

March 12 Adult Spiritual Growth Class Synopsis

Let There Be Light: A Study of FPC Stained-Glass Windows – Christ in the Garden of Gethsemane

First Presbyterian Church has been blessed with parishioner memorial gifts of 15 beautiful stained-glass windows over the years, as summarized in the wonderful guide put together by Virginia Wiley in 1990, as part of the 175 year anniversary celebration of the church. The window of focus is Christ in the Garden of Gethsemane, located in the rear of the sanctuary.

The window is one of five that were moved from our former church on Ninth and Court Streets, which was dedicated on May 8, 1900. The window depicts Jesus in His most trying moment prior to His crucifixion in the Garden of Gethsemane, voiced in Matthew 26:39: "Oh my father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou will." Jesus is shown on his knees looking heavenwardly to His Father as He is praying. Jesus wears a brown tunic and red cloak signifying His perfect humility and His suffering and sacrifice taking on the sin of all, in that *'He humbled himself by becoming obedient to death, even death on a cross.'* Although it is evening, it is as day as the light of God's glory shines down from heaven as He prays. In front of Jesus is a very small plant growing out of the rock, possibly a small mustard plant, that may symbolize the great faith in those who believed and those not yet born who will come to believe and grow His Church. These were whom He prayed for in the Upper Room at the Last Supper.

Gethsemane, meaning 'oil press', was located across the brook of Kidron at the foot of Mount Olive, just outside the Old City of Jerusalem. This is where the account took place as told in all four Gospels, with the Synoptic Gospels detailing Jesus' prayer and subsequent arrest, while John gives the account of His arrest. Jesus' inner circle of disciples, Peter, James and John, are with Jesus in the garden. The accounts given by Matthew and Mark are very similar. In the final moments before being handed over to be crucified, with *'His soul overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death'*, the Lord Jesus is found earnestly praying to His Father. Three times He prays His prayer. As the appointed time for the work of redemption drew ever closer, the Lord Jesus is found on His face beseeching the Father: "If you are willing, remove this cup from Me, nevertheless, not My will, but Yours, be done." Three times Jesus calls His weary disciples to be earnest in prayer as well - so that they would not fall into temptation. Each time they could not stay awake – *"the spirit is willing but the flesh is weak,"* Jesus tells them.

In Luke's account of the Gethsemane prayer, we see Jesus, although fully God, also as fully man. In His moment of anguish, *'He prays more earnestly, His sweat is like drops of blood falling to the ground.'* His Father sends a ministering angel to strengthen Him as He prays, just as He does for us in Psalm 91:11: *For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your way.* Here "anguish" is translated from the Greek word "Agonia" meaning a contest, conflict; stress, agony, intense inner tension. The intense anxiety, dread, or tension is one experienced in anticipation of a conflict, as a soldier before a battle. It denotes Jesus' anguished state of mind in Gethsemane prior to the crucifixion. He is filled with dreaded anticipation, not fright or panic, as He faces the epic battle on which man's salvation rests in which He will be the Victor. When the hour had come, Jesus tells His disciples, "The Son of Man is delivered into the hands of sinners. Rise! Let us go! Here comes my betrayer!"

In the Synoptic Gospels' accounts of Jesus' arrest, Judas arrives with a crowd armed with swords and clubs where Judas betrays Jesus with a kiss. John's account is different in that Jesus asks the approaching crowd, "Who is it that you want?" When they reply "Jesus of Nazareth", Jesus replies, identifying Himself to the treacherous crowd with the words spoken to Moses at the burning bush - "I AM", to which they all drew back and fell to the ground to God Himself. Jesus asks a second time with the crowd repeating

their answer. Here Jesus asks that that they would let His disciples go such that His words would be fulfilled: *"I have not lost one of those you gave me."* At this time, one of Jesus' companions (who John names as Peter) draws a sword and cuts off the ear of the servant of the high priest (who John names as Malchus). Jesus commands Peter, *"Put your sword away! Shall I not drink the cup the Father has given me?"* Luke's account is unique in that he speaks of Jesus also touching the servant's ear and healing him, thereby allowing no cause for Peter to be arrested also.

In the Synoptic Gospels, Jesus speaks of the sovereignty of God that has brought about all that has taken place such that *'Scriptures would be fulfilled'*. Jesus said to the crowd, *"Am I leading a rebellion, that you have come out with swords and clubs to capture me? Every day I sat in the temple courts teaching, and you did not arrest me. But this has all taken place that the writings of the prophets might be fulfilled."* In Matthew, Jesus adds: *"Do you think I cannot call on my Father, and he will at once put at my disposal more than twelve legions of angels? But how then would the Scriptures be fulfilled that say it must happen in this way?"* Here Jesus made clear that their evil schemes worked only because He allowed them to work. He was determined to honor his Father's will and fulfill what the Scriptures had said about Him. Jesus was about to be arrested, brutalized, and murdered by these people. However, their evil deeds happened only because He offered Himself for our sins, not because they had power over Him. At this moment, all the disciples deserted him and fled.

We know that Jesus prayed throughout His ministry with Scripture recording more than two dozen occasions, signifying prayer to be central to His relationship with the Father. His first recorded prayer was in Luke 3:21 during His baptism: *Now when all the people had been baptized and when Jesus also had been baptized and was praying, the heavens were opened. Our Lord* often withdrew to lonely places, rising early in the morning, and prayed. He taught us how to pray to *'our Father in Heaven, hallowed be thy name'* in Matthew 6. Jesus prayed for the faith of His disciples. He prayed before and after healing. In the Upper Room just prior to Gethsemane, Jesus prays what is known as the High Priestly Prayer. Jesus prays for Himself, His disciples and for all believers to come. This was our Lord's longest recorded prayer during His public ministry on earth and was offered in the presence of His apostles, after the institution and celebration of the Lord's Supper. Following Gethsemane asking that His Father's will would be done, our Lord prays on the cross for those who crucified Him, *"Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing."*

The Apostle Paul tells us in 1 Thessalonians to *"pray without ceasing"*. We are to model our Lord Jesus in prayer, understanding that there is no occasion that is not in need of prayer, and that our relationship with Him is founded in prayer. The Father always hears our prayers, answering them according to His perfect and sovereign will just as He did with His only begotten Son. A commentary poses that *'in Gethsemane, had there been an alternative way to secure the redemption of mankind, God would surely have interjected... but on this occasion the heavens remained silent, for there was no other way. There was no other good enough to pay the price for sin. Only the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ, where the floodgates of God's wrath were to be poured out on His innocent Son, could satisfy the righteous requirement of a holy God.'* Praise God for His great love and amazing grace!

Throughout life, we can be assured that *nothing in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

A song to reflect and pray on:

[\(96\) Gethsemane Hymn - Keith & Kristyn Getty - YouTube](#)

Looking ahead – Sunday March 19

Narthex Window on Left – Mary at the Tomb