

Blood, Sweat and Courage

Jesus went out as usual to the Mount of Olives, and his disciples followed him.⁴⁰ On reaching the place, he said to them, "Pray that you will not fall into temptation."⁴¹ He withdrew about a stone's throw beyond them, knelt down and prayed,⁴² "Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done."⁴³ An angel from heaven appeared to him and strengthened him.⁴⁴ And being in anguish, he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground." Luke 22:39-44

Sometimes, for the sake of children, the stories of true violence and death in the Bible are treated with a very light hand. We don't focus on the cost of life in the wars the Israelites fought, or that a giant could have had a family that mourned his passing, no things are very often told in terms of good guys and bad guys, black and white, or victory and defeat. But with the stories of Passion Week and the crucifixion, it is like the blinds are opened and nothing is held back in the telling from the garden to the cross. Children even use sign language to show the nails in the hands of Jesus as they sing Easter songs. Easter is vivid; it is graphic, and when we put ourselves in Jesus' shoes, it is terrifying.

There are probably few of us who do not remember hearing first time that Jesus wept as he prayed in the garden and he sweat drops of blood. In this passage, the humanity of Jesus is sorely tempted. Knowing the agony that awaited him, Jesus asks the question that could have changed history, he asks if the cup might be taken away, the cup of death, the cup of torture and humiliation, the cup of pain and the path of suffering. And yet, even in the asking, there is willingness and obedience to the Father's plan.

G.K. Chesterton, a writer and philosopher-poet from the 1800's once wrote: "The only courage worth calling courage must necessarily mean that the soul passes a breaking point and does

not break". Jesus could only become our savior through sacrifice and because he was not only fully God but fully, infinitely human, that sacrifice took courage; more courage than we could possibly imagine, a courage that is born out of a father's love for his children. It was courage that had been tested, tempted, and forged in sweat, blood and fear. Once you've sweat blood, there is no going back and so Jesus continued on toward the fate God intended...onward past the soul's breaking point to the cross. Never again would there be someone so brave.

So today we pause, we honor the struggle within that Jesus faced and we reflect on our own struggle to follow the path of Christ, for it is a path of great suffering and great joy.

Prayer: Father, in your agony you still sought our freedom. Thank you for your courage. Amen.