

Mark 14:27–52 (NIV)

[After their last supper together, Jesus and his disciples make their way to the Garden of Gethsemane. Jesus tells them more of what lies shortly ahead.]

²⁷ “You will all fall away,” Jesus told them, “for it is written:

“ I will strike the shepherd,
and the sheep will be scattered.”

²⁸ But after I have risen, I will go ahead of you into Galilee.”

²⁹ Peter declared, “Even if all fall away, I will not.”

³⁰ “Truly I tell you,” Jesus answered, “today—yes, tonight—before the rooster crows twice you yourself will disown me three times.”

³¹ But Peter insisted emphatically, “Even if I have to die with you, I will never disown you.” And all the others said the same.

³² They went to a place called Gethsemane, and Jesus said to his disciples, “Sit here while I pray.” ³³ He took Peter, James and John along with him, and he began to be deeply distressed and troubled. ³⁴ “My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death,” he said to them. “Stay here and keep watch.”

³⁵ Going a little farther, he fell to the ground and prayed that if possible the hour might pass from him. ³⁶ “Abba, Father,” he said, “everything is possible for you. Take this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will.”

³⁷ Then he returned to his disciples and found them sleeping. “Simon,” he said to Peter, “are you asleep? Couldn’t you keep watch for one hour? ³⁸ Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.”

³⁹ Once more he went away and prayed the same thing. ⁴⁰ When he came back, he again found them sleeping, because their eyes were heavy. They did not know what to say to him.

⁴¹ Returning the third time, he said to them, “Are you still sleeping and resting? Enough! The hour has come. Look, the Son of Man is delivered into the hands of sinners.

⁴² Rise! Let us go! Here comes my betrayer!”

⁴³ Just as he was speaking, Judas, one of the Twelve, appeared. With him was a crowd armed with swords and clubs, sent from the chief priests, the teachers of the law, and the elders.

⁴⁴ Now the betrayer had arranged a signal with them: “The one I kiss is the man; arrest him and lead him away under guard.” ⁴⁵ Going at once to Jesus, Judas said, “Rabbi!” and kissed him. ⁴⁶ The men seized Jesus and arrested him. ⁴⁷ Then one of those standing near drew his sword and struck the servant of the high priest, cutting off his ear.

⁴⁸ “Am I leading a rebellion,” said Jesus, “that you have come out with swords and clubs to capture me? ⁴⁹ Every day I was with you, teaching in the temple courts, and you did not arrest me. But the Scriptures must be fulfilled.” ⁵⁰ Then everyone deserted him and fled.

⁵¹ A young man, wearing nothing but a linen garment, was following Jesus. When they seized him, ⁵² he fled naked, leaving his garment behind.

They slept through Jesus’ time in Gethsemane . . . would we?

How shaken the disciples must have been. Their Passover supper together had taken a bad turn. Would one of them truly betray Jesus? Would it be Judas? And now, as Jesus led them to the Mount of Olives, a heavy darkness fell across them all.

After a bit, Jesus turned to look at the stumbling disciples. He warned them that they would all fall away. But Peter looked directly at Jesus and declared that though the rest of the disciples might abandon Jesus, Peter never would. Jesus persisted. Before this very night was out and the rooster welcomed a new morning, Peter would deny that he even knew Jesus – not once, but three times. Peter insisted that he would stay faithful all the way. The others did too. And they continued to make their way.

Jesus led them to a quiet place filled with olive trees. The grove of trees had an olive press and the garden was named for that press – Gethsemane.

As they settled in, Jesus asked his disciples to sit and to wait. He wanted to pray nearby, knowing what lay just ahead. He would have to endure this trial alone, but he needed his friends with him now, so Jesus asked Peter, James, and John to join him. Visibly distressed, troubled down to his soul, Jesus told the trio to keep watch.

A Tale of Two Gardens

Adam was once in a garden. He had the opportunity to be obedient, to trust that God knows best and, thus, refuse to eat the fruit of the forbidden tree. But Adam did not trust. He was not obedient. He came to his time of testing and trial . . . and failed. His disobedience set in motion the wrecking of humanity's relationship with God and the distortion of all creation.

Jesus, on the other hand, came to a garden on that spring night in 30AD. Like Adam, Jesus' obedience was tested. The gospel accounts of Jesus' Gethsemane experience reveal a man struggling with his choice, struggling to be obedient to his father. But where Adam failed, Jesus succeeded. And in this lies our own salvation.

The Garden of Gethsemane is the reversal of the Garden of Eden. Jesus' decision to remain faithful in his obedience, to press on to the cross was the means for the healing of relationship and the restoration of the cosmos. As Paul would write in his letter to the Romans, "For just as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous" (5:19).

Despite our proclamation that Jesus was fully divine and fully human, we sometimes tend to cloud over his humanity. We have trouble imagining that Jesus was truly fearful or anxious, as if the right question is "How could God be scared?" But that's not the right question. Instead, we must strive to resist the temptation to see Jesus as less than human. Jesus faced the temptations and trials we face. For as D. Hare writes, "If Jesus was not fully human, the cross was an empty pantomime."

When Jesus fell to the ground in prayer, he felt nearly overwhelmed. Please, Lord, let this cup pass. Isn't there another way? Must I? . . . but . . . may your will be done, Father, not mine. . . .

Then Jesus got up and returned to the three posted on watch. He soon saw that all three were sleeping. Confronting Peter, Jesus warned him that a trial lay ahead. If Peter couldn't stay awake for an hour, how could he ever hope to keep his promise to stay with Jesus to the end. Your spirit may wish to stay faithful, Jesus said, but your flesh is weak.

Jesus left the three a second time to return to prayer. And again the disciples fell asleep. When Jesus awakened them a second time, none of them could say a thing. They couldn't even look at Jesus.

And again Jesus went to pray. And again the disciples failed him. Perhaps with a note of exasperation, Jesus told them to get up. It was time. The hour had come. Let's go, he told them. The betrayer was arriving.

And sure enough, as the disciples stumbled to their feet, they saw Judas walking toward them and a large group of armed men following close behind, the arresting party sent by the chief priests. Truly, the hour had come.

Falling asleep

Could the disciples really be so blind, so weak? In Peter, James, and John, Jesus has with him those who were there from the beginning. How hurt must Jesus have been that they had not remained vigilant, sensing the foreboding of this long night? Peter had been so insistent that even if all the rest fell away, Peter would stay true, faithful, beside Jesus to wherever it was they were headed.

And yet Peter too fell asleep. Three times. In a few hours he would deny knowing Jesus – three times. Of course it hurt Jesus, even though he knew how weak, how human, these men were.

I suppose that in their weakness and frailty, we can find encouragement. Jesus led them, taught them, lived with them, loved them . . . and built his church on them. We don't have to be super-heroes to be God's hands and feet in this world. God often uses us despite ourselves.

R. Kent Hughes makes an interesting point about this. He speaks of Jesus "steeling" the disciples, filling them with resolution and determination. Years later, how often would the disciples look back on their time in Gethsemane and resolve to do better.

We must understand that Jesus invited the inner circle to be with him in Gethsemane not because he needed company, but because they needed to learn (especially with their presumption) the secret of steeling their lives for service. The scandal of their failure that night could not be suppressed and underlines the necessity of what Jesus was teaching for the Church Universal.

Verse 34b shows that when Jesus was overtaken with the horror, he told them, "Stay here and keep watch." He wanted them to observe his battle. Luke tells us that he even stated the reason: "Pray that you will not fall into temptation" (22:40). If they had watched closely and entered into prayer like his, they would have found the steel necessary to make it through what was coming. They did watch for a little while, but then shamefully dozed off despite the mortal, noisy combat and suffering of Christ. Jesus desired so much that they learn from him, that in the midst of his unparalleled agony he returned twice more to look after his three weak followers.

When he first returned, he singled out the most vocal of the three, Peter. "Then he returned to his disciples and found them sleeping. 'Simon,' he said to Peter, 'are you asleep? Could you not keep watch for one hour? Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the body is weak'" (vv. 37, 38). There was kindness here. Jesus understood human weakness, but they must pray or they would fall. Mark says, "Once more he went away and prayed the same thing. When he came

Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1906-1945) was a German Lutheran pastor who publicly opposed the Nazis from 1933 until his execution. In 1943 he was implicated in a plot to assassinate Hitler. Bonhoeffer was jailed by the Nazis and later hung.

This is what we might call Bonhoeffer's "Gethsemane prayer" as he faced his own death at the hands of executioners.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer
"condemned to death"

O Lord God,
Great is the misery that has come upon me.
My cares overwhelm me: I am at a loss.
O God, comfort and help me.
Give me strength to bear what you send,
And do not let fear rule over me.
As a loving Father, take care of my loved ones,
My wife and children.

O merciful God,
Forgive all the sins I have committed
Against you and against my fellow men.
I put my trust in your grace,
And commit my life wholly into your hands.
Do with me as is best for you,
For that will be best for me too.
Whether I live or die, I am with you,
And you are with me.
Lord, I wait for your salvation
And for your kingdom.

back, he again found them sleeping, because their eyes were heavy. They did not know what to say to him" (vv. 39, 40). Finally we read: "Returning the third time, he said to them, 'Are you still sleeping and resting? Enough! The hour has come. Look, the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise! Let us go! Here comes my betrayer!'" (vv. 41, 42).

Jesus, who so steeled himself in prayer while asking that the "hour might pass from him," accepted it, saying, "The hour has come," and went out to drink the cup and win the greatest victory ever won. The disciples all failed, and significantly Peter, who fell asleep three times, went on to deny his Lord by that same number—hardly a poetic coincidence! But all was not lost. Their scandal was to become their salvation because in the years to come all came to steel their lives in prayer. Peter and James died martyrs' deaths, and John was a man of steel who endured to the end.

The lessons are here if we wish to see them.¹

¹ Hughes, R. K. (1989). Mark: Jesus, servant and savior. Preaching the Word (168–169). Westchester, IL: Crossway Books.

The Garden of Gethsemane

(from *The Anchor Bible Dictionary* – entry by Donald Thorsen)

The Garden of Gethsemane is located east of the Kidron Valley from Jerusalem (John 18:1), on the slopes of the Mount of Olives (Matt 26:30; Luke 22:39). Jesus often went to Gethsemane in order to rest, pray, and find fellowship with his disciples (Luke 21:37, 22:39; John 18:2). After celebrating the Passover with his disciples for the last time, Jesus went to pray in Gethsemane, where he was later betrayed by Judas Iscariot (Matt 26:36–56; Mark 14:32–52; Luke 22:39–53; John 18:1–12).

The name Gethsemane derives from Hebrew and Aramaic words for “oil press.” Presumably Gethsemane consisted of an olive orchard and an oil press to squeeze oil from the olives, both of which were common on the Mount of Olives. Matthew and Mark depict Gethsemane as a parcel of land (*chorion*) on the Mount of Olives (Matt 26:30; Mark 14:32). Luke does not mention Gethsemane, implying that the events of Matthew and Mark occurred at a place (*topos*) on the mount itself (Luke 22:39). Only John describes it as a garden or enclosure (*kepos*), though he does not refer to Gethsemane by name (John 18:1). It may have been a walled garden since John describes Jesus and the disciples as having entered it. From John’s account we derive the traditional name of the “garden of Gethsemane.” The garden must have been fairly large because Jesus led Peter, James, and John away from the rest of the disciples (Matt 26:36–38; Mark 14:32–34), and later Jesus withdrew further in order to pray alone (Matt 26:39; Mark 14:35).

In Gethsemane, Jesus warned his disciples several times to watch and pray against entering into temptation (Matt 26:41; Mark 14:38; Luke 22:40, 46). Jesus understood his own agonizing time of prayer as a time of temptation from completing the sacrificial will of God (Matt 26:42; Mark 14:36; Luke 22:40, 46). He prayed three times for deliverance (Mark 14:32–42). Some ancient manuscripts of Luke include the physical account of how Jesus’ sweat became like great drops of blood falling down upon the ground (Luke 22:44). Jesus won the spiritual battle and faithfully met his betrayer in the garden (John 18:1–11). Some now consider the garden of Gethsemane sacred because it represents the location of Jesus’ obedience to God and self-sacrificial love. Reminiscent of Gethsemane, Heb 5:7–8 reflects upon the prayers and supplications Jesus made with loud cries and tears. As a result of his godly fear and obedience, Jesus was made perfect and became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him. . . .

Early Christians conceived of Gethsemane as analogous to the garden of Eden in the divine plan for human redemption. The sinful actions of the first Adam are contrasted with the prayerful obedience of the second Adam—Jesus Christ. Other Christians claim that Jesus’ example in Gethsemane gave rise to the custom of kneeling for prayer (Luke 22:41).

Questions for Discussion and Reflection

1. You might begin by talking about or reflecting upon a “Gethsemane” in your own life, a time of severe testing and crisis. How did you respond? Were your actions governed by fear or panic? How do you think we could be better prepared for those inevitable crises? Why do you think that some people get through them well, while others seem to fall apart? I’ve often thought that you get to see the genuine person, the authentic leader, in tough times. Do you agree? How does crisis strip us down to our essentials?
2. How can our faith better prepare us to handle life’s tough times, whether in our personal lives or on the job? How might we steel ourselves so that our faith endures testing? How might a deeper trust in God breed greater confidence in the future? How do we find the peace that passes all understanding and how can we bring this peace to the times when we need it most?
3. Finally, are you cultivating habits that will help shape you into a faithful servant? Do you attend worship regularly? Are you involved in an on-going Bible study with others? Are you serving the church in any way? Serving those in need? All of these deepen our faith – so that we may remain awake and alert.

Daily Bible Readings

Before reading each passage, take a few minutes to get a sense of the context. Your study bible should help. Jot down a few questions that come to mind from your reading of the passage.

<p>Monday, Mark 11:1-11 Jesus enters Jerusalem as Messiah</p>	<p>Tuesday, Mark 11:12-33 Jesus clears the temple courtyards, curses a fig tree, and has his authority questioned by the chief priests and scribes.</p>
<p>Wednesday, Mark 12:1-17 Jesus tells a story about some wicked tenants and then is confronted about paying taxes.</p>	<p>Thursday, Mark 12:18-34 Sadducees pose some hard questions to Jesus and a teacher of the law asks Jesus to name the greatest commandment.</p>
<p>Friday, Mark 12:35-44 Whose son is the Messiah?; Jesus warns against the teachers of the law; and points people to the meager but exceedingly generous of a widow.</p>	<p>Weekly Joys and Concerns</p>

Scott Engle's Weekday Bible Classes

Join us whenever you can. Each week's lesson stands on its own. This is very "drop-in." Bring something to eat if you like. Bring a study Bible. On occasion Scott has to cancel class, so if you are coming for the first time, you can check www.scottengle.org to make sure the class is meeting.

Tuesday Lunchtime Class – now studying Genesis

Meets from 11:45 to 1:00 in Piro Hall on Tuesdays.

Monday Evening Class – Participating in the Monday evening Wesley Hall Study on Feb 25 & Mar 4 (see below)

On March 11, we will return to Piro Hall, where we meet every Monday from 7:00 to 8:15. We will begin an in-depth study of Mark's gospel on the 11th.

Scott's 11:00 Sunday Class in Festival Hall

This is a large, lecture-oriented class open to all ages.

Current Series: *Glittering Vices: the seven deadly sins*

Feb 24 – From Vices to Virtues

Coming in March: *How On Earth Did Jesus Become a God?*

This series will help us to get ready for the sermon series on world religions that will start after Easter.

An all-church Bible Study in Wesley Hall taught by Scott Engle

Continuing on Feb 25 and March 4
Monday evenings at 7pm

What Christians Believe

There will even be "can't-miss" music to start our evening!

The series will be suitable for youth and adults.

Kim Meyers will lead a special series for elementary age children each week on the basics of what Christians believe.

Childcare available – make reservations at www.standrewumc.org

Scott's Weekly Bible Studies are available at www.standrewumc.org. Just go to "worship" and then "sermons." You'll find the study with each week's recorded sermon. There is also a complete archive of the studies at www.scottengle.org

Sermon Notes
