

St. Paul's Dorking Small Groups April 29th 2007

Deeper into prayer – In Gethsemane with Jesus

In testing times Matt 25 : 36-45



Word: Key points from Sunday's sermon.

In The Garden of Gethsemane we find ourselves on holy ground, for we find ourselves 'a stone's throw away' (Luke 22:41) from Jesus in the private place of prayer that was his resource and lifeline through out his ministry. Often (Luke 22:39- 'as usual') in the Gospels we are told that he went to prayer on a mountain side or hills side for the night, alone. This time he takes his disciples. He wants them and us to witness how he prays here. Gethsemane means 'Olive press'. Olives produced oil that was the essence of daily living: heat, light, food, medication. Olives were bagged in nets having been bruised and crushed and the stones removed. In bags they were set upon each other and then heavy stones were laid on top. Under this kind of pressure a red juice would flow from the olive through the stone channel carved in the stone they were laid on, and after a long enough pressing the oil would then begin to flow. The greater the weight of stone on the olives, the purer the oil that was produced. Jesus had come to a place of great pressure where by it life is produced.

John 12: 20-36: : is one record of Jesus knowledge of what was about to happen to Him. He comes to a private place to lay his fear and anguish before God. Jesus wants to do God's will, but he does not know how he is able to do it. Bound up with fear and anguish he is hindered. In his anguish he throws himself on his face on the ground and cries out to God.

Gethsemane, the *private* place of great pressure is :

1. **The place of Intimacy and family** : he calls out not to a distant tyrannical God but to 'Abba' : 'Daddy'. He knows who he is, the Son of God. He knows he is loved unconditionally **Luke 3:22**. We cannot minister without knowing we are God's child and that we cannot earn that status. We can never be less than God's child and we can never be more. It is given to us. So often we try to earn it/ prove it/ engineer it. We are here to follow God and he will make us his followers, we so often take control and attempt to make ourselves into his people.

2. **The place of openness and honesty:** there is no shame for Jesus in expressing his fear and anguish in the presence of his friends, but most importantly before God. He uses words, but we may find ourselves in a state where all we can do is weep, or sit in silence. That is as much prayer as any carefully worded prayer. In this garden of 'pressing' Jesus lays out his fears, but he does not attempt to manipulate and persuade Father God. He simply asks 'if it is possible' that his suffering be taken away. In his praying he sees there is a choice here. God is not tyrannical, he gives Jesus a choice. To drink or not to drink this cup of suffering; if he chooses not to the alternative is that we, the rest of the human, race will have to 'drink it'.

3. **The place of resolution and surrender** : Realising this, he surrenders to God's will saying 'let me drink it'. Knowing he is loved unconditionally, Jesus expresses the Father's love for us as he offers his life for you and me. The situation does not change but Jesus' fears have. Here in surrender to God a burden has been taken from him. The burden of fear and anguish. When we surrender to God's will we will find the burden lifted from us.

4. **The place of overcoming, victory and peace** : This does not mean that his suffering is any the less, but the signs of anguish we see in Gethsemane are not in evidence in the events that follow. In the face of being vilified, spat upon and tortured Jesus remains in control, his character is steadfast: he heals, he speaks peace and he forgives. There is no evidence of any bitterness in him. He has 'done business' with God in the private place, and now in the public arena he is steadfast and true to his father's love. His disciples however had slept and not participated. They awake to discover their fears and desperation as Jesus is arrested. They all desert him out of fear as they move from the private place to the public arena of trials and crucifixion. Peter's denial is an explicit example of this, and Jesus' gaze upon him (**Luke 22: 60-62**) distinguishes the difference of the effect between struggling in prayer and sleeping in fear. Later the disciples were to all die for their faith. They too come to the same place of surrender=victory in the lives. So must we.



Witness: questions to discuss

1. What does it mean **to follow** Jesus ? Who takes the initiative?
2. In what ways do you **know** God as father.?
3. Jesus calls us to be like **little children** in our relationship with Father God. How was Jesus like a child here ?
4. When it is difficult, or beyond you to pray, what do you do ? Is it hard just to 'sit with Father God' /to weep before him?
5. **John 12:30-36** : Jesus several times refers to his impending suffering and death in the Gospels. Why this change of heart in Gethsemane ? How does Jesus' honesty help us deepen our relationship with Father/ God ?
6. In Gethsemane what is prayer really about ? Where can you go to be in this private place ?
7. What are the fears that we face, that the world faces today that are overwhelming ? What does surrender mean to you ? What do you make of surrender = victory ?
8. What is God saying to us to day through the work of Jesus in Gethsemane ?