Christ Church NYC Lenten Faith Forum 2024

**Entering the Passion of Jesus**—Session 6

**Chapter 6 of “Entering the Passion of Jesus”*—Gethsemane: Risking Temptation***

*We move, step by step, to the cross. We too are vulnerable and fearful. We too have deserted. We too have failed to stop what cannot be stopped. Before we can be built up, Lent will strip us down. And, in that rawness, that openness, we can begin to heal. Before we get to the resurrection, there will be suffering, crucifixion, and death. (*Amy-Jill Levine, from Chapter 6 of “Entering the Passion…”)

**Mark 14:32-52—** *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, ‘My soul is 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. Look, my betrayer is at hand.’*

*Immediately, while he was still speaking, Judas, one of the twelve, arrived, and with him there was a crowd with swords and clubs, from the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders. Now the betrayer had given them a sign, saying, ‘The one I will kiss is the man; arrest him and lead him away under guard.’ So when he came, he went up to him at once and said, ‘Rabbi!’ and kissed him. Then they laid hands on him and arrested him. But one of those who stood near drew his sword and struck the slave of the high priest, cutting off his ear. Then Jesus said to them, ‘Have you come out with swords and clubs to arrest me as though I were a rebel? Day after day I was with you in the temple teaching, and you did not arrest me. But let the scriptures be fulfilled.’ All of them deserted him and fled. A certain young man was following him, wearing nothing but a linen cloth. They caught hold of him, but he left the linen cloth and ran off naked.*

* What strikes most you about this story of Jesus at Gethsemane and its variations?
* Have there been moments of personal crisis in your life in which prayer became something uniquely desperate and urgent? What were those moments like?
* Have you experienced times of personal need when you have been either encouraged or disappointed by those around you? What impact did the encouragement or disappointment have on you?

Differences in the variations of the story of Gethsemane

* The word “Gethsemane” (Aramaic for “oil press”) appears only in Matthew and Mark. Luke places the story on the Mount of Olives. John sets it in an unnamed garden across the Kidron Valley. Combining these stories results in the concept of “the garden of Gethsemane.”
* In Matthew, Mark, and Luke, Jesus suffers in this time of prayer and temptation with a heaviness in his soul as though he were carrying the weight of death itself. In John, we find a confident Jesus—not suffering in his spirit, and not dealing with temptation, but with a clear sense of vision and purpose.

Central themes in the variations:

* Matthew, Mark, and Luke emphasize the urgency of prayer and its central place in Jesus’ life.
* Risk: Jesus risks temptation; God risks vulnerability and the grief to which it might lead; the disciples risk not coming through for Jesus the way he needs them to.
* Non-violent resistance and speaking to power—In all the gospels, Jesus rejects violence as a means to thwart his arrest. In Luke 22:51, Jesus declares, “No more of this!” and heals the servant’s ear.

Questions for Reflection:

* Why do you think Jesus wanted to spend time in Gethsemane? Do you have a personal “Gethsemane”?
* What are you risking these days (or this Holy Week) in your discipleship to Jesus?