

Theme: “Names of Wondrous Love” - JESUS

Text: Luke 22:39-46 (EHV)

³⁹ Jesus left and went out to the Mount of Olives, as was his custom. His disciples followed him. ⁴⁰ When he reached the place, he told them, “Keep praying that you may not enter into temptation.” ⁴¹ He withdrew from them about a stone’s throw, knelt down, and prayed, ⁴² “Father, if you are willing, take this cup away from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but yours be done.” ⁴³ An angel from heaven appeared to him and strengthened him. ⁴⁴ As he was in agony, he prayed more fervently. His sweat became like great drops of blood falling to the ground. ⁴⁵ When he rose from prayer, he went to the disciples and found them sleeping as a result of sorrow. ⁴⁶ He said to them, “Why are you sleeping? Get up and keep praying so that you may not enter into temptation.”

What is your favorite name for the Savior? Chances are it’s Jesus. It’s a name for many of us that has been dear to our hearts since we were first able to sing, “Jesus loves me this I know, for the Bible tells me so.” It’s a name we hear and read often—whether in church or in our personal Bible readings and devotions. Just doing a quick word count on the name **Jesus** in the New Testament I found that it is used 980 times in the New King James Version. Not surprisingly, Jesus is by far the most commonly used name for the Son of God in the Bible.

Why is the name of Jesus so precious to us? First of all, God the Father Himself picked this name for His Son. He sent angels to both Mary (**Luke 1:31**) and Joseph (**Matthew 1:21**) to deliver the message that Jesus was to be His Son’s name.

Second, it’s because this name fits. As you might already know the name Jesus means “Savior.” One short name of only five letters, but in it God’s plan of salvation is simply described.

Best of all, we associate God’s wondrous love for us with this name. How can we use or hear the name Jesus without thinking about His love for us which won our salvation? This year in our Lenten services we’re going to look at some of the names of our Savior and the wondrous love linked with them. Where else would we start but with the well-known “**Name of Wondrous Love**” - **JESUS**

I. Jesus’ love for all people

Notice that name is the first word in our text for tonight: **Jesus**. What is Jesus doing the night of our text as He and his disciples head to an olive grove called “**Gethsemane**” (**Matthew 26:36**) on the Mount of Olives? Picture in your mind this scene among the shadows of the olive trees that night before He was crucified as we read again the words from our text, **He [Jesus] withdrew from them [the disciples] about a stone’s throw, knelt down, and prayed,** ⁴² **“Father, if you are willing, take this cup away from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but yours be done.”** ⁴³ **An angel from heaven appeared to him and strengthened him.** ⁴⁴ **As he was in agony, he prayed more fervently. His sweat became like great drops of blood falling to the ground (v. 41-44).** Matthew’s Gospel tells us that Jesus fervently prayed these words to His Heavenly Father three times.

What’s going on here in this peaceful garden scene that would cause the Savior so much anguish? What is this “**cup**” that Jesus pleads with His Father to take away? It was, of course, the cup of suffering as payment for all of human sin throughout history. Every hurtful word, every wicked act, every greedy, lustful, hateful thought—all of it. Your sins. My sins. Every. Single. Sin. Ever. Distilled like poison into that cup of suffering that Jesus was about to drink on the cross. We can’t even fathom the anguish Jesus was going through as He faced the waves of hell itself about to break over Him. Is there any wonder why He turns to His Father and pleads, “**Father, if you are willing, take this cup away from me**” (v. 42)?

This scene we view once again this Ash Wednesday in the shadows of Gethsemane is a vivid reminder of the seriousness of sin. Look and listen to what our Savior went through! Can we ever again consider any of our sins as something insignificant? As something that doesn't really matter all that much in the sight of our God? But how often do we brush our sin off as, "No big deal." We're so used to swimming in the filth of our own sinful flesh and the sinful world around us that can begin to convince ourselves that, "It's not so bad," or make excuses, "Everyone is doing it"? Can we ever again shrug our shoulders at those daily temptations or pet sins that are about as common to us as breathing? Sin is serious. Deadly serious. Each one of them helped fill that dreadful cup of which Jesus spoke. Each one of them made the Savior bleed.

We see more in this scene than just the seriousness of sin and the unimaginable suffering it caused our Savior to pay its full punishment to the very last drop. Ask yourself, "Why is Jesus here?" Why is He, the only innocent man who's ever lived, willing to shoulder the punishment for our sins, and the sins of all people for all time? Why is He willing to go through with His Father's plan to save us? When we hear Jesus plead, **"take this cup away from me,"** and yet adds, **"Nevertheless, not my will, but yours be done,"** do we have to ask why? It has to be because he loves us. He loves us with a love that, even if I were to preach a thousand Ash Wednesday sermons, I'd never be able to find the adequate words to describe. His name fits beautifully: Jesus, "Savior." Jesus, who loves us fallen, sinful people with an incredible, indescribable, unexplainable love.

II. Jesus' love for his Father

Little Mikey sat at the dinner table and ended his prayer, "Dear Lord, put the vitamins in the pie and the cake instead of in the cauliflower and the broccoli." We might grin and chuckle at little Mikey's prayer, but how often don't our prayers resemble his? "Lord, just give me the good stuff, the sweet stuff. Leave out all the stuff that's difficult or doesn't 'taste good' to me." When God gives us the "sweetness" of His blessings in our lives how easy it is to say, "Your will be done." But when God doesn't, when our health disappears and our family disappoints, when our plans don't work out and our checkbook doesn't balance, when friends prove unfaithful and gossip wounds us deeply, when our faith is belittled and insulted, when the cross comes down on our shoulders and seems far too heavy for us to carry, what do we do then? Does our response shift to "Not Your will, but mine be done"? Does praying then become not asking God but demanding from Him?

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. Three times Jesus asked his Father to remove his load of suffering, to find some other way. When the answer was no, look at what the Savior did. There was no murmuring against the Father's will or questioning about 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" (v. 42)** Jesus' love for his Father knew only surrender to the Father's way and will even when it led from Gethsemane's shadows to Calvary's cross.

When we find that God's work in our lives at times is painful how do we react? Do we rebel against his will, even accusing him of not caring for us or at the very least doubting his wisdom and his ways? We've all been there, haven't we? It's especially at those times we need to look again at our Jesus in the garden that Thursday evening. He was there driven by his love for us. He was there to earn forgiveness for our sinful self-will and rebellion against God's will. Those drops of blood that dripped from His forehead were the painful preview of how far His love was willing to take Him—all the way to the cross to pay for our debt and wipe our sin slate clean.

Look again at our Savior in the shadows and find in him the power to submit to our Father's will. There's nothing wrong with praying, **"Father, if you are willing, take this cup away from me" (v. 42a).** Jesus prayed that too. But let's be sure to add, **"Nevertheless, not my will, but yours be done."** Jesus our Savior, our Friend, our Helper, will give us the strength we need to follow our loving God's perfect will in our lives, just as He once received strength from His Father (**"An angel from heaven appeared to him and strengthened him" v. 43**),

We call Him Jesus. That's our favorite name for Him. God help us never to forget why. It's because of His **wondrous love** that brought Him down to earth to be our rescuer in our greatest need, our Savior from all our sins. Amen.