

The Garden of Gethsemane

Message 2 of 5 in the series: "24 Hours That Changed History"

A. Following the Lord's Supper, Jesus and His disciples went out to the Garden of Gethsemane on the Mount of Olives.

"Gethsemane" = "olive press." This was a private olive grove where Jesus and His disciples often spent time together. Olives from neighboring groves were brought here to be crushed in order to produce olive oil.

"They went to the olive grove called Gethsemane, and Jesus said, 'Sit here while I go and pray.' He took Peter, James, and John with him, and he became deeply troubled and distressed. He told them, '**My soul is crushed with grief to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch with me.**' He went on a little farther and fell to the ground. He prayed that, if it were possible, the awful hour awaiting him might pass him by. '**Abba, Father,**' he cried out, '**everything is possible for you. Please take this cup of suffering away from me. Yet I want your will to be done, not mine.**' Then he returned and found the disciples asleep. He said to Peter, 'Simon, are you asleep? Couldn't you watch with me even one hour? **Keep watch and pray, so that you will not give in to temptation. For the spirit is willing, but the body is weak.**' Then Jesus left them again and prayed the same prayer as before. When he returned to them again, he found them sleeping, for they couldn't keep their eyes open. And they didn't know what to say. When he returned to them the third time, he said, 'Go ahead and sleep. Have your rest. But no—the time has come. The Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Up, let's be going. Look, my betrayer is here!'"

Mark 14:32-42 (NLT)

1. Jesus was deeply troubled because He knew what He was facing in the next 24 hours. He was going to face the physical horror of betrayal, desertion, horrific beatings, mockery, crucifixion, and death. He was also facing the spiritual horror of taking all of our sins upon Himself and bearing the wrath of God in our place. "**For God made Christ, who never sinned, to be the offering for our sin**, so that we could be made right with God through Christ." 2 Corinthians 5:21 (NLT)
2. Jesus' prayer shows us that He understands how difficult it can be to surrender to God's will when every part of our flesh is screaming that we need to look out for ourselves. "This High Priest of ours understands our weaknesses, for **he faced all of the same testings we do, yet he did not sin**. So let us come boldly to the throne of our gracious God. There we will receive his mercy, and we will find grace to help us when we need it most." Hebrews 4:15-16 (NLT)
3. Jesus' prayer shows us that His death on the cross was absolutely necessary and there is no other way for us to be saved except through a personal relationship with Christ. "I am the way, the truth, and the life. **No one can come to the Father except through me.**" John 14:6 (NLT)
4. Spiritual battles are often won or lost before a crisis comes. Peter learned the hard way that our spirits are willing, but our flesh is weak, and he never forgot what Jesus said in Gethsemane about watching and praying so we don't fall into temptation. "**Stay alert! Watch out for your great enemy, the devil.** He prowls around like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour. Stand firm against him, and be strong in your faith. Remember that your family of believers all over the world is going through the same kind of suffering you are." 1 Peter 5:8-9 (NLT)
5. Praying for God's will to be done is the key to effective prayer. "This, then, is how you should pray: 'Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, **your will be done**, on earth as it is in heaven.'" Matthew 6:9-10 (NIV)

B. In the middle of the night, Judas led a mob to arrest Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane.

"And immediately, even as Jesus said this, Judas, one of the twelve disciples, arrived with a crowd of men armed with swords and clubs. They had been sent by the leading priests, the teachers of religious law, and the elders. **The traitor, Judas, had given them a prearranged signal: 'You will know which one to arrest when I greet him with a kiss.**' Then you can take him away under guard.' As soon as they arrived, Judas walked up to Jesus. 'Rabbi!' he exclaimed, and gave him the kiss. Then the others grabbed Jesus and arrested him. But **one of the men with Jesus pulled out his sword and struck the high priest's slave, slashing off his ear.** Jesus asked them, 'Am I some dangerous revolutionary, that you come with swords and clubs to arrest me? Why didn't you arrest me in the Temple? I was there among you teaching every day. But these things are happening to fulfill what the Scriptures say about me.' **Then all his disciples deserted him and ran away.** One young man following behind was clothed only in a long linen shirt. When the mob tried to grab him, he slipped out of his shirt and ran away naked." Mark 14:43-52 (NLT)

1. The religious leaders sent a huge, armed mob to accompany Judas to Gethsemane because they were unsure how Jesus' followers would react when word of Jesus' arrest got out. "The leading priests and the teachers of religious law were still looking for an opportunity to capture Jesus secretly and kill him. 'But not during the Passover celebration,' they agreed, 'or **the people may riot.**'" Mark 14:1b-2 (NLT)
2. Judas' betrayal with a kiss fit perfectly with the hypocrisy of the religious leaders who had paid Judas to betray Jesus. "You hypocrites! Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you, for he wrote, 'These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. Their worship is a farce, for they teach man-made ideas as commands from God.'" Matthew 15:7-9 (NLT) (*Isaiah 29:13*)
3. From John's gospel, we know that Peter was the one who slashed off a man's ear. (John 18:10) From Luke's gospel, we know that Jesus touched the man's ear and healed his wound instantly. (Luke 22:51) From Matthew's gospel, we learn that Jesus could have opted out of dying on the cross at any time by calling in an Angelic Army. "'Put away your sword,' Jesus told him. 'Those who use the sword will die by the sword. **Don't you realize that I could ask my Father for thousands of angels to protect us, and he would send them instantly?** But if I did, how would the Scriptures be fulfilled that describe what must happen now?'" Matthew 26:52-54 (NLT)

IMPORTANT! Jesus was no helpless victim. "The Father loves me because I sacrifice my life so I may take it back again. **No one can take my life from me. I sacrifice it voluntarily.** For I have the authority to lay it down when I want to and also to take it up again. For this is what my Father has commanded." John 10:17-18 (NLT)

4. The cowardice of the disciples in the Garden of Gethsemane was highlighted all the more by the fact that just a few hours earlier they all promised to die with Jesus. "Then they sang a hymn and went out to the Mount of Olives. On the way, Jesus told them, 'All of you will desert me. For the Scriptures say, "God will strike the Shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered." But after I am raised from the dead, I will go ahead of you to Galilee and meet you there.' Peter said to him, 'Even if everyone else deserts you, I never will.' Jesus replied, 'I tell you the truth, Peter—this very night, before the rooster crows twice, you will deny three times that you even know me.' 'No!' Peter declared emphatically. '**Even if I have to die with you, I will never deny you!**' **And all the others vowed the same.**" Mark 14:26-31 (NLT)

Good News! Jesus died on the cross to rescue cowardly, hypocritical, filthy, rotten sinners like us. "Healthy people don't need a doctor—sick people do. I have come to call not those who think they are righteous, but **those who know they are sinners and need to repent.**" Luke 5:31b-32 (NLT)

Good News! We don't have to live the Christian life in our own strength! (It's not possible anyway.) "**But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you.** And you will be my witnesses, telling people about me everywhere—in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." Acts 1:8 (NLT)

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Connect Group Discussion Questions:

Read Mark 14:26-52, and then discuss the following questions:

1. Describe a time in your life when you knew the right thing to do but you "chickened-out" and didn't do it when the time came. Can God forgive this? (Psalm 103:13-14)
2. Why do you think Jesus was in such agony in the Garden of Gethsemane? (Hebrews 4:15, Luke 22:41-44) What do you think He was wrestling with? (2 Corinthians 5:21, Isaiah 53:3-6)
3. Is it significant that Judas betrayed Jesus with a kiss? (Proverbs 27:6, Matthew 15:7-9)
4. Why didn't Jesus let His disciples fight for His freedom in the Garden of Gethsemane? (Matthew 26:52-54, John 10:17-18 & 12:27)
5. Discuss the following statements:

Spiritual battles are often won or lost before a crisis comes. (Mark 14:38, 1 Peter 5:8-9, 1 Thess. 5:17)

Praying for God's will to be done is the key to effective prayer. (Matthew 6:9-10, 1 John 5:14)

Jesus died on the cross to rescue cowardly, hypocritical, filthy, rotten sinners like us. (Luke 5:27-32)

We don't have to live the Christian life in our own strength! (It's not possible anyway.) (Acts 1:8, Phil. 2:13)

Jesus' prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane shows us that His death on the cross was absolutely necessary, and there is no other way for us to be saved except through a personal relationship with Christ. (John 14:6)

6. Occasionally Christians will say, "It would be a lot easier for me to obey God without worrying if He would just tell me what is going to happen in the future." Did knowing the future make obedience easier for the disciples? ...for Jesus? (Proverbs 3:5-6)