

Series: The Cross

March 19, 2017

## **Title: Gethsemane**

### **[Slide 1]**

**Text: Mark 14:26-52**

## **The Eye of the Storm**

### **Into the eye of the storm:**

It was Passover night in Jerusalem. Jewish law required that the Passover meal be eaten within the city's walls. As midnight approached, thousands of people made their way through the narrow streets and out the gates of the city. Among them were Jesus, the rabbi from Galilee, and 11 of His most trusted friends. They were walking from the security of the upstairs room where they had eaten the Passover into the eye of the storm.

As they walked along, Jesus took the time to prepare them for what was coming:

### **[Slide 2]**

*Mark 14:27-28 NIV*

*"You will all fall away," Jesus told them, "for it is written: 'I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered.'*

*"But after I have risen, I will go ahead of you into Galilee."*

There it was: the worst and the best of the journey ahead.

This very night Jesus would be taken from them. Judas was no longer with them; the next time they saw him would be when he betrayed Jesus to the Temple police. When that happened, the shepherd would be struck down and the disciples – Jesus' sheep – would run for their lives. The storm would break upon them with all the fury of Hell. Jesus would be crucified by Roman soldiers. To all eyes, that would be the end of the story.

### **The end of the story:**

But the storm would not last forever. When it had spent its force, the Spirit of God would stir the slain body of Jesus and He would rise from the dead, to

go ahead of the disciples back to Galilee. The Good Shepherd would once more gather His sheep around Him. This was the real end of the story that they were to live through during the next three days. And it was the beginning of the great story of God's victory over sin and death.

However confused or terrified they might be in the coming hours, they were to keep this bright promise alive in their hearts:

*"But after I have risen, I will go ahead of you into Galilee."*

### **Who gets the last word?**

Jesus' warning, however, fell on deaf ears. Peter was the first to speak:

#### **[Slide 3]**

*Mark 14:29 NIV*

*Peter declared, "Even if all fall away, I will not."*

As had happened before, Peter had to have the last word. He would prove Jesus wrong, even if all the other disciples failed Him.

Jesus replied with another prediction:

*Mark 14:30 NIV*

*"Truly I tell you," Jesus answered, "today – yes, tonight – before the rooster crows twice you yourself will disown me three times."*

Peter and the other disciples refused the warning:

#### **[Slide 4]**

*Mark 14:31 NIV*

*But Peter insisted emphatically, "Even if I have to die with you, I will never disown you." And all the others said the same.*

The storm was almost upon them. Jesus had done his best to prepare them. He had given them a glimpse into the eye of the storm. He had promised them His own victory when the clouds parted. How would they respond?

### **Watch and Pray**

## **Passover vigil:**

Passover commemorated the beginning of the great Exodus journey from slavery to freedom. It was a nighttime meal, eaten in haste. No one knew when the order would come to set out on the journey. Their primary mission that fateful night, was to watch and wait expectantly for the command to move out.

The Book of Exodus says:

### **[Slide 5]**

*Exodus 12:42 NIV*

*Because the LORD kept vigil that night to bring them out of Egypt, on this night all the Israelites are to keep vigil to honor the LORD for the generations to come.*

To “keep vigil” was a military term. It meant to stand watch. Any soldier knows what that means. It means standing at one’s post in the dead of night, while everyone else is sleeping. It means listening for the slightest sound of an enemy approaching. It means being ready for whatever might happen, good or bad.

And this is what Jesus asked His three closest disciples to do for Him as He prepared to be swept up into the eye of the storm:

### **[Slide 6]**

*Mark 14:32 NIV*

*They went to a place called Gethsemane, and Jesus said to his disciples, “Sit here while I pray.” He took Peter, James and John along with him, and he began to be deeply distressed and troubled.*

*“My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death,” he said to them. “Stay here and keep watch.”*

Jesus was standing watch to lead His people on a New Exodus from death to life, from sin to forgiveness. He asked that Peter, James and John stand watch out of love and honor to Him.

## **Peering into the heart of the storm:**

During those hours in Gethsemane Jesus peered into the very heart of the storm. We've all seen athletes deep in thought just before they perform. The skater, downhill skier or bobsledder sits with eyes closed, rehearsing every move, every twist, every turn, so they won't be caught off guard when it's their turn to compete.

Jesus did the same thing there in Gethsemane: He allowed Himself to feel the shame and the pain. He dug deep into His own deepest motives. He processed that very natural desire to just have this whole thing "go away":

### **[Slide 7]**

*Mark 14:35-36 NIV*

*Going a little farther, he fell to the ground and prayed that if possible the hour might pass from him. "Abba, Father," he said, "everything is possible for you. Take this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will."*

No shortcuts here. No pat answers. No glib phrases. He looked wide-eyed into the depths of evil and into the depths of His own soul.

### **Sound asleep:**

And what about the disciples? He had done His best to prepare them for the coming storm. But when He went to check on them, they were fast asleep. Some guard duty!

### **[Slide 8]**

*Mark 14:37-38 NIV*

*"Simon," he said to Peter, "are you asleep? Couldn't you keep watch for one hour? Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak."*

Three times He came to check on them. Three times they had the chance to "watch and pray." Three times they had the opportunity to prepare themselves for the storm. And every time He found them asleep at their posts.

## **Gethsemane**

### **The scattering of the sheep:**

I guess it's no surprise that the disciples cut and run that dark night in Gethsemane. Judas's arrival with a well-armed mob caught them completely off guard. Before they had rubbed the sleep from their eyes Jesus was already captured. One of them put up a brief fight, but to no avail.

The storm broke in all its fury. The disciples ran for their lives.

**[Slide 9]**

*Mark 14:50 NIV*

*Then everyone deserted him and fled.*

Now they were utterly on their own. No Shepherd, no Leader, no Messiah. They had slept away those precious hours when they could have joined Jesus in watching and praying. They could have taken the time and effort to prepare themselves as much as possible for the coming storm. But they did not. Now the storm swept them up in all its chaos and fury.

**"Watch!"**

You and I will never have to face the horror the disciples faced in Gethsemane. We will never face a moment when Jesus is not present to us through His Spirit. Nonetheless, we are commanded to "Watch!"

The command comes in a little parable Jesus told His disciples concerning His return at the end of this Age. He told them:

**[Slide 10]**

*Mark 13:34-37 NIV*

*"It's like a man going away: He leaves his house and puts his servants in charge, each with their assigned task, and tells the one at the door to keep watch.*

**[Slide 11]**

*"Therefore keep watch because you do not know when the owner of the house will come back—whether in the evening, or at midnight, or when the rooster crows, or at dawn. If he comes suddenly, do not let him find you sleeping. What I say to you, I say to everyone: 'Watch!'"*

## Watch!

Jesus gives the command to "Watch!" three times in this parable – just as He gave it three times in Gethsemane. But in this parable He gives the command to you and me as well:

*"What I say to you, I say to **everyone**: 'Watch!'"*

That is our assignment as we follow Jesus. We live in between His return to the Father after His resurrection and His return as King to rule all of God's Creation forever and ever. Like a person watching for the dawn, our eyes are fixed not on the darkness around us. We are not defined by the dark, or the things done in the dark. Instead, we strain to see the first glimmer of light in the eastern sky

When our dark times come, when we feel the disorientation and terror of Gethsemane, we are to take our posts:

*Mark 14:38 NIV*

*"Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation."*

He has promised to stand beside us, to even pray inside us through His Spirit. And just as He promised to meet His disciples in Galilee when the long night was over, He has promised to come again, this time as King of kings and Lord of lords.

Meanwhile, we have one thing to do: "Watch and pray!"

## LIFE Group Lesson for "Gethsemane"

### 1 Thessalonians 5

- Tell about something that you knew was going to happen, but you didn't know when. What was it like to have to *wait*?

#### The Day of the Lord:

- There is *one thing* that we all are commanded to be ready for – something that is going to happen, but we don't know when:
  - *1 Thessalonians 5:1-3*
  - *Now, brothers and sisters, about the times and dates we do not need to write to you, for you know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. While people are saying, "Peace and safety," destruction will come on them suddenly, as labor pains on a pregnant woman, and they will not escape.*
- The Day of the Lord refers to that day when Jesus returns as King. Jesus will come when no one is expecting Him.
  - Paul says that people will be saying "Peace and safety." This was Caesar's motto or slogan. It was actually inscribed on the sides of the altars on which people offered sacrifices to the caesars as gods.
  - But no earthly mortal will be a match for the Lord of the world.
  - The Creator doesn't need cute slogans or propaganda. All He needs to do is show up. End of story.

#### Being ready!

- So what should our mindset be?
  - *1 Thessalonians 5:4-8*
  - *But you, brothers and sisters, are not in darkness so that this day should surprise you like a thief. You are all children of the light and children of the day. We do not belong to night or to the darkness.*
  - *So then, let us not be like others, who are asleep, but let us be awake and sober. For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, get drunk at night.*
  - *But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, putting on faith and love as a breastplate, and the hope of salvation as a helmet.*

- What a contrast: sleeping drunks or wide-awake soldiers, armed and ready for battle!
- This is the mindset we are to have each and every day.
  - We are to be ready for Jesus to appear as King.
  - We are to be ready to answer His call to us in the here-and-now.
  - There should be no difference whatsoever between how we act right now and how we would act if He were to suddenly appear in front of us.

### **What we hope for:**

- Finally, Paul reminds us of what it that we are hoping and waiting for:
  - *1 Thessalonians 5:9-11 NIV*
  - *For God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ. He died for us so that, whether we are awake or asleep, we may live together with him. Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.*
- We have an appointment: an appointment in which we receive a resurrected body just like Jesus.
- This will happen whether we are alive when Jesus returns, or whether we have died on gone to be with Him.
- In other words, every moment of our Christian life is lived in this hope. Every day we are called to be ready for action.

### **Prayer time:**

- What would be different about your life if you knew that Jesus was coming back today?
- Paul says that we are to encourage and build each other up.
- How do you need to be encouraged? Take time to share and pray together.