

# **Faith Walk! - Sermon Discussion**

**Date** : 27 September 2020

**Sermon Title** : Wrestling in the Garden

**Speaker** : Rev Raymond Fong

**Text** : Luke 22:39-46

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## **INTRODUCTION**

In our prayers we wrestle with distractions, busyness and sleepiness. Jesus too wrestled in prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane. Though the name of the garden may not be mentioned in this scripture text, we can infer from parallel passages in Mark and Matthew that it is the Garden of Gethsemane, located at the Mount of Olives that Jesus went to pray. When in Jerusalem, Jesus would spend His nights at the Mount of Olives, presumably at the Garden of Gethsemane, a place of quiet, to rest after a full day of ministry. (Luke 21:37) This is also where Judas led the Roman soldiers and temple guards to arrest Jesus because he knew Jesus would be there.

Gardens have a spiritual significance in the Bible. In Genesis 2 and 3, human history began and sin entered this world in the Garden of Eden and it will end and climax in a garden city where there will be no more sins. (Revelation 22) In between the garden where men failed and the garden where God reigns, is "Gethsemane", the garden where Jesus accepted the cup from the Father's hand. The first Adam rebelled in the Garden of Eden and brought sin and death into the world but the last Adam submitted in the Garden of Gethsemane and brought life and salvation for all who will believe (1 Corinthians 15:45). At the garden, Jesus wrestled and submitted but it is more than just a functional submission in His prayer.

### ***Wrestle from the perspective of God and Jesus:***

#### **1. A wrestle of love**

Jesus prayed in agony, distress and was astonished by the grief that He was experiencing (Mark 14:33-34), and His sweat was like drops of blood (Luke 22:44). Either Jesus' sweat was thick like drops of blood or Luke was referring to a rare physical medical condition called "*hematidrosis*" where under great emotional stress, the blood vessels rupture in the sweat glands producing a mix of blood and sweat.

- More than just the physical pain, Jesus knew that by going to the cross as our atoning sacrifice, He will bear the judgment of all the sins of man and the wrath of God. He did not wish to face the Father's judgment and anger for sin and thus cried to the Father to remove that cup from Him, if it is the Father's will. We can imagine God the Father equally wrestling with the decision to let His Son drink the cup.

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*For we walk by faith, not by sight. 2 Corinthians 5:7*

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- Perhaps the real reason for Jesus' agony in the garden was that He knew that at the cross, His Father would abandon Him and forsake Him. Jesus would be left all alone on the cross and this separation from the Father, with whom the Son is one, is an indescribable pain. (Matt 27:46)
- In Mark's gospel, Jesus referred to His Father as "abba" which in Aramaic is often associated with intimacy similar to "daddy". So Jesus crying out "abba" in this prayer must have gone like a knife straight to the Father heart of God because the Father knows that abandoning His Son hanging alone on the cross would bring much agony and pain.

## **How much God loves us**

In the garden, Jesus submitted to be abandoned by His Father, if it was the Father's choice. God the Father so love us that He made the choice to give and abandon His only Son so that we will never be abandoned or spiritually orphaned by being separated from His love. The Garden of Gethsemane captured an amazing wrestle of love where Jesus knows the love of His Father for His creation and this love will bring Him to the cross.

May we be humbled by this amazing love that our King would die for us and in response, enter our own gardens; to deny ourselves, bear our crosses daily and follow Him (Luke 9:23); because all the crosses in our lives call for obedience and surrender to God in our garden of wrestling prayer.

## **3 characteristics of our wrestle in prayer:**

### **2. A wrestle in authentic weakness**

In Gethsemane we see a different side of Jesus; no longer fearless, in full control and power as shown in the miracles He performed. Here, He was vulnerable and authentic, pleading in humility, on His knees, not to have to suffer. Many of us when helpless in the face of challenges would ask God to take the suffering away from us and Jesus shows that He is just like us.

We need to be vulnerable, to know "It's okay not to be okay" before God. Let us be authentic and admit we are afraid, lonely or weak, so God's strength can come upon us. The more we lay down our self-reliance, the more we admit we cannot do it on our own and need God's strength; then we shall find the strength to carry our cross.

### **3. A wrestle for faith-filled surrender**

We often quote "Not my will but Yours be done", but sometimes it is actually a forced submission when we give in to God's will because we know we can never win against Him. The wrestle in the garden will move us from a place of forced submission to a place of willing surrender; a faith-filled surrender. Hebrews 5:7 tells us that God heard His Son's cries but He did not answer His Son's prayers; but Jesus submitted in faith to His Father's purposes.

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It was not an immediate process as we picture Jesus on His knees wrestling with God to take the cup away, then says, "It's not my will". He goes back time and again to plead with God as He struggled in His journey, as a process, until He finally reached a point where He submits to God's will, having faith to believe that the Father's will is always more beautiful.

Let us have faith to trust that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him who are called according to His purpose (Romans 8:28); to trust that His eyes are always on us, to trust His heart even when we cannot see His plan as we bear our crosses and wrestle in the garden till we finally reach a faith-filled surrender.

#### **4. A wrestle of watchful prayer**

In the garden when Jesus went back to where He left His disciples, He found them sleeping. (Luke 22:45-46) The disciples were sorrowful because at the Passover meal Jesus spoke about His death (Luke 22:14-21), so they were tired and slept. But Jesus needed them to be praying; to stand with Him, to watch and pray so that they would not give in to temptation. Mark and Matthew recorded that Jesus went to the disciples three times and each time He found them sleeping.

We are also to watch and pray so as not to fall into temptation; for the spirit is willing but the flesh is weak. (Matt 26:41) Our temptation may be to give up our cross, do things in our way, or stop praying all together and stop seeking and wrestling with God in prayer. Jesus knows our flesh is weak because of many distractions and our flesh succumbs to sleepiness, apathy and indifference. We need God's grace to persevere and stay in our wrestling prayer, to find our surrender and experience a fresh revival. God promises a way out for us even though the crosses that we have to carry may seem unbearable at times. (1 Corinthians 10:13)

#### ***God's presence in every wrestle***

Just like how angels announced the births of John the Baptist and Jesus, preparing for Jesus to come, now, an angel came to prepare Jesus to leave by going to the cross. In His wrestling in the garden, Jesus experienced God's divine strength, comfort and presence through a heavenly ministering angel. (Luke 22:43) God's presence is also with us in every wrestle through a ministering angel - Jesus' heavenly presence with us in all our wrestles.

#### **CONCLUSION**

"Every life has its Gethsemane and every Gethsemane has its angel" – Dr. George Morrison. We are not alone in our struggles or bearing our crosses. God loves us so much that He gave His only Son for our salvation. Let us go to our loving God in authentic weakness and faith-filled surrender; to watch and pray so that we will not succumb to temptation but know that Jesus is always with us in our wrestling in the garden.

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## **Faith Walk! - Sermon Discussion**

As a group, spend some time to share your success and struggle in fulfilling what you/your group had committed to do at the previous meeting.

### A. Review Sermon Content

***Purpose: Reflect on one key takeaway.***

Appoint someone to read Luke 22:39-46 twice, slowly.

1. At the end of the reading, the reader will say, ‘This is the Word of the Lord.’

All to respond, “Thanks be to God.” Our response reminds us that this is the Word of the Lord. Just as God had spoken to His people in the past, He is still speaking to us even today, right now.”

- a. As God's word was read, which verse speaks to you the most?

- b. What is the key takeaway for you from the sermon “Wrestling in the Garden”?

- c. How will you align the way you live to your key takeaway?

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## **B. Relate Sermon Content**

***Purpose: Relate with the Truth and Resolve for Transformation.***

- 2a. Why is it important that the result of our wrestling prayer with God is not just a functional submission but a faith-filled surrender like Jesus'?
- 2b. How does knowing that we wrestle with “authentic weakness”, “faith-filled surrender” and “watchful prayer” help us better posture ourselves in seeking God in prayer?
- 2c. What does “God’s presence in every wrestle” mean to you?
  
- 3a. (i) Do you seek God in wrestling prayer?  
(ii) Is there a cross you are bringing to God in wrestling prayer in your life now?
- 3b. What is one thing you need to do or not do so as to reach a faith-filled surrender to God's will in 3a(ii)?
- 3c. How can your group members encourage or help you achieve 3b above, for the next week(s) until your next meeting?

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## **C. Testimonies and Prayer**

***Purpose: Give glory to God and seek Him.***

4. Share your personal testimony on a “Gethsemane” experience where Jesus’ divine strength, comfort and presence ministered to you in your wrestling prayer regarding a cross you had to bear.

OR

Give thanks to God for empowering you to overcome temptations in watchful prayer.

5. Commit all that have been shared in 3b and 3c to God, asking for Jesus’ presence to be with you in your wrestle to follow through what you and your group have committed to do in the following week(s), until your next meeting.

With your prayer partner(s), take turns to personally thank God for His amazing love for you, sacrificing His only Son; to be separated from each other at the cross, so you may be reconciled to God through Jesus’ blood. Commit to enter your own gardens; to deny yourselves, bear your crosses daily and follow Him (Luke 9:23) and ask for the Holy Spirit’s empowerment in watchful pray; to persevere so as not to fall into temptations.

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