

The Garden of Gethsemane

Prayer: Lord Jesus, you agonized while people who proudly claimed to be close to God plotted your destruction. But even when the sadness and fear were worst, you didn't give up and run away from your mission. Because you didn't, I can trust your faithfulness to help me grow, and to give me eternal life. Thank you for loving me (and all of us) that much. Amen.

Father, Let This Cup Pass From Me MONDAY Mark 14:35-36

It's been said, "Salvation is free, but it was not cheap." When the reality of the cross—the cruelest death the Roman Empire could devise—loomed just ahead, Jesus felt that with awful clarity. He had purposefully come to this city and this moment. Even so, the question came: "Father, isn't there some other way?"

- Mark says that even in the uncertainty and anguish he felt in Gethsemane, Jesus called God the Aramaic word *abba*. It was a close family word—the nearest English parallel is "daddy." What light does that cast on Jesus' spirit of complete trust? How good are you at continuing to trust God when things turn difficult in your life?
- Pursuing God's will is sometimes costly. When have you struggled over a choice or a sacrifice that you believed God was calling you to make? In today's devotional reading, Pastor Hamilton asks, "Are you willing, even grudgingly, to go where God calls and do what God asks, regardless of the cost?"

Two Gardens

TUESDAY John 18:1; Mark 14:36

Pastor Hamilton's devotional today notes why John alone described Jesus' as going to a "garden." John's gospel draws imagery from the primeval stories of Genesis, starting with the words "In the beginning...". In Genesis 3, Adam and Eve fell into sin in a garden. Now, from another garden, Jesus goes to redeem the human family from sin.

- "Not what I will, but what you will" are among the best known of all Jesus' words. Yet we often quote them at times like the death of a loved one, in which we had no choice. What was Jesus' active choice, reflected in those words of submission? In what ways do you have to choose, intentionally, to do God's will rather than your own?
- In Romans 5 and 1 Corinthians 15, Paul presents Jesus as the "second Adam." Genesis 3 says the first Adam's choice to pursue his own will rather than God's brought a loss of innocence, and led to death. How has Jesus' choice to follow God's will set you on a course toward goodness, restored innocence and eternal life?

He Came and Found Them Sleeping

WEDNESDAY Mark 14:37-41

Jesus had asked his disciples to "keep watch." The *New Revised Standard Version* renders the phrase as "stay awake," which follows logically. No one ever rewarded a watchman for falling asleep! Jesus yearned to have his closest friends praying with him as he (and they) faced the supreme test of the cross.

- Jesus lived out his teaching that community is vital to our soul's health. To what extent do your disposition and family history make it hard for you to ask for support and help? Are you more at ease giving someone else support than receiving help from them?
- When Jesus urged his disciples to spiritual alertness (Matthew 25:13; Mark 13:34-35), he used the same phrase ("keep watch") as in the garden. When you are mentally asleep and miss a chance to serve God and bless someone else, how do you react? Do you give yourself human blame or Jesus' grace

("the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak" —verse 38)? What helps you stay awake to God's call for you?

Betrayed With a Kiss

THURSDAY Mark 14:43-46

In Jesus' culture, a kiss from a disciple was a sign of great regard and honor for his teacher. It was most unusual that Judas chose a kiss as the betrayal signal. Was he "rubbing salt in the wound," or (as Pastor Hamilton's devotional suggests) revealing his own deep inner conflict about betraying Jesus?

- Judas brought with him "a crowd armed with swords and clubs...from the chief priests, the teachers of the law, and the elders." Jesus' enemies treated him as a political and military threat, more than a spiritual one. What is the last problem or issue you saw solely on a human level, while forgetting to seek God's perspective?
- Pastor Hamilton writes that Judas' kiss was "a sign perhaps...of a love for this man and yet a desire to be free of him, of a love for God's kingdom and a desire for the kingdoms of this world." In what ways do you find yourself torn between love for God and love for "the kingdoms of this world"?

The Trial Before the Righteous

FRIDAY Mark 14:53, 55

The "Sanhedrin" was the 71-member ruling religious court for the Hebrews. As such, they should have been the most fair-minded, conscientious group Jesus could have encountered. But they knew the conclusion before the "trial" ever started. They gathered, not to weigh evidence, but to find a reason to do what they'd already decided to do.

- It's easy—almost too easy—to look at the members of the Sanhedrin who pre-judged Jesus and think, "How awful they were!" What aspects of their attitudes or behaviors can you identify in your own life? How can you remain open to the ways that God's message might come to you even through an "unlikely" person?
- A long view of this story becomes truly sobering. The Sanhedrin saw themselves as the "best of the best," the leaders of God's people on earth. Yet when God came among them in person, they condemned him to death. How can we keep our faith centered on God's goodness, not our own righteousness and traditions?

Destroy This Temple

SATURDAY Mark 14:56-59

Jesus often used "prophetic hyperbole." The only charge the witnesses against him could agree on meant taking his hyperbolic words literally (see John 2:19-22). Deuteronomy 19:16-21 said false witnesses should face the penalty their false charge would have created. This Sanhedrin just ignored that command.

- When Solomon dedicated the first Temple, he prayed a profound prayer recorded in 1 Kings 8. In that prayer, he acknowledged that no earthly building could contain God. But by Jesus' day, the leaders were willing to kill God to preserve the Temple. How can we honor God even more than we honor the important earthly symbols that point to God?

Family Activity: Jesus needed friends. He asked His closest friends to be with Him in the garden while He prayed. Think about times when you and your family have needed extra help and support. Discuss whether or not you have been willing to ask others to support and serve you. What makes it hard for you to do that (e.g. "don't like to seem weak," "hate to be a burden," etc.)? When your friends are in need, how are you willing to be present and supportive for them? Choose one way to lift others up this Lenten season. And when you are need prayer, encouragement or help,

follow in the footsteps of Jesus. Learn to seek, and to welcome, the help and support of your friends.