

It was now the time for action – “Look, the hour is near, and the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise, let us go! Here comes my betrayer!” (v. 45-46)

**Reflect:**

- After the temptation, Luke records, “When the devil had finished all this tempting, he left him until an opportune time” (Lk. 4.13). In what sense do we see in Gethsemane a return of issues in his earlier temptation?
- Do we see the prayer of Jesus as resignation to what was about to happen or as commitment to the Father’s will? Why? What’s the difference?

**For Us**

In these five studies we have been looking at some of the incidents which mark the “steps to the cross” – and some challenging questions.

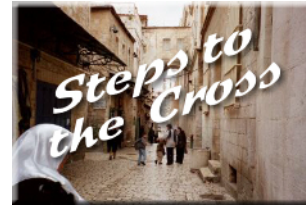
- Was the way of suffering truly “the way of the Christ”?
- Do we look for status in the Kingdom rather than self-giving service after the example of Jesus?
- Do we want a place in the Kingdom without the two-fold turn of repentance and faith?
- Are we tempted to snatch the Kingdom of God from its only rightful Ruler?
- What does it mean to seek and to do the Father’s will?

Jesus came for us. He died for us. And he rose again for us! That “for us” needs to become real “in us” as we respond to him and keep on trusting him and responding to him in our lives day by day.

**Reflect:**

- How can we do the Father’s will even when everything seems against us?
- How can we move from apathy, negativity and resignation into active commitment to the Father’s will?

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Five Lenten Studies  
by Peter J Blackburn

## 5. The Father’s Will

Reading: Matthew 26.36-46

There’s an old saying, “Where there’s a will, there’s a way”. A modern variation says, “Where’s there’s a will, there’s a won’t!”

These days there seems to be such an emphasis on looking after number one and doing our own thing. That’s not a totally foolish idea, yet it is seriously flawed. After all, if everyone operates on that basis, it is a sure recipe for disaster. Again and again it comes down to my will against someone else’s will – my “own thing” in conflict with another person’s “own thing”.

In many ways it reflects the on-going tension between rights and responsibilities. We can’t have one without the other. The fact and benefits of living in a society lay expectations and responsibilities on us. Nobody can always have it their own way.

Quite apart from all this, we face the frustration of unfinished work. Of course, some work by its very nature needs to be repeated constantly. That’s why “a mother’s work is never done”. Meal preparation, washing up, tidying, vacuuming, washing, shopping... – they may well all be shared tasks these days, but they are representative of many recurring tasks.

Then there are the “one-off” responsibilities. Perhaps it is a project – self-chosen or committed to us by someone else. All those recurring tasks – plus some – keep getting in the way. Time is escaping us. The deadline is looming ahead. We are afraid that, if we actually get around to doing it, we won’t do it well.

**Reflect:**

- To what extent is our life the expression of our own will? To what extent is it governed by factors beyond our control?

## The Life of Jesus

We are impressed by the life of Jesus. In some ways his life seems to have been full of interruptions. Yet those very interruptions always became opportunities. Nothing was ever wasted. As he said, “My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work” (Jn 4.34) – not the whim of the people, but the will of the Father. Not even what we might regard as “the whim of the people” ever deflected him from “the will of the Father”.

In the upper room we are told, “Having loved his own who were in the world, [Jesus] now showed them the full extent of his love” (13.1b). How he had tried to prepare them for the events that were up ahead!

After Peter’s great confession at Caesarea-Philippi, “From that time on Jesus began to explain to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life” (Mt. 16.21).

None of it seemed to sink in. And now, with his arrest, trial and crucifixion imminent, they were all totally unprepared. Peter was positive he would remain loyal, even if the others didn’t (v. 33). The only disciple who achieved what he intended to do was Judas – and he was crushingly disappointed by the result.

Jesus loved them to the end. Even Judas could have been restored, had he been willing.

### Reflect:

- Part of the prayer Jesus taught his disciples was “your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven”. How did the life and ministry of Jesus reflect his commitment to the Father’s Kingdom and the Father’s will? Name some occasions when human “interruptions” became further “opportunities” to do the Father’s will.
- What do we mean when we pray “your will be done”? Does it move us forward with vital commitment, or slump us back into inactive resignation?

## Gethsemane

**Read: Matthew 26.36-46.**

The Garden of Gethsemane is across the Kidron brook from Jerusalem and at the base of the Mount of Olives. The name “Gethsemane” means “oil press”. The present-day garden has some of the world’s oldest olive trees, three of which have been scientifically dated as being over 2000 years old.

For Passover, of course, Jews traveled to Jerusalem from throughout the land and beyond. Many set up camp outside the walls of the city. This Garden, however, was a private place, a favoured spot for Jesus and his disciples – hence known well to Judas.

Judas had already agreed to betray Jesus (vv. 14-16). Jesus has eaten the last supper with the disciples (vv. 17-30). He has predicted Peter’s denial (vv. 31-35).

Jesus’ urgent need was prayer. They went to Gethsemane – “Sit here while I go over there and pray” (v. 36). He took Peter, James and John further on with him and “began to be sorrowful and troubled” – “My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch with me” (vv. 37-38). The key to the life of the Son of God on earth was his continual relationship with the Father, yet he needed the company and prayer support of his close friends.

“My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will” (v. 39). The “cup” referred to his imminent suffering and death – including the awfulness of separation from the Father as the sinless one identified himself with sinners (27.46).

But the disciples had fallen asleep – hardly a good sign for Peter who was so self-confident he would stick by Jesus no matter what. “Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the body is weak” (26.41).

And Jesus prayed again a second and a third time his prayer of commitment to the Father’s will – “My Father, if it is not possible for this cup to be taken away unless I drink it, may your will be done” (v. 42).