

Reflection



- Showing love
- Giving hope
- Bringing peace

The Church of St John & St Leonard

Mark 14: 32-42

Maundy Thursday, Thursday 9th April 2020

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,^[1] 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!"

Bible Gateway - New International Version

The week that changed everything. That was the phrase that Sue used on Sunday to sum up the week ahead, starting with Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday through to his crucifixion on Good Friday and culminating in his resurrection on Easter Sunday. Today we arrive at Maundy Thursday, the Thursday of the week that changed everything, and Jesus arrives in Gethsemane.

Here in Gethsemane we're shown Jesus' identity. He takes Peter, James and John with him. This is the third time in Mark's gospel that Jesus has taken just these three with him, the earlier occasions being at the transfiguration when they saw his divine glory as God's son, and when Jesus raised Jairus' daughter from the dead. But Jesus is both God *and* human. Having seen his divine power, these three will now see his human frailty.

With Jesus' arrest fast approaching, Jesus is overcome with grief and distress, throwing himself to the ground he prays 'that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him.' What's going on here? Martyrs were supposed to be stalwart to the end, knowing they will receive the reward from God for their faithful endurance. Jesus though is asking if there is a *way out*. Can Jesus really be God if this is his prayer?

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Absolutely, yes! The passage speaks of the hour and the cup. These words are used in scripture to refer to God's judgment and wrath being poured out to defeat the sinful. Jesus' impending death is no mere martyrdom. Rather he is to take the place of all sinners and take upon himself the judgment and wrath of God. As it says in 2 Corinthians 5:21, 'For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.' This was not just about death, this was about Jesus, who enjoyed union with God due to being human and God, facing in his humanity the separation from and judgment of God that was due for sinners. No wonder he would have preferred any other way if it were possible. It is precisely because he is both human and God that this fate was so distressing and led to this reaction. Yet despite this, Jesus in his humanity submits to God's will to bring about the salvation of the world in the only way possible.

The week that changed everything is moving fast, as triumphal entry turns to the anticipation of impending doom. Jesus welcomed by the crowds is now facing isolation from both God and his disciples. The COVID19 pandemic has led to life as we know it changing fast, many are literally living in isolation from others, many are fearful of the future. Are you feeling a sense of isolation? Are you feeling a sense of loss of meeting up with others? Are you feeling fearful? Are you feeling far from God? Gethsemane shows us that Jesus understands. So however you are feeling I encourage you with Jesus' words to stay awake and pray for an hour. Draw near to Jesus our companion, our comforter, our friend, our redeemer.

The Revd Phil Bryson

Rector: The Revd Vicki Bryson



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