**Good Friday 2025**

Today is Good Friday.

Traditionally worship services on this day focus on the crucifixion of Jesus on the cross at Golgotha, but today I want to go back to an earlier piece of the story of that day. I want to focus today on Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane.

After the Last Supper and telling Judas to go and do what he had to, Jesus went, as was his custom, to the Mount of Olives; and He took with him Peter and James and John, leaving the other disciples. Jesus went with them to a place called Gethsemane.

Mark 14: 32 *They went to a place called Gethsemane; and he said to his disciples, “Sit here while I pray.” 33 He took with him Peter and James and John and began to be distressed and agitated. 34 And he said to them, “I am deeply grieved, even to death; remain here, and keep awake.” 35 And going a little farther, he threw himself on the ground and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him. 36 He said, “Abba, Father, for you all things are possible; remove this cup from me; yet, not what I want, but what you want.” 37 He came and found them sleeping; and he said to Peter, “Simon, are you asleep? Could you not keep awake one hour? 38 Keep awake and pray that you may not come into the time of trial; the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.” 39 And again he went away and prayed, saying the same words. 40 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. 41 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. 42 Get up, let us be going. See, my betrayer is at hand.”*

Gethsemane is at the base of the Mount of Olives and means an oil press.

The oil press is frequently mentioned in the Bible, sometimes referring to suffering. In relation to Gethsemane, the setting underscores the weight of the impending sacrifice, much like olives being crushed to produce oil. This imagery emphasizes the anguish and pressure Jesus experienced as he prepared for his impending sacrifice, embodying the profound struggle between his divine mission and human vulnerability.

The wine press is symbolic of the execution of God’s judgement

Think of God saying in Isaiah 63:3 *“I have trodden the winepress alone; from the nations no one was with me. I trampled them in my anger and trod them down in my wrath; their blood spattered my garments, and I stained all my clothing*.

Think of John’s vision in Revelation 14:14, 18-20 *I looked, and there before me was a white cloud, and seated on the cloud was one like a son of man[a] with a crown of gold on his head and a sharp sickle in his hand. ..18 Still another angel, who had charge of the fire, came from the altar and called in a loud voice to him who had the sharp sickle, “Take your sharp sickle and gather the clusters of grapes from the earth’s vine, because its grapes are ripe.” 19 The angel swung his sickle on the earth, gathered its grapes and threw them into the great winepress of God’s wrath. 20 They were trampled in the winepress outside the city, and blood flowed out of the press.*

How apt was the setting because of this link, for the start of Good Friday, as Jesus’ blood was poured out for the salvation of many.

The wrath of God poured out on Jesus instead of being poured out on us.

One person described Gethsemane as truly being a wine press: “the place in which Jesus’ precious blood was forced from the veins of his sacred body, as the juice and oil are pressed from the crushed grape and pounded olive.”[[1]](#footnote-1)

Apart from the symbolism of the name of the place – Gethsemane – the oil press, there is other echo in this incident.

We hear an echo back to the garden of Eden.

The fall of our first parents Adam and Eve had taken place in a garden, under the trees of Eden and therefore reparation of this fall was also to be made in a garden by Jesus.[[2]](#footnote-2)

The sacrifice of Jesus the Christ in the garden of Gethsemane was the atonement for the original sin in the Garden of Eden.

Let’s not pass over this part of the Good Friday story too quickly. Let us linger in the story..

Gethsemane was the setting for an intensely emotional and spiritually significant moment for Jesus. As he faced the impending suffering and sacrifice awaiting him, he went to a solitary place in the garden with his disciples, away from the madding crowds. Jesus expressed his distress, saying, *“My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death”* (Mark 14:34).

This profound moment highlights the humanity of Jesus, who, in his divine nature, willingly took on the burdens of humanity’s sins. He showed the depth of his love for humanity and the obedience to God’s plan that would soon unfold.

This was no easy ask. Jesus knew what was going to happen to him and the immensity of the sin of the world which would rest on his shoulders, and the alienation from his Father because he took on the sin of the world.

It is no wonder that he was overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death.

I cannot imagine what it would do to our minds to know that you were going to die that same day. I cannot imagine the mental anguish of those on death row when all their appeals have been declined and the date set for execution. Yet Jesus was an innocent man, unlike death row prisoners. He was taking the punishment set for others.

How do you deal with that. Yet that is what Jesus struggled with in the Garden that night.

He could have escaped his fate but did not. He knew Judas had gone to get the soldiers and could have changed his usual resting place and gone somewhere else to pray and avoid arrest, but he did not. He did not shirk from what he knew was coming, he did not hide. But it was still a major struggle for him.

He became distressed, grieved and agitated. He said to the three disciples, *“I am deeply grieved, even to death; remain here, and stay awake with me.” 39 And going a little farther, he threw himself on the ground and prayed, “My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me; yet not what I want but what you want.”*

Even in the wording – he threw himself to the ground in weeping and prayer – shows the intensity of the emotional cost on Jesus. He threw himself down, not just knelt and prayed, he threw himself on to the ground.

A google image search will show an in control Jesus praying nicely on his knees in the garden, yet scripture does not tell us that was the case. In Luke 22:44, we are told that “*being in anguish, he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground*”.

He was in battle to do the will of God, and the tempter was trying to dissuade him from going through with the plan. In the Passion of Christ movie, the battle is shown in the personification of the devil speaking lies and half-truths to Jesus as he prayed.

<video clip>

The battle in his prayer life and in our prayer life is real, make no mistake about that.

In yet more biblical symbolism, the concept of the “cup” often represents an individual’s portion or experience, whether it be blessings or suffering. Jesus referred to his forthcoming crucifixion as a “cup” that he would willingly drink. In this garden, Jesus grappled with the weight of the cup of suffering he was about to bear.

Let us pause and feel the enormity of what Jesus went through at this time.

His suffering was mental sufferings, suffering of the soul. Suffering of the soul can be much worse than bodily pain, because it is interior and mental, and it often communicates itself to the body.

The passage in Mark 14:33 identifies his suffering as fear and apprehension, repugnance, horror, aversion, and the passage in Matthew 26:37-38 identifies his suffering as sadness and depression. There is no conceivable phase or form of mental suffering that he did not go through in his agony.[[3]](#footnote-3)

He goes to his disciples and finds them asleep under a tree.

*Could you not stay awake with me one hour? 41 Stay awake and pray that you may not come into the time of trial; the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.” 42 Again he went away for the second time and prayed, “My Father, if this cannot pass unless I drink it, your will be done.” 43 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, saying the same words. 45 Then he came to the disciples and said to them, “Are you still sleeping and taking your rest? See, the hour is at hand, and the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. 46 Get up, let us be going. See, my betrayer is at hand.”*

He sought support from his closest friends and found no one to console him and he was left to bear the whole weight of his suffering alone[[4]](#footnote-4)

And then his accusers and soldiers came for him.

As we reflect on Jesus’ agonizing prayer in the garden, we understand that Gethsemane represents a pivotal moment in His journey towards the ultimate sacrifice for humanity’s redemption. The start of the culmination of his purpose in coming to earth.

The place stands as a testament to Jesus’ humanity, his unwavering commitment to God’s will, and his sacrificial love. The events that unfolded in this garden pave the way for redemption and eternal life for believers.

A t what cost were our sins forgiven? We see the cost in the garden of Gethsemane.

We cannot sit and look – be bystanders to the work of Christ. We may have heard the Good Friday message for years but what do we do with the impact of what we know of the event? What do we take from this incident in Christ’s life?

Jesus’ submission to God’s will in Gethsemane should speak to us of the importance of obedience and trust even in the face of immense suffering and personal sacrifice in our lives.

His submission should serve as an encouragement for us to surrender our own desires to God and trust in His perfect plan, even when it may be difficult or incomprehensible. “*Not my will, but yours be done*.”

We may try to justify our lack of submission by saying that Jesus could do all this because of his divine nature but actually this incident gives us conclusive proof of his true and complete human nature. We have confirmation that there were two wills in Christ’s nature, one divine and one human, because he says, “Not my will, but yours be done.” [[5]](#footnote-5)

And because of his humanity, we know that he, like us, had natural impulses and emotions and that was the struggle he faced in the garden.

He surrendered to the will of the Father – to the eternal plan – at huge cost, and we need to consider that in our lives as well.

By his example, we can be comforted when we can find solace in no one else.

When we contemplate the battle he faced in his heart, and how hard it was for him to undertake the passion for us, yet he never wavered in love and fidelity to us, may we find inspiration in Jesus’ example and seek strength through prayer and surrender to God’s perfect plan.

In this time of communion, we will take the cup symbolising the blood of Jesus, spilt for us. We will take the bread symbolising the broken body of Jesus, broken for us.

Come and take the elements back to your seat and take them in your own time.

We will listen in silence to the song Gethsemane written by Keith Getty and Stuart Townsend, as we contemplate this day.

1. M Meschler *The Life of our Lord Jesus Christ* 384. Maurice Meschler was a German Jesuit who lived during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. He is known for his writings on the saints and the life of Christ. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Meschler 377 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Meschler 379-380 [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Meschler 388 [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Meschler 387 [↑](#footnote-ref-5)