



December 11, 2016

### What Are We to Do With Our Fears?

**READ:** Luke 22:42 (Common English Bible)

*“He said, ‘Father, if it’s your will, take this cup of suffering away from me. However, not my will but your will must be done.’”*

#### **MEDITATE:**

Fear is an area of human experience, which involves us all. Fear shows no partiality. The young and old, the rich and poor, and the wise and simple all play host to fear at sometime in their life. Some fears are absurd and ridiculous, having life only in the imagination. Others are very real such as losing work, of experiencing failure or growing older and struggling with illness and death. The range of fears visited upon us and the variety of forms it assumes is astounding. Imagined or real, fears sap our energy and vitality, leaving us helpless and hopeless. What are we to do with our fears? Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, struggled with fear. His response provides guidance for meeting and managing this crippling experience.

Jesus’ initial response is to acknowledge his fear. Asking that “this cup of suffering” be removed is an honest appraisal of his fear. He identifies the presence of fear and looks squarely at it. Jesus’ practice suggests that it is a mistake to take no account of fear or to repress it or to bottle it up. In fact, many psychologists agree that an attempt to drive fears from the mind actually establishes the fear more and more into our subconscious where it festers and the crippling power is increased. Jesus does not bluff himself or others. He is afraid and he shares that fear freely with his disciples and his heavenly Father. Truthful acknowledgement of fears that grasp us is not weakness but wisdom.

The second lesson Jesus offers is to acknowledge that fears are driven by the desire for self-preservation. Basic survival is primitive and instinctive. It is how any species – including humans – have endured threats that continually confront life. We all want health, joy, and the assurance of security. If there is one thing that we are afraid of more than any other fear, it is the fear that these things may be snatched from us. Jesus is no exception. Here, in the garden that fretful night, Jesus wishes that suffering might be removed from him. At its core, fears demonstrate that we are very much wrapped-up in ourselves. We best manage our fears when we frankly acknowledge that we want to survive.

Third, Jesus directs us to take our fears to God in prayer, seeking to submit our basic desire for survival to a higher, and a more noble aspiration; the aspiration of pursuing God’s will. Jesus never stated it more plainly than when he said, “All who want to come after me must say no to themselves...(Matthew 16:24).” Jesus is asking that we put God above all else, including our own desire to grasp life. In the proportion that we are able to do this, self-centeredness, the cause of so many fears, is diminished. When self-centeredness is diminished, so are our fears. We cannot decide what will happen to us. But we can decide what will happen in us – how we will respond to the fears that visit us. Jesus shows us the way.

**APPLY:**

1. How has this scripture or meditation spoken to you?
2. What insight can you apply to your life this week?
3. What one specific act do you intend to take, an attitude to change, a person to see, or prayer to pray?

**PRAY:**

***NEED PRAYER FROM DOUG***