

**"The Message of the Mural"**  
**Sermon on Luke 22:39-46**  
**Saint Mark's, Watertown**  
**Pastor Karl Walther**  
**March 8, 2006**

*He was pierced for our transgressions, Christ was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by Jesus' wounds we are healed. Amen.*

The Word of the Lord for us for this second Wednesday in Lent is Luke chapter twenty-two, verses thirty-nine through forty-six. It is Luke's account of Jesus' prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane:

**Jesus went out as usual to the Mount of Olives, and his disciples followed him. On reaching the place, he said to them, "Pray that you will not fall into temptation."**

**He withdrew about a stone's throw beyond them, knelt down and prayed, "Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done." An angel from heaven appeared to him and strengthened him. And being in anguish, he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground.**

**When he rose from prayer and went back to the disciples, he found them asleep, exhausted from sorrow. "Why are you sleeping?" he asked them. "Get up and pray so that you will not fall into temptation."**

This is God's Spirit-inspired Word of Jesus Christ.

### **Introduction: The History of the Mural**

Dear fellow Christians—for whom Christ underwent agony, for whom Christ also set an example:

The story from the Scriptures that I just read is one of only a few accounts that are directly commemorated in art in this sanctuary. Do you know where that is?

...Yeah, it's in this mural right up here! This mural dates to nineteen-oh-eight; it's ninety-eight years old; it was placed here in the initial decorating of the church, twenty years after the building was constructed. Eight-and-a-half years ago, when this church was restored, something interesting happened to this mural. When it was cleaned, the angel in the upper left hand corner reappeared; dirt had hidden it for many years.

And so, I'm right in saying that the account I just read is directly commemorated in that mural. In fact, it's not Matthew's and Mark's accounts of Jesus' prayer in Gethsemane that we see there, but this account from Luke; only Luke mentions that angel.

### **Theme: The Message of the Mural**

...Of course, all of that begs a question. If this account was important enough to merit a mural in our church, what's the message for us? Well, let's explore that briefly today. Let's consider together: THE MESSAGE OF THE MURAL. And we're going to find that, even more than the accounts from Matthew and Mark, Luke's account emphasizes two things: JESUS' AGONY FOR US, and: JESUS' EXAMPLE TO US.

### **Scripture: Jesus' Temptation & Petition On the Mount Of Olives**

It was – who knows? – maybe eight or nine or ten in the evening, and arguably – arguably – April sixth of thirty AD. Jesus had just been in the Upper Room, in the city of Jerusalem, where among other things he had instituted the Lord's Supper.

Now we read—and this is God’s Word to us today: *Jesus went out as usual to the Mount of Olives*. It was probably about a mile’s trip and, in the dark and all, nearly a half hour in duration. Jesus probably immediately exited the city and skirted the south edge of Jerusalem. Without any doubt, he crossed the valley of the babbling Kidron Brook. And he began to climb the slopes of the hill a scant eighth of a mile across the Kidron Valley from the temple complex—the *Mount of Olives*. The other accounts tell us Jesus entered the Garden of Gethsemane: a sort of a wayside park, enclosed by a wall, surrounded and filled with olive trees, since “Gethsemane” means “oil press” for olive trees.

*And his disciples* – especially if not exclusively: the eleven, minus Judas, of course – *followed him*. Jesus was clearly in the lead.

*On reaching the place, he said to them, "Pray that you will not fall into temptation."* Notice, on the one hand, that Luke doesn’t happen to mention Jesus taking the three further in. Nor will Luke mention that Jesus prays three times. So, we’re not going to consider those things much today. But do notice what Luke does emphasize: *"Pray that you will not fall into temptation."* He’ll repeat it, almost word for word later. That means we’re unfaithful to God if we don’t consider that also today.

Moving on: *He withdrew about a stone's throw beyond them*—maybe twenty-five yards, near enough that they could sort of see and sort of hear what was going on, far enough that Jesus was still very much alone.

And then: Jesus *knelt down*, even with his face to the ground, *and prayed*—better translated: *he kept praying*, it took probably the better part of an hour. But Luke gives us the substance of his prayer: *"Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done."* That figure of a *cup* is interesting—not that it’s uncommon; it’s used elsewhere in Scripture. But what’s pictured is a cup filled with revolting stuff, stinking, putrid, even poisonous stuff. And Jesus knows it. And he wants it gone. But Jesus is also perfectly willing, lovingly willing to follow his Father’s will and not his own.

Interestingly, then: *An angel from heaven appeared to him and strengthened him*. God was answering Jesus’ prayer with help from on high. But he wasn’t answering Jesus’ prayer in exactly the way Jesus had spoken it.

After all, we read: *And being in anguish* – literally: *agony*; that’s the Greek word here, “being in agony” – *he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground*. Only two times does the Bible ever mention *sweat*. The one is God’s prophecy that Adam will eat only by the sweat of his brow—the result of his sin. The other is here—also the result of Adam’s sin, and ours. *And his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground*—thick and dark. You see, the Father was answering Jesus’ prayer. He was saying: “My Son, the cup will not be taken away from you. Your blood must fall—the purchase price of your people....”

Well: *When he rose from prayer and went back to the disciples, he found them asleep, exhausted from sorrow*. When it came to their salvation, they contributed nothing; Jesus did it all. When it comes to our salvation, we contribute nothing; Jesus did it all. *"Why are you sleeping?" he asked them*. And here it is a second time, so we will have to consider it: *"Get up and pray so that you will not fall into temptation."*

### **Application One: Jesus’ Agony for Us**

So, there it is: the account of Jesus praying—on the Mount of Olives, late on Maundy Thursday. The exact account is commemorated in that mural up there. So, what’s the message of that mural for us?

Well, first of all: Consider Christ’s agony for you—and consider how much it means that Christ loves you!

“This cup, my Father—take it away!” Jesus was moved in prayer to cry, “this cup of revolting stuff, stinking, putrid, even poisonous stuff.” That stuff was my hatred for God, with which I was born, and it was yours. That stuff was also every time I said, “You—I demand to glorify me! I demand you to shower me with money! I demand my pleasure!” and that stuff was every time you said the same. What revolting stuff, what stinking, putrid, even poisonous stuff! You and I would never drink that. We’d surely never drink it for another.

But Christ Jesus did! He did it for you! He must love you! He must really, really treasure you!

“And his sweat was like drops of blood,” we read. You know how your heart races, then sinks, then hurts, when you’re ten miles over the speed limit and the flashing lights pull up behind you. You know how your heart races, then sinks, then hurts, when your teacher catches you misbehaving badly. And you know how your heart aches with guilt when you have really sinned, and sinned big time, and you are caught, and you are embarrassed, and the consequences will be very, very bad. You and I do anything to crawl out from under that situation.

But Christ Jesus didn’t! All the guilt and all the embarrassment and all the punishment of all our sins were crashing down on him in that garden. Yet he willingly shouldered that for you, to exonerate you, to rescue you. He must really, really love you!

### **Application Two: Jesus' Example to Us**

And now, secondly: in his love for you, he warns and encourages you—and me, too! “Pray,” he says, “that you will not fall into temptation.” And he says it twice. We can’t escape it.

So, pray! my friend. And: don’t pray that your name be glorified; pray that Jesus keeps you from the temptation of glorifying yourself; pray that you glorify him. Pray! not that you have all the money and possessions you want; no! pray that Jesus prevent you from getting so rich that you no longer feel you need him. Pray! my friend. And: don’t pray that you have fun and you be happy and you have life easy; no! pray that you and many others may merely be truly content in this life through Jesus Christ—and entirely, spectacularly content in the next life through the same Jesus Christ.

### **Conclusion: The Remembrance of the Mural**

...So, that’s the message of the mural. Christ Jesus suffered agony—so much did he love you. And Christ Jesus lovingly teaches you to pray—so that you do not fall into temptation.

Now, there’s one last thing about that picture that I want to point out to you. Of course, you see Jesus there, and the angel. Do you see what the angel has in his hands? It’s a cup, even a chalice. What’s that cup doing there? Well, as I’ve said: Jesus prayed that the cup pass from him, and the Father answered by saying, “No, my Son, I must send exactly that cup to you.”

And why – in the picture, at least – is that cup a chalice? Well, what was for Christ a poisonous cup of sin and guilt and punishment becomes for us a sweet cup of righteousness and forgiveness and life—and especially in the Lord’s Supper. In fact, when we receive that delightful cup, even when it brings some suffering for us – some persecution, some ridicule, some pain – we happily, even joyously, bear that: as did our dear Savior before us. Amen.

*We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on Jesus Christ the iniquity of us all. Amen.*