

Greetings friends,

I ask that as we begin our spiritual journey together we begin to take some time daily (if you are not already) to read the Scripture and pray. I thought it would be beneficial for us to focus on the same passage of Scripture for the week. This week, we will focus on Sunday's texts (See below). If you were not present in worship on Sunday and have not yet watched it, I encourage you to do so. The Scripture used on Sunday was **Mark 14:25-50**. The setting for this week's passage begins in Jerusalem as Jesus and the disciples leave what is now referred to as the "Upper Room." It is during time when Jews would go to Jerusalem to celebrate Passover, which they had just celebrated together. Judas has already left to go to the Chief Priests, as he had already arranged with them to turn Jesus in for 30 pieces of silver. Soon, Jesus will face arrest, trial, and crucifixion. They left the Upper Room singing, likely singing Hallel, Psalms 113-118, which is customary at Passover. They are headed toward Gethsemane, at the base of the Mount of Olives.

Mark's Gospel is the oldest written account of Jesus' ministry. It was written by John Mark, nicknamed Mark, who was close to the Apostle Peter. Papias, bishop of Hieropolis, writing about A.D.140 wrote, "And the presbyter [the Apostle John] said this: Mark having become the interpreter of Peter, wrote down accurately whatsoever he remembered." It was written in Rome, and scholars date it between 50-70 A.D.- before the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple in 70 A.D. The Gospel was written for Roman believers, particularly Gentiles.

As an expression of Peter's remembrance of events, and knowing Peter's character and impulsivity, the Gospel seems to reflect that. The Gospel of Mark is succinct, fast-paced, and action packed. He is known for using the word "immediately," which emphasizes the urgency of the action and the mission.

In Peter's first epistle he referred to him as "Mark, my son" (1 Pet. 5:13). When Peter was released from prison in Acts 12:12, he went straight to John Mark's mother's home in Jerusalem. John Mark was the cousin of Barnabas (Col. 4:10), and he joined him and Paul as they traveled on missionary journeys. Unfortunately, John Mark deserted them along the way in Perga and returned to Jerusalem (Acts 13:13). Barnabas wanted to John Mark to go on the second missionary journey, but Paul refused, causing friction that resulted in their separation (Acts 15:38-40). Later, we learn that John Mark had somehow gained favor again, and when Paul wrote the Colossians he instructed them to welcome him (Col. 4:10). Paul even listed him as a fellow worker (Philemon 24). And in 2 Tim. 4:11 Paul told Timothy to "Get Mark and bring him with you, for he is useful to me for ministry."

Format-this is a repeat from every week, and will be consistently present for anyone new and as a reminder for all. It is listed at the bottom for review and for anyone who is new to this exercise. Please remember that it is a suggestion. There is no pressure to do it in the format suggested, to do everything on the days that are listed, or to even to answer all the questions. Allow the Holy Spirit to lead you. If one question takes up the time because you are moved in your spirit, then stay with it. The idea of this is to spend some intentional time with the Scriptures, in the presence of God, and in prayer and reflection- in whatever way that works for you!

Scripture: Mark 14:26-50 (NIV)

²⁶ When they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.

²⁷ "You will all fall away," Jesus told them, "for it is written:

"I will strike the shepherd,
and the sheep will be scattered."^[a]

²⁸ But after I have risen, I will go ahead of you into Galilee.”

²⁹ Peter declared, “Even if all fall away, I will not.”

³⁰ “Truly I tell you,” Jesus answered, “today—yes, tonight—before the rooster crows twice^[a] you yourself will disown me three times.”

³¹ But Peter insisted emphatically, “Even if I have to die with you, I will never disown you.” And all the others said the same.

³² They went to a place called Gethsemane, and Jesus said to his disciples, “Sit here while I pray.” ³³ He took Peter, James and John along with him, and he began to be deeply distressed and troubled. ³⁴ “My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death,” he said to them. “Stay here and keep watch.”

³⁵ Going a little farther, he fell to the ground and prayed that if possible the hour might pass from him. ³⁶ “*Abba*,^[f] Father,” he said, “everything is possible for you. Take this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will.”

³⁷ Then he returned to his disciples and found them sleeping. “Simon,” he said to Peter, “are you asleep? Couldn’t you keep watch for one hour? ³⁸ Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.”

³⁹ Once more he went away and prayed the same thing. ⁴⁰ When he came back, he again found them sleeping, because their eyes were heavy. They did not know what to say to him.

⁴¹ Returning the third time, he said to them, “Are you still sleeping and resting? Enough! The hour has come. Look, the Son of Man is delivered into the hands of sinners. ⁴² Rise! Let us go! Here comes my betrayer!”

⁴³ Just as he was speaking, Judas, one of the Twelve, appeared. With him was a crowd armed with swords and clubs, sent from the chief priests, the teachers of the law, and the elders.

⁴⁴ Now the betrayer had arranged a signal with them: “The one I kiss is the man; arrest him and lead him away under guard.” ⁴⁵ Going at once to Jesus, Judas said, “Rabbi!” and kissed him. ⁴⁶ The men seized Jesus and arrested him. ⁴⁷ Then one of those standing near drew his sword and struck the servant of the high priest, cutting off his ear.

⁴⁸ “Am I leading a rebellion,” said Jesus, “that you have come out with swords and clubs to capture me? ⁴⁹ Every day I was with you, teaching in the temple courts, and you did not arrest me. But the Scriptures must be fulfilled.” ⁵⁰ Then everyone deserted him and fled.

Other Scriptures referenced:

The story of Palm Sunday, with Jesus’ triumphal entry into Jerusalem is found in Matthew 21:1-11, Mark 11:1-11, Luke 19: 28-40, John 12:1-15. **For all of the Holy Week story, begin with these passages in each Gospel, and read through to the end.**

Other versions of the Garden of Gethsemane and Jesus’ arrest are found in Matthew 26:36-56, Luke 22:39-53, John 18:1-11.

Isaiah 53:5-6

⁵ But he was pierced for our transgressions,
he was crushed for our iniquities;
the punishment that brought us peace was on him,
and by his wounds we are healed.

⁶ We all, like sheep, have gone astray,
each of us has turned to our own way;
and the Lord has laid on him
the iniquity of us all.

John 3:16 (NKJV)

For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

Daily Readings:

Monday: v.26 “When they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives”- Jesus and the disciples had just celebrated Passover. Jesus washed the disciples feet, instituted a “new covenant” using the bread and wine of Passover (celebrated now as Holy Communion). Jesus spent much time teaching, especially about loving one another, and he prayed for them. Judas has left for the Chief Priests and guards, as he previously arranged with them to turn Jesus over for 30 pieces of silver. They were all singing, likely singing Hallel, which is Psalms 113-118, and traditionally sung with Passover. Imagine Jesus singing! God loves it when we sing praises to him, and worshipers singing is throughout the Scriptures. The Psalms are actually a songbook. See Psalm 9:2; 30:4; 47:6; 47:7; 57:9; 66:2; 92:1; 106:12; 146:2; 147:1; 149:1, telling worshipers to sing! Why do you think God desires for us to sing praises to him? How is it different than speaking? Can you think of any benefits of singing praises? What is your favorite song that you love to sing to God, about God, for God? Take a moment and sing it!

Imagine the circumstance that Jesus is in- knowing Judas left, and why, knowing he would be arrested, tried, and crucified- and yet he sings songs of praise. What does that say to you? Have you ever had a time when you found it difficult to sing praise to God? What was going on, and why was it difficult- what was going on in your mind and heart? If there is ever a time again when you face challenges and struggles that make it difficult to sing praises to God, I encourage you to press through and sing anyways. It will be a reminder of who God is, what God does, how much God loves you, and it will touch your heart as God hears the praises. When you get an opportunity, read through Hallel, Psalms 113-118, and note how it points to Christ. Read also Jesus’ farewell discourse and prayer in the Upper Room, John 14-17.

“Mount of Olives”- They were then heading just outside of Jerusalem to the Mount of Olives, a mountainous area that separates Jerusalem from the Judean desert, and many olive trees grew there. The Garden of Gethsemane is on the Mount of Olives. Olives are used to produce oil, which was used to anoint a king, to anoint the High Priest who would give the sacrifice, was used for healing, and used to fill the lamps to light the darkness. Consider how all of this points to who Jesus is and what Jesus would do. Reflect on how Jesus is all of those roles in your life- King over all of Creation and over your life, High Priest who gave his life as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world- your sin, offering salvation, Jesus is healer, healing in every way- physically, mentally, spiritually, relationally, etc., and Jesus is the oil for our lamp, illuminating our darkness, shining light upon our path. Take time to reflect, pray, and give thanks for who Jesus is, and all that he has done for you.

Tuesday: v.27a “You will all fall away,” Jesus told them”- I don’t believe Jesus said this in order to condemn the disciples, but rather to let them know that he really is in command of the situation. It’s also

a warning- be aware, check yourself, watch for temptation that will lead you to stumble. If we ever get to the point that we think we would never do or say something to betray Jesus, then we need to examine even closer, because pride may very well have crept in and we might be even more vulnerable. “Fall away” in the original Greek is *skandalizó*, which means set a snare or stumbling block; to hinder right conduct or thought; to cause to stumble- literally, to fall into a trap (biblehub.com). Ephesians 6:10-18 speaks about putting on our spiritual armor. Don’t get settled, complacent, but “armor up” and get “powered up” because temptation will rise, we will all face spiritual attack, and we need to be protected. Every sin betrays Jesus. In spite of believers committing to Christ, we will all have times when we sin. It is part of the sanctification process, as we grow and become more holy, more in Christ’s likeness, and sinning becomes less and less. Describe a time when you were tempted, or under spiritual attack, or when you fell away, or betrayed Jesus. It could be a time when you sinned, or a time when you gave in to peer pressure and denied your faith, or perhaps you had a time when you were weak, not strong enough to stand firm in your faith- by yourself or with others, or many other possible scenarios. What was going on in your mind and heart? Why was that decision made? How did it make you feel? Too often, people will go through that wrong decision and have a difficult time recovering from it. People carry around guilt, shame, even condemnation, believing it impossible that Jesus would ever forgive. But Jesus does, and will, and wants to be in reconciled relationship- he loves you that much!

Jesus knows that all the disciples would fall away, and that we would all fall away, and yet he was still willing to go to the cross. Consider how you were thinking and feeling when bringing up memories of falling away and betraying Jesus. Did you experience gratitude for forgiveness, and a commitment to grow? If so, take a moment to give thanks once again for God’s great mercy and grace. If you experienced something different, perhaps guilt, shame, condemnation, know that those feelings are from the enemy- they are not of God. Take a moment and pray, offering up your weaknesses and failures, confessing them before the Lord. Accept what Jesus shared throughout his ministry about loving and forgiving, and what is reinforced in the rest of the New Testament, such as “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9). Accept that fully, knowing God loves you!

v.27b “for it is written: “I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered””- Jesus is quoting Zechariah 13:7. Not only is Jesus in command of the situation, but he also understands that the Scriptures regarding the suffering of the Messiah must and will be fulfilled (if you have time, see Zechariah’s extended oracle- 12:10-13:9). What was going to happen would cause the disciples to be overwhelmed and ensnared by fear. It would have their confidence and faith challenged, leading to a question of loyalty. By using the Scripture, Jesus is also saying why the disciples must be scattered- to fulfill prophecy (this prophecy given about 500 years prior). In this prophecy, it is God the Father, “I”, who will strike down the shepherd, which Jesus depicts as himself. Recall John 3:16 when Jesus said, “For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son, that whosoever believes in him will not perish, but have eternal life”- all of this is happening because of God’s love for us. How does that make you feel?

Jesus as shepherd is found throughout the NT, such as “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep” (John 10:11), “I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me- just as the Father knows me and I know the Father- and I lay down my life for the sheep” (John 10:14-15), “My sheep listen to my voice; I know them and they follow me” (John 10:27). What does a shepherd do for his sheep? What does the illustration and imagery of Jesus being a good shepherd say to you about who he is, and what he will do? Consider sheep, and the awful image of their shepherd being struck down- and the sheep scattering. What does that say to you about who we are and the impact of what is happening? The word “strike” leads to the image of the suffering servant found in the messianic prophecies of Isaiah (see Isaiah 53, esp. vv.4-7+), which includes v.6- “We all, like sheep, have gone

astray, each of us has turned to our own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.” Jesus used the example of shepherd and sheep as the people then could easily relate. Can you think of any other analogies to describe the shepherd/sheep relationship in our modern context? After Jesus’ resurrection, Jesus told Peter, “Feed my lambs” and “Take care of my sheep.” Knowing what we do about what a shepherd does, and knowing our Good Shepherd, what do you believe it looks like in us? What would it mean if you were to “shepherd” someone- what would that look like? In what ways have you experienced Jesus being a good shepherd to you? Consider how we are called to live, love, and serve like Jesus. Pray thanks for all of the shepherding you have received, and pray for revelation and discernment about for whom and how you should follow in the steps of our Savior by shepherding others.

Wednesday: v.28 “But after I have risen, I will go ahead of you into Galilee”- Jesus will endure the cross, but he is already looking ahead, beyond the cross. Hebrews 12:2b says, “For the joy set before him he (Jesus) endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.” For the joy set before him- knowing what would happen on the cross- victory over sin and death, forgiveness of sins, reconciliation between God and humanity, eternal life for all who believe. It’s a message of hope, with Jesus leading the way. At the same time that Jesus is acknowledging that all the disciples would betray him and fall away, he is also letting them know that in spite of that, he not only will rise again, but will also plan to gather his “sheep,” still be in relationship with them, meet with them, and lead them. Jesus consoles the eleven disciples with this promise. It’s something for us all to consider, as we “all have gone astray,” and yet we must always hold on to God’s promises. “But”- yes, there will be trials, and suffering, and fear, and death... BUT GOD! When facing difficulties, trials, and pain in your life, how have you had hope? How did God impact your hope? Have there been times that felt as if there was no hope, or that hope was difficult to grasp? How did you experience God through that? If you have time, look up in your Bible, and then write down some of the many promises of God. If you are going through a time of pain, confusion, or difficulty, know that our Lord has gone before you and is with you. Take some time and pray, asking God for your needs, giving thanks, and lean into the protection, provision, comfort, peace, strength, and hope that God offers freely to you. Lay down any worries and burdens, placing them at the foot of the cross, and accept God’s gift of grace. You are not alone. God is with you through it all.

This phrase is yet another time when Jesus tries to let the disciples know what was going to happen, not only about suffering on the cross but that he would rise again, and yet they still did not understand when the time came. Too often people can be hard-headed, stuck in their own ideas, and not really listening. I encourage you to listen more, to be open to what God has to say to you. When praying, don’t just talk at God, but embrace silence, and listen for God’s voice, which may come as an idea, a word, an image, a feeling. Remember, that God will never contradict the Bible, so whatever you discern must be in alignment with God’s Word. But listen, and be open to the revelation of the Spirit. Take some time in prayer today.

Thursday: v.29 “Peter declared, “Even if all fall away, I will not””- Peter was feeling strong and brave, unaware of the spiritual battle that would take place. He was speaking impulsively, boldly, with bravado, while simultaneously disregarding everything Jesus has been saying. Peter was the first one to follow, the first one to proclaim Jesus as the Christ, and will be the first one to deny him- three times, in fact. “I will not”- basically saying, I am stronger, more loyal, and there is no possible way this will happen to me (maybe them-but not me). With arrogance, he elevates himself above the others, unaware of his own weakness. It reminds me of Proverbs 16:18, “Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall.” Jesus has been modeling humility, yet Peter has still not received the message.

v.30-31 “Truly I tell you,” Jesus answered, “today- yes, tonight- before the rooster crows twice you yourself will disown me three times.” But Peter insisted emphatically, “Even if I have to die with you, I will never disown you.” And all the others said the same.”- Note that only some manuscripts have “twice.” The disciples were all feeling overly confident, but Jesus still warns them about what is coming and what their response will be. Even knowing that the pit lies ahead, they still fall into it. Peter will remember these words when he hears the rooster crow. In Luke’s account, the story is filled in more with Jesus saying, “Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift all of you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers” (Luke 22:31-32). Have you ever experienced the enemy in a way that it felt as if you were being “sifted as wheat”? Describe it- what was going on, how did it feel, how did you discern it was the enemy, how did you get through? Were you victorious, or did you fall into temptation? Consider that the enemy’s goal is to steal, kill, and destroy, and if so, how do we prepare ourselves, protect ourselves- what is God’s role and what is ours? Take some time to pray, asking God to show you what to do. Pray for protection, guidance, that God’s light would illuminate the darkness and you would be strong enough through Christ to stand strong. Be filled with the power of the Holy Spirit!

Friday: v.32 “They went to a place called Gethsemane, and Jesus said to his disciples, “Sit here while I pray.”- Gethsemane means “olive press,” and is a garden on the Mount of Olives. I was there on my trip to Israel- it’s beautiful, with ancient olive trees, and you can see all of Jerusalem from there. It is directly across from the Temple (which now holds the space for the Al Aqsa Mosque). Imagine that it’s dark, surrounded by olive trees, and they are in a place where they are looking out over Jerusalem, illuminated by the moon and perhaps some fires. Some scholars note that Jesus chose to go to a garden because humanity was created in a garden, the fall of humanity occurred in that same garden, and in a garden Jesus will choose to accept the cup of judgement against the sin of the world, to provide the cup of redemption for humanity.

v.33 “He took Peter, James and John along with him, and he began to be deeply distressed and troubled”- Peter, James, and John were Jesus’ inner circle, often accompanying him as a small group, including for Jesus’ transfiguration. “Began to be deeply distressed and troubled”- I don’t believe we ever know the depth of pain and agony that Jesus was going through. In a place named “olive press,” Jesus would now be pressed, crushed, by knowing what was coming soon, and why. He would be on the cross in twelve hours- pierced for our transgressions, crushed for our iniquities (Isaiah 53:5). V.34 “My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death,” he said to them. “Stay here and keep watch”- Jesus asked the disciples to keep watch, giving him time to go alone and pray. Satan is not announced, but is certainly present, the spiritual darkness and oppression thick. Jesus asked them to stay awake, be alert, keep watch, because danger was coming- physically and spiritually. “Overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death”- though certainly the horrific physical torture and death would bring this anguish, I believe it’s deeper. What would happen on the cross would be spiritual torture, a spiritual horror, as Jesus becomes sin, taking the sin of the world upon himself. As it says in 2 Corinthians 5:21, “God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.”

v.35-36 “Going a little farther, he fell to the ground and prayed that if possible the hour might pass from him. “Abba, Father,” he said, “everything is possible for you. Take this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will.”- “a little farther”- Luke’s version says “about a stone’s throw away” (22:41). Imagine, that Jesus “fell” to the ground, a position of humility, but also of weakness from torment. The most common position for praying at that time was standing, yet in Gethsemane he is brought low. In Matthew, Jesus “fell with his face to the ground” (26:39). It is very possible that as he prayed, the disciples saw his body shaking from weeping, heard the cries of his prayers. Jesus asked them to stay

awake. He prayed to the Father, "That the hour might pass him," "Take this cup from me"- but also, in submission and obedience he said to his Father, "yet not what I will, but what you will"- the hour that has been destined and determined, the cup of judgement upon sin- for which Jesus the Christ would suffer, be tortured, and bear the cross for humanity. Jesus was fully divine, but he was also fully human, and his desire to find any other way to fulfill his Messianic mission stems from his humanity, shrinking away from the pain of what was to come. Hebrews 4:15 says, "For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weakness, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are- yet he did not sin. Jesus was also fully divine, struggling with the horror of the revolting stench and pain of sin would be laid upon him. Jesus, who had no sin, would become sin for us.

"Pray" here is *proseuchomai* in the original Greek, and a scholar (Hiebert) notes that the imperfect tense signifies over and over, again and again. What is recorded is a glimpse- it wasn't a short statement and then done. The prayers of Jesus in Gethsemane are intense. Hebrews describes it in 5:7, "During the days of Jesus' life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with fervent cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission." The Father heard the cries of his Son and, though there was no other way, he responded - "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). "Yet not what I will, but what you will"- is great trust, great love- for the Father and humanity, and we must always remember that Jesus chose to go to the cross. He went of his own will because it was his Father's will.

v.37-41a "Then he returned to his disciples and found them sleeping. "Simon," he said to Peter, "are you asleep? Couldn't you keep watch for one hour? Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak"- Note that Jesus singled out Peter, and called him by his old name, Simon, for he was not acting like the "rock" that the name Peter means. Peter was also the one who called himself out earlier with boasting, but now he is "Simon." Note too, that this is after the first time he went to pray, and he indicates it had been an hour. With much turmoil comes much prayer. Imagine though, Jesus going through those prayers, and the heartache of finding the disciples asleep, reinforcing just how alone he would be as he went through the horrors of the cross. It was late at night, and with Passover there is lots of food and wine, and their flesh succumbed to it all with sleep. Sleeping here, I believe, is more than the physical and addresses the spiritual- there is darkness, spiritual attack is coming, be ready and watchful- don't fall into temptation. Even knowing that they would all fail, they would all fall away, he is still encouraging them toward victory. "The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak"- too true for all of us. We all must be awake spiritually, come to God in prayer to pour out our heart to him, and be prepared for the temptations in the world. God heard the cries of prayer and sent an angel for strengthening. God will strengthen us as well, so we can stand strong against anything that comes our way. It happens through prayer- open, honest, sometimes gut-wrenching, prayer. Take some extra time in prayer- be transparent, vulnerable, humble, knowing God hears you, loves you, and is there for you. Seek the Father's will.

Saturday: v.39-40 "Once more [Jesus] went away and prayed the same thing. When he came back, he again found them sleeping, because their eyes were heavy. They did not know what to say to him"- Jesus continues praying, and continues to want the disciples to keep watch, and they continually fall asleep! Have you ever disappointed someone like that? Where you know they wanted, even needed, something from you, and you even wanted to give it, but you just kept failing? What does that say to you? How do you think the disciples were feeling? How do you think Jesus felt? Learning from the disciple's mistakes, what should we do differently?

V.41a “Returning the third time, he said to them, “Are you still sleeping and resting?” Three times Jesus prayed, and three times Jesus checked to see if his disciples would stay awake, stand by him in prayer, and become prepared through prayer for their own spiritual battle. Yet they were asleep each time. This is a lesson of what not to do. Yet so often, we too can be found the same way- spiritually asleep, not watching or praying- for ourselves or others. This is essential for ourselves, but also, we are called to stand beside others in hope and support in their time of need. Earnestly pray for discernment, to guide you to where you need to grow in this.

V.41b-42 “Enough! The hour has come. Look, the Son of Man is delivered into the hands of sinners. Rise! Let us go! Here comes my betrayer!”- the time has come. The disciples had an opportunity to prepare, but they had been sleeping. They had an opportunity to share a sacred moment with Jesus, but they missed it. Watch for offerings of sacred times, and make sure to enter in. The “hour,” or designated time, when the Messiah, the Son of Man (the Messianic term from the book of Daniel), is “delivered into the hands of sinners”- Jesus knew it was coming. Having prayed, he made the choice, following the Father’s will, to allow himself to be arrested. He would allow himself to be unfairly tried, without giving a defense. He would allow himself to be beaten, tortured, humiliated, and crucified by the hands of sinners. He had continually told the disciples about this (Mark 8:31+; 9:31+; 10:33-34+). “My betrayer” in the original Greek is in the present tense, as in the one “betraying me has come.” It defines who Judas was and what Judas was doing. In every area of life, we become defined by what we do. Here, it’s the negative. But it’s true for the good and bad. It’s not enough to think wonderful things, we must have action. As it says in Matthew 7:16, by their fruit you will know them. Take some time to reflect on your actions, and what they say about who you are, and your relationship with Christ. Pray about it, and ask God to reveal areas of growth needed, and ask for empowerment to do so. Jesus called us to be the light of the world, with God’s light shining through us.

v.43 “Just as he was speaking, Judas, one of the Twelve, appeared. With him was a crowd armed with swords and clubs, sent from the chief priests, the teachers of the law, and the elders”- sent from the religious leaders. Many assume this was the Levitical guard, the police of the Temple. “One of the Twelve” reminds us that this is being carried out by one of Jesus’ closest followers- one he had shared his life with for three years, teaching and leading- Judas building relationship with Jesus and the other disciples. V.44-46 “Now the betrayer had arranged a signal with them: “The one I kiss is the man; arrest him and lead him away under guard. Going at once to Jesus, Judas said, “Rabbi!” and kissed him. The men seized Jesus and arrested him”- this is filled out more with the other Gospels- in Matthew 26:50, “Jesus responded by saying: “Friend, do what you are here to do,” and in Luke 22:48 Jesus said, “Judas, are you betraying the Son of Man with a kiss?” Judas chose to kiss Jesus on the cheek, not only a normative greeting for a Rabbi from his disciple, one who actually follows his Master, but also a symbol of friendship, devotion, love, and respect. The choice of a kiss reveals a depth of hypocrisy fueling his treachery. It is the epitome of being two-faced. The kiss on the cheek would’ve felt like a slap in the face.

V.47 “Then one of those standing near drew his sword and struck the servant of the high priest, cutting off his ear”- In John 18:10-11 we learn that the servant’s name was Malchus, and that the one who cut off the ear was Simon Peter. John 10:11 “Jesus commanded Peter, “Put your sword away! Shall I not drink the cup the Father has given me?” In Luke 22:51 “Jesus answered, “No more of this! And he touched the man’s ear and healed him.” In Matthew 26:52-53 “Put your sword back in its place,” Jesus said to him, “for all who draw the sword will die by the sword. Do you think I cannot call on my Father, and he will at once put at my disposal more than twelve legions of angels?” Imagine that Peter is his

typical impulsive and impetuous self, reacting with violence, while Jesus, who had spent much time in prayer, was calm, with peace, in control. In the midst of it all, he take the time to reach out with compassion and heal the ear. Imagine the hardness of hearts, that they witness the healing in that moment, yet still arrest him.

v.48-49 "Am I leading a rebellion," said Jesus, "that you have come out with swords and clubs to capture me? Every day I was with you, teaching in the temple courts, and you did not arrest me. But the Scriptures must be fulfilled"- In darkness, in secrecy, and secluded. Isaiah had prophesied that the Lamb of God would be led away to suffer and give his life for the redemption of humanity. Take a moment and read, slowly and prayerfully, Isaiah 53.

v.50 "Then everyone deserted him and fled"- everyone who had said they would never do so, everyone who said they would go to their death for him, everyone who had said they would always be by his side... they deserted him, running away in fear. Fear is a powerful motivator to do something you don't want to do. Jesus was courageous... and alone. I am reminded of 1 John 4:8, "Perfect love casts out fear." Jesus was deserted and alone, yet was filled with perfect love. He had spent much time in prayer preparing for this. Take time in prayer, reflecting on all of this- what is God bringing to mind, what is God speaking to your heart? If possible, write it down. Read the "rest of the story," through the trials, crucifixion, and the resurrection. Take time in prayer, and be filled with God's perfect love. As it is said weekly in worship "Hear the Good News! Christ died for us while we were yet sinners, and this proves God's love for you and me. In the name of Jesus Christ your sins are forgiven. Glory to God! Amen!"

Other items:

Responsive Reading

L: Rejoice! Jesus- long anticipated, long awaited- is coming!

ALL: Hosanna to the Son of David!

L: Rejoice! Jesus- God's Chosen One, long promised- is on the way!

ALL: Blessed is the One who comes in the name of the Lord!

L: Rejoice! Jesus- teacher, prophet, healer, source of Spirit- will be here soon!

ALL: Hosanna in the highest heaven!

(from Responsive Prayers, Year A, by David Sparks)

Unison Prayer

Almighty God,

**You sent Your Son, our Savior Jesus Christ,
to suffer death on a cross.**

**Grant that we may share in his obedience to Your will
and in the glorious victory of his resurrection;**

**through Jesus Christ our Lord,
who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit,**

One God, now and ever. Amen.

(UMH #281)

Song Lyrics:

Hosanna, Loud Hosanna #278 v.1,2,3

1. Hosanna, loud hosanna,
the little children sang,
through pillared court and temple
the lovely anthem rang.
To Jesus, who had blessed them
close folded to his breast,
the children sang their praises,
the simplest and the best.

2. From Olivet they followed
mid an exultant crowd,
the victor palm branch waving,
and chanting clear and loud.
The Lord of earth and heaven
rode on in lowly state,
nor scorned that little children
should on his bidding wait.

*Scripture- Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to Jesus, "Teacher, rebuke your disciples!" I tell you, he replied, "if they keep quiet, the stones will cry out!" Luke 19:39-40

3. "Hosanna in the highest!"
that ancient song we sing,
for Christ is our Redeemer,
the Lord of heaven our King.
O may we ever praise him
with heart and life and voice,
and in his blissful presence
eternally rejoice!

What Wondrous Love is This #292 v.1,2,3

1) What wondrous love is this, O my soul, O my soul,
what wondrous love is this, O my soul!
What wondrous love is this that caused the Lord of bliss
to bear the dreadful curse for my soul, for my soul,
to bear the dreadful curse for my soul.

2) What wondrous love is this, O my soul, O my soul,
what wondrous love is this, O my soul!
What wondrous love is this, that caused the lord of life
to lay aside his crown for my soul, for my soul,
to lay aside his crown for my soul.

3) To God and to the Lamb, I will sing, I will sing,

to God and to the Lamb, I will sing.
To God and to the Lamb who is the great I AM,
while millions join the theme, I will sing, I will sing,
while millions join the theme I will sing.

How Great Thou Art #77 v.1,3 (Delta UMC)

O Lord my God!
When I in awesome wonder
Consider all the worlds thy hands have made,
I see the stars, I hear the rolling thunder,
Thy power throughout the universe displayed.

Then sings my soul,
My Savior God to Thee;
How great Thou art, how great Thou art!
Then sings my soul,
My Savior God to Thee;
How great Thou art, how great Thou art!

And when I think
That God, his Son not sparing,
Sent him to die, I scarce an take it in;
That on the cross,
My burden gladly bearing,
He bled and died to take away my sin;

Then sings my soul,
My Savior God to Thee;
How great Thou art, how great Thou art!
Then sings my soul,
My Savior God to Thee;
How great Thou art, how great Thou art!

Written in Red by Janet Paschal (solo- First UMC)

In letters of crimson, God wrote His love
On the hillside so long, long ago
For you and for me Jesus died
And love's greatest story was told

I love you, I love you
That's what Calvary said
I love you, I love you
I love you, written in Red

Down through the ages, God wrote His love
With the same hands that suffered and bled
Giving all that He had to give
A message so easily read

I love you, I love you
That's what Calvary said
I love you, I love you
I love you, written in Red

Format (this is a repeat from last week, and will be consistently present for anyone new and as a reminder for all):

Find a quiet place and time to focus on the Word, and to hear from God through it. It doesn't have to be long, for some it will be longer than others. I encourage you, if possible, to do this practice in the morning. You will then find that God brings it to your mind throughout your day.

For greater impact I encourage you to get some paper and a pen and journal daily what thoughts and impressions God brings to mind. Write out also your own thoughts and your own prayers, making sure to leave space within your time for God's response. Listen intently, and notice what rises up within you- what you are thinking, feeling, memories that arise and ideas that spring up. It may be something God would want you to address within yourself and/or with others. It may be something God is inspiring you to begin or end. God's possibilities are infinite! After time, it is often beneficial to go back and read what you have written, and notice how God has been moving in your life (and praise God for it!).

Begin with prayer, quieting yourself within and opening up to hearing what God would like to reveal to you. Praise God for who he is, for loving you, being with you, and more. Then ask God to speak to you; to open your heart and mind to hear his message. (if you are journaling, you could write out the prayer)

Read the Scripture passage over twice; once as a read through, and the second time slowly, meditatively. Notice what God illuminates for you. Notice what words or ideas are "jumping off the page at you," impacting you from the Scripture. Ask God why that is being highlighted for you. What is God saying to you? What is God asking you to say, do, change, pray about, etc.? What is the application for my life today? ****Most importantly- what am I going to do about it?** (If you are journaling you could write it all out, which reinforces it in a greater way)

I have put together some daily questions based upon the Scripture. You may use those, but also feel free to deviate away from it if God is leading you there. They are simply offered to prompt contemplation with God. There is much more in this passage, feel free to delve in more!

At the end of your time pray again. I recommend praying throughout, but the ending prayer would include praise, thanking God for revelation, and asking for the Holy Spirit to continue to reveal, bringing to mind God's will. Ask God for the courage, empowerment, and opportunity to do what you have determined God is asking you to do.