that there come moments when you and I face things which are so painful that we cry out like Jesus did to God, 'God, Father, will you please take this cup from me', sometimes it is the cup of grief, sometimes it is a cup of divorce, of relationship pain and struggle and betrayal, sometimes it is the cup of unfulfilled longings and yearnings that we live with everyday, sometimes it is a cup of business failure, of retrenchment, of loss, sometimes it is a cup of a deep disappointment, when things don't turn out as I wanted them to be, sometimes it is a cup of illness, of sickness, sometimes it is a cup of getting old, of ageing and your body no longer has the energy and the health and the vigour that it once had. I am turning 60 soon, you will pray for me please but a friend said to me the other day, 'Trevor, it is not the end, don't worry but you can see the end from there', have you ever been to Gethsemane? Maybe some of you are saying under your breath right now, 'Trevor you are speaking to me because I am living in my Gethsemane right now, right now' and if you are, if you are, if that is where you are right now, can I ask permission from you to be your Pastor today, I cannot be your doctor, I cannot be your psychiatrist or your psychologist, I cannot be your financial advisor or broker but I can be your pastor and as your pastor today, if you are going through Gethsemane, I want to extend an invitation and it is an invitation to bring the story of your Gethsemane and to put it alongside the story of Jesus' Gethsemane because when we do that, something happens.

When we do that, Christ steps out of the gospel, comes alongside of us as we face whatever we have to face and when he does that, he helps us to find a way through and that is my prayer this morning, that is my prayer. For those of us who are facing Gethsemane, that somehow Christ will step out of the gospel and will come alongside of us so that we may find our way through whatever it is threatening to overwhelm us, so come with me just for a few moments, come with me as we step into the story of Jesus in his Gethsemane moment, will you notice a few things with me, will you notice first of all that Jesus was able to find his way through Gethsemane because he was willing to be vulnerable with those closest to him, write that down, he was willing to be vulnerable with those that were closest to him.

Look at these words again, from that story as they come up on the screen, Verse 37, 'Jesus took Peter and the two sons of Zebedee along with him and he began to be sorrowful and troubled', now watch this, 'And then he said to them', here is Jesus becoming vulnerable, he says to them 'My soul is overwhelmed, it is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death, stay here and keep watch with me', here is Jesus who up to this moment has always been strong, he has been leading, he has been teaching, he has been guiding and suddenly he is in a place of vulnerability, it is always a frightening thing, isn't it, when you are with someone who has always been strong and suddenly they are vulnerable.

I just think of this moment in our nation, of Nelson Mandela, who has always been this incredibly statesman, a person of incredible power and who now is in a moment of extreme vulnerability and fragility and it is a moment of anxiety for the whole nation or you can think of your own parents, maybe your own father and he was always so strong and then one day you hear him weeping in the bedroom and you know that he is a vulnerable man or you had a colleague at work who has always been so confident about everything and then one day, you sense a crisis of confidence, it is a frightening thing or you know a pastor who has always been full of safe and love and hope and one day, he or she finds themselves in a moment of struggle and anguish and vulnerability, it is not easy. But in this moment, Jesus, please underline this, Jesus shares his vulnerability with those closest to him. I want to suggest friends today that when we face something painful that threatens to overwhelm us, we find our way through Gethsemane when we are willing to be vulnerable. In 1978 I had the wonderful privilege of working for a few months in Washington DC in a small, little church that has affected the lives of that city incredibly, the political life, the economic life of that city, that has ministered amongst those on the streets and I remember one day sitting with the Minister of that church, a Pastor, by the name of Gordon Crosby, a wonderful man and one day he said a sentence to me that scorched its way into my life, he said these words to me, he said, 'You know Trevor, there comes a day when everyone of us needs a wailing wall, there comes a day when everyone of us needs a wailing wall, a place where we can be vulnerable, a place where we can tell the story of our struggle, a place where we can process our pain', have you got a place like that?

Don't try got it on your own, find a wailing wall, maybe it is a professional person, maybe it is a dear friend, maybe it is a Pastor, maybe it is a psychologist, maybe it is a family member that you can really trust but find a wailing wall, someone that you can just share the struggle with. Before we go any further, let me just say a quick word, to those of us today who are not in Gethsemane, can I ask you today in God's name, will you be willing to be a wailing wall for someone else, we are surrounded each day by people who are being overwhelmed and the greatest gift that we can give to them is the gift of our presence, just to be there with them. Jesus said to his disciples, 'Just watch and pray' and that is the gift we give to those who struggle, we simply watch and pray with them.

A few weeks ago I got called to the ICU unit, at the Lenmed Hospital, in Benoni and I found my way to a bed in the ICU unit, a young man, early forties, had had a terrible heart attack, he was unconscious, around his bed, there were three children, all under the age of 10 and across the way on the other side of the bed, there was his wife with no hair because she was struggling, her own battle with cancer and here you are in an ICU, now what can I do, I can't do anything, I can be there, I can watch and pray, I can offer the gift of my presence and I can ask God, 'God, help me to be a wailing wall for this couple'.

Let us go back to the story, will you notice with me that Jesus was able to find his way through Gethsemane because he knew, experientially he knew God as Abba, as his father. Look again at these words as they come up, 'Going a little further, he fell on to his face and he prayed, Abba', the Aramaic word there is Abba, my father, my father, Abba is a beautiful word, no one, no one ever in human history before Jesus had ever called God Abba, no one, Jesus was the first person ever to say to God, Abba and it is a word that expresses a deep intimate spiritual bond with God, it is a word that holds together things like intimacy and closeness and oneness and reverence and all.

Jesus knew that he was bonded with the father and so he was able to find his way through Gethsemane, he knew God as Abba and the tragedy for us, is that when we go through our Gethsemane, what so often happens, is we think God is punishing us, that God is against us. Just yesterday, early in the morning, I get a phone call from a young woman, in her late thirties, she is a massage therapist in Benoni and she is going through her Gethsemane and she says to me, 'Trevor, God must be punishing me' and that so often happens when we are in Gethsemane, it is almost as if all our negative understandings of God come to the surface. Even though we say to God you are my father, in our guts, we don't know it and if you are in Gethsemane today, I invite you today to come to know God as Abba and you may say to me, 'Trevor, how do I get to know God as Abba'.

The only way I know is to go on a journey with Jesus Christ, to receive Jesus into our lives, to become his disciples, his followers, to follow him and as we do that, what happens, is that the spirit of Christ enters our spirit,

read Romans Chapter 8 versus 14, 15 and 16, the spirit of Jesus enters our spirit and we cry out, Abba, father, Abba father. If you are in Gethsemane this morning, can I invite you to get to know God as Abba, otherwise we will never get through Gethsemane, can I say one more thing, Jesus was able to go through Gethsemane because in that moment of anguish, he was willing to let God be God, he was willing to let God be God. Look at these words and they are the last words that I want to show you today, 'Going a little further, he fell with his face to the ground and he prayed, Abba, my father, if it is possible, may this be cup be taken from me', now look at this, 'Yet, not as I will, but as you will'.

He is willing to let God be God and we know today that that cup was not taken from him, Jesus had to drink it but as he drank it and as he let God be God in his life, ultimately he experienced resurrection and I think it is the same with us, it is the same with us. When I am willing to let God be God, when I am willing to really seek God's way and will for my life, when I am in Gethsemane, somehow God leads me to resurrection and you know and I know that one of the hardest things in life sometimes is just to let God be God, we want to be God, we want to call the shots, we want to determine what happens, we want to be in charge, we want our will to be done.

I love a story of a little guy, he is 8 years of age, he is causing chaos, he is running around the house, he is turning things upside down, his mom says to him, 'Come on now, sit down', he refuses to sit down, he causes trouble for his sister, eventually his mom goes across to him and forces him down and says, 'Sit there' and he looks at her and he says 'Mom, outside, I may be sitting down but inside, I am still standing up' and somehow that stubbornness never leaves us, it is so hard to leave us but when I am willing to go on this incredible journey, from willfulness, from wanting everything to happen my own way, to willingness, to letting God be God, to letting God to be the God of compassion in and through me, to letting God, the God of mercy be the God of mercy in me and through me, that is when I find my way through Gethsemane into resurrection. Let me end, is there anyone here this morning who is going through Gethsemane, you don't have to put up your hand, is there anyone here this morning facing something so painful that it is threatening to overwhelm you right now, it is threatening to overwhelm you? Will you let me be your Pastor, can I invite you to find a wailing wall where you can be vulnerable, to invite you to stop running from your pain, to stop pretending that you have got it altogether, to find a place, where you can be vulnerable, a safe place, can I invite you to get to know God intimately as Abba, as Abba, as Abba and the only way that happens is as we go on journey with Jesus, Jesus said, 'I am the way, the truth, the life, no one comes to Abba except by me' and then can I invite you to let God be God, to let God be God, so that God can lead you and me to resurrection, even if we have to drink the cup, Amen.

Let me pray for you, 'Dear God, we have been speaking today about deep and difficult things, we thank you that as we come to you, we can come to someone who has been through Gethsemane, we ask today Lord, that as we come to you, that you will step off the pages of the Bible and that you will step into our lives and into our Gethsemanes so that we may be able to find with you a way through to resurrection, to new beginnings, to a new start. Lord there are some of us today who are in a very good place and life is going well, Lord will you help us to learn how to be wailing walls for those who are in Gethsemane, so that we might reflect your love and your mercy and your grace, this is our prayer and we offer it to you, in your name and for your sake, Amen, Amen'.

Friends, as you go your way, may the joy of Jesus Christ be with you, thank you friends, God Bless you and take care, Amen.

