

Expectations 2 – Watch and Pray

Prayer – What Do You Expect?

Mat. 26:36-46; Mark 14:26-42; Luke 22:39-46

We're in the Garden of Gethsemane in the middle of the night. Jesus wants to pray. He left eight disciples at one spot in the Garden, and three others are only a stone's throw away from him. He tells these three to, "Watch and pray, so that you will not enter into temptation. The Spirit is willing; just the flesh is weak." (Mat 26:41)

The word "watch" here is variously translated, "watch", "be alert", or "stay awake". The root word deals with sleep. There is a similar word used elsewhere; in fact, it's often translated the same way. But there's a subtle difference. The word used here deals with having been asleep, then waking up, and trying to gather your thoughts – it's the moment before we've had our first cup of coffee in the morning, or before we've had our shower. The other word indicates not going to sleep in the first place. But both are used to convey this idea of watching for something, or for someone. It implies standing guard, such as the steward of the house who watches for the return of his Master. In Mark 13:34-35 Jesus says, "It is like a man going on a journey, who left his house, gave authority to his servants, gave each one his work, and commanded the doorkeeper to watch. Therefore watch, since you don't know when the master of the house is coming back."

That's what's going on here. The three must watch so they can protect and wake the others. But first they must awake themselves. "Wake Up! The time for slumber is over. *Focus! What day is it? What time is it?*" We must know what time it is; whether it is a time for peace, or a time for war; a time for sowing, or a time for reaping; a time to work, or a time to rest. *What time is it?? What season is it??* What must be done NOW, THIS HOUR, THIS DAY? Jesus was always acutely aware of the time, never wasting a moment. He knew who he was, what he must do, and when he must be finished. Look at his example in the synagogue.

Luke 4:18-21 "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." And he rolled up the scroll and gave it back

to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him... “TODAY this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.”

That was Jesus’ ministry. But it’s ours too. We are sent by the Lord. It’s time to begin. We must WATCH and PRAY. We EXPECT something, or someone. And therefore we must wake from our slumber, prepared to do the work which each day requires of us. Our prayers are not a litany of requests for personal comfort – although we may certainly pray for the desires of our heart. They are not a Christmas list, filled with candy and toys. Our prayers are considered, thoughtful, and intentional – we pray about what is needed to fulfill our calling, about what is required of us, and about how we can be useful to God. Our prayers can be about material things, such as bibles, and people to help, and transportation to get to where we need to be. They can be about money – food, clothing, and shelter. These are not bad things in themselves. But neither are they ends in themselves.

We are stewards of the household of Christ, watching over his people, feeding them *what* they need, *when* they need it. We are attentive to their care, watching their growth, watching out for wolves, and watching how we walk. We strive to grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. And we cover all these things in prayer. If we are to be effectual as a church, if we are to be fruitful in our service to Christ, then we *must* keep watch over each other, and pray.

And so Jesus instructed his disciples, Peter in particular, to watch and to pray. Why? So that they might not enter into temptation. What temptation? What will tempt them? What is the snare? Specifically, what will keep them from knowing the day and time which God has appointed? “***This is the Day that the Lord has made.***” What has he made it for? What is to be accomplished – TODAY? Did they know? Do WE know? And that’s what we’re going to consider, today.

The text this morning is Mat 26:36-46, but we’re going to begin with v 30. I’ll try to put us in that time and place to consider what may be going on in their minds to distract them. It is Thursday, April 6, 30 AD, sometime after 5 p.m. It is cool and humid out. It is the eve of Christ’s crucifixion, and the disciples know it – but they refuse to acknowledge it, or to deal with it. Jesus has broken the bread, and passed the wine. He has washed their feet, and sent Judas on his way, *quickly*. He tells the

eleven who remain that he goes to prepare a place for them; he tells them that he is the Way, and the Truth, and the Life – and then he says to them, “Do not let your hearts be troubled.” Please open your bibles and follow along with me.

Matt 26:30 *And having sung hymns* – These were probably the Paschal hymns – or hymns of the Passover. These are Psalms 113-118, and Psalm 136 – they are called *The Great Hallel* – which means “praise.” Let’s recite just a few verses from Psalm 118 to capture the same mood, perhaps, that the disciples were in on this very night:

The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone. This is the LORD’s doing; it is marvelous in our eyes. This is the day that the LORD has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it... Blessed is he who comes in the name of the LORD! Recall that the crowd recited this as Jesus entered Jerusalem – Mat 21:9

The LORD is God, and he has made his light to shine upon us. Bind the Paschal Lamb { ‘the festal sacrifice’ } with cords, up to the horns of the altar! You are my God, and I will give thanks to you; you are my God; I will extol you.

Verse 30 ends with this: “They went out to the Mount of Olives.” If you look at a map of Jerusalem, the Mount of Olives will be found on the right. A major road runs south, down through the valley between the Temple Mount and the Mount of Olives. Alongside that road, just 2/10ths of a mile from the Golden Gate entrance is the Garden of Gethsemane where Jesus will pray later this night.

From the book of John we know that he and the disciples are on their way up the street from the Lower City; they probably passed the temple. He instructs them about the vine and the branches, and how to love one another as he has loved them; he warns them of the persecution to come, and of the necessity of his leaving. He promises to send them the Helper. And then he prays, perhaps right there in front of the Temple, in the open square, as they watch for his enemies who are eating and meeting in their rooms, just beyond the gate leading to the Temple.

The Temple was impressive in the eyes of men. Nicanor Gate, at the entrance to the Temple, which can be seen towering above it in the distance, gilded and shimmering, with massive columns and finished stones. In the walls of the temple, some stones are six feet by twenty-four feet, weighing about 65 tons. The foundation stones are three times that size. It's impressive by any standard, except God's. These are the stones Jesus said would be destroyed; not one would remain on another. Looking at them, you can imagine that the disciples might have thought it impossible. They couldn't wrap their minds around it, much less accept what is about to take place. They exit through the Golden Gate opposite the Temple, down the stairs, and then across the Kidron Valley, probably heading to the top of the Mount of Olives which overlooks the city.

At the top of the Mountain, looking down on the Temple, Jesus puts it all in perspective for his disciples. They undoubtedly recalled Psalm 113 which they just sang. It's part of *The Great Hallel* that I mentioned earlier: *Who is like the LORD our God, who is seated on high, who looks far down on the heavens and the earth?*

From here they would be able to see Antonia's Fortress in the distance where Christ will be tried. Calvary is just off to the left of the Fortress in the distance. They must know that, surely. Many others have been crucified there. Their hearts are heavy with the knowledge of what is about to take place, and how they may react in the moment. While they are here on the mountain top, Jesus prays: first for himself, and then for them, in their presence. You'll find that prayer in John chapter 17. He reveals his expectations for himself in his prayer: he expected to be glorified.

John 17:1-5 "Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you, ² since you have given him authority over all flesh, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him. ³ And this is eternal life, that they know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent. ⁴ I glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work that you gave me to do. And now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed." And what are his expectations for his disciples? He prays for the Church.

17:11-13 Holy Father, keep them in your name, which you have given me, that they may be one, even as we are one. While I was with them, I kept them in your name, which you have given me... **BUT NOW** I am coming to you, *and these things I speak in the world*, so that they may have my joy [abounding] in themselves.

17:15 I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one.

17:17-18 Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth. As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world.

17:24 Father, I would that they too, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory that you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world.

17:26 I made known to them your name, and I will continue to make it known, so that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I too in them.”

Here we pick up Matthew 26 again, in verse 31. I'll give you a slightly more literal translation, and a few verses from Luke and Mark:

³¹ Then Jesus said to them, “You will all be [scandalized] for me this night. {Some of you will have “offended” – it’s the same idea} For it is written, ‘I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered.’ {Zec 13:7}

³² [But after I am to be raised up, I will lead before you to Galilee.](#)”

³³ Peter answered him, “Even if all will be [scandalized] for you, I will never be [scandalized].” ³⁴ Jesus informed him, “Truly, I tell you that on this very night, before the rooster crows, you will deny me three times.” ³⁵ Peter said to him “Even if it were necessary to die with you, I would not deny you!” And all the disciples said the same. Luke adds this: **Lk 22:36-38** He said to them, “But now let the one who has a moneybag take it, and likewise a knapsack. And let the one who has no sword sell his cloak and buy one. For I tell you that this Scripture must be fulfilled in me: ‘And he was numbered with the transgressors.’ For what is written about me has its fulfillment.” And they said, “Look, Lord, here are two swords.” And he said to them, “Enough!” For they have brought the weapons of the world with them to fight a spiritual battle, rather than the weapons of the Kingdom. They are finished here on the Mount. Now they must go where Judas expects to find them, and where Jesus must be arrested by the Temple Guard: Gethsemane.

Down they go, following Christ, further and further into the valley of death, until they come to the Garden, and to peace, momentarily hidden from the threat...

36 ¶ Then Jesus arrived with them at a place called Gethsemane, and he said to his disciples, “Sit down here awhile; I am going over there, that I might pray.”

37 And taking with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, he began to be sorrowful and troubled.

38 Then he said to them, “My soul is very sorrowful, even to death; remain here, and watch with me.” {*He invites them to fellowship, and to share his burden*}

39 And going a little farther {⁴¹**about a stone’s throw, Luke says**} he fell on his face and prayed, saying, “My Father, if it is possible, let this cup {**or this hour, Mark says**} pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will.” {⁴³ **Luke then adds, And there appeared to him an angel from heaven, strengthening him.** ⁴⁴ **And being in agony he prayed more earnestly; and his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground.**}

40 And he came to the disciples and found them sleeping. And he said to Peter, “So, could you* not watch with me one hour? {**singular in Mark*}

41 Watch and pray so that you* may not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing; just the flesh is weak.”

42 Again, for the second time, he went away and prayed, “My Father, if this cannot pass unless I drink it {or as Mark puts it, **Remove this cup from me, yet**}, your will be done.”

43 And again he came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were heavy { Luke tells us they were heavy **“with sorrow; and he said to them, “Why are you sleeping? Rise and pray that you may not enter into temptation.”**{ Mark adds, **“and they did not know what to answer him”**}.

44 So, leaving them again, he went away and prayed for the third time, saying the same words again.

45 Then he came to the disciples and said to them, “Sleep and take your rest later. {or as Mark puts it, **“Are you still sleeping and taking your rest? Enough!**} See, the hour is at hand, and the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners.

46 Rise, let us be going; see, my betrayer is at hand.”

From everything we've looked at so far, it seems clear that Jesus was not asking them to watch his back, or protect him. Look at verse 38 again: "remain here, and watch with me." They are not being asked to watch FOR him, but WITH him. He has watched over them and prayed to fulfill his ministry, just as he asked them to do. He has been *demonstrating* what he expects of them. There is nothing left to do except go to the cross, which Peter continues to resist – as he cuts off the ear of the high priest's servant. Christ has prepared them for what must come afterward, but they are reluctant. He has equipped them for the battle to come, but they have not donned their proper armor. He has asked them to watch so they would know when to wake, but they have fallen asleep – unprepared when the time comes.

Do you remember the mother of the sons of Zebedee asking that her sons might sit at Christ's right and his left? **Mat 20:22-23** Jesus answered, "You don't know what you're asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I am to drink?" They said to him, "We are able." He said to them, "You *will* drink my cup..." Indeed, they will, but not right now. While he is in the world, he protects his sheep from these things. He is the light of the world. But when he leaves, we become the light of the world. ***Times change. Roles change. Duties change.*** We must *watch* and *pray* for that.

In Jn 4:34-38, after talking with the woman at the well, Jesus is asked if he has eaten. "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me and to finish His work," Jesus told them. "Don't you say, 'There are still four more months, then comes the harvest'? Listen *to what* I'm telling you: Open your eyes and look at the fields, for they are ready for harvest.³⁶ The reaper is already receiving pay and gathering fruit for eternal life – so the sower and reaper can rejoice together. For in this case the saying is true: 'One sows and another reaps.' I sent you to reap what you didn't labor for; others have labored, and you have benefited from their labor." {*In other words, those who came before did their work in their seasons. Now it is time for you to do yours. Watch and pray, so you recognize the time to sow and reap. Work while it is still day, for the night is coming when no man can work. Jn 9:4*}

Ok. That's enough about watching. In the Lord's Prayer, Christ taught us to pray, saying, "Lead us not into temptation." In Gethsemane, he taught us to pray to avoid *entering or falling* into temptation. Prayer somehow prevents our falling. But what are we to pray about? Should we pray to escape all temptations and trials; are we to

resist them when they come? John Gill’s commentary explains what it means not to be led or enter into temptation. He writes,

“That is, [do not be led] into the **power** of it, so as to be overcome by it, and sink under it; this is the sense in which the phrase is to be understood here. We are not taught to pray against temptations at all, ...for they are sometimes needful and useful; but that they may not have **power** over us, and destroy us.”

Let me repeat what I said at the top. Our prayers are to be considered, thoughtful, and intentional – *we are to pray about what is needed to fulfill our calling*. Paul’s letters are filled with such prayers. Take this example from Colossians 4:2-6:

*Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving. At the same time, pray also for us, that God may open to us a door for the word, to declare the mystery of Christ, on account of which I am in prison – that I may make it clear – which is how I **ought** to speak. Walk in wisdom toward outsiders, making the best use of the time. Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person.*

That leads us to how we should watch and pray for the Church. There are four key areas of prayer for the Church – We pray for the Kingdom which the Church serves; the Church where the saints serve; for the saints who comprise the Church; and for the purpose of it all, which is to glorify God. Here are the four areas:

1. **Watchful Prayer** – Pray for The Kingdom: what can we personally do to further the Kingdom as Christ’s servants? We do not know when Christ will return. Therefore, we must be diligent and prepared, like the virgins with their lamps, or the servants with their talents. Look for his hand at work in the world. Watch for his coming with great hope. Do the work he has assigned you with great diligence, so you will not be ashamed at his coming. Expect the Kingdom to spread, because God is sovereign over all things above and below. Exercise Christ’s power, love, and authority with great enthusiasm! Christ is Head over all, and in all, and through all. Therefore, pray for his appearing. Pray for his reign on earth. Pray that his Gospel is proclaimed. Pray for those who are persecuted for his name’s sake.

2. **Militant Prayer** – Pray for the Church: we are engaged in the greatest battle mankind will ever face, against the greatest foe mankind has ever known. We cannot engage the enemy unprotected and unarmed. As in Eph 3:18, we must put on the full armor of God – not to stand there and take hits; not to look impressive with our knowledge of doctrine and church activities. We don our armor **to pray**. And to that end, we must watch with perseverance, making supplication for all the saints. Therefore, prepare yourselves for battle! Pray for strength and endurance. Remember who fights for you, and through you, and in you! We are not like those who are without hope in the world (1Th 4:13). We are more than conquerors through Christ who loved us (Rom 8:37). We can do all things through Christ who strengthens us! (Phil 4:13) For God did not give us a spirit of fear, but of power and love and self-control. (2Tim 1:7)

Ephesians 6:12-18 ¹² For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. ¹³ Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm. ¹⁴ Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, ¹⁵ and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace. ¹⁶ In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; ¹⁷ and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, ¹⁸ praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. **To that end** keep alert – stay awake – **watch** with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints,

1Th 5:5-8 For you are all children of light, children of the day. We are not of the night or of the darkness. So then let us not sleep, as others do, but let us keep awake and be sober. For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, are drunk at night. But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation.

3. **Comforting Prayer** – Pray for yourselves, crying out in the watches of the night, wakened from your slumber by Satan’s afflictions of fear, doubt, and anxiety. He is your enemy, the accuser of the saints. But in that moment, **remember God and**

what he has done for you. Remember who it is that you serve: the God of Creation, the God of Hope, the God of Mercy, the God of Forgiveness, the God of Second Chances, the God of power and might. He is our Strong Fortress and our High Tower. Therefore, be hopeful and expectant, praying for God's deliverance in your hour of need. Listen to David crying out in the night for his God, and our God, the One who is always there, the Protector of his people:

Psalm 143:1-12 Hear my prayer, O LORD; give ear to my pleas for mercy! In your faithfulness answer me, in your righteousness! ² Do not enter into judgment with your servant, for no one living is righteous before you. ³ For the enemy has pursued my soul; he has crushed my life to the ground; he has made me sit in darkness like those long dead. ⁴ Therefore my spirit faints within me; my heart within me is appalled. ⁵ I remember the days of old; I meditate on all that you have done; I ponder the work of your hands. ⁶ I stretch out my hands to you; my soul thirsts for you like a parched land. *Selah* ⁷ Answer me quickly, O LORD! My spirit fails! Do not hide your face from me, lest I be like those who go down to the pit. ⁸ Let me hear in the morning of your steadfast love, for in you I trust. Make me know the way I should go, for to you I lift up my soul. ⁹ Deliver me from my enemies, O LORD! I have fled to you for refuge! ¹⁰ Teach me to do your will, for you are my God! Let your good Spirit lead me on level ground! ¹¹ For your name's sake, O LORD, preserve my life! In your righteousness bring my soul out of trouble! ¹² And in your steadfast love you will cut off my enemies, and you will destroy all the adversaries of my soul, for I am your servant.

4. ***Worshipful Prayer*** – Pray for the Glory of God. This is why we watch and pray. This is why we were born. This is why we exist. This is why we were called: **For His Glory!** Ps 141:2 Let my prayer be counted as incense before you, and the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice! Rev 5:8 And when he had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each holding a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. Therefore, pray with thanksgiving. Rev 3:3 Remember, then, what you received and heard. *Guard* it, and repent. ***If you will not wake up***, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what hour I will come against you.

Paul encourages us with this: “But you are not in darkness, brothers, for that day to surprise you like a thief. For you are all children of light, children of the day... For God has not destined us for wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us so that whether we are awake or asleep we might live with him. Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing... Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.” (1Th 5:4-5; 9-11;16-18)

And so, as careful watchmen who have been placed on the walls, we cry out at the approach of our King. We lift up our voices in praise and thanksgiving to our Mighty God:

Lift up your heads, O you gates! And be lifted up, O ancient doors, that the King of glory may come in. Who is this King of glory? The LORD, strong and mighty, the LORD, mighty in battle! Lift up your heads, O you gates! And lift them up, O ancient doors, that the King of glory may come in. Who is this King of glory? The LORD of hosts, HE is the King of glory! (Ps 24:7-10)

Amen.