

Sunday School Lesson
“Stories of Faith” Series
Lesson 6: Jesus In the Garden

Opening Thoughts:

Following the Last Supper and final teachings of Jesus, he goes with the disciples into the Garden of Gethsemane where Jesus realizes the weight of his impending death. This moment is perhaps the most human of Jesus within the synoptic gospels, as well as pointing to the difficult truth of faith that sometimes we must do those very things which we dread. As we encounter Jesus in the garden, we also encounter ourselves on the path of faith, seeking God’s truth while trying to control the journey ourselves.

1. When have you had to do something you did not want to do? What was it?
2. How do you think Jesus’ humanity is revealed in this story?
3. How do you respond when forced to reckon with your own human frailty?

Please open with a time of prayer.

Background:

While traditionally understood to be the second of the four gospels, Mark is generally viewed today as having been the first of the canonical gospels to be written. Likely written between 65 and 75 CE, the gospel is generally shorter than its synoptic counterparts (Matthew and Luke), containing shorter versions of many miracle and teaching stories. However, the last supper and passion narratives are lengthy and extended.

In our passage below, the last supper has concluded, and the group has departed into a nearby garden. Jesus is clearly distressed and worried, asking the disciples to stay up and pray while he goes alone to pray. However, the disciples are unable to stay up and fall asleep. Jesus, however, prays fervently to God.

The prayer is unique as this is the first time, we see Jesus not in control of the situation. Rather than simply invoking God’s power, Jesus asks that the coming situation may change. Most importantly, however, even with the uncertainty ahead of him, Jesus lays God’s will above his own. This is an important lesson of faith to the reader (and the disciples), underscoring that the walk of discipleship is difficult and many times involves unpleasant tasks.

1. Why do you think the disciples fall asleep? What other message may be meant by it?
2. Does the fact Jesus asks for God to change course change your view of Jesus? Why or why not?
3. Why do you think the gospel writer of Mark takes such great care in the passion narrative? What do you feel is the most important part of the story?

Main Passage: **Mark 14:32-42a**

They went to a place called Gethsemane; and he said to his disciples, “Sit here while I pray.” He took with him Peter and James and John, and began to be distressed and agitated. And he said to them, “I am deeply grieved, even to death; remain here, and keep awake.” And going a little farther, he threw himself on the ground and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him. He said, “Abba, Father, for you all things are possible; remove this cup from me; yet, not what I want, but what you want.” He came and found them sleeping; and he said to Peter, “Simon, are you asleep? Could you not keep awake one hour? Keep awake and pray that you may not come into the time of trial; the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.” And again he went away and prayed, saying the same words. And once more he came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were very heavy; and they did not know what to say to him. He came a third time and said to them, “Are you still sleeping and taking your rest? Enough! The hour has come; the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Get up, let us be going. See, my betrayer is at hand.”

1. What is the main point of this passage? What stands out?
2. How is Jesus’ faith shown? What about the disciples?
3. How is Jesus’ humanity shown? What does that say about our faith as human beings?

Reflection:

While much of the gospel of Mark seems rushed and almost expendable, the passion narrative forces the reader to encounter a worried and harrowed Jesus. The disciples, Jesus’ constant companions, are found asleep, not of any help. Within the garden, Jesus prays that another way may be found, another path taken, another method used. It is not, however, to be.

Jesus acknowledges God’s power and sovereignty, even after just asking for a change, by stating that “not what I want; what you want...” This is the message of faith found here. Rather than fleeing as Jonah did, or looking for practical solutions like the disciples, Jesus follows a heavenly path. Because of it, the world is saved by grace.

Each day we are forced to make choices. Most of these choices are obvious and easy. But sometimes we struggle. Other times, we know the right choice, but refuse to make it due to our own worries and fears. Jesus *wanted* to make a different choice, yet his faith led him to follow God. We often want our faith to be convenient, available for us, but not controlling us. Yet that is not the vow we made. In asking Jesus to lead us, we accept not what we want, but what God wants. This is the ultimate lesson of faith: not what we want, or what I want, but what God wants.

1. When have you struggled most in faith?
2. Have you ever considered Jesus’ wishes in the garden? How does that change your own view of the cross?
3. What have you learned most about faith during this series?