

THE BON AIR PULPIT

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Scripture: **Mark 14:32-42**

Sermon: **Not My Will -- Yours!**

Sometimes after a worship service I become involved in other things, and I forget that my Bible is on the pulpit stand. So I will come back the next day to get it. One Monday morning I was coming in to get it. The room was dark. As I was almost here, I realized that a person was kneeling in front of the communion table and was in great agony and praying before God. I realized that I was intruding upon a very private moment. So without getting my Bible I just turned around and walked away. There are certain times in peoples lives that seem to be so private and so precious that no one else needs to be there. The passage of scripture I am going to read for us today is one of those moments in the life of Jesus. He is alone, praying with God, agonizing with Him about His will for his life. It would almost seem as though this is one of those moments when maybe we ought to move away. But I am so grateful that Jesus felt that it was important that you and I read it to understand it so it would be helpful to our own lives. This is the night before he dies. This is his prayer when he is in the garden of Gethsemane. It is the time in which he is making his final surrender unto the Father. I am reading today from the Book of Mark, Chapter 14, verse 32:

They went to a place called Gethsemane. (A Gethsemane is an olive press. So a place of Gethsemane is a place where there is a lot of olive trees and there is a big olive press.) Jesus said to his disciples, sit while I pray. He took Peter and James and John with him, and he began to be deeply distressed and troubled. My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death, he said to them. Stay here and watch. Going a little further, he fell to the ground and prayer if it is possible, the hour might pass from him. (This is his prayer.) Abba, Father. (The word Abba would be translated in our language daddy) So "daddy", everything is possible for you. Take this cup from me. (This is the phrase that I want to call special attention to.) Yet not what I will but what you will.

In 1957 two psychiatrists, Dr. Thigpen and Dr. Checle, published a book entitled "The Three Faces of Eve." It grew out of their clinical treatment of a lady who had what is called multiple personalities. Sometimes she was Eva White. She was a demure housewife. Sometimes she was Eva Black. She was carefree and immoral. At other times she was Evelyn White. She was a very aggressive businesswoman. Now when you begin to read of people like that, you understand that here is a person who has a split personality. Here is a person who has in technical terms extreme schizophrenia. Now nothing I can think of can be more tragic than for a person to not know who they are, to have multiple people dwelling within their body, to have people who are pulling them in all difference directions. They can never wake up any day and determine who they are for that day. But the only thing that is more tragic than this is a person who has spiritual schizophrenia. They are a person who never can determine that they are going to live up to the decisions they make. They are the people who make promises and never live up to them. They are the people who have such divided loyalties they can't determine which one is the most important. They are people who are never dependable. No one trusts them because you don't know what they are going to do or when they are going to do it. They can't decide what they are going to do. They have to wait for somebody else to tell them.

You will recall that one day Jesus met a person like this. He went to him and said, tell me your name. He used the name that would be more familiar in Bible times. He said I am Legion. We would understand it better if he would say I am a crowd. There are some people in their spiritual life who are a crowd. They are people who really cannot put down roots, cannot say this is what I am going to be. They

are the kind of people in spite of attempts to make them to be something else who always say this is the way I am going to live and this is what I am going to do, and this is what I am going to be. The person who cannot do that, the person who has not done that, is a person who is living a very troublesome and a very sad life. There are people who cause sadness to others.

I had a beautiful wedding yesterday. It is always one of my great joys when I perform a wedding ceremony. I never quite get over the beauty of them. I stand and look at these beautiful young women as they are all dressed and they come down the aisle. Then, you know, everyone stands and here comes the bride, and she is all dressed in her white. I look at the beauty of all of those girls, and then I look at all these ugly men standing over here. And I know what grace it is and how wonderful it is to be able to turn and see a young man and a young woman as happened yesterday with me, turn and say I put everyone else out of my life, and I am going to be with you until death do us part. Now in my ministry I have performed over 1,000 weddings. People will come to me afterwards a year, or five years. Some of them now have been married twenty years. They will come to me and say we want you to know that this has meant more to us. We are just so happy, and this is wonderful.

Occasionally, I hear sad stories. The sad story of the girl who called me a week after this beautiful wedding to say, "Pastor, I wanted you to know that we are going to move to get the wedding annulled, because, Pastor, the night of the wedding rehearsal I learned that my husband-to-be slept with one of the girls in the wedding party." A person who can never determine who they love is a person who cannot decide I am going to make choices and I am going to live by them. Sometimes a parent will call me, and say, "We have just learned about our child. Our child we thought always was obedient and always listening to us, and now we find out that child has been living almost a double life. They have been listening to everybody else except us." At home they seem to be so obedient, but then when they get out, they listen to everybody else, and the tragedy and heartache that comes to people's lives.

A week ago I was on vacation with my two sons. I asked one of my sons about his golf game. He was telling me about the last one that he played. He and a friend were out playing. Another man came up that they knew and asked, "Can we make a foursome?" They introduced him to someone he had never met. So the four of them started playing golf together. My son said that the one they didn't know almost immediately began to be angry and upset, and profanity just flowed out. He said, "Dad, I hear this at work all the time." I said, "I am not really that amazed when people say it, but this became so abusive and so obnoxious that I just didn't know if I wanted to play golf with him or not. So about the fifth hole, I had a chance to go over to him." I said to him, "Tell me. Where do you go to church?" The young man without hesitation told him where he went. Unfortunately, it was the same church that my son goes to. My son, who is a deacon in that congregation turned to me almost with a tear in his eye. He said, "Dad, that young man probably did more harm in one week than the good I have tried to do this week." Nothing is more tragic than for people to say one thing and yet be something else, to give the impression that they have made commitments that they really have not, or to make commitments and not be able to live up to them. What a sorrow they bring to others.

So many times we ask about what is God's will for my life. I have come to understand that our greatest confusion is not about God's will. The problem in our life is we don't live up to the commitments to say this is God's will I want to make for you. This is my will. I want to make a commitment. I want to live up to it, and I want to keep it. That's the reason it is important that we go back to the story in the life of Jesus. It is the night before he is to die. By three o'clock the next afternoon, he is going to be dead. He's alone in this garden where he has prayed with God. He is alone with God, and he is wrestling with this decision. You must understand that he is not afraid about dying. He is not saying *Dear God, if you can work this out, I don't want to die*. That is not his prayer. He said, *God, what I am praying for, is there some way for this cup to pass?* What we understand from all of the scripture is that Jesus was dying as the sacrifice for our sins. To die as a sacrifice for our sins meant that he took all of the sin, all of the wrong, all of the evil upon himself, and he was dying for it. And it was so horrendous, even beyond what he understood, you will recall on the cross that he turned and he said, *God, God, why have you gone off and left me?* Here he is, the pure Son of God who never knew evil in his life, who let all of the evil and ugliness in his life come, and he just bore all of the consequences of sin for my sake and for yours. He prayed to God. He said, *Dear God, if there is some way I don't have to go through this?*

Jesus people have three postures for prayer. Whatever their prayer is that is the posture they take. If they are giving thanks to God for the blessings, they will stand and lift their hands. If they are thinking of God's greatness and are in awe and reference, they kneel down. But if they are in a time when they are

going through great difficulty in their life, what they do is they stretch out on the ground. When you read this passage of Scripture, here is Jesus stretched out on the ground, his face having to turn where he would be able to speak. He said to his disciples *I am overwhelmed*. The Scripture actually said the Book of Luke that has the same story that actually drops of blood were poking out on his forehead. Doctors have said that when people get through immense strain and stress that literally capillaries in their forehead can start breaking, and that blood can actually start appearing on their forehead. Here is a man who is completely overwhelmed, thrown on the ground, but he turns his face to where God can hear his voice. He said, *Dear God, whatever you want, that is what I want. Not my will but your will be done.*

If you want to know what the very essence of what the Christian faith is, this is it. Listen carefully. Some people think that coming to Christ means I give Him my sins. Partially true. Sometimes people think what it means is I give Him my time. Partially true. Sometimes people think it is giving Him some money. Partially true. But I want you to hear what the Bible says what he really wants. Not everyone comes to me and says, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven. But listen! He that does the will of my Father who is in heaven. What does God want from us? He wants beyond our emotions. He wants beyond our beliefs. He wants more than our time. He wants more than our money. He wants us to come and to say, "Dear God, whatever comes, I want to give you MY WILL. Dear God, I want to do what you want me to do. I want to go where you want me to go. When you say this is right, I want to do it." And the Christian is a person who all of his life is saying, "Dear God, when all of the other options are open, God, I want to do what you want me to do." Is that the motto of your life? Is that the guiding principle of your life--the guiding principle that says, "Dear God, more than anything else in my life, I want to do what you want me to do."

Tragically, if you are here today and you have given 60% of your life to the Lord, but you simply have said, "Dear God, you are not going to have my business, dear God, you are not going to have my spare time, dear God, you are not going to have my money, dear God, you are not going to have this". . . ., then if you wonder what is wrong with your spiritual life we have just put the finger on it. If you can come to say, "Dear God, here are the sections of my life. What I want to do is I want to gather them all up, and I want to put them as an offering to you, and I want to say God, in every area of my life, I want to do your will." Now you understand that when you leave there, you are going to hear a hundred voices that are going to say all kinds of ways that you are going to be. There are going to be forces that are trying to pull you from being one person. What He wants is He wants you to come to do what you pray sometimes. *Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come (listen) thy will be done. Where? On earth. As compared to what? As in heaven.* God, I don't want to wait to get to heaven to do what you want me to do. I want to do it here. I want to start bringing heaven down here. I want to do what you want me to do. Sometime you will have to look at the face of temptation and say I am sorry. Sometime you will have to shake your head to the group. Sometime you will have to say no to the culture. But in the depth of your being, you are going to say "Dear God, not my will but thy will be done."

I get amazed when I talk to people about this. They almost feel like that when I am asking them to give their will to the Lord, they feel like somehow or other I am asking them to take castor oil or something. I always remember talking to a college student. She was dealing with all kinds of things. I said, "You know you never know God's will until you are willing to give Him your will. You can't get answers until you are willing to give your life to the Lord." I said, "Are you willing to give yourself to Him?" She turned to me and said, "I don't know if I can do that or not." I said, "Why?" She said, "As sure as I give myself to the Lord, he is going to call me to be a missionary to Africa, and I don't want to go to Africa." Now there are some people who think that if you give yourself to God that lurking back here he's got something all worked out for you that is going to make you miserable. I've got great news for you! He wants the best for you. He has nothing but good for you. When you come to say, "Dear God, I give myself to you," You grow down the roots in your life, and say dear God every day I want to say that--not my will but your will. You are going to find the joy and the blessings that God has planned throughout all of eternity.

Few men have made such an impact upon really world history, certainly Christian history. There was a man by the name of William Booth, an Englishman, who began to see all kinds of homeless people. He began to see all kinds of needy people. He started a little group. He called it the Salvation Army. That group now is in every country of the world ministering to people in the name of Christ. They came to William Booth one day and said, "Mr. Booth, can you tell us how you made such an impact upon the world?" William Booth said very simply, "One day I said to God, "God you can have all there is of William Booth." Someone has said it doesn't take much to be a Christian. It just takes all that you have.

What that simply means is that you have got to come and say, "Here I am, God, sinner, weak. I am torn. Sometimes I am one person. Sometimes I am another. I can't ever come to the point, dear God, of being whole."

What I want you to do is I want you to take me and make me what you want. I want to tell you there is no telling when you could do and how you could bless the world if you just give God all that you are. I know what I am asking, but that is what I wanted to ask you in the name of God today. I want to ask you if you have never given yourself wholly to him, I want to ask you to do that. If you have never done that, you may believe lots of stuff but what Jesus said is you are not a Christian. A Christian is a person who is determined to do God's will. If you haven't, I am going to ask you to come and to say dear God, I want to give myself wholly to you. Some of you are Christians. God has been leading you to this church. Maybe a part of what He wants you to do is to come to be a part of this fellowship. So you will come this morning, and say I want to do His will.

Most of you are members of our congregation. Let me ask you. On the scale of one to ten, how committed are you? How given over are you? How much of His will are you doing? 60%--70%? How long are you going to hold on to the other 30%? Are you willing to say today with the prayer of Jesus, Jesus' prayer is not my will; that will be done. And you come to simply say God, here I am, take all there is of me. Some of you need to make decisions that are life changing. I am going to ask the Spirit to touch your life. I am going to ask some of you who need to make public decisions, I am going to ask you to do it right now. Come to Christ. Come to this church. Come to total commitment of your life to Him. I am going to ask you to come and do it.

One day there was a little boy a hundred years ago. After the preacher preached and the offering came by, he didn't have any money. But he took a pencil and a piece of paper out of the pew, and he wrote these words. I give myself. He is the young man who helped to open up China to Christian missions. I give myself. I want to ask you today to give yourself to Him.