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St. Paul's Lutheran Church
2100 16th Street SW
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Pastor Ted Barthels
Sermon preached on
March 5, 2014
1st Midweek Lent

Scripture Lessons: Psalm 51 Passion Upper preparations
Hymns: 140; 142; 324:1-6; 653

Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and our Lord
and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Sermon Text: Luke 22:39-44

39 Coming out, He went to the Mount of Olives, as He was accustomed, and His disciples also followed Him. 40 When He came to the place, He said to them, "Pray that you may not enter into temptation."

41 And He was withdrawn from them about a stone's throw, and He knelt down and prayed, 42 saying, "Father, if it is Your will, take this cup away from Me; nevertheless not My will, but Yours, be done." 43 Then an angel appeared to Him from heaven, strengthening Him. 44 And being in agony, He prayed more earnestly. Then His sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground. (NKJV)

This is the Word of God!

Sanctify us, oh Lord, through Your truth. Your Word is truth.
Amen.

In Christ Jesus, our crucified Savior, dear fellow Redeemed.

INTRO: Remarkable incidents.

Things don't always go as expected, at least not as *WE* expected. Things don't always go as normal. We find that things happen that are simply remarkable, even astounding. As we read through the

Passion History we find many remarkable incidents. I mean that quite literally, there were things happening that we shouldn't just read right past, but we should pause and meditate, and make some remarks concerning how the Lord directs things for our salvation, how the Lord directs things according to His mercy and grace. Without doubt there are so many remarkable incidents within Jesus' Passion that one could not cover them in a few midweek meditations. So we have a sampling, some, as this evening's meditation, take a look at one aspect of a familiar scene for a deeper consideration, while others hopefully will offer a fresh look at happenings we have talked about before.

So this evening let us go to Gethsemane, that familiar garden on the Mount of Olives, and consider a detail that is often overlooked.

THEME: An Angel Appears and Strengthens Jesus.

Let us consider first how the Lord Jesus sought --

I. A Time for Prayer.

Luke 22:39-42 Coming out, He went to the Mount of Olives, as He was accustomed, and His disciples also followed Him. 40 When He came to the place, He said to them, "Pray that you may not enter into temptation."

41 And He was withdrawn from them about a stone's throw, and He knelt down and prayed, 42 saying, "Father, if it is Your will, take this cup away from Me; nevertheless not My will, but Yours, be done."

We are familiar with how Jesus went from the upper room in Jerusalem to spend the night in Gethsemane on the Mount of Olive. We are familiar with how He took all the disciples with Him and had many things to say to them as they walked out to Gethsemane, and He sought to prepare them for the events that were about to happen.

It was also a time for Jesus to prepare for those events, for Jesus fully understood all that was going to happen, both physically -- that He would suffer many things at the hands of His enemies, and also spiritually -- that He would bear the burden, bear the curse of

our sin upon Himself, in His body and His soul, as He went forward to the cross.

It was already a heavy burden upon Jesus' heart and mind. Jesus knew that this was a time for prayer. It was a time for prayer for Himself and for His disciples. He understood that this would be a trying time for them as well as for Himself, so He encouraged them to pray that they not enter into temptation. Yes, the devil was going to be very busy that night. It was the hour of darkness.

We know from the other gospels that Peter, James and John were taken farther into the garden than the rest of the disciples. Jesus sought their companionship and support in this hour of trial and prayer. We also know that the disciples did not comprehend the urgency of the hour, and that their eyes were heavy with sleep, for the hour was very late. They fell asleep instead of spending the time in prayer.

The content of Jesus' prayer is very familiar. **“Father, if it is Your will, take this cup away from Me; nevertheless not My will, but Yours, be done.”** If there was any other way, if it was at all possible Jesus desired, Jesus prayed that this ordeal that lay before Him be taken away. But Jesus also submitted to the Father's will. He willingly prayed, **“Your will be done.”** And the Father's will for our salvation was to be done. Jesus was to go forward to be taken by His enemies and suffer for our salvation.

But one should not think that the prayers which Jesus prayed to His heavenly Father fell on deaf ears, or that the Father was unsympathetic to the plight of His Son. His Father heard the prayers of His Son, and we are told of the coming of --

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II. An Angel in Answer to Jesus' Prayer.

Luke 22: 43-44 Then an angel appeared to Him from heaven, strengthening Him. 44 And being in agony, He prayed more earnestly. Then His sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground.

This is a remarkable event in the Lord's passion. It is remarkable for a number of reasons.

First, the Lord Jesus was not left without support. He was given the spiritual support of an angel coming to minister to Him. The angel strengthened Jesus. How would this happen except for spiritual encouragement. The words or actions of the angel are not revealed to us, however we know from our own struggles in this life that the trials of life that we face all have a spiritual component that the world cannot appreciate. When we are afflicted, when we are burdened, that is when the Word of the Lord means the most to us. We hear the promises of God and we are reassured that God is faithful, and that God will be with us, and see us through the evil day.

There are so many scriptures that speak of the sufferings of our Lord Jesus, scriptures that fully informed Jesus of the importance of His mission of salvation, and the necessity of the sacrifice that He was to make upon the cross. We know that Jesus even quoted the opening verse of Psalm 22 that spoke of the God-forsakenness He was to endure. However, there are other scriptures also which speak of the outcome of this suffering. Surely the angel would have brought these Scriptures to Jesus' attention to encourage Him. Isaiah 53 which speaks so graphically of Jesus' suffering also speaks of the success of His mission.

Isaiah 53:10-11 "When You make His soul an offering for sin,
He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days,
And the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hand.
11 He shall see the labor of His soul, and be satisfied.
By His knowledge My righteous Servant shall justify many."

The psalms also speak of the outcome for Jesus in His resurrection.

Psalms 16:9-11 "Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoices;
My flesh also will rest in hope.
10 For You will not leave my soul in Sheol,
Nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption.
11 You will show me the path of life;
In Your presence is fullness of joy;
At Your right hand are pleasures forevermore."

The coming of the angel was significant, but isn't it remarkable that Jesus, the Son of God, should need, and benefit from the ministrations of an angel? Here we see the Creator being helped in things spiritual by one of His creatures! Jesus had to be the Son of God if His death would atone for the sins of the world, but Jesus didn't call upon His divine strength and power to overcome the sufferings that were before Him, that He might somehow avoid them. He endured all in His state of humiliation. He had set aside His divine power and He managed His passion with the resources available to you and me. Prayer, the Scriptures, and the help of angels watching over Him and ministering to Him. We see in Jesus how God is faithful in His promise

Psalm 91:10-12 No evil shall befall you,
Nor shall any plague come near your dwelling;
11 For He shall give His angels charge over you,
To keep you in all your ways.
12 In their hands they shall bear you up,
Lest you dash your foot against a stone.

It was still an ordeal for Jesus. The sufferings still weighed upon Him heavily. His sweat still fell to the ground as if they were great drops of blood falling to the ground. But He was not alone. Though His close companions failed Him, the angel came and ministered to Him. What a remarkable event.

AMEN.

And the peace of God which passes all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.