

Study Guide for the Central Church of Christ 4-9-17

April 9 we will study Mark 14:27-42 Due to flooding of classrooms there will be no classes April 9. Some of you might wish to use the following discussion ideas in your Home Team:

1. What was the “Gethsemane” time in your life?
2. How did you get through it?
3. If you had to go through it again, what would you do differently?
4. How much did prayer or the lack of it, effect your Gethsemane experience?
5. How is Gethsemane a continuation of the wilderness temptation?
6. How is Gethsemane a tougher temptation than the wilderness temptation?
7. How would you describe the feelings of Jesus during the singing of Ps. 118:27b and when He quotes Zech. 13:7?
8. Do you think it was co-incidence or intentional that Jesus moment of great pressure comes in a place called “The Oil Press” (Gethsemane)?
9. What was the cup Jesus prayed to have removed? (See John 12:27-28)
10. Jesus use of “abba” parallels our use of “daddy”. Why is it inappropriate in a public prayer to address God as “daddy”?
11. Agree/disagree: “There was a time when Jesus did not want to do the Father’s will.”
12. When you think of Peter, James and John sleeping in Gethsemane do you think:
 - a. “Bless their hearts, they can’t help it if they are suffering from sleep deprivation.”
 - b. “How could they sleep while Jesus agonized?”
 - c. “Their sleepiness was a symptom of a lack of awareness of the seriousness of the situation.”
 - d. “That’s why you should always carry some No-Doz in your pocket.”
13. What were the apostles supposed to be “watching” for?
14. Why does Jesus keep returning to Peter, James and John? Why doesn’t He just keep praying?

Sermon: *What to Do When Life Presses You Down*

A man sent out a floral arrangement to celebrate the beginning of a good friend’s new business. When the sender arrived at the celebration he was shocked to find his flower basket with a card that read, “Rest in Peace.” Angrily, he phoned the florist and complained about the mix up. The florist said, “Don’t be too upset. Think of it this way, somewhere in town today someone was buried under a sign that said, “Good luck in your new location.”

Sometimes life feels like a cruel practical joke and you aren’t laughing. There are folks sitting here this morning who are facing a time in life that feels like they are in hell. And, to make matters worse, friends and family efforts to help seem about as misguided as a cemetery sign reading “Good luck in your new location.” If that is close to how you are feeling this morning, you picked a great day to come to church! Hopefully you will leave

here today feeling deep in your soul that Jesus absolutely knows what you are feeling because He has been there. He knows what it's like to be plotted against, talked about, and confused about what God expects from you at this point in your life.

To get the big picture reminisce with me a bit. Remember how Jesus began his ministry in the wilderness where he was tempted by Satan. And remember how at the end of the wilderness temptation Satan left Jesus "until an opportune season". In Mark 14, the season is over and Satan is back in full force. This time he brings all the powers of hell with him as he tempts Jesus like he has never tempted anyone before or since. In the wilderness Jesus was tempted to use his power selfishly, to become a Messiah who gives people what they want rather than what they need, a Messiah who will compromise in order to avoid personal pain. The pressure on Jesus to avoid the way of the cross is enormous in the wilderness temptation. But Jesus, armed with the word of God, resists the temptation and resolves to do things God's way. Now, in the Garden of Gethsemane, Satan pounds away at the same sore spot in Jesus' psyche – the awful nature of death on a cross. You can hear him whispering in Jesus' ear while he prays, "Avoid the cross! Think of the physical pain! Think of the mocking, the disgrace, the shame! You've done enough. You have loved, healed, and taught for 3 ½ years. Just head on back to Heaven. You've done enough." Perhaps even worse than the anticipation of physical pain was the reality that with the cross he would, in the words of Paul, "be made to be sin for us".

Mark makes it clear that Jesus knew what was going to happen to him. He sings the Hallel with his apostles. The Hallel which included the phrase, "Bind the festal sacrifice with cords to the horns of the altar." (Psalm 118:27b). He quotes from Zechariah, "I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered." (Zechariah 13:7). Then Jesus does what he does every time he mentions the cross – he includes the resurrection! He adds, "But after I have risen, I will go ahead of you into Galilee." (Mark 14:28).

"Gethsemane" means "the oil press". Evidently it was a location in a garden of olive trees where an olive press was located. You have to wonder if it isn't more than coincidence that Jesus is squeezed so hard he sweats drops of blood at a place where olives are pressed so hard they become oil. Here, at the oil press, for the very first time, Jesus does not want to do what the Father wants him to do. This is why there came upon his spirit this deep sense of struggle, distress. There is a sense of distance, of deviation. The disciples sense this, and He does not try to hide it from them. He says to them, "My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death...." (Mark 14:34). He prays, "Take this cup from me." (Mark 14:36). Some think he meant "take the agony of Gethsemane from me." The problem with that view is, at the end of this account, when Jesus is arrested, he says, "Put the sword into the sheath; the cup which the Father has given Me, shall I not drink it?" (John 18:11). The cup is still ahead, the cup of agony and terrible separation that he knew awaited him on the cross. I know it is a bit troubling to think there was ever a time when Jesus did not want to do the Father's will but the whole point of the Gethsemane experience is to see the conflict Jesus felt. The same conflict many of you are feeling right now - your will vs. God's will. He really is a Savior who has been tempted in every way just as we are, yet without sinning. Do you understand the implication of that? We all struggle at times with not wanting to do the will of God.

Jesus strongly desires not to go through the agony ahead of Him. But he chooses to do so. Why? Hebrews 12:2 says He did it because of the joy set before him. Here is the question of the hour: what joy? The answer is given in John 12:27-28 – "...for this purpose I came to this hour. Father, glorify Thy name." Jesus chose to suffer and die on the cross, receiving the penalty for our sins, so that God might be glorified. That is the joy set before him – an opportunity to display the character of God.

Jesus steels himself through His prayer in Gethsemane. What happens to the men who slept rather than praying in Gethsemane? Peter has just boasted he will be there ready to die even if everyone else fails. James and John have just recently said they could drink Jesus' cup. In Gethsemane all 3 men get their chance to keep their promises. When Jesus asks them to stay awake, watch and pray, He is not asking them to keep watch for the arresting soldiers. He is not asking them to pray for Him. He is asking them to stay awake for their own good and pray for their own strength in the hours to come.

A nameless woman anoints Jesus for his burial over the objections of his friends. A bystander carries his cross. A pagan centurion supervising the crucifixion makes the public confession that Jesus is the Son of God. A Sanhedrin council member obtains the body and buries it in his tomb. Women followers watch him die on the cross and later go to anoint the body. By contrast the apostles doze while he shudders in horror. Some will betray him, others deny him, and others flee for their lives when he is arrested. They do not keep watch. They fall asleep.

At this point in his life the enemy has very little struggle with Peter. It is not even necessary to threaten to throw him to the lions or burn him at the stake. He just makes him too sleepy to pray. Peter, James and John are sleepy at this crucial moment because they fail to realize how crucial this moment is. Those 3 apostles are not the last followers of Jesus to get sleepy when they should be alert. Some of you are struggling right now to stay awake. It's not a sin to be sleepy, but it is a sin to unnecessarily stay out so late on Saturday night that you can't be alert in worship on Sunday morning.

Three times Jesus leaves his private place of prayer to check on his 3 friends. Each time they are asleep and each time Jesus encourages them to stay awake and watch and pray. Is He not telling them, "Guys, this is not just my Gethsemane? It is also yours. You cannot make it through Gethsemane on your own strength."

Jesus prays his way through Gethsemane and comes out steeled for what is about to come. Peter, James, and John sleep their way through Gethsemane and when the pressure comes, they fold. How will you go through your Gethsemane, asleep or alert?

To sleep spiritually is to stop praying. It is to be so oblivious to spiritual trials that you don't even recognize it when you are in the midst of the battle. To sleep is to assume that we have arrived. To sleep is to settle comfortably into the routine of life and assume Satan has given up on you.

If Gethsemane says anything to us it says, “There are 2 ways to face a spiritual crisis: (1) Pray before the crisis comes. Pray with all your heart – tell God how you feel, what you want, then trust Him and His will for your life. (2) Wait till the crisis comes and try to wing it on the run. One of those models leads to victory the other leads to shame and remorse.

Your Gethsemane is coming. Will you be awake?