



Growth Group Questions
April 6, 2025
“Praying in the Garden”

CONTEXT

Gethsemane is transliteration of two Hebrew words meaning “oil press”. The exact location is not known, but probably on the lower slopes of the western side of the Mount of Olives across the Kidron Valley and opposite the temple area. It was a place that was known by the disciples which we see in Luke 22:39 and John 18:1-2.

Peter, James and John were often seen as a part of the inner circle of Jesus. Here, they may be included because Peter had recently boasted of his loyalty to Jesus in Mark 10:31 and James and John had said they would be able to suffer with Jesus in Mark 10:38-40. Yet, they could not even stay awake and pray with Jesus. They did not “see” the agony Jesus was going through, and they missed Jesus praying for the strength he would need to carry out his mission.

Why does Jesus have so much grief? He knows that he will need to drink the cup of God’s wrath. He knows that God will abandon him. At this moment in the garden, he is coming “face to face” with the death he had been talking about. Mark makes it seem that the submission to the will of the Father is greater than what Christ endured on the cross. Before Jesus can surrender his body on the cross, he must be willing to give over his will to God in the garden.

Abba is an Aramaic word meaning “father” or “daddy.” The word was used primarily by little children within their family setting. There is no evidence of Jewish people ever using this word when addressing God. God was not understood in such a personal way. Jesus uses this word so that we can see the intimate relationship he had with God. The church preserved this term as a way of personally addressing God which can be seen in Romans 8:15 and Galatians 4:6.

The repetition of the idea to “keep watch” is there to remind us that we must always keep watch. It is easy to grow weary. It is easy to lose our focus. It is easy to move from falling asleep to falling away. The threefold sleeping has also been seen as corresponding to the threefold denial of Peter. The statement about “keeping watch” can be taken as an imperative or as a question. In either case it is rebuke of the behavior of the disciples.

SCRIPTURE

Mark 14:32-42

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*,^[a] 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!”

Romans 5:6-9

⁶ You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. ⁷ Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person someone might possibly dare to die. ⁸ But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. ⁹ Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God’s wrath through him!

Luke 22:31-32

³¹ “Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift all of you as wheat. ³² But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers.”

Ephesians 3:16-19

¹⁶ I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, ¹⁷ so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, ¹⁸ may have power, together with all the Lord’s holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, ¹⁹ and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

Psalms 51:11-12

¹¹ Do not cast me from your presence
or take your Holy Spirit from me.
¹² Restore to me the joy of your salvation
and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me.

QUESTIONS

1. In Mark 14:33, we are told that Jesus took Peter, James and John into the Garden of Gethsemane with Him. What do you think is the significance of Jesus taking these three disciples with Him into the garden?
2. In Mark 14:36, Jesus prays, “Abba, Father, everything is possible for you. Take this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will.” What strikes you most about this prayer?
3. How does Jesus’ prayer in Mark 14:36 reveal both His humanity and his divine nature?
4. What lessons can we learn from Jesus’ experience in the Garden of Gethsemane about prayer, suffering and obedience?
5. When we find ourselves in difficult circumstances, what can and should we be asking of God?
6. What Bible verses encourage you and offer you the assurance of God’s presence and support when you find yourself in difficult circumstances?
7. Pastor Paul said that Jesus died the death you and I should die so we can live the life He lived. What does that statement mean to you?
8. What lessons can we learn from Luke 22:31-23?
9. This week’s sermon focused on Mark 14:32-42, but the 14th chapter of Mark contains many other glimpses into the final days of Jesus. What other passages in Mark 14 particularly spoke to you this week?

SERMON QUESTIONS

1. How does the “suffering” of Jesus in the garden impact your understanding of what He did for you on the cross?
2. Is there a situation you are facing where you need to be praying for God to help you get “through” it?