

Gethsemane: Mark 14:32–42

After celebrating the Last Supper with his disciples (Mark 14:12–26), they crossed the Kidron Valley at the foot of the Mount of Olives and went to a quiet garden called Gethsemane. This was a place where olives would have been pressed. It was a favourite place for Jesus and his disciples to visit.

Jesus told his disciples to stay put whilst he turned to prayer (vv.32, 35 & 39). He took Peter, James and John (who had previously witnessed Jesus' transfiguration) to go with him. He would have appreciated their human company. He was deeply distressed and troubled (v.33) as he felt the weight of 'the cup' he was to endure. The 'cup' was the Old Testament image for destined suffering and judgment. His blood was to be 'poured out for many' (Mark 14:24).

His human inclination was to have such a cup removed. But he accepted God's will: "Yet not what I will, but what you will," he prayed (v.36). In his prayer, Jesus is honestly expressing his feelings, but submitting to his Father's will.

Are we truly honest with God when we pray? And do we attempt to surrender our wills to his will?

Jesus was ready to give up his life, in contrast to the rest of his disciples, who were sleeping when he was praying. They were unready to keep watch with Jesus and were taken off guard when Jesus was abruptly arrested. Their good intentions (e.g. v.29, when Peter stated "Even if all fall away, I will not") are overcome by human weakness—as ours can be.

Is our prayer life ever stifled by our sleepiness? Are we ever caught off guard, like the disciples were? We need always "to watch and pray" (v.38).

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