

"One Way"

Has you ever heard someone say, "You Christians are so arrogant. You dismiss every other religion as false and claim that Jesus is the only way. You think you are so perfect and everyone else is wrong."

Doesn't it bug you a bit? You know, that Jesus said He was the only way? That every other religion was wrong? Wouldn't it be easy to coexist and get along with everyone if we could just believe that all religions eventually lead to God? Tolerance does not mean approval. But wouldn't life be easier if we could accept other religions as valid without denying Jesus?

So are we sure that Jesus is the only way? How do we know that? Can you believe in Jesus as your Savior and approve of other religions as legit? We are going to look at another moment of surrender during Passion Week today. We have been learning about surrender and what it really means that "I can't. God Can" And one of the things that we have learned is that we were born with a sin nature. We were born as enemies of God. We, by nature, follow Satan. We were not good people who just chose to sin. We were sin natured people doing what came naturally to us.

We spoke about how at the core every religion is in some way man's understanding of how to appease or please God or gods. Every human has a hole that they know is spiritual. We know that something is wrong at the very core of who we are. We are trying to complete that part of ourselves. We all seem to know that we are not God, but we somehow think that we have the potential to be God or to at least gain His favor ,

We're all aware of personal failings and the need to be better. This is what leads to the creation of religions. We also want to feel at peace, fulfilled and having inner strength. And so we move to practices like meditation, religious rituals, self-help books, fasting, prayer, personal sacrifice, pilgrimages, etc.

Hindus believe their position in this present life was determined by their actions in a previous life. Pain, disease, poverty or a disaster like a flood is deserved by that person because of their own evil actions, usually from a previous lifetime. A Hindu's goal is to become free from the law of karma...to be free from continuous reincarnations.

New Age Spirituality promotes the development of the person's own power or divinity. When referring to deity, a follower of this type of spirituality is not talking about a transcendent, personal God who created the universe, but is referring to a higher consciousness within themselves. Anything negative a person experiences (failures, sadness, anger, selfishness, hurt) is considered an illusion. Believing themselves to be completely sovereign over their life, nothing about their life is wrong, negative or painful. Eventually a person develops spiritually to the degree that there is no objective, external reality. A person, becoming a god, creates their own reality.

Buddhists do not worship any gods or God. People outside of Buddhism often think that Buddhists worship the Buddha. However, the Buddha never claimed to be divine, but rather he is viewed by Buddhists as having attained what they are also striving to attain, which is spiritual enlightenment and, with it, freedom from the continuous cycle of life and death. Buddhists follow a list of religious principles and adhere to personal restraint, fasting and very dedicated meditation. When a Buddhist meditates it is not the same as praying or focusing on a god, it is more of a self-discipline. Through practiced meditation a person may reach Nirvana -- "the blowing out" of the flame of desire.

Muslims believe there is the one almighty God, named Allah, who is infinitely superior to and transcendent from humankind. Allah is viewed as the creator of the universe and the source of all good and all evil. Though a Muslim honors several prophets, Muhammad is considered the last prophet and his words and lifestyle are that person's authority. To be a Muslim, one must follow five religious duties: 1. Repeat a creed about Allah and Muhammad; 2. Recite certain prayers in Arabic five times a day; 3. Give to the needy; 4. One month each year, fast from food, drink, sex and smoking from sunrise to sunset; 5. Pilgrimage once in one's lifetime to worship at a shrine in Mecca. At death -- based on one's faithfulness to these duties -- a Muslim hopes to enter Paradise. If not, they will be eternally punished in hell.

It's interesting that Buddha never claimed sinlessness. Muhammad also admitted that he was in need of forgiveness. "No matter how wise, no matter how gifted, no matter how influential other prophets, gurus, and teachers might be, they had the presence of mind to know that they were imperfect just like the rest of us." All of these religions focus on one's own efforts to please God.

In Hinduism a person is on their own trying to gain release from karma. In New Age a person is working at their own divinity. In Buddhism it is an individual quest at being free from desire. And in Islam, the individual follows religious laws for the sake of paradise after death.

So all religions worshiping the same God? Are Christians the only ones who can't Coexist? Let's consider that. New Age Spirituality teaches that everyone should come to center on a cosmic consciousness, but it would require Islam to give up their one God, Hinduism to give up their numerous gods, and Buddhism to establish that there is a God. It turns out that all of the religions, when compared to others are exclusive. They all believe that they are the only way.

In that claim however, the Followers of Jesus are different. Jesus is not interested in your performance, it is all about surrender. With Jesus Christ, you see God offering us a relationship with himself, not based on our efforts, but based on what he did for us.

Jesus took all of our sin on himself, suffered on a cross, and willingly died in our place. In doing so, he satisfied the Father's righteous demands for justice. He allowed the Holy Spirit to come in to His followers and replace the sinful nature with the very nature of God Himself. He replaces our sinful desires with His and thus we become new people free from the nature of sin.

True followers of Jesus learn that it is not our religious practices that bring us closer to God, it is the process of dying to our old sin nature through continual surrender. God focusing on doing, we focus on being. Jesus, compared to other religions, is the only one who offers a solution for our sin nature.

So Christians can't accept any other way to God because doing so denies what Jesus did for us. We can't accept other religions as ways to God because Jesus Himself told us we can't.

John 14:6 (ESV) 6 Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."

Acts 4:12 (ESV) 12 And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."

Romans 10:9 (ESV) 9 because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.

John 3:36 (ESV) 36 Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him.

1 Timothy 2:4–6 (ESV) 4 who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. 5 For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, 6 who gave himself as a ransom for all

John 17:3 (ESV) 3 And this is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.

So I don't have an opinion on Jesus being the only way. He spoke and I believe.

Have you ever wondered who first got on their knees and asked God "Is Jesus the only way?" We are going to dive a bit deeper into this a bit in a few moments.

We are going to look at another incredible moment where Jesus surrendered to the Father's will. Today, we are going to go with Jesus to the Garden of Gethsemane.

It is the night before His crucifixion. Judas has left to go arrange Jesus' betrayal and arrest. He did so with very clean feet but a heart against Jesus.

The night has been a tense one. Jesus wants to go and pray with His disciples, so they leave the upper room and walk about a mile outside the city gates.

Matthew 26:36 (ESV) 36 Then Jesus went with them to a place called Gethsemane, and he said to his disciples, "Sit here, while I go over there and pray."

The word Gethsemane is derived from two Hebrew words: gat, which means "a place for pressing oil (or wine)" and shemanim, which means "oils." Thus it is a place where olives are pressed in order to express the oils.

The Garden of Gethsemane...is about a mile from the East Gate of the Wall of Jerusalem. PHOTO 1 PHOTO 2 and PHOTO 3

During Jesus' time, heavy stone slabs were lowered onto olives that had already been crushed in an olive crusher. Gradually, the slabs weight squeezed the olive oil out of the pulp, and the oil ran into a pit. There the oil was collected in clay jars.

Symbolism is key in the Bible and Jesus was the master of using locations to teach lessons. As the world pressed in on Him, he went to place where olives are pressed. Lets look a bit deeper at the olive tree and the oils.

Olive Tree PHOTO 4

Amazingly olive trees will grow where other plants will not. They thrive in rocky and unproductive soil. When an olive tree gets very old (often hundreds of years old) and has reached its maximum production, farmers usually cut it down to improve its future growth. Soon, new shoots grow from the old stump, and the tree begins producing olives again.

Throughout the Old Testament, the Olive Tree is used as a symbol of the Nation of Israel. Initially in the Holy Land the nation flourished, but as it grew up, the Jewish people became fruitless and God had to cut the tree of Israel at its roots.

In 586 BC God directed Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, to destroy what was left of the Southern Kingdom in Judah. David's kingdom.....was reduced to almost nothing. It became like a tree cut down with only its stump left in the ground. But then, as the Prophets foretold,

Isaiah 11:1–5 (ESV) 1 There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit. 2 And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord. 3 And his delight shall be in the fear of the Lord. He shall not judge by what his eyes see, or decide disputes by what his ears hear, 4 but with righteousness he shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth; and he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked. 5 Righteousness shall be the belt of his waist, and faithfulness the belt of his loins.

The promised One, Jesus, would rise from the stump of Jesse...and all future branches will grow from that shoot and importantly be sustained by that shoot.

In the New Testament, Paul tells us that Gentiles are grafted into this shoot through their faith in Jesus.

Romans 11:24 (ESV) 24 For if you were cut from what is by nature a wild olive tree, and grafted, contrary to nature, into a cultivated olive tree, how much more will these, the natural branches, be grafted back into their own olive tree.

Paul describes Christians as either natural olive branches (those of Jewish background), or olive branches that have been grafted onto Jesus (Gentiles). As branches grafted into Jesus, Christians will only bear fruit if we are attached to (and have a personal relationship with) him.

That is why Jesus said...

John 15:1–5 (ESV) 1 "I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. ... 4 Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. 5 I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.

Something critical to notice...Though God cut many Jewish branches down because they rejected Jesus as Messiah, he did not uproot the tree. The shoot of Jesus and the branches of his Gentile followers grew from a Jewish stump. As Christians, we are branches growing from Jewish roots.

The often gnarled, irregular trunk of the olive tree indicates strength and durability. It continues to bear fruit. It represents the strength that develops when the root and shoots come together to form the tree.

The tree therefore signifies new Testament church. Based on Jewish roots, connected to Jesus, some original Jewish shoots intertwined with newer Gentile shoots. All coming together in Christ.

The Olive Tree is symbolic of Israel but we also see symbolism in the oil it produces.

Olive Oil PHOTO 5

Olive oil, in the symbolism of the Bible, is a picture of the presence of the Spirit of God. Oil was used for anointing priests and kings. It was also used to bring light from the menorah in the Tabernacle in the wilderness.

It was greatly valued and was an important export. The Oil of an Olive Tree often symbolized the Grace of God as it pours out on us.

Psalm 133:2 (ESV) 2 It is like the precious oil on the head, running down on the beard, on the beard of Aaron, running down on the collar of his robes!

The children of Israel wore tassels upon their garments to remind them of the streams of the divine oil that God poured out upon them continuously.

The olives are pressed with weight to express the oil that is within them.

Olive Press PHOTO 6

Once the olives are gathered they were placed on a circular stone basin in which a millstone sat. Perhaps you have seen animals walking in circles around a millstone pushing the stone around grinding whatever is put beneath it. This is how the olives were crushed and eventually a paste was formed.

That thick paste is then smeared onto mats or burlap type fabric. The baskets or mats are stacked under a huge stone column.

When olives are pressed for oil and they go through three rounds of pressing. The first press gives you extra virgin olive oil, which is used in the Jewish temple for lighting and anointing. The oil from the second press is used for making medicine (or for healing), while the oil from the third press is used for making soap (cleansing). It is the first press that brings forth the oil for the temple.

The purest of oil is the first press. This oil is used in the temple for lighting and for anointing. God instructed the lighting of the menorah (the seven branch candelabra) and other Temple lights with olive oil. The menorah was lit with 'pure oil of pressed olives'. The oil was to be katit (beaten olives). To produce katit oil, the olives must be squeezed repeatedly. They used these super heavy stones to weigh on the olives in order to get rid of any fluid and to release the purest of the beaten olives. Now here is the important part. The more the olives are pressed.....the more concentrated the beaten olives become....and the brighter the light when it is burned. If you don't press the olives with heavy weight....the oil will not be concentrated enough for the lamps to make light.

Matthew 26:37–38 (ESV) 37 And taking with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, he began to be sorrowful and troubled. 38 Then he said to them, "My soul is very sorrowful, even to death; remain here, and watch with me."

So it is likely that Jesus stopped at the gate to the Garden and told His disciples to stay there. But He took His inner circle....Peter, James and John into the Garden with Him.

Jesus even with His soul troubled to death....is still trying to teach His disciples before He dies.

Jesus is going to show them what to do during extremely difficult trials. Remember they had just argued about who was the greatest...and Jesus knew His disciples needed to learn the humility and surrender necessary to serve God. He wanted Peter, James, and John to be convinced and convicted of their foolish pride and arrogance. And He wanted them, in turn, to teach their fellow disciples that lesson.

This lesson Jesus shows them that there are many times when the only place you can go is to the Father. Sometimes you don't need to talk to your friends or seek their advice....Often you need to get on your knees and surrender. He wanted to show them vividly that, in His humanness, even the divine Son of God needed the support of His heavenly Father. His support did not come from other believers...He went to the Father.

Every moment of Jesus' life, from His first cry as an infant to His last cry from the cross, was lived in total submission to His heavenly Father. Every Christian at times faces temptations, trials, and heartaches that threaten to overwhelm him. In the depths of such tests, even our dearest and most spiritual friends are unable to provide what we need.

God expects believers to encourage and strengthen one another, but there are times when only direct, intimate communion with the Lord in intense prayer can provide the strength to meet their desperate need.

26:38 sorrowful, even to death. His anguish had nothing to do with fear of men or the physical torments of the cross. He was sorrowful because within hours the full cup of divine fury against sin would be His to drink

Matthew 26:39 (ESV) 39 And going a little farther he fell on his face and prayed, saying, "My Father, if it be possible,

His posture here is different from any other time we see Jesus. The typical Jewish prayer posture of the day was standing, with eyes open and lifted to heaven. Here Jesus fell on His face in humility, urgency and desperate need.

PHOTO 6 It is remarkable that we see Jesus in this posture only once and most artistic renderings of Jesus in the Garden show him kneeling or slightly leaning on one hip. In fact, the Word tells us He was on His face. We have cleaned this up a bit in our imagination. In fact the word used here to describe Jesus is also used another place in the Bible...in Mark 9 when the demon man falls to the ground convulsing in pain and distress...

.This is not some quiet kneeling that Jesus was doing. He threw Himself to the ground in desperation. In addition, most images of Jesus in the garden show Him with hands folded or fingers entwined, yet there is no Jewish precedent for folding hands in prayer, Jewish people always lifted open hands in prayer.

Jesus states a condition in this desperate prayer: My Father if it be possible.. Note that even though Jesus is desperate, distraught and full of despair....He still surrenders to the Father's authority, power and will. He begins this desperate prayer with "If it be possible" Jesus is asking if the Father can, in the realm of his will and purpose, create a way for Jesus to avoid the cross. Luke records the absolute condition of his prayer, "If you are willing...."

Matthew 26:39 (ESV) 39 And going a little farther he fell on his face and prayed, saying, "My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will."

The Cup

God's wrath and judgment are often pictured in the Old Testament as a cup to be drunk. This cup symbolized the suffering Jesus would endure on the cross, the cup of God's fury vented against all the sins of mankind, which the Son would take upon Himself as the sacrificial Lamb of God.

Repeatedly in the Old Testament, the cup is a powerful picture of the wrath and judgment of God.

- (Psalm 75:8) For in the hand of the Lord there is a cup, and the wine is red; it is fully mixed, and He pours it out; surely its dregs shall all the wicked of the earth drain and drink down.
- (Isaiah 51:17) Awake, awake! Stand up, O Jerusalem, you who have drunk at the hand of the Lord the cup of His fury; you have drunk the dregs of the cup of trembling, and drained it out.
- (Jeremiah 25:15) For thus says the Lord God of Israel to me: "Take this wine cup of fury from My hand, and cause all the nations, to whom I send you, to drink it."

Jesus became, as it were, an enemy of God, who was judged and forced to drink the cup of the Father's fury, so we would not have to drink from that cup—this was the source of Jesus' agony.

The cup didn't represent death, but judgment. Jesus was unafraid of death, and when He had finished His work on the cross—the work of receiving and bearing and satisfying the righteous judgment of God the Father upon our sin—when He finished that work, He simply yielded Himself to death as His choice.

But first...Jesus needed to be absolutely sure...absolutely sure that the only way for Him to save us was to go to the cross for us.

My Father...If it be your will...don't make me stand in your wrath....Is there any other way?

Do you see Jesus' question? It is the same question that we all have....Jesus is asking the Father....Are you sure that I am the only way? Is there any other way to save these people whom we love? Is the cross the only way to accomplish what must be done to maintain holiness, justice, righteousness, and forgiveness?

"We hear Him cry out: Father – is there an alternative? Is there any way to avoid this? If there's a way this cup could pass from Me, would You please provide that to Me?"

That Jesus asks the hour and the cup to be passed should not indicate that he is afraid of death. Over and over he has been telling his disciples that he is voluntarily going to his death. Instead, he appears overwhelmed by the weight of what he is about to do: bearing the sins of the world.

Many people assume that Jesus' prayer in the garden was because He simply didn't want to endure the physical agony of death on the cross. Who would want to experience that? No one could have faulted Jesus for seeking another way besides the cross. Jesus was in agony in the garden because He knew He would bear the sin of all eternity in His body. His perfect, sinless body would become sin and bear the weight and punishment of that sin.

This does not mean that Jesus somehow developed or was given a sin nature. That is entirely false. Let's remember that the sin nature is passed from father to child. And because Jesus' father is God (the Father), He had no sin nature; neither did He take a sin nature on the cross.

Jesus did, however, bear our sin in His body. And by doing so, Jesus would have to "drink the cup" of the Father's divine wrath; a fury so great that any other person would have no way to endure it. And yet Jesus was about to drink that cup fully and empty it upon Himself in our place. This leads us to why Jesus was in such agony in the garden.

Because of the cup Jesus would drink and the sin he was bear in His body in our place, Jesus knew that He and His Father would be separated. As the Father crushes His only Son for us as He pours out His divine wrath, the Father must also separate Himself from Jesus because He cannot associate in any way with sin.

The anguish that Jesus was feeling in the Garden....what threw Him face down on the ground...was the realization that He was being separated from the Father for the first time in all eternity. Because the Son had taken sin upon Himself, the Father turned His back.

He not only endured the agony of the cross and the pain of God's divine wrath; Jesus suffered the tremendous pain of being separated from His Father. The eternal Trinity that had, since eternity past, enjoyed a perfect relationship with perfect fellowship, was, for a brief moment in history, separated.

The high cost of our salvation was not merely the physical punishment Jesus bore in His body, but included the being forsaken by His Father as He bore our sin in His body.

Yet even though He is separated....event though His Soul is troubled to the point of death... Jesus' is still surrendered to the Father's will. His personal preferences don't matter....His desire is for the Father's best....the Father's highest... the Father's glory. . Only if Jesus' prayer can be answered within the scope of his Father's will does he want it answered. Only then. Jesus prays prostrated to the ground, in agony, fully surrendered but in total distress...He prays in alignment with God's will...and the response? Deadly Silence. Luke adds another detail that helps us. Even though the Father couldn't answer Jesus' prayer....Look at what He does to let Him know He is loved.

Luke 22:42–44 (ESV) 43 And there appeared to him an angel from heaven, strengthening him.

An important lesson for all of us here. Sometimes the Father in His love and perfect will must make us go through trials and situations that we beg Him to take away.....Even though He may seem silent...Even though we wanted a different outcome....He is with us and brings us comfort and strength in desperate times.

Here He sent Jesus an angel. He has given you and me the Holy Spirit. But no matter what we are going through...He is walking through it ahead of us and with us.

Then Luke adds an incredible detail....

Luke 22:42–44 (ESV) 43 And there appeared to him an angel from heaven, strengthening him. 44 And being in agony he prayed more earnestly; and his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground.

In this moment...The weight of the sins of the world are pressing down on Jesus. He will be pressed three times. He is among the Olive Trees...Pressed by the sins of man...as the burden and weight of those sins begins to increase...we see sweat like drops of blood coming from Jesus and falling to the ground. Just like oil is expressed from olives under the weight of the press....Jesus' sweat is expressed from the weight He is carrying. We are told that His sweat was full of blood and fell to the ground.

This first oil....from the first of three pressings....is the purest....Do you want to guess what color of oil comes out at the first press? We are used to seeing virgin olive oil in its cleaned up form. But under the first press....as the baskets of olive paste are compressed by the weight.....it looks like this. **PHOTO 7**

The purest oil that is used in the lamps and for anointing...has a reddish hue. It looks a lot like blood.

Jesus...the purest root of the tree of Israel.....sinless but under the weight of our sin...pours out reddened sweat....as the purest anointing oil for us. He will anoint the world with His blood...and the first drop of Jesus' blood to pay for our sins...was not on the cross....it was pressed out of Him in the Garden as He began to bear the weight of our sins. The first drop of our Savior's blood for you and me...Hit the earth in the Garden...where our Savior was pressed and His precious blood was expressed.

Matthew 26:40–41 (ESV) 40 And he came to the disciples and found them sleeping. And he said to Peter, "So, could you not watch with me one hour? 41 Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."

He tells Peter to wake up and stay awake. Why? Did you notice that Jesus is once again focused on His disciples? This is incredible. With sweat of blood on His brow...Jesus doesn't ask Peter to pray for Him as He takes on the sins of the world..... He tells Peter to pray to for Himself so that Peter would not be weak and fall into temptation. Jesus is using every moment He has left to teach His disciples all the way to the cross. It is incredibly selfless.

Matthew 26:42 (ESV) 42 Again, for the second time, he went away and prayed, "My Father, if this cannot pass unless I drink it, your will be done."

Jesus is pressed the second time. Symbolizing the healing that He would bring to mankind. Again note....Your will be done.

This struggle at Gethsemane—the place of crushing—has an important place in fulfilling God's plan of redemption. If Jesus failed here, He would have failed at the cross. His success here made the victory at the cross possible.

There is an important concept here that we should not miss. Jesus spent His time in the Garden preparing Himself for the trial that the Father was about to take Him through. Peter, rather than preparing for his trial....slept. Jesus succeeded and Peter failed. The Spiritual battle that God calls us to...if often won or lost before the crisis comes based on how well we have prepared for it.

The spirit is willing, ... the flesh is still weak. This is exactly what we have been studying. The struggle between our flesh and our Spirit. Then Jesus models for us how to manage when we need strength in trials.

When Jesus was tempted in the desert by Satan...He was tempted three times. Each time Jesus quoted Scripture and aligned His will with the Father's.

Now in the Garden. Jesus is pressed three times. He goes directly to the source of Scripture three times in prayer. Aligning His will with the Father's.

When we face trials...just like Jesus we need to completely depend upon only two things....God's Promises in His Word and the power we receive in prayer. If you are in desperate situations and depending on anything else...you are off base.

Matthew 26:43–44 (ESV) 43 And again he came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were heavy. 44 So, leaving them again, he went away and prayed for the third time, saying the same words again.

Three times He is pressed....Three times the weight of the sin of man begins to press in on Him....The first time as a pure offering to the Lord, the second for healing of mankind and the third time like soap to cleanse man from His sins. Each prayer was book-ended with surrender.... If and only if it is your will....and not my will but yours. Each time Jesus is pressed..... His resolve is strengthened....His mission is clarified....His flesh is defeated...and His Spirit is empowered.

By asking, "If it is possible," Jesus did not wonder if escaping the cross was within the realm of possibility. He knew that He had been given all authority. He could escape the cross...He could just walk away....In fact He said as much to the Pharisees.

John 10:17–18 (ESV) 17 For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it up again. 18 No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from my Father."

Jesus had also told His disciples that with God all things are possible. What He is trying to make sure of is that within the will of God...for the purpose of saving mankind...Is drinking the cup of wrath at the cross...the only way.

And in asking...Jesus teaches us an important lesson. For those surrendered to God....the only true options we have are those that fall within His will....They are many options in every situation...but we are to stay within the confines of the Father's will for us too.

For those surrendered to Christ it would benefit us greatly to remember that there are no options for us...that fall outside of the will of the Father. If God doesn't ordain it we don't do it.

Matthew 26:45–46 (ESV) 45 Then he came to the disciples and said to them, "Sleep and take your rest later on. See, the hour is at hand, and the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. 46 Rise, let us be going; see, my betrayer is at hand."

The word behold is used to call attention to something. As Jesus walked back to the three disciples, the men coming to arrest Him were already within sight. As they approached, Jesus could make out the Roman soldiers from Fort Antonia and the chief priests and elders. Most clearly of all, He could see Judas...His betrayer had done what he was going to do quickly. The Hour had come.

The Story of Surrender in the Garden of Gethsemane is I believe the most powerful example of surrender short of the cross.

The Father sent the Son to the cross, but He did not force Him to go. Jesus spend the night in the garden...clarifying what was possible within the will of the God. .. The first person to ask God if Jesus was the only way....was Jesus Himself.

Jesus came to the Garden that night with just one final question for the Father. "Dad, is there any other way, within your will, that man can be saved without me going to the cross? Please search you ways, is there any other way? Does everything depend upon me?

What about Buddha? A lot of people have been following him? Can He save mankind? Can he be the way?

What about Hindu's? There are a lot of people on earth right now who are following....Can the Hindu ways save mankind? Can they be the truth?

What about Zeus or all those Roman gods. Father can they be the way? Can they be the truth? Can pleasing those gods save mankind?

God could there be a different Jewish Messiah? One who will come today lead armies...one who will today bring peace...They have rejected me God...maybe another Messiah could convince them....

God what about Mohammed...he is coming...will he be the way the truth and the life?

God what if man became enlightened? What if man rose to his highest level? Could man save himself? Could humanism be the way...the truth?

Father, what if we just ignored their sins? What if we allowed them to live pretty good lives...We could grade them on a curve and pick those that are better than others. Can you remain just and kind of look the other way regarding their sins?

They were born with this sin nature....They sinned before they knew what it was...What if we just made them ask for forgiveness. Couldn't we accept them with their cleaned up sin nature?

Father what if we took away their free will? What if we made them obey you? We could start over like in Noah's day. Wipe everyone out and then make them a people who can't do anything but obey you.

Father could we still have a relationship with them...even if they stayed in their sin nature? Don't we have enough holiness for everyone?

Three times Jesus begged the Father to find another way. To find some way to solve man's sin nature without Jesus having to be tortured/crucified for the sins of the world and separated from the Father. I don't know how many scenarios Jesus floated past the Father....but I know the outcome.

And each time....the Father through tears with silence....said no....there is just one way....My son you are it...You must pay for the sins of the world if we are going to save them from themselves.

If Jesus knew of any other way that man could be saved...and He went to the cross anyway....then He was the biggest fool and idiot ever to walk on the earth. If there was any other way to solve man's sin nature and give Him God's nature, then Jesus rather than going to the cross....should have held a press conference.

Only an absolute mad man would go through what Jesus went through at Calvary if He knew that there was any other way to accomplish what God wanted.

How do I know that Jesus is the only way?

Because with every other option available to Him...He looked ahead to you and me...and chose the cross because He knew there was no other way....and that is more than enough for me. Let's Pray.