

## Hope Church South Haven May 17<sup>th</sup>, 2026

### Matthew 26:36–46 & Luke 22:43–44

#### FAQ #5: Why is God quiet when I desperately need Him not to be?

I want to start today by being honest and vulnerable about the 'fun' challenge of our IMMIGRATION PROCESS. Especially in the *middle of a culture* where IMMIGRATION has become such a **charged and divisive conversation**.

- From the start we've been trying to do things the right way.
- Trying to *honor God* in the process.
- PRAYING CONSTANTLY.
- Filing all the paperwork. **Waiting on deadlines**. Watching timelines shift. Again and again.
- It's been FOUR YEARS of **waiting** and **trusting** and **hoping**.

And somewhere along the way, you expect clarity. A BREAKTHROUGH. *Some kind of answer*. But instead – **silence**.

As the **deadlines get closer**, the uncertainty keeps growing. And I find myself asking *more and more* hard QUESTIONS.

- What's going to happen next?
- What is going to happen to my family?
- Is God really in this?
- Did I miss something?

And honestly, that's been one of the hardest parts. Not just the uncertainty itself. **But the silence inside the uncertainty.**

And I believe every single person sitting here today *carries a story like this*.

- Praying for healing that never comes.
- Praying for a marriage to survive but it keeps getting worse.
- Praying for anxiety to lift but you're just not coping.
- Praying for clarity on important decisions.
- Praying for your children and the choices they are making.
- Praying for someone to change but nothing is changing.
- Praying to feel God again. That He feels real again.

And instead of getting answers: **silence**.

NO clear direction. NO immediate rescue. NO breakthrough. NO explanation.

- We can **definitely work** with a YES.
- Eventually we **can even deal** with a NO.
- But silence? Silence is hard. Because silence *makes you question everything*.

⇒ Did God forget about me?

⇒ Is He disappointed in me?

⇒ Did I do something wrong?

⇒ Does He really even care?

Silence creates a space for fear to **take over**. And that's where today's Frequently Asked Question come from:

### **Why is God silent when I desperately need Him not to be?**

Here is where we are going this morning and I want you to hold onto it from the very start.

### **The silence of God does not mean the absence of God.**

And if anyone understands that feeling, it's Jesus in GETHSEMANE.

- GETHSEMANE was likely located on the **western slope of the Mount of Olives** just outside Jerusalem.
- GETHSEMANE carries the idea of an oil press. Olives were **crushed to produce oil**.
- The SUFFERING of Jesus *did not begin at the cross*. It BEGAN in the **silence and agony of the garden**.

- It was PASSOVER WEEK. Jerusalem was overflowing with pilgrims. **Tension filled the city** — *Roman occupation and political unrest and generations of Messianic hope* sitting heavy on the hearts of the Jewish people.
- And right in the **middle of all that noise and pressure**, Jesus steps into the darkest night of His earthly life.

#### Verses 36-38:

Then Jesus went with his disciples to a place called Gethsemane, and he said to them, "Sit here while I go over there and pray." He took Peter and the two sons of Zebedee along with him, and he began to be sorrowful and troubled. Then he said to them, "My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch with me."

### **Gethsemane teaches us to be honest.**

- The Greek word for pray here is **προσεύχομαι** (proseuchomai). It carries the idea of turning to God openly and honestly. It is about DEPENDENCE and SURRENDER.
- Jesus does not run from prayer under pressure. **He moves toward it.**
- SUFFERING usually *does the opposite*. It makes us want to withdraw and isolate ourselves. It tries to **shut us down spiritually**.
- But Jesus' suffering makes Him move *toward the Father*.

- Matthew says Jesus became **sorrowful** and **troubled**. He uses two intense Greek words.
  - ⇒ **λυπέω** (lupeō) — deep grief. *Real intense emotional pain*.
  - ⇒ **ἀδημονέω** (adēmoneō) — overwhelmed and distressed and emotionally crushed and disoriented.
- Jesus is not struggling with mild anxiety. Not something a XANAX or three can fix. This is **crushing anguish**. This is **desperation**.
- Jesus says it feels like He is dying under the weight of it.
- Jesus is not pretending to be human here. He is! And **He fully enters human suffering**. Emotionally and mentally and physically and spiritually.

And you need to hear this today: *faith is not pretending you're okay*.

- Jesus is honest about His pain.
- He is honest about His fear.
- He is honest about His anguish.
- Some of us grew up thinking *strong faith means hiding your emotions*. Don't look weak. But Gethsemane **destroys that idea**.
- Honest prayer is not faking till you make it.

Honest prayer is bringing my fear to a God who is strong enough to handle it.

Strong enough to handle all my doubt and anger and fear and anxiety.

## **Gethsemane teaches us to include others.**

- Jesus asks his FRIENDS to stay close — stay here and keep watch with me.
- One of the lies SUFFERING tells us is that we **need to pull away**. Disappear. Carry it alone.
- But Jesus draws trusted people near in the middle of His pain.
  - ⇒ Even knowing they **will fail Him**.
  - ⇒ Even knowing they **will fall asleep**.
  - ⇒ Even knowing they **cannot fully carry His burden**.
- SUFFERING was never meant to be carried alone. The faith community cannot remove every burden, but **we are called to help carry them**.
- Some of us are quietly drowning while still smiling in public. Gethsemane challenges us to **stop pretending** everything is FINE when its not.

God often carries people through suffering through the presence of other believers.

Verses 39-41:

Going a little farther, he fell with his face to the ground and prayed, "My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will." Then he returned to his disciples and found them sleeping. "Couldn't you men keep watch with me for one hour?" he asked Peter. "Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak."

- Jesus falls face down and pray:

My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will.

- **Face to the ground** – HUMILITY and DESPERATION and SUBMISSION.
- Even in his deepest agony Jesus still sees God as His Father. Their relationship is safe.

⇒ In the *Gospel of Mark* Jesus uses the Aramaic phrase **Abba** for father. A deeply personal word almost like dad.

⇒ In **ROMANS 8** Paul says the Holy Spirit teaches us to cry out the same name for God – **Abba** – when *life hurts* and *faith feel heavy*.

⇒ The Name Jesus called out to in His darkest moment is the Name we can call out in our darkest moments too.

- The CUP in the Old Testament symbolized suffering and judgment and wrath.

ISAIAH 51 and JEREMIAH 25 describes the CUP as God's wrath. Jesus knew what was coming:

- ⇒ The cross.
- ⇒ Bearing the sin of everyone human being throughout of history.
- ⇒ Abandonment.
- ⇒ Judgment.

God made him who had no sin to be sin for us...

**2 Corinthians 5:21 NIV**

- This prayer of Jesus is not sinful resistance. It is **honest surrender**.
  - ⇒ Jesus is not saying: *I refuse to listen to God*.
  - ⇒ Jesus is saying: This is hard. **This is unimaginably hard**. I don't think I can deal with this. I don't think I want to deal with this.
- Honest and vulnerable and real.
- And this becomes one of the clearest pictures of real faith in all of Scripture.
- Real faith is **not denying reality**. Real faith is bringing my reality honestly before God. Real faith is *choosing to surrender to God* despite my reality.

## Not my will, but Yours.

- That sounds beautiful **until I actually have to pray it.**
  - ⇒ Not my will, but Yours for my family.
  - ⇒ Not my will, but Yours for my future.
  - ⇒ Not my will, but Yours for my dreams and plans.
- Because sometimes God's will leads us through suffering before it **leads us to resurrection.**
- Sometimes God's will leads through surrender before it leads **to victory.**

## Gethsemane teaches us that silence is not absence.

- In this real and vulnerable and scary MOMENT God **says nothing.**
  - ⇒ No rescue plan.
  - ⇒ No change in direction.
  - ⇒ He doesn't remove the CUP.
- **ABSOLUTE SILENCE.**
- But Gethsemane teaches us something we desperately need to remember. **Silence is not the same thing as abandonment.**

- God may be SILENT. But God is not absent.
  - ⇒ Jesus is still loved.
  - ⇒ Jesus is still heard and seen.
  - ⇒ He is still held inside the will of God.
- The CUP remains. But so is God.
- And you may need desperately to hear this. Because we **often interpret silence as rejection**.
  - ⇒ That God left.
  - ⇒ That God stopped caring.
  - ⇒ That God is disappointed.
  - ⇒ That God is ignoring me.
- But Gethsemane destroys that assumption.
- SOMETIMES God is **doing His deepest work** in the places where *He feels the most silent*.
- **Do not confuse silence with rejection.**
- Trust God's character even when you CANNOT hear His voice. Know that He is in this!

This pattern runs throughout the Bible.

- God was quiet while Joseph sat forgotten in prison.
- God was quiet during **Israel's suffering in Egypt**.
- God was quiet DURING EXILE.
- God was quiet for **400 years between the Old and New Testament**.

And yet in every one of those silent seasons God was still **moving history toward redemption**. God's silence has never meant God *stopped working*.

Sometimes in His silence God is preparing something deeper than we can currently see.

Verses 42-44:

He went away a second time and prayed, "My Father, if it is not possible for this cup to be taken away unless I drink it, may your will be done." When he came back, he again found them sleeping, because their eyes were heavy. So he left them and went away once more and prayed the third time, saying the same thing.

- Jesus goes back and prays again. And again. And again. Three times.
- Matthew EMPHASIZES **the repetition**. And I love that.
- REPEATED PRAYER is **not weak faith**. Being persistent is not unbelief.

- Jesus keeps bringing the *same burden back to the Father*.
- Some of us think – but I already prayed about this once. Jesus prayed the same prayer more than once.
  - ⇒ Prayer is RELATIONAL DEPENDENCE.
  - ⇒ It is bringing my **fears and pain and questions** back to the Father. Again and again.
  - ⇒ Not because God didn't hear me the first time, but because suffering was never meant to be carried alone.

As N. T. Wright said:

The point of prayer is not simply to get answers from God. The point of prayer is to become the sort of person through whom God can work.

- Sometimes SUFFERING exposes shallow faith. Sometimes SUFFERING **deepens real faith**.
- SUFFERING has a way of *stripping away our illusions*.
  - ⇒ It reveals what **we actually trust**.
  - ⇒ It reveals what we **actually worship**.
  - ⇒ It reveals what our faith is **actually built on**.

## Gethsemane teaches us that God promises strength, not always escape.

- Luke adds something powerful to this moment:

An angel from heaven appeared to him and strengthened him. And being in anguish, he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground.

Luke 22:43–44 NIV

- The angel does not remove the suffering. But the Angel strengthens Jesus to endure it faithfully.
- And honestly, this is **where many of us struggle**.
  - ⇒ Because most of us pray: *God, get me out. Sort this out. Make my life better.*
  - ⇒ But often God says: *I will bring you through this.*
- God does not promise to remove every part of the brokenness of this life immediately.
- Sometimes HE ALLOWS us to **feel the weight of a fallen world**. Our own sins and decisions, and the *sins and decisions of others*.
- But in the middle of that brokenness, God promises that He will sustain us.

- He **gives grace** for the NEXT STEP. **Strength** for the NEXT MOMENT. Strength for just one more breath. And then one more after that.
- Faith is DISCOVERING that God keeps holding you together **one breath at a time**.

Jane Marczewski was a singer who struggled through cancer with EXTRAORDINARY FAITH before she passed away. She said this:

It's okay if you cry, but you have to fight. And it's important that everyone knows I'm so much more than the bad things that happen to me.

— Nightbirde

- Sometimes God calms the storm. Sometimes He **steadies His people in the middle of it**.
- Sometimes the miracle is deliverance. Sometimes the **miracle is endurance**.
- Sometimes the miracle is simply that your faith survived what should **have destroyed you**.
- The Father did not remove the cup. *But He never abandoned His Son*.

And that means your SUFFERING mean **God has not abandoned you either**. Tim Keller once said:

God will either give us what we ask or give us what we would have asked if we knew everything

He knows.

- The problem is: We see **deadlines** and **fear** and **pain** and **confusion** and **uncertainty**.

Keller also said:

A faith without some doubts is like a human body without antibodies.

- But Gethsemane reminds us that God *sees the full story*.
- And honestly, some of the deepest faith is formed in seasons where people **keep trusting God while wrestling honestly**.
- Not polished FAITH. Not performance FAITH.
- Real FAITH.

Verses 45-46:

Then he returned to the disciples and said to them, "Are you still sleeping and resting? Look, the hour has come, and the Son of Man is delivered into the hands of sinners. Rise! Let us go!

Here comes my betrayer!"

- Jesus leaves the garden strengthened and resolved.
- Not because the SUFFERING **disappeared**.
- Not because the *cross suddenly became easier*.
- But because surrender settled His heart.
- Peace did not come from escaping suffering. Peace came from **trusting the Father** in the middle of it.
- It **prepared Jesus** to walk toward it faithfully.

And maybe that is what God is doing in some of our lives right now.

Some of you came in CARRYING **quiet pain. Quiet fear. Quiet disappointment. Quiet exhaustion**. Wondering where is God? Why is heaven so quiet? Why does it feel like I'm praying into silence?

Gethsemane gives us an answer.

**Silence does not mean abandonment.**

Even when Jesus could not see Sunday morning, God was already working in Friday's darkness.

And I will tell you honestly – I still do not know how our immigration story is going to end. I do not know how your story will end either. But I know who is in the silence with us. And because of Gethsemane, **I know that the silence is not empty.**

Keep PRAYING. Keep TRUSTING. Keep SHOWING UP. Keep LETTING PEOPLE WALK WITH YOU.

**The silence of God does not mean the absence of God.**