

Alêtheia Christian Fellowship
March 28, 2021
“Palm Sunday”

Sunday school at 8:30, Service at 9:15, Service at 10:45 with King’s Kids.

NEWS

Wednesday Night Activities at 6:30 PM

330 N. Somers Rd. (Mail: PO Box 10626) Kalispell, MT 59904~ (406) 755-1776

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Emails: pastor@myaletheia.com, stacey.sundt@myaletheia.com

MATTHEW 26:30-35 ~

The image conjured by the Biblical metaphor of “Scattered sheep,” is that each sheep is doing its own thing (Zechariah 13:7, Deuteronomy 12:8, Proverbs 12:15, etc.).

Traditionally, the hymn they sang was Psalm 118 - the final hymn of the הַלֵּל (hä-làl), meaning praise (הַלְלוּיָהוָה - hà-là-lü-yä, praise the Lord).

Verse 25 is, Hebrew, אֲנִי יְהוָה הוֹשִׁיעָה נַפְשִׁי (ä-nä Yä-wěh hō-shē-ä nä).

Not only was one of them going to betray Him, but all of them would abandon Him.

Zechariah 13:7 “My sword, wake up! Attack my shepherd!” Zechariah chapter 14 tells how God will return and save the remnant. That’s where our verse 32 comes in... “After I have been raised.”

Fill out the other side, detach this part of the page, and place it in the offering plate or the prayer/suggestion box in the lobby or with an Elder or Deacon of the church.

God Bless You!

At that moment Peter fully intended to die fighting to protect Jesus. All the other guys agreed. They would have gone down fighting, but... It wasn't the fight they expected.

MATTHEW 26:36-46 ~

They could fight to the end, but they couldn't stay awake and pray.

Three times Peter failed to stay awake and pray. Three times Peter will fail to confess Jesus. Three times Jesus will pointedly ask Peter a question.

Jesus was "Grieved and distressed." The most extreme emotional state imaginable. "My soul is deeply grieved, to the point of death." Luke 22:44, "And being in agony He was praying very fervently; and His sweat became like drops of blood."

"Agony" is ἀγωνία (ä-gō-nē-ä) - agony.

"Fervently" is ἐκτενω̄ς (ĕk-tĕn-ōs).

"Sweat" is ἰδρώς (hē-drōs).

"Drops" is θρόμβος (thrōm-bōs).

"Blood" is αἷματος (hī-mä-tōs).

Jesus had to get alone with the Father. But at the same time, He elicited the support of praying friends.

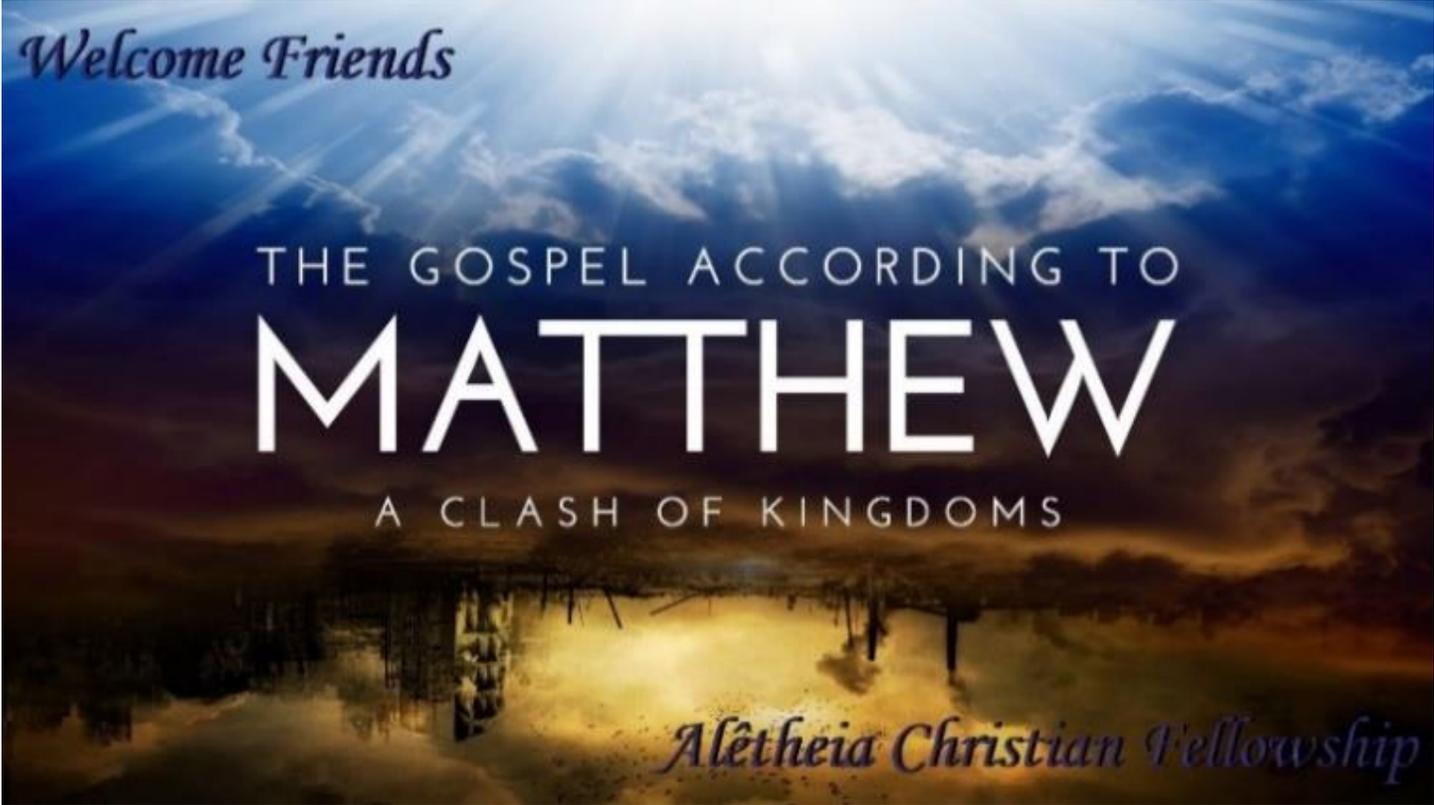
While His prayer didn't get Him the answer He wanted, it got Him the help He needed (irrespective of the Apostles sloth).

"Keep watching and praying." So that you may receive the strength you require in order to keep the faith. The flesh is so weak... Lord help us stay awake and pray, that we may not fall into temptation.

Write a brief note – detach and place in the offering, or the prayer box, or give it to a Deacon or Elder.

Name _____ Address _____

Phone _____ Email _____



Today is Palm Sunday.

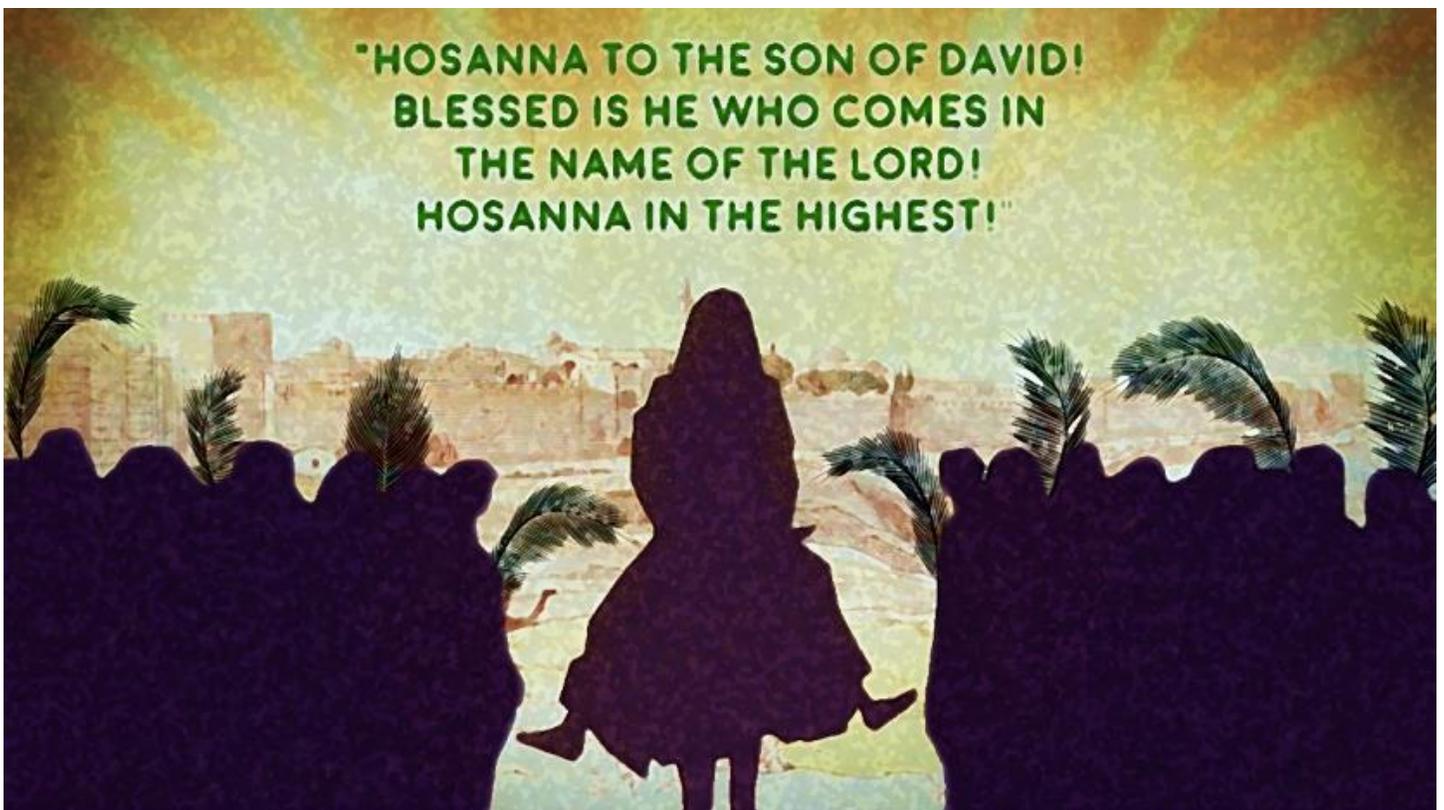


It is the day we celebrate the Triumphal entry of Jesus into Jerusalem one week before His Resurrection. It was a very busy week for Him. We discussed that Entry way back in August... 7 months ago when we examined the first bit of Matthew chapter 21. A lot has happened. We have only moved from Sunday morning to, what for us, would have been late Thursday evening. A lot has happened, and a lot more has to happen in the closing days of that week.



Matthew 26:30-35 ~ 30After singing a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives. 31Then Jesus said to them, “You will all fall away because of Me this night, for it is written, ‘I will strike down the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered.’ 32“But after I have been raised, I will go ahead of you to Galilee.” 33But Peter said to Him, “Even though all may fall away because of You, I will never fall away.” 34Jesus said to him, “Truly I say to you that this very night, before a rooster crows, you will deny Me three times.” 35Peter said to Him, “Even if I have to die with You, I will not deny You.” All the disciples said the same thing too.

The image conjured by the Biblical metaphor of “Scattered sheep,” is that each sheep is doing its own thing. It isn’t so much that the sheep run away in all directions as it is that they all tend to the business that interests them. Each sheep is “Doing what is right in their own eyes” (Zechariah 13:7, Deuteronomy 12:8, Proverbs 12:15, etc.). The individualism that we as Americans cherish so much, is the opposite of being part of a flock led by the Shepherd... Good morning.



The first verse this morning is a transitional verse taking us into the other bookend piece to closeout this subsection dealing with betrayal, but central to it is the hope inaugurated at the Last Supper.

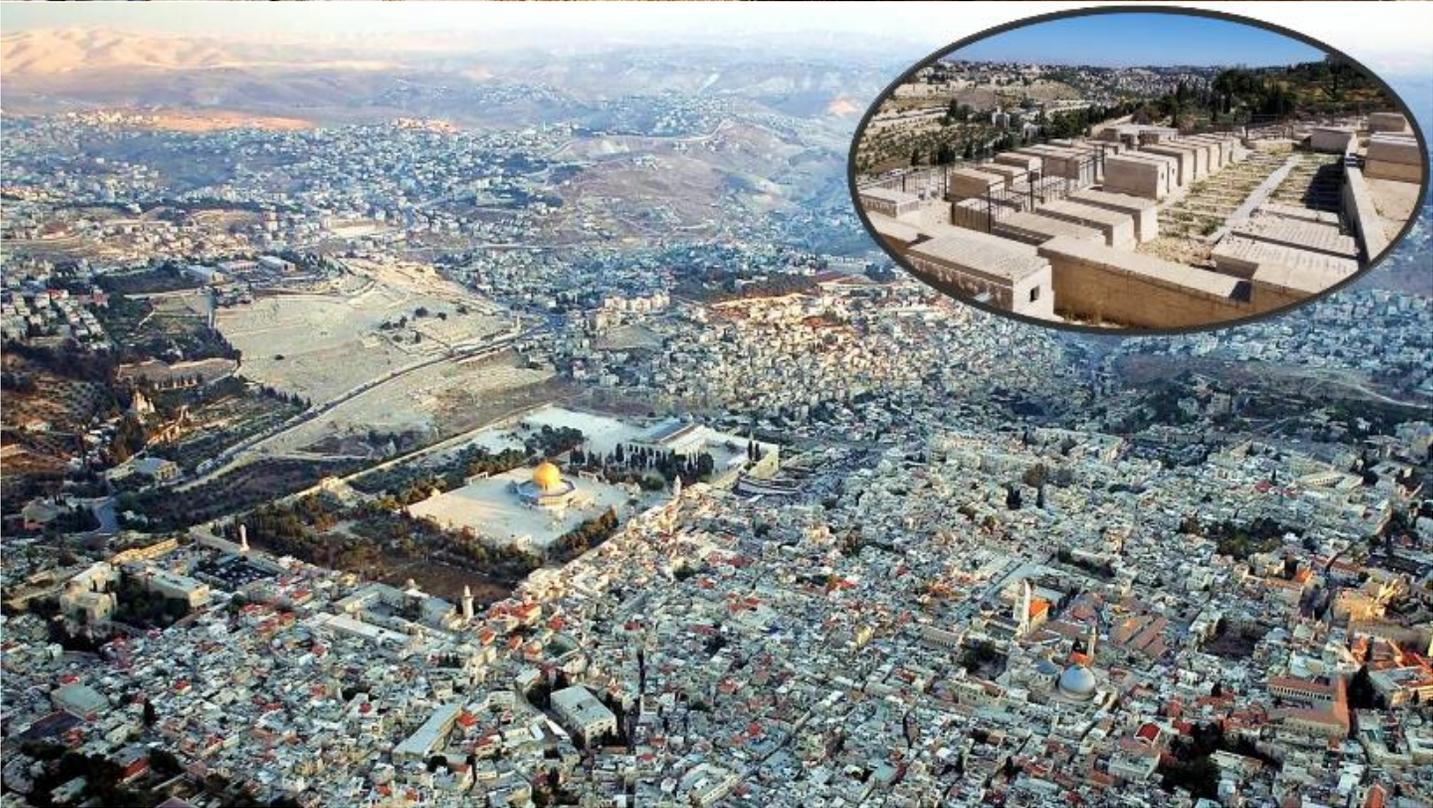
Traditionally, the hymn they sang was Psalm 118. It is still the final hymn of the Jewish Hallel הלל (hä-làl), meaning praise, the first part of Hallelujah הללויה (hà-là-lü-yä), meaning praise the Lord. That psalm is a heavily Messianic psalm giving thanks to God for His promise of a future where He would save people entirely, once and for all, through His Anointed One.

It starts “Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good; For His lovingkindness is everlasting.” It goes on starting in verse 22, with what is very familiar to most Christians, 22The stone which the builders rejected Has become the chief corner stone. 23This is the Lord’s doing; It is marvelous in our eyes. 24This is the day which the Lord has made; Let us rejoice and be glad in it. 25O Lord, do save, we beseech You; O Lord, we beseech You, do send prosperity! Verse 25 is, Hebrew, אָנָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ (ä-nä Yä-wěh hō-shē-ä nä). Hōshēä nä was transliterated into Greek as ὠσαννά (hō-sän-nä), which is Anglicized today as Hosanna, “Save now, I pray.” It is, of course, what the people were shouting on that very first Palm Sunday. It’s what the children in Jerusalem were shouting to Jesus that got the chief priests and scribes so “Indignant” (Matthew 21:15). The Psalm ends the same way it began, praising and

thanking God for the rescue - the salvation - that He would eventually provide.

Kind of ironic. Anyway, after singing a Psalm that was all about Jesus and the Salvation He was bringing, Jesus led His eleven remaining Apostles out of the city, across the Kidron Valley and up onto the Mount of Olives and into the Garden of Gethsemane.









Once on the Mount of Olives, Jesus again said something shocking and demoralizing. Not only was one of them going to betray Him, but that they all, every last one of them, would abandon Him. In the opening bookend it was “One of you will betray Me,” here in the closing bookend it is “All” of you will betray Me by deserting Me.

How would you respond to that? What would you say? You’re one of Jesus’ disciples and He comes to you and pointedly tells you that you will run from Him. What would you think - what would you say - what would you do?

Jesus added to the solemnity of His words by quoting the Bible passage that clearly prophesied that Truth. It is Zechariah 13:7. I don't want to go into a whole tedious thing here, but you might remember that two weeks ago we talked about Zechariah chapter 11. There it talked about how God, through the prophet and ultimately through His anointed One the Messiah, shepherded the flock Israel, but that they had grown weary of Him and He had grown impatient with them.



So, God and the nation of Israel agreed to terminate their association. To terminate the deal, the Jews valued God's previous efforts on their behalf at 30 silver shekels. Thirty pieces of silver to buy themselves

out of their contract - the same price Judas was getting to betray Jesus.



Zechariah 13:7, “My sword, wake up! Attack my shepherd! Attack the man who is close to me,” announces the Lord who rules over all. “Strike the shepherd down. Then the sheep will be scattered. And I will turn my hand against their little ones.”

It is God Who strikes down His Shepherd. Notice it is God who says through the prophet, “I will strike down the shepherd.” Then we get to Zechariah chapter 14, where it tells how after the sheep are scattered, God will return and save the remnant and they will be with Him forever. So, God is about to strike Jesus down and

everyone will scatter, but it is all part of the plan of redemption. The remnant will be Saved. Now, to be a stickler... The Word is the Sword... Ultimately, it is Jesus Who does His Own striking down... Jesus sacrificed Himself... The only thing that held Him to the cross was His choice to stay there... For us.

That's where verse 32 comes in... "After I have been raised," is the rest of the story. You will all run away from Me and not only will you all abandon Me to My horrific fate, but you will all do so within hours... Roughly three hours in the future traditionally speaking. He said it would be this very night. Not a lot of ways to interpret that.

What will happen then? The Risen Jesus will meet with them in Galilee. That indicates a reset of the mission. Jesus wasn't going to simply resume where He left off. After He was raised, it would be a whole new ballgame and starting that in Galilee pointed to that reality. It was on the shore where Jesus first called Peter that he would restore Peter.



"I'm trying to decide if it's more likely I know nothing about leading, or everyone I work with knows nothing about following."

Peter, you got to love Peter, while all of the Apostles would have been surprised, hurt, and offended by Jesus' announcement of their future cowardice and would have all disagreed with Jesus' prediction, it was, of course, Peter who gave strongest voice to his feelings. Life is so difficult for natural leaders. The take charge, willingness to step forward, readiness to lead thing, which makes them natural leaders, is also the thing that leaves them exposed.

I've never met a leader who hasn't been abused in the process of leading... While everyone else is safely waiting to see what happens, Peter boldly steps forward to say what everyone else is only thinking at

that point. In this case, it is to disagree with Jesus once again, openly.

He may not have really thought it through, but he was essentially saying, You're wrong Lord, others may fall away, and even if all of them do, I won't. I'll never abandon You. We've seen this kind of thing a few times in this Gospel. It never ends well for Peter... The "Get behind Me, Satan!" incident in chapter 16 springs to mind (Matthew 16:23).



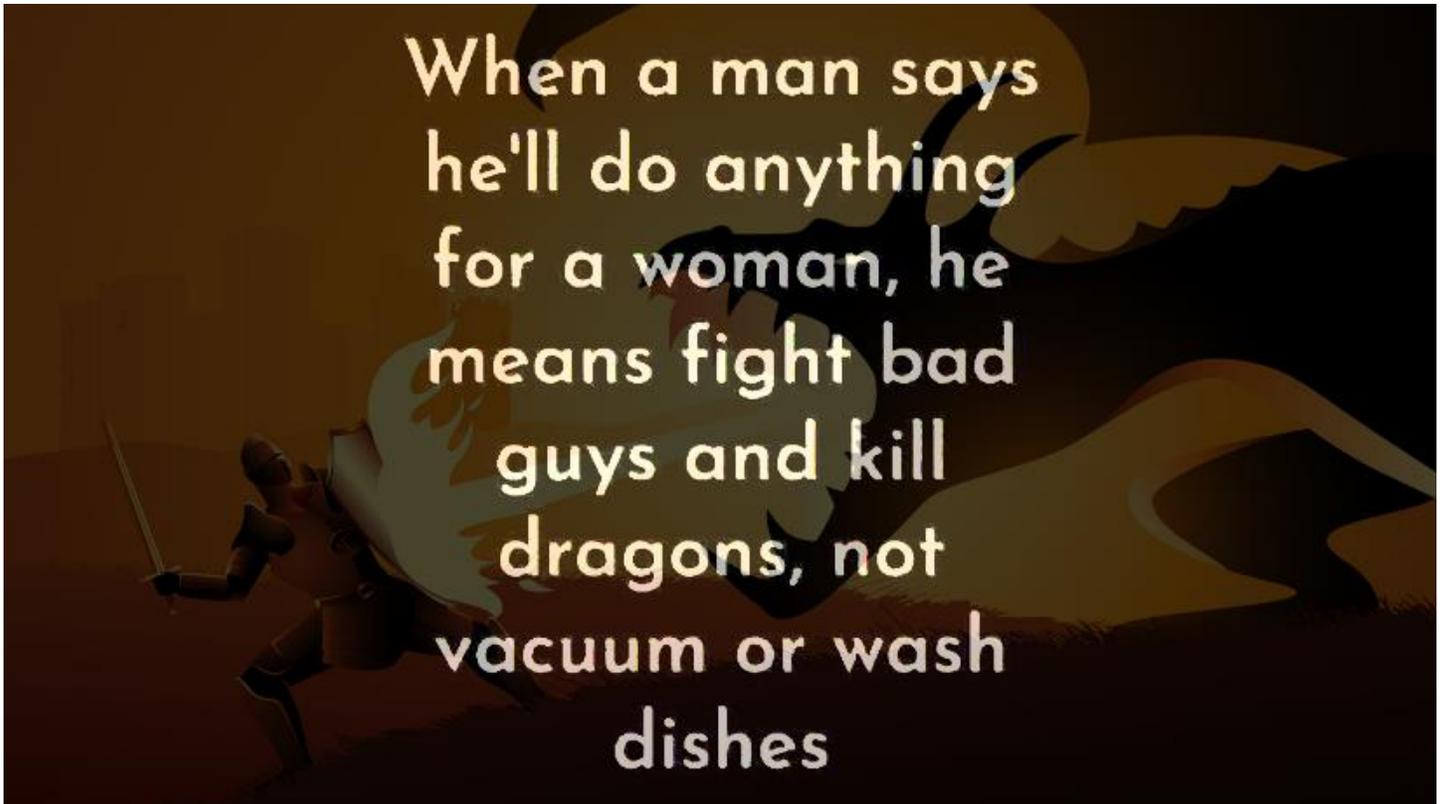
Time for Jesus to rebuke poor Peter once again. This time it doesn't seem as much like a rebuke as it really

is... I think because the content is so striking, we miss that part, but it was a far worse slap in the face for Peter, than the rebuke He gave Judas at Mary's anointing and we know how that turned out.

Jesus again stressed the immediacy by repeating, "This very night." Adding, "Before a rooster crows," heightens the drama, reinforces the immediacy of his denial, and makes the prediction more precise.

Three times you will betray your loyalty to Me with your denial that you are My disciple before morning. Peter cannot let that stand. If he had only disagreed with Jesus the first time you could chalk it up to pride and bravado - this second statement proves that Peter was as sincere as any human being has ever been.

At that moment Peter fully intended to die fighting to protect Jesus. All the other guys agreed. They were all fully with Jesus and they were all going to go down fighting together. There is no reason, at all, to believe otherwise.



There is a truism summed up by this sentiment: “When a man says he’ll do anything for a woman, he means fight bad guys and kill dragons, not vacuum or wash dishes.” They would have died for Jesus in a fight, but... It wasn’t the fight they were planning on it being.

Matthew 26:36-46, 36Then Jesus came with them to a place called Gethsemane, and said to His disciples, “Sit here while I go over there and pray.” 37And He took with Him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be grieved and distressed. 38Then He said to them, “My soul is deeply grieved, to the point of death; remain here and keep watch with Me.” 39And He went a little beyond them, and fell on His face and prayed,

saying, "My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; yet not as I will, but as You will." 40And He came to the disciples and found them sleeping, and said to Peter, "So, you men could not keep watch with Me for one hour? 41"Keep watching and praying that you may not enter into temptation; the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak." 42He went away again a second time and prayed, saying, "My Father, if this cannot pass away unless I drink it, Your will be done." 43Again He came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were heavy. 44And He left them again, and went away and prayed a third time, saying the same thing once more. 45Then He came to the disciples and said to them, "Are you still sleeping and resting? Behold, the hour is at hand and the Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of sinners. 46"Get up, let us be going; behold, the one who betrays Me is at hand!"

They could fight to the end, but they couldn't stay awake and pray. It isn't just men. It really is a human thing. We can make the grand gesture, but all the little things seem less important and certainly less dramatic. They're tiring and tedious. What we fail to realize is that the foundation is made of all the little things.

There's something here that a lot of folks miss. I pointed out before that Matthew has created an organized structure to his Gospel that helps us better decipher and understand the meaning. Here, Peter is the focal point of the Apostles. Three times Peter failed to stay awake and pray. Three times Peter will deny Jesus just as Jesus already told him he would. Peter's failure to do the little, less dramatic things like stay awake and pray is precisely why Peter failed to remain loyal to Jesus. Later on, Jesus will pointedly ask Peter if he really loves Him three times.

My friends, it is all the little things that demonstrate as well as build character. It is all the little things that undergird as well as enhance relationship.

Aviation in itself is not inherently dangerous. But to an even greater degree than the sea, it is terribly unforgiving of any carelessness, incapacity or neglect.



Show me a person who flies an airplane with precision when it doesn't matter, and I'll show you a pilot able to fly with precision when it does matter. In aviation, as in Christianity, it's actually the little things that will bite you.

An interesting note here. Verse 36 makes it seem like Jesus came with the disciples - almost like He was following along as they led the way. The translation does that because it follows the Greek flow, what is missed, is the Greek flow is a colloquial, or slang, or idiomatic way to say the opposite. The words flow that way, but the meaning is that Jesus led them, and they

followed Him. He knew precisely where He was going literally and figuratively.

Jesus then took His inner circle of Apostles, their natural leader Peter and the brothers James and John (here downplayed as just “The two sons of Zebedee” to place the emphasis on Peter).



Jesus is described as being “Grieved and distressed.” The two words function to paint a picture of the most extreme emotional state imaginable. Jesus wasn’t merely agitated, He was as deeply distressed, as undone, as stirred up, as profoundly grieved as anyone has ever been. Both Matthew and Mark record these

words from Jesus “My soul is deeply grieved, to the point of death” (Mark 14:34). It doesn’t get more desperate than this... Jesus needed to get alone with the Father in fervent prayer. Just as Luke recorded, Luke 22:44, “And being in agony He was praying very fervently; and His sweat became like drops of blood, falling down upon the ground” (Luke 22:44). Jesus was in a state of ἀγῶνία (ä-gō-nē-ä) - agony.

Let me take a moment with that verse in Luke. The word ἀγῶνία that I mentioned is a hapax legomenon. It occurs only here in the entire Bible. Doctor Luke had an extensive vocabulary - his Greek was fantastic. In this single verse we have three more rare words. “Fervently” is ἐκτενῶς (ĕk-tĕn-ōs), found only 3 times in the Bible, here, once in Luke’s other Book, Acts, and once in I Peter.

The phrase “His sweat became like drops of blood,” is a medical expression. The word “Sweat” is ἰδρώς (hē-drōs), only here in the New Testament and only one other place in the Greek Old Testament. In Genesis 3:19, God is declaring what sin has wrought for humankind. He said, “By the sweat of your face You will eat bread, Till you return to the ground, Because from it you were taken; For you are dust, And to dust

you shall return.” Jesus was the “Bread of Life,” sent to undo the effects of sin and to accomplish that, He would die. Because what He did worked, Jesus did not return to the ground.

Finally, the word drops in “Drops of blood,” is θρόμβος (thrōm-bōs), meaning a curd or with blood a clot - thrombosis is our medical term for a blood clot - a DVT is a deep vein thrombosis. The phrase has to do with a particular kind of sweat that is very thick like heavy large droplets of blood. The dude who succeeded Aristotle, was called Theophrastus. He wrote about a type of perspiration caused by a combination of dehydration and extreme anxiety that was so thick it had the consistency of blood clots. He coined this phrase, 300 years before Luke used it, ὁ ἰδρῶς αὐτοῦ ὡσεὶ θρόμβοι αἵματος (hō hē-drōs ow-tū hō-sā thrōm-boy hī-mä-tōs) - αἵματος of course, for blood as in hematoma, hymen, etc.

Jesus was freaking out, to put it in our vernacular, and what do you do when that happens to you? Jesus knew better than any other person in history. The thing to do is to immediately get alone with the Father. But at the same time with the support of your praying friends. Notice that. Jesus went to them three times to elicit

their support and even though it didn't help we can learn a valuable lesson.



We are never supposed to try to lone wolf Christianity. Even the Lone Ranger wasn't alone. This is a team sport, and we need to involve our teammates every chance we get, but at the same time, it is irrelevant how they respond. How they support you is between them and God, it will not change how God interacts with you when you've done it right by going to Him, relying on Him, trusting in Him, and giving your friends the opportunity to participate.



The fact that Peter and the boys couldn't pray did not change a thing for Jesus or between Him and the Father. It did change things for them. So, we learn from Jesus that when life has you struggling, get your strength from Him, but also encourage others to participate. As you involve them, never make the mistake of thinking that their response, positive or negative will change anything. It is God who holds you. Hopefully, your friends give you better support than Jesus' friends gave Him, but either way, you've given them the opportunity and you've put your faith in God, not in people.

On that note, let me interject that I know several people who have become disillusioned with Christianity over the Covid response. Because other Christians have extremely strong opinions that differ from their own extremely strong opinions, they question church, Christianity and ultimately Christ. Get your eyes off of man, and put them on Jesus! He's the One Who is perfect, and He commands us to love each other. If it were easy it wouldn't need to be a command. If it were easy, we wouldn't need the Holy Spirit's power to do it even as imperfectly as we do. Don't give up - do better - worry about your own walk.

Jesus needed the strength, support, comfort, and encouragement that only His Father could give Him. Because Jesus knew that, even though He was in a fit of emotion, and even though He was more worn out and tired than His Apostles, He stayed alert and prayed. While His prayer didn't get Him the answer He wanted, it got Him the help He needed. irrespective of the Apostles slothful inaction.

When Jesus told Peter and the brothers to "Keep watch with Me," it was just another way of saying, stay awake and pray. He wasn't asking them to keep watch on Him, or each other, or over the other Apostles, or for

the betrayer to come... He was asking them to keep watch over themselves... In other words, He was saying the time to prepare for the coming events is running out - get ready. How do we get ready? Fervent, focused, intentional prayer.

Verse 41 makes that clear. Jesus was asking them to participate in His prayer vigil and in so doing they would have received the strength from God they needed not to betray Him by abandoning Him to His fate and denying that they even knew Him. He said, "Pray that you may not enter into temptation."

Their prayers that night wouldn't have changed things for Jesus, but they would have changed things for them.

If Peter had stayed awake and prayed, He would not have abandoned Jesus and He would not have denied Him. It may be that such a course would have ended in his own arrest. Of course, that ended up happening later anyway. We can't be sure how it would have played out for Peter, but what is certain, is he could have saved himself a whole lot of grief and guilt.

What about James and John? The way Matthew puts it here, it is obvious that we are supposed to remember the brothers and their mom lobbying Jesus for the two top spots in the Kingdom. If those guys had kept watch and prayed... Perhaps, they would have gotten their wish and replaced the two thieves on either side of Jesus. Then they would have literally been on His right and left hands as He came into His Kingdom.

Jesus had to be betrayed, He had to be denied, He had to die with thieves to fulfill prophecy, but just because that was what had to happen, it did not in any way mitigate the sin of betraying, abandoning, and denying the Lord in His most desperate hour.

“Keep watching and praying that you may not enter into temptation; the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.” So that you may receive the strength you require in order to keep the faith. The flesh is so weak... So, so, weak... Lord help us stay awake and pray, that we may not fall into temptation.