

Bethel

Prayer Meeting Addresses

Number 120
Gethsemane

Reading: John 18. 1-9

1 When Jesus had spoken these words, he went forth with his disciples over the brook Cedron, where was a garden, into the which he entered, and his disciples.

2 And Judas also, which betrayed him, knew the place: for Jesus oftentimes resorted thither with his disciples.

3 Judas then, having received a band of men and officers from the chief priests and Pharisees, cometh thither with lanterns and torches and weapons.

4 Jesus therefore, knowing all things that should come upon him, went forth, and said unto them, Whom seek ye?

5 They answered him, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus saith unto them, I am he. And Judas also, which betrayed him, stood with them.

6 As soon then as he had said unto them, I am he, they went backward, and fell to the ground.

7 Then asked he them again, Whom seek ye? And they said, Jesus of Nazareth.

8 Jesus answered, I have told you that I am he: if therefore ye seek me, let these go their way:

9 That the saying might be fulfilled, which he spake, Of them which thou gavest me have I lost none.

Address

The Garden of Gethsemane is a solemn, sacred place. We are told that this is a place that the Lord Jesus loved, where the Lord Jesus oftentimes resorted. As we see the dreadful opposite in this chapter, the deceitfulness, the wickedness of Judas Iscariot, for “Judas ... knew the place” – O what an awful contrast there is here between light and darkness, good and evil!

In meditation on the Garden of Gethsemane, I could not help but think of our beautiful Gethsemane hymn, just perhaps one or two verses particularly on this point:

“Full of love to man’s lost race,
On His conflict much He thought;

This He knew the destined place,
And He loved the sacred spot;
Therefore 'twas He liked to be
Often in Gethsemane.

“They His followers, with the rest,
Had incurred the wrath divine;
And their Lord, with pity pressed,
Longed to bear their loads – and mine;
Love to them, and love to me,
Made Him love Gethsemane.”

There “was a garden, into the which He entered.... And Judas also, which betrayed Him, knew the place: for Jesus oftentimes resorted thither with His disciples.” This beautiful little passage most gloriously exalts the Lord of life and glory, both in His power, His divine, almighty power, and in His love, His matchless love, and also in His wisdom. We read of this “band of men and officers from the chief priests and Pharisees, coming thither.” It has been estimated by the godly divines there were probably a few hundred who had come. There was that detachment of Roman soldiers, and also there were quite a number of Jews who were interested, and they came with one evil, malicious intent, and that was to arrest our dear Lord Jesus.

Now here the wonders of redemption begin. “Jesus therefore, knowing all things that should come upon Him, went forth, and said unto them, Whom seek ye?” It has often been remarked that in the Garden of Eden, the first Adam, when his Maker appeared, fled from Him. The second Adam in the garden went to meet His enemies and His accusers. Really it was a beautiful question He asked them: “Whom seek ye?” Perhaps it has reminded you, in the first chapter of this gospel, that was the very same question, the identical question that the Lord Jesus asked to two of His first disciples: “Whom seek ye?” If we understand it graciously, what a question it is to longing, seeking, enquiring souls! The Lord Jesus knows the answer, those here this evening who are seeking Him and who are not. But He asks the question to draw it out from us. “Whom seek ye?”

But here this was so different. “Jesus ... said unto them, Whom seek ye?” He knew what the answer was, but how tenderly He spoke to His enemies. “Whom seek ye? They answered Him, Jesus of Nazareth.” They gave Him, not that honoured name, the eternal Son of God, the promised Messiah, the Lord of

life. They gave Him that often-maligned name, Jesus of Nazareth. “Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?” But our Lord and Master was not ashamed to accept it as His own. “Jesus saith unto them, I am He.”

And then you see the Lord was there, the miracles began. Roman soldiers were not easily abashed, or became timid, or anything like that. They all fell *backward*, not forward. They all fell *backward* in utter helplessness, lying there prostrate on the ground. What an opportunity for our Lord Jesus to escape! But not only do you see in this passage the wonders of His divine power in the miracles; you see His matchless love in His willingness to lay down His life. “No man taketh it from Me.” They could not have taken it from Him; they lay helpless, prostrate. “I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again.” O beloved friends, these things should endear our Lord and Saviour to our hearts. They should make Him precious to us. All this was done for lost, ruined, unworthy sinners.

“Jesus saith unto them, I am He ... they went backward, and fell to the ground.” It would appear that there was something of a pause here. It was a solemn occasion and it was a solemn pause. How long they lay prostrate on the ground, we do not know. We know it was only by the Lord’s enabling power that they rose up again. O but the hardness of sinners’ hearts! They should have been ashamed of themselves. They should have fled. But, “Then asked He them again, Whom seek ye?” The same question; the same answer. “They said, Jesus of Nazareth.”

“It were an easy part
For Him the cross to fly;
But love to sinners fills His heart,
And makes Him choose to die.”

“Was ever love like this?”

“Whom seek ye? And they said, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus answered, I have told you that I am He: if therefore ye seek Me,” take Me, bind Me, arrest Me, crucified Me, but “let these” – My followers – “go their way.” That was a second miracle, that it was impossible for them to touch any of the Lord’s followers as afterwards they made their way home. And that word still stood in the judgment hall, and when the Saviour was on the cross, and after He had died. “Let these” – My followers – “go their way.” As has been beautifully said, this is *the passport of the whole church of God to heaven*. “If therefore ye seek Me,

let these go their way: that the saying might be fulfilled, which He spake, Of them which Thou gavest Me have I lost none.” Beloved friends, may you and I this evening, and those who are listening on the relay, be privileged to be found amongst these favoured souls.

This address was given at Bethel Chapel, Luton, by Mr. B. A. Ramsbottom, on Thursday, 10th February, 2022