

DAY 39

GETHSEMANE



Matthew 26:36

"Then Jesus went with his disciples to a place called Gethsemane; and he said to them, 'Sit here while I go over there and pray.'" Matthew 26.36

The Garden of Gethsemane is a real place- it's on the side of the Mount of Olives in Jerusalem, and it is where Jesus went to pray, knowing His time had come-- before Judas betrayed Him before Peter denied him three times and before He suffered and died on the cross.

The Bible tells us that while Jesus was in this garden of Gethsemane, He wrestled with God. His soul was deeply grieved, overwhelmed with sorrow, to the point of sweating drops of blood. We also know from scripture that Jesus fell on His face, prayed, and begged God, "if it is somehow possible, take

the cup of suffering from Me," but He ultimately expressed that He would surrender to the will of His Father. To make it even worse, His closest friends, whom He had simply asked to pray and wait for/with Him--just couldn't do it. When He needed them the most, they failed Him-- they fell asleep, three different times! Finally, in exasperation, He says, "The hour is at hand and the Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of sinners. Arise, let us be going; behold, the one who betrays me is at hand."

Hebrews 12 tells us that Jesus "endured the cross and scorned its shame" and that He did this "for the joy set before Him." In other words, although He was under immense pressure- a pressure I don't think we can ever understand- and in torment, at the suffering, He was undergoing, BUT He pressed on. And He did because it was the will of the Father and because, by faith, He absolutely was convinced that He would have great joy on the other side of the suffering-- all for our sake, for our redemption. It's why He came to earth in the first place!

The setting of Jesus' darkest hours before the crucifixion, at Gethsemane, and even the name of the place, is full of meaning.

"Gethsemane" is a combination of an English and Hebrew word, which together literally mean "the place where olive oil is pressed."

Olive presses were and still are today found in Israel and throughout the Mediterranean region.

Just for a quick tutorial: at an olive press, olives are gathered into rough sacks and stacked one on top of each other. A huge beam is lowered onto the stack, and increasing weight is added to the end of the beam to press the oil from the olives: the more pressure, the more oil.

In the Bible, olive oil is a picture of the presence of the Spirit of God (Genesis 28). Oil was used for anointing priests (Exodus and Leviticus) and Kings (1 & 2 Samuel). It was also used to bring light (Exodus 27) from the menorah in the Tabernacle in the wilderness.

Olive oil is always produced under pressure. For Jesus, his time in the garden of Gethsemane was nothing but crushing pressure. It was a time of lonely prayer before his crucifixion and death. In Gethsemane, He completely surrendered himself and his life to His Father. He fell with his face to the ground and prayed, "My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me; yet not what I want but what You want." (26.39) All this...for you and for me...

I have a couple of questions for you as you remember His surrendering love for you:

1. Is it difficult for you to take in the gravity of His sacrifice for YOU- the surrender He willingly offered to save you from sin and death? Would you ask Him to help you take in what He has done for you?
2. Along with Jesus, are you willing to allow your Gethsemane times/seasons to become opportunities for you to renew your trust and confidence in God's purposes for your life?

PRAYER: Jesus, may this Good Friday be a fresh reminder for us- that You surrendered Your will, Your life- to forgive our sins, to make us your child, and give us the promise of eternal life with You. May we remember: The greater the pressure, the more precious the oil, and when we face the pressures that come our way, help us surrender them to You- seeing them as a chance to share in Your sufferings. Thank you for your blood shed for us, Your body broken for us. Amen

Daily Practice

Before you go to sleep tonight, get on your knees before Jesus. Tell Him your heart's intention to make His prayer of surrender your own prayer in the midst of your Gethsemane moments. If there is anything the Spirit brings to your attention that you need to surrender to God, make sure you do it.

The below reflections are written by congregants & staff of CPC. All reflections are following Trevor Hudson's book Pauses for Lent and are both heavily influenced and borrowed from his work. Any quotes without attribution should be credited to him.