



Jesus in the Garden

Matthew 26:36-46

"Oh, there you are, teacher. Hail, Theophilus! Oh, Hail Theophilus!" Gus called as he entered the garden. The gardener was sitting on a bench with his head down and his eyes closed. He did not reply to Gus' calls.

"Perhaps he is asleep," Gus concluded. "Hail Theophilus!" He shouted, but his teacher did not respond. He began to panic. "Oh no, maybe he stopped breathing! Don't worry, I know CPR! I shall save you!" He yelled as he ran to Theophilus and shook him. Gus shook so hard, Theophilus tumbled to the ground.

Theophilus looked up, his eyes now wide open with surprise. "Gus!! What are you doing?!" He yelled.

Gus pushed him so that he was flat on the ground and began pressing on his chest. "Lay back, Theophilus," he screeched. "I'm saving your life!"

Theophilus struggled to push Gus off of him and tried to stand up. "Stop pounding on me! I'm not dying!"

"Are you sure?" Gus asked as he continued to try to press on the old man's chest.

"If I was dead, I think I'd know about it," Theophilus pointed out as he finally succeeded in pushing Gus out of the way. He stood up and brushed the dirt and leaves from his clothes.

Gus rocked backwards on the ground and looked up at his teacher. "But, you were sitting there so still."

"I was praying," Theophilus explained.

"Praying?" Gus asked surprised, as he squinted his eyes in the bright sunlight. The gardener nodded and sat back down on the bench. "Yes, I love to come out here and spend my prayer time in the garden talking to the Lord."

"You actually have a special time just to pray?" Gus asked.

Theophilus shrugged. "Of course, doesn't everybody?"

"Should we?" Gus scooted back to lean against an oak tree and shrugged. "I just pray when I need something."

"Well, it is good to pray when you have a need. But, we should also pray just to spend time with God. In fact, Jesus prayed all the time. Here, let me get His Word for us to read." Theophilus reached over and lifted the Bible from its window. "This report is about Jesus praying in the Garden of Gethsemane."

"The Garden of Whosie-whatsie?" Gus asked.

"Gethsemane," Theophilus repeated.

"Gesmemberly!" Gus tried again.

"Close enough." Theophilus laughed. "Anyway, it was the garden where Jesus went to pray after the Last Supper."

Gus looked concerned. "Is this going to be sad?"

Theophilus nodded. "I'm afraid so. Jesus said His soul was overwhelmed with sorrow. He knew it was almost time to give His life on the cross."

Gus leaned forward. "So, what did Jesus do?" he asked.

"He did the wisest thing we can do," Theophilus began.

"He prayed?" Gus guessed.

"Yes, Jesus asked His friends, Peter, James and John to come and wait for Him while He prayed." Theophilus looked down at Matthew 26 in the Bible and read the words Jesus said in the garden, "'My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from Me. Yet not as I will, but as You will.'"

"Cup? What cup was Jesus talking about?" Gus interrupted.

"By saying 'cup,' Jesus meant His death and suffering. God's plan was for Jesus to save all the people in the world from their sins by dying on the cross," Theophilus explained.

Gus thought for a moment. "I would've prayed for God to choose another way to save the world," he finally replied.

Theophilus smiled a knowing smile. "Jesus did ask if there was another way, but He also prayed this prayer, 'My Father, if it is not possible for this cup to be taken away unless I drink it, may Your will be done.'"

Gus sat up straight. "Wow...so Jesus really wanted to live, but most of all, He wanted to do whatever God wanted, no matter what!"

"Correct," Theophilus replied. "When we say, 'Your will be done,' we're really saying, 'I want whatever God wants.'"

"And Jesus chose to do God's will, even though it cost Him everything." Gus paused and looked down. He picked up a leaf and flicked it with his thumb. "Teacher, I have been praying selfishly."

Theophilus looked up from the Bible and over at Gus. "Why do you say that, Gus?"

"I always pray just for the things that I want," Gus explained softly as Theophilus nodded to show he was listening closely. "For instance, I prayed that I would have a horse and God gave me Rufus. I prayed for a sword and I got this one." Gus pulled his sword from the sheath and, as usual, dropped it.

"And I pray that you'll stop dropping it," Theophilus mumbled through gritted teeth.

Gus ignored his teacher's comment. "And lately I've been praying that I would become a knight. All my prayers are about me, me, me."

"Gus, it's okay to pray for things you want, but, like Jesus, we must be asking God what He wants for us. You see, prayer is not a wish list, it is simply the way we talk with God." Theophilus explained.

Gus looked up from the leaf. "So I can talk with God and ask Him to make me a knight, but most importantly, I can ask God to do what He wants with my life."

"Exactly," Theophilus agreed. "And, you never know, it might very well be God's will that you would become a knight so that you may help others."

Gus jumped up, nearly knocking over a wooden planter in the process. "That's it! Theophilus, I've got it!" he announced.

Theophilus scooted down the bench to avoid being hit by Gus' swinging arms. "Got what?"

"I have been searching and searching for something to give up for Lent but I've got a better idea. I am going to give God a special time every day when I'll talk to Him and pray that His will be done!" Gus announced.

Theophilus smiled proudly, "That is a wise way to serve our King."

Gus returned the smile, "A wise man helped me see it."

"You're growing on me, Gus. Remember, serving the King is the noblest thing!"

Theophilus patted the empty space on the bench next to him. "Come, sit, and let's pray together." Gus grinned happily and sat down next to his wise teacher. He quietly folded his hands, bowed his head, and asked God to do His will.