

Garden of Gethsemane (Mt 26:36-46; Mk 14:32-42; Lk 22:39-46; Jn 18:1)

The Feast of the Passover was drawing to a close and Jesus sang the hymn of the Hallel. It was now time to begin one of the most painful experiences that Jesus EVER had, the event of the Garden of Gethsemane.

Matt 26:36-46 Then Jesus came with them to a place called Gethsemane, and said to His disciples, "Sit here while I go over there and pray." 37 And He took with Him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be grieved and distressed.

- John 18:1 states *"When Jesus had spoken these words, He went forth with His disciples over the ravine of the Kidron, where there was a garden, into which He Himself entered, and His disciples."* This would mean that they left the East Gate of the city, crossed the Kidron ravine and ascended the Mount of Olives.
- It was here that they arrived at a location that they had often frequented, for Luke said in 22:39 that it was "His custom". The word for Gethsemane means "the olive press". Apparently this was a private grove of olive trees that Jesus had permission to frequent. From here it would have been possible to see many in town delivering gifts to the poor and couriers gathering supplies for the meal. Even though it was late, the Temple would have been reopened to begin preparations for the great sacrifices of the next day. There were many out that night, not just the Savior.
- The Mark account said it was here that He left eight of the disciples, telling them to pray that they would not enter temptation. The three from the inner circle, Peter, James and John, went with Him to the center of the garden with Jesus.

Mt 26:38-39 Then He said to them, "My soul is deeply grieved, to the point of death; remain here and keep watch with Me." 39 And He went a little beyond {them,} and fell on His face and prayed, saying, "My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; yet not as I will, but as Thou wilt."

- Mk 14:35 states *And He went a little beyond {them,} and fell to the ground, and {began} to pray that if it were possible, the hour might pass Him by. Luke 24:41 says "And He withdrew from them about a stone's throw, and He knelt down and {began} to pray."* How far a "stone's throw" is we do not know for sure. Some people can throw far and some stones are extremely heavy. We do know that there was a full moon and He would have been within sight of the three.
- He is deeply grieved at what is about to occur in the crucifixion and it has been building for some time. Two days prior it stated in *John 12:27 "Now My soul has become troubled; and what shall I say, 'Father, save Me from this hour'? But for this purpose I came to this hour."* It is here that the pinnacle was reached, for He was grieved to the point of death.

- He was crying out to the Father to take away this terrible event from His life if possible. It was not about Jesus, but the will of the Father. Mk 14:36 says *"And He was saying, 'Abba! Father! All things are possible for Thee; remove this cup from Me; yet not what I will, but what Thou wilt.'"* This is a more personal phrase from the Aramaic, being the equivalent to saying "Dad".
- This has always been a difficult text in regards to Jesus because it almost makes Him look like a coward. It is not that He was afraid of the pain or suffering, but of the separation from God and guilt of humanity, two things that were alien in nature to Him.

Separation from God: He was always with God.

- Gen 1:26 Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth."
- Matt 27:46 And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? "that is," My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?"
- Luke 23:44 And it was now about the sixth hour, and darkness fell over the whole land until the ninth hour,

Guilt of Humanity: He had never known sin.

- Heb 4:15 For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as {we are, yet} without sin.
- 2 Cor 5:21 He made Him who knew no sin {to be} sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.
- 1 Pet 2:24 and He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed.

This was a terrible event in Jesus' life.

- Jesus knew the weight of the world's sin would be placed on Him and for the first and only time, He would be separated from God. The dual thought of that to Him would have consumed Him greatly.
- *Heb 5:7-8 In the days of His flesh, He offered up both prayers and supplications with loud crying and tears to the One able to save Him from death, and He was heard because of His piety. 8 Although He was a Son, He learned obedience from the things which He suffered.*

Mt 26:40-42 And He came to the disciples and found them sleeping, and said to Peter, "So, you {men} could not keep watch with Me for one hour? 41 "Keep watching and praying, that you may not enter into temptation; the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak."

- He returns from the first session of prayer only to find the three disciples asleep. He singles out one of them above the others, Peter. This is probably because only hours prior he said he would lay down his life for Jesus and now he won't even stay awake for Him for an hour of prayer.
- We have to remember that it was getting late and it had been a long day, so you might think that Jesus might be more understanding. The real issue was that they were about to be under a great trial, for six-hundred men with torches are about to come and take Jesus captive. They will be under huge stress and had better be preparing. The best way for them to be prepared is to be alert in prepare.
- Matt 6:13 'And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil.
- Col 4:2 Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with {an attitude of} thanksgiving;
- Eph 6:18 With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints,

Mt 26:42-44 He went away again a second time and prayed, saying, "My Father, if this cannot pass away unless I drink it, Thy will be done." 43 And again He came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were heavy. 44 And He left them again, and went away and prayed a third time, saying the same thing once more.

- As mentioned prior, this was an extremely trying time for Jesus. So much so that Luke states in *Luke 22:43 Now an angel from heaven appeared to Him, strengthening Him*. The last time we saw an angel coming to minister to Jesus was in Mt 4:11 following the forty days of fasting and temptation at the very beginning of Jesus' ministry.
- Luke, who was also a physician, mentioned something that the other writers left out. *Luke 22:44 And being in agony He was praying very fervently; and His sweat became like drops of blood, falling down upon the ground*. This is likely a condition called *hemitidrosis*. It is a condition from such great stress that the capillaries burst. The blood that is trapped below the skin actually is released when sweating.
- Some Jews taught that to pray about something three times in a session was a complete sequence of prayer for an issue.
- It was three times that God communicated the acceptance of the gentiles to Peter in the vision. Acts 10:16 *And this happened three times; and immediately the object was taken up into the sky*.
- Paul prayed three times to have the thorn in the flesh removed. 2 Cor 12:8-9 *Concerning this I entreated the Lord three times that it might depart from me. 9 and He has said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness." Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may dwell in me*.
- The fact that Jesus fervently prayed three times for the removal of this trial indicates to us the severity of the grief in Gethsemane. Three times He

deeply meditated on the desire to not go through with it, but willingly in the end to follow the plan of going to the cross.

Mt 26:45-46 Then He came to the disciples, and said to them, "Are you still sleeping and taking your rest? Behold, the hour is at hand and the Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of sinners. 46 "Arise, let us be going; behold, the one who betrays Me is at hand!"

- This is the third time that Jesus has caught them sleeping. They are exhausted and are under tremendous stress of their own. This has been the busiest week of their life. On Sunday they had the triumphal entry. Monday was the cleansing of the temple. Tuesday was the confrontation of the leaders. Wednesday and Thursday was the preparation for the Passover. To top it off, there was a multi-mile walk each morning and evening to their place of residence during the Passover week. They were worn out! The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.
- The Mark account states by the time He finds them sleeping at the end of the third Gethsemane prayer session, He says, "It is ENOUGH". They had their chance to strengthen themselves from abandoning Him in the coming moments, but they chose sleep.
- Within a matter of moments, Judas would arrive with the Jewish leadership and six-hundred soldiers that would arrest Jesus and they would not be ready for it. Peter would become violent and denying; some fled; others stood aloof. It was a bad night becoming worse.

When you are worn out, PRAY FOR STRENGTH.

- Even though the apostles had a long and drawn out week filled with incredibly emotionally draining events, they were not praying like they should have. Jesus knew what was coming and told them they needed to prepare in prayer, but they did not. Jesus had a longer week than any on them, but He focused on prayer to the Father. He drew a great strength in His prayers. He entered the Garden deeply grieved and left with the strength of the Son of God. Can you just imagine what the crucifixion would have been like without what occurred in prayer at Gethsemane?
- We all should also have busy schedules. I know that I am often meeting myself going while coming back. There are many times that I am worn out. There are many things on your plate as well. There are all those work responsibilities that you have with all those home responsibilities as well. Not to mention that if you have kids there are also all those sporting events and school events. Then you have that vacation that really does not seem like a vacation. God have mercy if you have illness in your home or friends. We barely have time to sleep anymore and are living on caffeine. We are worn out! Is it nice to know that we can go to the Father in prayer for the strength we need? I cannot tell you how many times I felt

worn out and receive the strength of the Energizer Bunny from my Father in prayer. You can, should and some are doing this already.

When you face the tough times, PRAY WITH PERSISTENCE.

- It is the persistent prayer that will get you through the tough times of your life. I would have to say that with what Jesus knew was coming qualifies for the toughest of weeks. He did not leave it at one prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane, but three intense prayers. In fact He had been praying more in this week of ministry than in any week in the Bible. The tougher the times were for Jesus, the more persistent He was with prayer.
- We also need to keep that in our memory, for we have weeks that are tough, but not as nearly as tough as Jesus. Maybe it is that car trouble you had or the job difficulties that you suffered. Maybe it is a money or nagging health problem. Perhaps it is marriage difficulty. Whatever the difficult situation, pray with persistence and it will help tremendously.

Whenever you are feeling like giving up, PRAY FOR COURAGE

- Jesus could have given up under the pressure, but prayed for the strength from God to complete His task. He was facing the toughest dozen hours of His life and it would be necessary to tackle it in prayer. In that time He would be beaten, spit on, slandered, cursed, humiliated, stripped of His clothes, hung naked on the cross to die, had the sins of the world placed on Him and have His Father turn His back on Him. If there was ever a time to give up, that would be it. He prayed; He gained courage; He re-focused and took the task as planned from the beginning of time.
- We also need to shake that quitting feeling by praying for courage to face our cross of living for Jesus. *Matt 16:24 Then Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.* It takes a great courage to carry this out and this courage comes from prayer.

PRAY! PRAY! PRAY!