

3. While Judas greets Jesus with a kiss, the teachers of the law, the officers of the temple guard, and the elders greet him “with swords and clubs.” What is equally ironic about their approach to Jesus?

PETER DISOWNS JESUS (vv. 54-62)

⁵⁴ Then seizing him, they led him away and took him into the house of the high priest. Peter followed at a distance. ⁵⁵ And when some there had kindled a fire in the middle of the courtyard and had sat down together, Peter sat down with them. ⁵⁶ A servant girl saw him seated there in the firelight. She looked closely at him and said, “This man was with him.”

⁵⁷ But he denied it. “Woman, I don’t know him,” he said.

⁵⁸ A little later someone else saw him and said, “You also are one of them.”

“Man, I am not!” Peter replied.

⁵⁹ About an hour later another asserted, “Certainly this fellow was with him, for he is a Galilean.”

⁶⁰ Peter replied, “Man, I don’t know what you’re talking about!” Just as he was speaking, the rooster crowed. ⁶¹ The Lord turned and looked straight at Peter. Then Peter remembered the word the Lord had spoken to him: “Before the rooster crows today, you will disown me three times.” ⁶² And he went outside and wept bitterly.

1. While Jesus was sharing Passover with his disciples, “a dispute arose among them as to which of them was considered to be greatest. (22:24).” Jesus particularly singles out Peter when he addresses the group, ““Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift all of you as wheat (v. 31).” Peter responded, “Lord, I am ready to go with you to prison and to death (v. 33).” “Jesus answered, “I tell you, Peter, before the rooster crows today, you will deny three times that you know me (v. 34).” This sad moment in Peter’s life would always serve as a vivid reminder that the Lord knows him far better than he knows himself.
 - a. What about Peter makes him particularly vulnerable in this moment?
 - b. How should he have responded to Jesus’ warning around the table?
 - c. How should he have responded to Jesus’ instruction, “Be always on the watch, and pray that you may be able to escape all that is about to happen, and that you may be able to stand before the Son of Man (Luke 21:36)?”
2. What must it have been like for Peter to catch a glimpse of the Lord at the moment of his most vehement denial?

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 22, 2023



LUKE

A PROMISE KEPT

WHEN DARKNESS REIGNS | LUKE 22:39-62

Hebrew poetry is known for its vivid images and concrete nouns. Psalm 23 is a great example. We love images like green pastures, still waters, a banquet prepared for us in the presence of our enemies, and a cup that overflows. It’s not difficult to picture ourselves in the moment enjoying the Lord’s gracious bounty.

But there is another image embedded in the heart of the Psalm. The valley of the shadow of death. Or the valley of deep darkness. This is a place the Psalmist tells us, where our imaginations get the best of us. We are overcome by fear. Where evil lurks in every crevice and behind every shadow.

The Psalmist of course walks through these treacherous ravines with all the calm and confidence of one who knows he never walks alone. He has the steady hand of the shepherd to guide him.

While we prefer green pastures and still waters, deep darkness is a very real part of the human experience. There will be times in our lives when we are particularly vulnerable, and the stakes are extraordinarily high, when we feel we can barely hang on.

In Luke 22, we find Jesus and his disciples surrounded by deep darkness. Jesus has done everything he can to prepare the disciples for this moment, but they are far from ready.

There is a marked difference in the way Jesus steels himself for the moment at hand, and his disciples lack of awareness. His calm sense of repose and their panic.

In the gospel of Luke, Jesus’ prayer on the Mount of Olives is a turning point in the life of Jesus, in the life of his disciples, and can and should be a turning point in our lives as well.

THE DISCIPLES FALL ASLEEP (vv. 39-46)

³⁹ Jesus went out as usual to the Mount of Olives, and his disciples followed him.

⁴⁰ On reaching the place, he said to them, "Pray that you will not fall into temptation." ⁴¹ He withdrew about a stone's throw beyond them, knelt down and prayed, ⁴² "Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done." ⁴³ An angel from heaven appeared to him and strengthened him.

⁴⁴ And being in anguish, he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground.

⁴⁵ When he rose from prayer and went back to the disciples, he found them asleep, exhausted from sorrow. ⁴⁶ "Why are you sleeping?" he asked them. "Get up and pray so that you will not fall into temptation."

1. Few passages illustrate the humanity and vulnerability of Jesus more vividly than Jesus' prayer on the Mount of Olives.
 - a. How does the passage highlight Jesus' humanity?
 - b. How does Jesus' honesty and vulnerability make the cross even more remarkable?
2. Jesus has already described the dangers of falling away in times of testing/temptation in the parable of the soils. He warns us "[The seed that fell] on the rocky ground are the ones who receive the word with joy when they hear it, but they have no root. They believe for a while, but in the time of testing they fall away (Luke 8:13)."

The word for "fall away" is used throughout the New Testament for a complete and final turn from faith. While this will not be true for the disciples, they are nevertheless vulnerable in this moment.

 - a. What makes the disciples particularly vulnerable in this situation?
 - b. When are we most vulnerable?
 - c. How does Jesus suggest they (we) shore up their (our) vulnerabilities?
3. Luke calls more attention to Jesus' prayer life than any other gospel writer. He records nine of Jesus' prayers, only two of which are found in other gospels. Jesus prays at the most significant moments of his ministry. Jesus prays at his baptism (3:21), before choosing the twelve (6:12), before his first passion prediction (9:18), before the transfiguration (9:29), and now before facing the bitter ordeal of the cross.
 - a. What are some ways that Luke emphasizes the importance of prayer in this passage?
 - b. Why do you think prayer played such a significant role in the life of Jesus?
 - c. What does this passage communicate about the importance of prayer in our lives?

4. What does the fact that the Father refuses to "take away the cup" communicate about trusting God's wisdom/purposes in our suffering and pain?
5. How does the Father ultimately answer Jesus' prayer?
6. What are some ways that the Father strengthens us (hint: angels may or may not be involved) when our struggles seem to be more than we can possibly bear?
7. What are some situations where we find it extremely difficult to pray, "not my will, but yours be done?"

JUDAS BETRAYS JESUS (vv. 47-53)

⁴⁷ While he was still speaking a crowd came up, and the man who was called Judas, one of the Twelve, was leading them. He approached Jesus to kiss him, ⁴⁸ but Jesus asked him, "Judas, are you betraying the Son of Man with a kiss?"

⁴⁹ When Jesus' followers saw what was going to happen, they said, "Lord, should we strike with our swords?" ⁵⁰ And one of them struck the servant of the high priest, cutting off his right ear.

⁵¹ But Jesus answered, "No more of this!" And he touched the man's ear and healed him.

⁵² Then Jesus said to the chief priests, the officers of the temple guard, and the elders, who had come for him, "Am I leading a rebellion, that you have come with swords and clubs?" ⁵³ Every day I was with you in the temple courts, and you did not lay a hand on me. But this is your hour—when darkness reigns."

1. A kiss on the cheek was a common greeting of respect and intimacy. When Jesus was dining in the house of Simon the Pharisee, he points out the unusually cold reception he received from his host on his arrival, "I came into your house... you did not give me a kiss, but this woman, from the time I entered, has not stopped kissing my feet (Luke 7:44-45)."

What is ironic about the fact that Judas "approached Jesus to kiss him?"
2. Before leaving the upper room Jesus cautioned his disciples, "if you have a purse, take it, and also a bag; and if you don't have a sword, sell your cloak and buy one (22:36)." The disciples responded, "see, Lord, here are two swords (v. 38). Jesus replied, "That's enough (v. 38)." While Jesus was obviously speaking figuratively, the disciples respond literally.

What does the disciples willingness to take up their swords reveal about their understanding of the kingdom?