

**+ Luke 22:39-46 + Name of Wondrous Love—Jesus<sup>1</sup> + Lenten Midweek #2 + 20 February 2013 +**

What's your favorite name for the Savior? Chances are it's probably Jesus. That's what we first learned to call him as little ones. ***"Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so..."*** As the years advance, it's still the name that we treasure. ***"Jesus, lead us on till our rest is won..."*** (*Christian Worship* 422:1)

Why is the name of Jesus so precious to us? It's a name given from heaven. Not doting parents, but God himself picked that name as we were reminded in the last hymn. Nine months before the Savior's birth, it was given to his mother Mary and then later also to his foster father Joseph. ***"Give him the name Jesus,"*** the angel messenger told them (Luke 1:31; Matthew 1:21). It's also precious because the name fits. After all, the name Jesus means "Savior" or "helper". One short name of only five letters, but in those five letters, God simply describes his plan of salvation for you and me.

Best of all, we associate God's wondrous love for sinners with that name. How can you use or hear the name Jesus without marveling at the divine love behind your salvation? This year in our Lenten services we're going to look at some of the names of our Savior and his wondrous love linked with them. Where else would we start but with the well-known **NAME OF WONDROUS LOVE—JESUS.** (*Read Luke 22:39-46*)

Consider what name Luke uses for our Savior that night in the Garden of Gethsemane. It's Jesus our Savior, Jesus our Helper. What brought him there? What's he doing there? Well, let's see. Come with me now into the shadows of that olive tree garden. Walk with me quietly past the main group of disciples waiting outside Gethsemane's gates. Tiptoe even more quietly past those three closest disciples—Peter, James, and John—sleeping in exhaustion inside the garden. Look over there, about a stone's throw away. Do you see him, Jesus our Savior? He kneels and then he falls, stretched out full length in Gethsemane's dirt. Timidly you draw even closer and what do you see? Can that be blood dripping down his brow, wrenched with sweat from his glands and veins? Listen. He speaks, and the force of his words, the anguish and dread packed into them, rivets you to your spot. ***"Father,"*** he begs, ***"if you are willing, take this cup from me."*** A second and then a third time he prays to his Father the same way his crimson blood flows, and we watch in astonishment and dread.

What's going on here? What crushes our Savior to the earth and causes him to beg? Isn't this the same Jesus who fearlessly faced his enemies, ferociously threw the money changers out of the temple, and calmly walked the raging waters of the sea? What's this cup that he dreads to drink? That cup was filled with the full force of hell's punishment for sin. The sins of Adam and Eve, the sins of Cain and Abel, the sins of David and Bathsheba, the sins of Judas and Peter, the sins of Jews and Gentiles, the sins of you and me—all these were distilled like some awful poison into that cup. Bitter beyond belief, more bitter than anything any other human being has ever tasted in the worst of circumstances, was the cup raised to Jesus' lips. Naturally, his human nature shrank from the task. Above him, beneath him, around him, outside and within him, all was anguish as the waves of hell began to break over him, our Substitute in the shadows of Gethsemane. No wonder he turns to his Father, pleading, ***"Take this cup from me."***

Today, standing in the shadows of Gethsemane, seeing what you have seen and hearing what you have heard, can you ever again consider any of your sins as something insignificant? As something that doesn't really matter all that much in the sight of your God? Can you ever again cover any of your sins with those worn-out excuses like "I didn't know" or "It's not so bad" or "Everyone else is doing it"? Can you ever again shrug your shoulders at those daily temptations or pet sins that are about as common as breathing? My friends, sin is serious. Each one of them is deadly. Each one of them helped fill that dreadful cup of which Jesus spoke. Each one of them made the Savior bleed, and not just your sins, but mine too.

That's our Jesus in the garden, shouldering our sins, suffering our punishment, satisfying the justice of a holy God, but why was he there? When a mother gets up night after night to feed her baby or stays up most of the night to tend a sick child, do you have to ask why? Isn't it because she dearly loves that little one? When a parent works faithfully at a job to take care of the family and send children to college, do you really have to ask why? Isn't it because that parent loves them? When you hear Jesus plead, ***"Take this cup from me,"*** yet adding, ***"not my will, but yours be done,"*** do you have to ask why? Isn't it because he loves us with a love that we could never find adequate words to describe? His name fits so beautifully, doesn't it? That's Jesus who loves the fallen world with an incredible, indescribable, unexplainable love.

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<sup>1</sup> The thoughts and language of this sermon were adapted from a 2013 Lenten sermon series by Rev. Em. Richard Lauersdorf and Northwestern Publishing House.

Walk back with me a second time into the shadows of Gethsemane to marvel at Jesus' wondrous love. This time it's love for his Father's will. Three times Jesus asked his Father to remove his load of suffering, to find some other way. Three times he looked his Father in the eye and asked, "May I pass?" When the answer was no, look at what the Savior did. There was no murmuring against the Father's will or questioning the Father's wisdom. There were no doubts about the Father's love or dissatisfaction with the Father's way. Instead it was, **"Not my will, but yours be done."** Jesus' love for his Father knew only surrender to the Father's way and compliance with the Father's will even when it led from Gethsemane's shadows to Calvary's cross.

"Please, Lord," the little boy ended his prayer, "put the vitamins in the pie and the cake instead of in the carrots and the broccoli." How often don't we pray like that? We want things to be sweet and rosy, preferring that God put the vitamins of his blessing on the wings of sunshine and song. When he does, isn't it easy to say, "Your will be done"? When God doesn't, however, when your health disappears and your family disappoints, when your plans don't work out and your checkbook doesn't balance, when friends prove unfaithful and gossip wounds deeply, when your faith is belittled and your convictions attacked, when the cross plunks down on your shoulders and seems far too heavy to carry, what do you do then? Does your response shift to "Not your will, but mine be done"? Does praying then become not asking God but demanding from him? Does it become grumbling against him because of the burden or asking for guidance to see the blessings beneath it?

The cabinetmaker knows well the need for the power sander to bring out the beauty in the wood, but if the wood could speak as that sander cuts into its surface and smooths out its imperfections, would it say, "Ouch!" or "Thank you"? Sometimes God's sanding in our lives can be so painful that we rebel against his will, even accusing him of not caring for us or at the very least doubting his wisdom and his ways. Have you ever done that, ever fallen into that sin of not loving your heavenly Father as you ought? Then it's time to look again at our Jesus in the garden that first Maundy Thursday evening.

He was there driven by his love for you so that you can find pardon for your sinful self-will and senseless rebellion against God's will. Those drops of blood that dripped from his holy brow were the painful preview of how far his love was willing to take him—all the way to the cross to pay for your debt and wipe clean your slate. Then look again at your Savior in the shadows and find in him the power to submit to your heavenly Father's will. There's nothing wrong with praying, **"Father, if you are willing, take this cup away from me."** Jesus prayed that way too, but let's be sure to add, **"Yet not my will, but yours be done."** From Jesus our Savior, Jesus our helper, will come the strength we need, just as he once received strength from his Father, to follow our loving God's always perfect will in our lives.

We call him Jesus. For many of us, that's our favorite name for him. God help us never to forget why. In that name Jesus, we see his wondrous love that brought him down to earth to be our helper in our greatest need and our Savior from all our sins. Amen.