

Coming to the Garden with Jesus

Thomas Robinson, *God's Kingdom Breaks In!* 3, February 5, 2017

Matthew 26:30-46 (Cf. Mk 14:26-42; Lk 22:31-34, 39-46; Jn 13:36-38; 18:1)

³⁰ And when they had sung a **hymn**, they went out to the Mount of Olives.

³¹ Then **Jesus** says to them, "**All of you will stumble and fall** because of me this very night. For it is written, '*I will strike down the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered.*' [Zech. 13:7] ³² But **after I am raised up**, I will go before you to Galilee."

³³ **Peter** answered him, "Even if they all stumble because of you, I will never stumble and fall!"

³⁴ Jesus said to him, "Truly, I tell you, this very night, before a rooster crows, **you will deny me three times.**"

³⁵ Peter says to him, "**Even if I must die with you, I will certainly not deny you!**" And all the disciples said the same.

³⁶ Then Jesus comes with them into a place called **Gethsemane** ("Oil-Press"), and he says to the disciples, "Sit here, while I go over there and pray."

³⁷ And taking with him **Peter** and the **two sons of Zebedee**, he began to be distressed and troubled. ³⁸ Then he says to them, "**My soul is deeply grieved to the point of death.** Stay here, and keep watch with me."

³⁹ And going a little farther he fell on his face as he prayed, saying,

**"My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me;
nevertheless, not what I will, but what you will."**

⁴⁰ And he comes to the disciples and finds them sleeping, and says to Peter, "So, weren't you all strong enough to keep watch with me one hour? ⁴¹ Watch and pray that you not enter into the time of **testing**. The **spirit indeed is willing**, but **the flesh is weak.**"

⁴² Again, for the second time, he went away and prayed,

**"My Father, if this cannot pass unless I drink it,
your will be done."**

⁴³ And again he came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were heavy. ⁴⁴ So, leaving them again, he went away and prayed for the third time, expressing the same prayer again.

⁴⁵ Then he came to the disciples and said to them, "Sleep and rest for the time you've got. Look, **the hour has arrived**, and **the Son of Man is being handed over into sinners' hands.** ⁴⁶ Get up, let's go. Look, the one who's handing me over is right here."

Zechariah 13:7

⁷ "Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, against the man who stands next to me," declares Yahweh of hosts. "Strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered."

Isaiah 51:17 Cf 51:22; Jer. 25:15-18; Ezek. 23:32-34

¹⁷ Wake yourself, wake yourself, stand up, O Jerusalem, you who have drunk from the hand of Yahweh the cup of his wrath, who have drunk to the dregs the bowl, the cup of staggering....

Romans 1:18, 23, 28-31

¹⁸ For God's wrath is revealed from heaven against all godlessness and injustice of humans, who by their injustice suppress the truth.... ²³ They exchanged the glory of the immortal God for a likeness

of an image of a mortal human....²⁸ And just as they did not think fit to hold God in their knowledge, God handed them over to an unfit mind to do what ought not to be done:²⁹ filled with all injustice, evil, desire for more, malice; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness....

Romans 8:3

³ For God has done what was impossible for the law on its own to do, because it was weakened by the flesh. By sending his own Son in flesh so like our sin-enslaved flesh and to deal with sin, God condemned sin itself in that very flesh.

Matthew 6:9-13 Lord's Prayer

⁹ Pray then like this: *Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,¹⁰ your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.*

The Disciples' Walk in the Dark

It had been a strange Passover. Jesus told them that one of them would hand him over. He described the bread and wine as his body and blood. After they sang a Passover psalm they left Jerusalem to walk in full-moon night across the Kidron valley. Judas disappeared.

The night was more inside them. Jesus matter-of-factly told them they would all stumble (*skandalizein*) because of him and cited Zechariah's words about God striking the shepherd. But he also assured them that he would get up from the blow and lead them to Galilee!

Peter heard the hard prediction of failure. He knew his intentions and reassured Jesus. Jesus just as simply said he would deny him that night. It made no sense. They all knew trouble could come. Peter knew he was ready to die defending Jesus, so did all the disciples.

Why is Jesus so Upset?

They come to a grove with an Oil Press (Gethsemane) on the Mount of Olives. Jesus tells the disciples to sit while he prays. He takes Peter along with James & John, who wanted to sit at his right and left in his kingdom (Mt 20:20-28). Jesus seems to walk into a place of horror. He is in distress in a way strange for him and asks them to keep watch while he prays.

What's happening? Jesus knew what was coming. Was he afraid of dying, of crucifixion's pain? Many have wondered. We'd expect the Gospels to show their hero with fearless courage. Jesus collapses on his face in prayer, pleading with Abba to "*let this cup pass from me!*"

The Cup of Horror and the Time of Testing

Matthew let's us watch and believes we will notice the word "cup" that Jesus must "drink."

From scripture the "cup" includes suffering but focuses on God's wrath: Isa 51:17-22, etc.

But what is that wrath? Is God angry with people, but Jesus must suffer that anger? No!

God's wrath is toward all that corrupts and destroys human life: Especially the brokenness that comes when people turn from their true Creator to follow idols: Rom 1:18-31. Paul says God's wrath flows in letting people experience God's absence and distortion of their lives. We push God out for Mammon, etc. and feel the enslaving yoke of Satan, "Sin," "Flesh."

Jesus grieves the uttermost identity with humans: the absence of God, of himself – the dark.

God in silence says, "No. We must take this on – to be the meeting place of God and humans."

Jesus lives out the prayer he taught his disciples: "Your will be done." Your kingdom come!

Sleep! The Betrayer is here!

Meanwhile, the disciples (and we) sleep. All this happens without our realizing its meaning.

We play our human roles of bravado and weakness, while God's love works to serve us.

We're with Judas, with Peter, with the city and its power brokers. Can we wake up to this love?