

26:44

And he left them, and went away again, and prayed the third time, saying the same words. Well, that doesn't seem very deep now, does it? I guess that means those are not the "vain repetitions" we thought about in Matthew 6:

*6:6 But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly. 7 But when ye pray, use not **vain repetitions**, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking.*

So know this, whatever "vain repetitions" means, it doesn't mean to ask for the same thing three times. Apparently the dissuasion to use repetition is to avoid mindless incantations that have no heart behind them. On the other hand, we can see that there is plenty of heart behind Jesus' prayer. Moreover, this is a two way communication. Jesus went from a request in verse 39 to a request in verse 42 with a certain increased level of awareness as to the will of God. This is anything but "vain."

26:45

Then cometh he to his disciples, and saith unto them, Sleep on now, and take *your* rest: I'll mention here that we have before us a good piece of training: when you have two translations that disagree,¹ you don't have to do either of the extremes: 1. Throw your hands up and say "what's the use? I don't know Greek!"; nor do you have to 2. Shrug your shoulders and say "what does it matter? It doesn't change the meaning of the overall text."² I will only say here that neither the Nestle-Aland's 27th edition³ nor the *Textus Receptus* contain this in question form if all we are doing is considering punctuation in the Greek New Testaments. We do understand, however, that Greek punctuation was added after the era when the New Testament was written. We actually find out, as a matter of fact, that "The form of a Greek question is not necessarily different from a statement; the punctuation and context are your main clues."⁴

So, if we suspect that the punctuation is not concrete or "set in stone," we consider the context. If Judas is walking up as Jesus is speaking and verse 46 occurs just beyond verse 45 (which appears to be the natural reading of the passage), then there is no time for the three disciples to "sleep on and rest," for Jesus says, "the betrayer is here, get up."

behold, the hour is at hand, and the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Herein a sober reminder that it will not always be time to pray. As a matter of fact—even more soberly—there is not always time to pray. Sometimes, it is too late to pray. Sometimes, the hour has passed where you and I can affect the transpiring of certain events. I do not know what would have been different, other than the experience of Jesus, had the disciples been faithful to "watch and pray." I say this because of the next phrase. There was a time when something would occur. Again, we are faced with the reality of Daniel 9 and its great accuracy. We are also faced with the reality that our prayers do not always affect the timing of something (although they may) as much as they may affect the experience of that very same thing.

26:46

Rise, let us be going: behold, he is at hand that doth betray me. These are the words of somebody who indeed knows that it is the doing of His Father and the time is right. Think about all the ways somebody could have reacted to this—knowing the discomfort that followed both during and after the arrest. Eventually, one must simply set their face like a rock (Isaiah 50:7) and proceed to the Father's will.

¹Your translation may read "Are you still sleeping?"

²This may be the most harmful to the understanding of a "verbal, plenary inspiration of the Bible." If a phrase is made up of words, and a paragraph of phrases, it doesn't take too many words to change the meaning of a paragraph.

³Eberhard Nestle et al., *The Greek New Testament*, 27th ed. (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1993), Mt 26:45.

⁴William D. Mounce, *Basics of Biblical Greek: Grammar*, ed. Verlyn D. Verbrugge, Third Edition. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009).

Be that as it may, imagine Jesus' prayer life informing Him that what His Scripture-reading life had informed Him was right and that His Father was equipped and able to carry Him through—carry Him through to death, that is. Remember, friends, Jesus had never been dead before. What if part of His “cup” was the human uncertainty of what that would be like? I want a Scripture life that informs me of the future, yes. But I want a prayer life that informs my emotions as well. “Let’s get up and go meet the will of my Father.” Totally unpleasant. Completely un-enjoyable. The will of the Heavenly Father found in the confused face of a friend. The will of God the Father found in the eyes of perhaps indifferent soldiers and indignant priests. They are there to conquer, and so is Jesus—through surrender to the Father.

26:47

And while he yet spake, lo, Judas, one of the twelve, “Matthew, we haven’t forgotten.” What is he doing here with this phrase **one of the twelve**? It seems like he is writing this out of shock. **came, and with him a great multitude with swords and staves,** Isn’t this laughable? The one who is controlling weather patterns in Matthew 8 is now going to be subdued with soldiers? It seems that Judas should have known better. Remember, we believe the text says that he did.

Even Jesus acts like this is irrational. Look at verse 55 where Jesus brings up the point that they had apparent opportunity earlier with the same apparent fire power. What is He getting at? The end of verse 54 tells us Jesus was in effect telling them as they heard him rebuke the sword-swinging disciple: “The only reason we are even talking is because Scripture said this would happen. If My Father’s will, as revealed in Scripture, were not playing out here, I would fry all of you, and you knew it then as well as you do now.”

We could let the **chief priests and elders of the people** off the hook for seeking to bind Jesus if they were nowhere around during his miracles and if they only heard his teaching and if they felt like he had hundreds hiding out with Him in the garden. We would even let them off the hook if they arrested Him already. Oh, no, We find right away that Jesus speaks to the whole lot of them—calling them to bear witness that there are reasons why they did not do it before, and now they are doing it under the darkness.

26:48-49

Now he that betrayed him gave them a sign, saying, Whomsoever I shall kiss, that same is he: hold him fast. 49 And forthwith he came to Jesus, and said, Hail, master; and kissed him. Such a strange greeting from somebody who seeks to harm you? This is a word that prior to this time is used three times by Matthew (2:10; 5:12; 18:13), and each time is translated as “rejoice.” So this is meant to be a cheerful, honorific greeting. When the word is used in chapter 27, it is a mock greeting to Jesus as “king.” When it is used after Jesus’ resurrection in chapter 28 it is a cheerful, consoling greeting to the women who found the empty tomb. This is another clue to me that Judas was either the most heinous, hateful, cocky, gloater of a former friend that could ever be conceived...or that he was intending on this being a happy occasion after all. Satan-possessed, Satan-obsesses, Satan-impressed...whatever you wish to say, he was fooled and bewitched, but something tells me that the greeting of Judas and the response and actions of Jesus after Peter’s cavalier act of defense of Jesus signal a forthcoming, shocking awareness: Judas had indeed delivered the Messiah, the Son of Man, to death. Remember his sorrowful realization in the next chapter.

26:50

And Jesus said unto him, Friend, wherefore art thou come? Here, as in Matthew 26:45, we have a difference of opinion as to whether it should be a question or a statement. The ironic thing is that while the some versions pose a question in verse 45, here they post a statement instead of a question.

Then came they, and laid hands on Jesus, and took him. Because of our myriad of parallels between Adam in Eden and Jesus around His death, I side with the question form of this translation. Remember, we have already seen the disparity between Jesus and Adam in the prayer of Jesus. In our second brush with Eden in this passage, we find God asking a particular friend that was walking with Him a soul-searching question. “Why are you here?” seems simple enough. Of course, so did “Adam, where are you?” You see, once again—as pointed out in 1:1—Jesus is the ultimate and perfect Adam and the flesh-crazy, manipulative arm of “making things

happen” and nationalism has never produced anything God-glorifying: not in Eden and not in Gethsemane; and certainly not in America.

26:51

And, behold, one of them which were with Jesus stretched out *his* hand, and drew his sword, and struck a servant of the high priest's, and smote off his ear. It is a strange action this man, identified by John as Peter, takes. What is he doing? First of all, Matthew must know it's Peter. He knows from verse 37 that there were only three men who entered the garden with Jesus. Why did he not know which of these men it was if he knew of the event taking place? Since we must assume that he knew who it was, why did he not mention Peter? Was it because he had already singled Peter out so many times and was seeking to show a little more deference? Was it because he was about to showcase Peter as the denier? Was it because Judas was to be the biggest villain? Who knows? At any rate, one must wonder what Peter is doing? Was he expecting to be martyred here? Was he expecting to somehow survive a flurry with a multitude of soldiers and but 2 fellow—and at the best case 10—fellow freedom fighters? Was he expecting Jesus to bail them out by flashing some of that “Son of Man” power?

26:52-53

Then said Jesus unto him, Put up again thy sword into his place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword. 53 Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels? Does anybody else think it's marvelous that Jesus, after having to bend his will to the Father's, feels the power still to ask this same Father for immediate deliverance from this hour? What a mystery is taking place here! I tell you that this is so far outside of my understanding. It seems as though Jesus is aware He could come out of this place and yet...at the same time...he cannot! Surely, Matthew is not seeking to mislead us! Surely, Jesus did not forget what He just prayed! The only thing I can say is that “this really did happen and I have no idea how to grasp or help others to grasp this phenomenal relationship between the God the Father and His Only Begotten Son!” All I can say is that since He did not ask His Father to deliver Him that this is yet another display of His submission. In other words, by Jesus' actions, He was saying “Although I have the access; and although I have the enablement...I do not have the authority to ask for such a thing!”

Or, even more powerfully, the pain that Jesus has felt, is feeling, and will feel is not at all between the forsaking disciples, the betraying deceiver, the jealous priestly class, or the disoriented Roman pontiff. This is the coordination of God satisfying His Own justice. This is the provision of the Father, using human instrumentality, to ransom those same wicked human instruments through the spotless Son of Man (Matthew 20:28). Or, more concisely said, “This is a conversation between God the Father and His Son Jesus. This is a drama between the Godhead; not silly, fickle, sons of Adam.”

So it is today. As we submit, as ransomed souls, to the Father of all spirits made perfect (Hebrews 12), we—although we may be entangled by the snares of men—are a part of a conversation with the Father, about plans from the Father, to bring glory to the Father by His Son Jesus in like manner as we have seen Him display even here.

This is what we do when we hear of unpleasant days ahead for the church. When we hear of our young ladies being the subject of a bill that just passed a house subcommittee requiring them to be a part of the draft we are tempted to fret. When we know of a possibility of losing our tax exempt status; when we consider that our religious liberty will probably be sacrificed before the cries of a sexually depraved, morally decadent and ever-increasingly secular society, we ask the Father to remove our cup. We do so today...and if it becomes clear that we are to carry a cross...we look at one another and say **arise, let us be going.**

When God calls us to different fields and we find ourselves quaking in our shoes; when He bids us follow Him to difficult tasks and hard burdens and vulnerable times, we ask for relief from heavy hearts and mental dilemmas; then we embolden our hearts by the Spirit of God and say **arise, let us be going.**

Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels? This has the idea of “calling the Father to His side with 12 legions of angels.” One understands that Jesus uses the number 12 as before in this book (Matthew 19:28) to refer to this “New Israel”,

and is a sort of rebuke to Peter and the others that He [Jesus] is not limited to the aid of 12 disciples, but has the help—should He call headquarters—of angels...not just angels, but thousands of angels; not just angels, but “twelve thousands of angels.”⁵

26:54-55

But how then shall the scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be? 55 In that same hour said Jesus to the multitudes, Are ye come out as against a thief with swords and staves this can also be a club or stick. for to take me? I sat daily with you teaching in the temple, and ye laid no hold on me. See commentary under verse 47.

26:56

But all this was done, that the scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled. Then all the disciples forsook him, and fled. I wish I knew more about Matthew. We find his conversion in chapter 9 and his calling to apostleship in chapter 10. In this short chapter, 3 times (26:8; 26:35 before this), Matthew courageously confesses to his complicit cowardice. “I left the Lord too.”⁶

From a strictly pragmatic side, what is it about people that tell their story of rejection of God’s will like Matthew? Why do those who find liberty in Christ also relish mentioning their old lives? It seems the reason is simple: we want people to see how deep the pit of our rejection of Christ, our fear of the unknown, and our capitulation to the fads and styles and voices of the day—just how deep that pit was. The reason we discuss how we were among those who “fled” is so that they too will rejoice with us when they see what deliverance and cleanliness and mercy look like.

Today, we have a clear-cut Gospel to believe: Christ died for our sins to deliver us from them (Matthew 1:21 and 20:28) and rose again. Matthew was not such a believer as seen in Matthew 20 & Matthew 26. He denied the entire drama by his own admission. He was not, in any way, a New Testament believer prior to this chapter so all the questions about “whether or not the disciples lost their salvation” is moot. What is not so cloudy is that God’s character is on display here. If anybody felt like they were beyond the reach of Heaven on this night—it was Matthew. If anybody felt like it was brainless to hope in a resurrection or a new life afterward or an afterlife with this same Jesus and God the Father, Matthew was among them. What about you? Have you been following from miles behind? Have you found yourself deep in sin—surely nobody will find you and nobody’s looking for you?

Do you think that the character of the Lord Jesus has changed? Do you not remember that the very same Lord Whom you forsook in this chapter of your life was the One for Whom you forsook all to follow in chapter 9? Do you not remember that you would have never gone from “forsaking all” to “all forsaking” had the Lord not passed by your life to begin with? Do you think that you are feeling the weight of your own failures leaving your very mind as you HEAR this because the Lord has forsaken the One who has forsaken Him? I say unto you, that the One Who drank the cup for you drank even your sin of forsaking Him? Will you believe that this is so, and return to Him and find healing and forgiveness? Will You? You have not out-sinned God’s grace. You can do no worse act than you have already done. Your sins have crucified the Savior. What worse can you do?

⁵ John Peter Lange and Philip Schaff, *A Commentary on the Holy Scriptures: Matthew* (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2008), 487; it seems to go without saying that this source (as well as others) hold to a legion being 6000 soldiers.

⁶ Let’s get the conversation out of the way. Did Judas have to betray? Did Matthew have to leave? The honest truth is that in some cases (such as here looking back at the prophecy of Zechariah in Matthew 26:31), the prophecy appears to be speaking from an omniscient perspective as if to be saying “here is what will happen with or without anybody’s permission because...it just will.”

Other times, such as was discussed in 26:18 and 26:24, and in this episode (verse 54), the prophecies are a script that must be followed...so let’s do what we’re supposed to do. What was the motive? Was Jesus moved to fulfill them out of obedience to the Father or out of the realization that “the Father would make it happen anyway so let’s get this over with?” The answer will tell you if you are a theological liberal who believes that these folks were just self-fulfilling the prophecies or if you are an inerrantist who believes these were truly divines who both felt compelled to obey and resigned that God’s will must—absolutely must—be done (with realities that the fear of the Lord keeps us from interfering with His very obvious work).