

March 29th Reflective Service

Welcome & Announcements (Karl Crouch)

Congregation Standing

CTW – Matthew 26:36-56 (Karl Crouch)

³⁶Then Jesus went with his disciples to a place called Gethsemane, and he said to them, "Sit here while I go over there and pray." ³⁷He took Peter and the two sons of Zebedee along with him, and he began to be sorrowful and troubled. ³⁸Then he said to them, "My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch with me."

³⁹Going a little farther, he fell with his face to the ground and prayed, "My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will."

⁴⁰Then he returned to his disciples and found them sleeping. "Could you men not keep watch with me for one hour?" he asked Peter. ⁴¹"Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the body is weak."

⁴²He went away a second time and prayed, "My Father, if it is not possible for this cup to be taken away unless I drink it, may your will be done."

⁴³When he came back, he again found them sleeping, because their eyes were heavy. ⁴⁴So he left them and went away once more and prayed the third time, saying the same thing.

⁴⁵Then he returned to the disciples and said to them, "Are you still sleeping and resting? Look, the hour is near, and the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. ⁴⁶Rise, let us go! Here comes my betrayer!"

⁴⁷While he was still speaking, Judas, one of the Twelve, arrived. With him was a large crowd armed with swords and clubs, sent from the chief priests and the elders of the people. ⁴⁸Now the betrayer had arranged a signal with them: "The one I kiss is the man; arrest him." ⁴⁹Going at once to Jesus, Judas said, "Greetings, Rabbi!" and kissed him.

⁵⁰Jesus replied, "Friend, do what you came for."

Then the men stepped forward, seized Jesus and arrested him. ⁵¹With that, one of Jesus' companions reached for his sword, drew it out and struck the servant of the high priest, cutting off his ear.

⁵²"Put your sword back in its place," Jesus said to him, "for all who draw the sword will die by the sword. ⁵³Do you think I cannot call on my Father, and he will at once put at my disposal more than twelve legions of angels? ⁵⁴But how then would the Scriptures be fulfilled that say it must happen in this way?"

⁵⁵At that time Jesus said to the crowd, "Am I leading a rebellion, that you have come out with swords and clubs to capture me? Every day I sat in the temple courts teaching, and you did not arrest me. ⁵⁶But this has all taken place that the writings of the prophets might be fulfilled." Then all the disciples deserted him and fled.

Key of F

I Will Sing the Wondrous Story (Hyfrydol) verses 1-4

Jesus, Name above All Names verses 1-4

Worship Prayer (Jim McKay)

Key of E/Eb

Jesus Paid It All verses 1-4

We Fall Down

Congregation Seated ... Extra Praise Team singers come down from stage ... Children exit for Children's Worship

Gethsemane – Introduction (*Karl Crouch*)

Under the light of a full Passover moon, Jesus and His little band of Apostles made the $\frac{3}{4}$ mile eastward trek out of Jerusalem, through the Kidron Valley and to the western slope of the Mount of Olives. Judas was missing. He was off plotting his betrayal of His Master. They had just left the Upper Room and a full evening of their beloved Rabbi's teaching. Jesus kept teaching them even as they walked. He foretold that the words of Zechariah would be fulfilled that very night:

"I will strike the Shepherd,
and the sheep of the flock will be scattered." – Matthew 26:31

The Apostles would run and hide before the night was over. Peter protested, insisting that he would be loyal to Jesus no matter what happened. He would even die if need be. In response, Jesus told Peter that he would deny that he even knew Him three times before the cock crowed the next morning.

The next stop would be "a place called Gethsemane." The scenes depicted there are among the most sacred in all Holy Scripture. In Gethsemane, the tension between the human and the divine natures of Jesus reached the ultimate climax. The mystery of the Godhead is as perplexing at this point as at any other. Because Jesus was fully human, temptations assailed him. But, ultimately, the human and the divine would reach full harmony as Jesus would boldly face all that lay ahead. I ask only for a unique measure of your attention today. So different and holy was Jesus' experience in Gethsemane, we should approach the occasion on our knees.

Choir Anthem - "*Be Still and Know*"

Key of D

Jesus, All for Jesus (prayerful)

"The Agony of the Christ" (Surrendered to the Father) (*Karl Crouch*)

³⁶Then Jesus went with his disciples to a place called Gethsemane ...

The Greek word for "place" speaks of an enclosed field. *John* calls Gethsemane, which means "oil press", "a garden." This was most likely a privately owned commercial olive orchard with an olive press on site. Jesus had friends in and around Jerusalem like the master of a donkey on which He had earlier entered the city and the owner of a house with an Upper Room where He and the disciples had just celebrated their last Passover together. Evidently, an unnamed olive producer also cared enough for Jesus to grant Him access to use his grounds as a kind of prayer retreat. *John* tells us that this garden had been visited by Jesus and His friends many times.

It may have been at the gate of the grounds that Jesus instructed eight of His disciples to remain while he prayed. Peter, James and John entered the garden with Him. This was the same inner circle that had been with Him on the Mount of Transfiguration. As a man, Jesus wanted His closest friends nearby as He steeled Himself for the coming hours. He became "sorrowful and troubled", "Troubled," meaning agitated, usually referred to the emotions one encounters in the throes of an *unexpected* calamity. *Mark's* translation is similar in English, but his actual grammar describes Jesus' distress even more as if it was something He had not anticipated.

That seems odd. Jesus had spoken of the cross many times, but now that the hour was at hand, it was as if His anguish was more acute than He ever imagined in advance that it could be. But again, that's not so odd at all. That is very like human nature. We can get used to the idea of some unpleasant surgery or procedure or some day of reckoning that lies in our future and still manage to function quite normally. After all, what's the value of obsessing over it? But, on the night before we go under the knife, before we stand before a judge or before we face the auditor, the sense of agitation escalates. Again, Jesus was fully human as well as divine. In His case, His loving concern for preparing His followers may have been a wonderful, joyous distraction. Now, the nightmare was upon Him.

"My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death." Luke tells us that Jesus' sweat was like great drops of blood. *Hematastrosis* is a rare, but not unprecedented condition when small capillaries burst under severe stress. The blood escapes through the sweat glands. It is excruciatingly painful. Some suggest that this was what Luke, that is, Dr. Luke was describing. Jesus was distressed to a degree that may have killed someone with a weak heart. No wonder, as Luke contributes to the story, God sent a ministering angel to strengthen Him.

³⁹Going a little farther, he fell with his face to the ground and prayed, "My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will."

Jesus left the three disciples and proceeded deeper into the garden, "about a stone's throw" according to Luke. In the Bible I carried as a youngster, there was a classic picture of the Gethsemane ordeal where a reposed Jesus elegantly kneels at a great boulder. Matthew depicts Jesus "on His face", a posture reflecting extreme anguish. Again, His humanity is on display.

One of the things Jesus laid aside to come to us was His absolute omniscience. On one occasion, He admitted that only the Father knew the precise time of His Second Coming. In Gethsemane, Jesus sought to learn if there might be some other way to complete the Father's will other than to face what lay ahead. Maybe, the Father knew something else that He did not know. Jesus's great mind may have envisioned Abraham, who bravely ascended a mountain to sacrifice his son, Isaac. At the last moment, *JEHOVAH* came through with a Plan B. Maybe, just maybe, the Father had a Plan B for Jesus. In any event, Jesus would do whatever the Father willed. He prayed a similar prayer three times. Ultimately, He came to understand that the cross must mean a cross.

Between His own prayers, Jesus checked on His disciples. Each time, He found them asleep. The first time He addressed the matter. They needed to "watch and pray" so as to resist temptation.. Prayer could protect them from temptation. He said, "The spirit is willing, but the body is weak." Jesus knew that they were sincere in their professions of love for Him. They really believed that they could follow Him even to the grave. But, all that bravado rested in their own resolve and resources, which would never be enough. He told them to pray for the same reason we should all pray. Prayer, by its very nature, says to God, "I need You, I cannot trust my own strength. My flesh cannot seem to accomplish the best intentions of my spirit."

When Jesus returned a second time, the three disciples were still asleep again. He must have awakened them, because Mark tells us that they did not know what to say to Him. I guess they were a little bit embarrassed. When Jesus returned the third time, it was too late to pray. They would just have to rely on their own wisdom and courage. We already know how well that went. Jesus was now ready to face whatever may come – the disciples, not so much.

The Agony in the Garden compels critics of Christianity to accuse Jesus of facing death with less composure than many who later died as martyrs for Him, but to compare Jesus' death to that of any martyr is invalid. Martyrs die with courage because they know that they will one day die anyway and that Jesus has secured Heaven for them. Jesus was not just facing death and brutality. He was not just facing betrayal by a friend, humiliation and abandonment. Jesus was facing "the cup" that His Father had prepared for Him. This cup included one dimension of horror that, because of Him, we will never have to face. We need never face the wrath of God.

In the Old Testament, God's wrath against sin was spoken of in terms of "His cup" on a number of occasions. The total of all such cups, and more, were emptied into the one reserved by the Father for Jesus. Jesus was to die with the sins of the ages draped across His holy back. He Who knew no sin would be abandoned by His Father because of no guilt of His own. God judged every sinner that ever has or ever will inhabit this wicked world when Jesus died in their place.

²¹ ... God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God." – 2 Corinthians 5:21

A powerful victory was won in Gethsemane. Jesus was tempted more severely than any other man has ever been tempted. The Father required a blood sacrifice for the sins of others. Jesus was spotless. Still, He became the Sacrifice that God required from the rest of us. He chose obedience in Gethsemane in spite of the anguish He endured there. Are the words of Hebrews 12:2 a call to face our own Gethsemane moment, an invitations for us to die to ourselves in a fuller way so that we might fully grasp God's way for us?

... ²Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. – Hebrews 12:2

Note Jesus' calm resolve when He returns to His slumbering disciples the third time. "Are you still sleeping and resting" can also be translated, "Sleep and get your rest." In other words, the time for prayer had passed. They had squandered the opportunity to prepare themselves in the presence of God. He aroused His Apostles and said, "Look, the hour is near, and the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise, let us go! Here comes my betrayer!" Sinners of every age must be grateful that prayer had worked its miracle in the heart of the man, Jesus.

Key of Eb

The Servant King verses 1, 2, 4

"The Arrest of the Christ" (Surrendered over by a Friend) (Karl Crouch)

⁴⁷While he was still speaking, Judas, one of the Twelve, arrived ...

Matthew tells us that the betrayer was "Judas, one of the Twelve." It's chapter 26. We know who Judas is. Matthew has even disclosed already that Judas was the betrayer. Matthew's words have the literary effect of simply reminding us how despicable this betrayal would be.

In the crowd that followed Judas were a number of the temple guard and some of the chief priests. John mentions a detachment of soldiers, likely Roman. Pilate would be more than willing to provide his soldiers to oversee the temple guard. Due to his earlier blunders, he was sensitive to uprisings during the highly patriotic celebration of Passover with its huge crowds.

Judas knew he could find Jesus in Gethsemane. "...Jesus had often met there with his disciples" according to John. The signal was a kiss. Matthew uses an intensified form of the word. Judas probably kissed Jesus fervently or repeatedly. In other words, he milked it. This hypocritical overkill stung. Words from the ancient psalmist may have raced through Jesus' mind?

His speech is smooth as butter,
yet war is in his heart;
his words are more soothing than oil,
yet they are drawn swords. – Psalm 55:21

Jesus addressed Judas as "Friend". That word is used two other times in Matthew, once in the parable of *The Laborers in the Vineyard*. An angry laborer who started work early in the day resents the generosity to others by the vineyard's owner, who says, "Friend, I am not being unfair to you." In *The Parable of the Wedding Banquet*, a man is graciously invited to join a king at a feast celebrating the wedding of the king's son, but he rudely fails to dress properly. The king says to that man, "Friend" ... "how did you get in here without wedding clothes?" The common denominator when this word for "friend" appears in Matthew, including with Judas, is that graciousness and generosity is repaid with ingratitude and indifference.

A sword is drawn. A servant of the high priest is maimed. Matthew, Mark and Luke don't tell us who did it. John, who wrote years after the culprit had died, lets us in on the big secret. It was Peter. Perhaps, Jesus' words about his denial hurt him and he wanted to prove his loyalty and courage. *John* also tells us the name of this "wrong place at the wrong time" servant, His name was Malchus. Only *Luke* records how Jesus averted a disaster by restoring the man's ear.

Some fishermen might be scrappier than others, but Jesus did not need any amateur soldiers to protect Him, especially one that couldn't even score a clean hit when he did pull a sword. Twelve legions of angels could have come to Jesus' rescue had he willed it. That would be 6,100 angels each for Jesus and His eleven Apostles. But, the Father did not will such resistance. In prayer, the will of Christ had already been cemented to the will of the Father.

⁵⁵At that time Jesus said to the crowd, "Am I leading a rebellion, that you have come out with swords and clubs to capture me? Every day I sat in the temple courts teaching, and you did not arrest me.

In the *King James Version*, Jesus asked, "Are ye come out as against a thief...?" Our text reads, "Am I leading a rebellion, that you have come out with swords and clubs?" The bad guys that Jesus was crucified with are called insurrectionists and thieves almost interchangeably. A fellow had to finance his insurrection somehow. In any event, these were not pickpockets or shoplifters. These were violent highwaymen, who would fight viciously to avoid arrest. Jesus almost sounds amused at the expectations His enemies seemed to have and at the firepower they brought.

Jesus' enemies could have taken Him any day at the temple in broad daylight. Of course, dragging off a nonresistant rabbi would have been bad form for these shallow holy men. They had to make Jesus out to be some kind of a desperado to convince the Romans that He needed to die. The *Luke* account adds, "But this is your hour – when darkness reigns." Jesus accused them of acting in a dark and underhanded way. Of course, that would prove to be true. The nocturnal trials of Jesus were illegal. Hired liars would serve as witnesses. More than that, they were mere pawns of the forces of darkness, the very gates of Hell, in their attempt to thwart God's plan.

... Then all the disciples deserted him and fled.

Working a little harder at prayer might have proven handy, but that was water under the bridge now. Jesus wasn't going to explode into a violent rage or summon His angels. He allowed Himself to be bound. He submitted to whatever the chief priests and the Romans had in mind for Him. All that was left was to run. That would not make the Apostles seem terribly heroic, but it was all just as well in the end. Jesus' abandonment had to be total. No one could accompany Him to the cross. No one could share with Him the burden of the world's sins. He was God's perfect Lamb and in the Father's mind, He was already slain before the foundations of the world.

But, betrayal still stung. And, disciples boastful of their loyalty scattering like chickens had to sting as well. Judas would hang Himself, but the others would spend the rest of their lives trying to make it up to Jesus, but they could only do so in the power that He Himself would provide after He was raised from the dead.

Actually, we can never make up for our failings. Such a notion undermines the heart of the Gospel. But, we can serve Jesus to the best of our ability out of love and gratitude to Him for what He has done for us. But, the gateway to doing that may very well be through enduring our own Gethsemanes of sorts. There are times when we know exactly what it means to love and to serve Christ, but the cost of doing so is high. Gethsemane for Christ was not an occasion for learning the Father's will. It was an occasion for resolving to do it without ever looking back.

Prayer (*Karl Crouch*)

Invitation (*Jim McKay*)

Key of C

What the Lord Has Done In Me

Scripture and Prayer (Pastoral) (*Dave Mueller*)

Communion Service (Ken George, server in charge)

Key of C

What Wondrous Love Is This verses 1, 3, 4 **ACAPELLA**

Communion Meditation (Tom Arnold)

Lord's Supper (no music)

Offering Prayer (Jim Ressler)

Offertory (Kay Burrichter)

Closing

Key of E/Eb

Amazing Love (You Are My King)