

LUKE—WEEK 28

GETHSEMANE



F. Michael Slay
A DEEP Study

The Fellowship of Ailbe

*The Cover Picture is “Jesus Captured” by Anthony Van Dyck (1599–1641)
on display at Albertina, Vienna*

Things are happening quickly now. Jesus issues a final warning to His disciples. He prays, “Let this cup pass,” is betrayed and arrested, and heals the ear of the servant of the high priest. Then Peter denies Him three times, and a quick trial before the council determines that He’s claiming to be the son of God.

He’s obviously guilty.

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We are a spiritual fellowship patterned after the Celtic Revival. Our goal is to promote revival, renewal, and awakening, following the teaching of Scripture and the example and heritage of our forebears in the faith.

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Thank you.

Luke 22:35–71 — Gethsemane
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1 Luke 22:35–38 (ESV)

And he said to them, “When I sent you out with no moneybag or knapsack or sandals, did you lack anything?” They said, “Nothing.” 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, “It is enough.”

It’s not about the swords.

Jesus says, *“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.”* He’s telling them that the last time was a cakewalk compared to what’s coming. Forewarned is forearmed.

Instead, they start obsessing on accumulating moneybags, knapsacks and swords—especially swords. *And they said, “Look, Lord, here are two swords.”* Sigh.

They can’t see the forest for the trees. In a few hours, Peter will actually use one of those swords and Jesus will have to undo the damage. For now, He just says, *“It is enough.”* If His earlier statement had been meant to be taken literally, they’d need eleven swords.

Note also that the prophecy, *“And he was numbered with the transgressors.”* is from Isaiah 53:12. It’s worthwhile to read the whole verse, or better yet, the whole passage (Isaiah 52:7–53:12).

*Therefore I will divide him a portion with the many,
and he shall divide the spoil with the strong,
because he poured out his soul to death
and was numbered with the transgressors;
yet he bore the sin of many,
and makes intercession for the transgressors. — Isaiah 53:12 (ESV)*

It’s powerfully messianic.

This passage sounds like it’s about the physical needs of a modern missionary. Yet what they need most—what they ask for most—is prayer.

Lift up their financial needs (moneybag), their physical needs (knapsack), and their safety (sword). If you aren’t aware of all your church’s missionaries or don’t have their contact information, make a point of getting that.

They’d love to hear from you.

Email is good.

2 Luke 22:39–46 (ESV)

And he came out and went, as was his custom, to the Mount of Olives, and the disciples followed him. And when he came to the place, he said to them, “Pray that you may not enter into temptation.” And he withdrew from them about a stone's throw, and knelt down and prayed, saying, “Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but yours, be done.” And there appeared to him an angel from heaven, strengthening him. And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly; and his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground. And when he rose from prayer, he came to the disciples and found them sleeping for sorrow, and he said to them, “Why are you sleeping? Rise and pray that you may not enter into temptation.”

Two things in this passage show striking agreement with modern medicine.

First, sweating blood is very rare but quite real. Clinically, it's known as “hematidrosis”.

<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/8982961>

<http://bloodjournal.hematologylibrary.org/content/121/9/1493.full>

But there's a twist to this that makes the passage especially powerful. Hematidrosis isn't triggered by tension; it's triggered by relief from the tension. Notice the timing. The blood broke through from Jesus' capillaries to His sweat glands right after *there appeared to him an angel from heaven, strengthening him*.

There were just a few dozen known cases of hematidrosis in the twentieth century. The population in the first century was a fraction of what it is now. Even as a physician, Luke couldn't have been familiar with it, and even if he was, he wouldn't have known the microscopic mechanism involved. Yet, he describes the result precisely.

Secondly, *he came to the disciples and found them sleeping for sorrow*. Sleeping for sorrow? The New King James says, “*sleeping from sorrow*.” Drowsiness is a classic symptom of depression.

http://www.helpguide.org/mental/depression_signs_types_diagnosis_treatment.htm

After the last supper, there's no way the disciples were still clueless about what was coming. Their drowsiness is described here as from the emotional weight they were now bearing.

Do you know someone whose emotional weight has gotten out of hand? Everyone has struggles, but sometimes those struggles seem to take over. If you have a friend who's losing that battle, lift them up today. Ask the Lord to comfort them and to give them His peace.

And give them a call while you're at it. Note: this may not be someone with the greatest struggles. Big struggles are often reserved for big saints; they may be handling it well. Pray for them, of course, but be on the lookout for someone less obvious who could use a lift.

Ask God to open your eyes to the need.

3 Luke 22:47–53 (ESV)

While he was still speaking, there came a crowd, and the man called Judas, one of the twelve, was leading them. He drew near to Jesus to kiss him, but Jesus said to him, “Judas, would you betray the Son of Man with a kiss?” And when those who were around him saw what would follow, they said, “Lord, shall we strike with the sword?” And one of them struck the servant of the high priest and cut off his right ear. But Jesus said, “No more of this!” And he touched his ear and healed him. Then Jesus said to the chief priests and officers of the temple and elders, who had come out against him, “Have you come out as against a robber, with swords and clubs? When I was with you day after day in the temple, you did not lay hands on me. But this is your hour, and the power of darkness.”

It’s hard for us to relate to how dark it was at night back then. Without electric lights, they only had the moon and stars—when it wasn’t cloudy. Even significant oil-based lighting was not available. Whale oil would become abundant centuries later with improved harpoon designs, but for now, oil is precious.

So, it would have been somewhere between very dark and pitch black. This explains why they needed Judas to identify Jesus. They’d seen Him plenty of times, but that was in the daylight. Now they can hardly see anything.

But the real key to Judas’s role is that he knew where to find Jesus. This was not by chance. Jesus either made this easily predictable or explicitly told Judas where He would be. This adds a puzzling element to the whole event—especially for Judas.

Put yourself in Judas’s shoes for a moment and try to imagine his thinking. Jesus makes it perfectly clear to Judas that He knows what he’s up to, plus He actually helps him do it. Obviously, Judas isn’t on board with the whole “Jesus is the Messiah” bit, much less that He is God incarnate.

But then, as this plays out, he watches Jesus’s predictions come true in precise detail, while his own expectations are never met. Every event challenges his thinking.

This will get in his face so bad that it kills him.

When something is true, refusing to believe it can be exhausting. Remember that when presenting the gospel. One way to lead someone to Christ is to lead them towards Christ.

Set them up to be confronted by the truth of the gospel by planting seeds that will sprout later. Confirmation will happen in God’s time; better for it to come from something they see or read on their own than in a pitch.

The best truth to work with isn’t any kind of doctrine or plan of salvation; it’s the fact that Jesus rose from the dead. Start with an undeniable historical fact such as, “Nero was a real person who ruled Rome from 54 to 68 AD.” This sets up challenging questions.

Did he actually torture Christians? Did they actually refuse to recant? Why?

4 Luke 22:54–62 (ESV)

Then they seized him and led him away, bringing him into the high priest's house, and Peter was following at a distance. And when they had kindled a fire in the middle of the courtyard and sat down together, Peter sat down among them. Then a servant girl, seeing him as he sat in the light and looking closely at him, said, "This man also was with him." But he denied it, saying, "Woman, I do not know him." And a little later someone else saw him and said, "You also are one of them." But Peter said, "Man, I am not." And after an interval of about an hour still another insisted, saying, "Certainly this man also was with him, for he too is a Galilean." But Peter said, "Man, I do not know what you are talking about." And immediately, while he was still speaking, the rooster crowed. And the Lord turned and looked at Peter. And Peter remembered the saying of the Lord, how he had said to him, "Before the rooster crows today, you will deny me three times." And he went out and wept bitterly.

All the other disciples skedaddled when the cops showed up, but *Peter was following at a distance*. He might have run too, but Jesus had challenged him to fulfill his claim, "*Lord, I am ready to go with You, both to prison and to death.*"

Of course, the reason he's *following at a distance*, is that he doesn't want to be identified. He wants to see what's going on, but he didn't want to be part of what's going on. Now he's in a courtyard with a lot of people and someone builds a campfire. Peter makes the tactical error of sitting near the fire. It's no longer pitch black where he is.

Peter's face hasn't exactly been on a wanted poster, but a lot of people have seen him because they've been following Jesus. In the light of the fire, a few folks recognize him. His plan to just blend in and keep an eye on things unravels.

But notice exactly what Peter does wrong here. Yes, there's a failure of courage, but at the detailed level, Peter's mistake is to cling to his plan. This is **the** classic Christian failing, one we've all experienced.

While it's always wise to make a plan, we often think too much of them—and miss the Lord's "clues."

"No plan survives first contact with the enemy." — Helmuth von Moltke the Elder

If Peter had just had the presence of mind to think about what was going on all around him, he would have recognized the spiritual tests involved and reacted accordingly.

Unfortunately, the urgency of responding to the accusations left him no time for introspection.

One of the great challenges we face is to discern God's will and to make our plans conform. Thus, the most important thing we can do with prayer is to draw closer to God—to seek His face.

We need to focus on our personal relationship with the Lord. Ask Him to reveal Himself and His will to you. Ask God to speak—and commit yourself to listening.

Note: this is figurative; God "speaks" in many ways.

5 Luke 22:63–71 (ESV)

Now the men who were holding Jesus in custody were mocking him as they beat him. They also blindfolded him and kept asking him, “Prophecy! Who is it that struck you?” And they said many other things against him, blaspheming him.

When day came, the assembly of the elders of the people gathered together, both chief priests and scribes. And they led him away to their council, and they said, “If you are the Christ, tell us.” But he said to them, “If I tell you, you will not believe, and if I ask you, you will not answer. But from now on the Son of Man shall be seated at the right hand of the power of God.” So they all said, “Are you the Son of God, then?” And he said to them, “You say that I am.” Then they said, “What further testimony do we need? We have heard it ourselves from his own lips.”

This conversation between Jesus and the council sounds like they’re speaking in code. The first statement from the council seems reasonable enough. *“If you are the Christ, tell us.”* But Jesus’s reply starts out with a sharp non-answer. *“If I tell you, you will not believe, and if I ask you, you will not answer.”*

He’s right; if He told them the truth, they wouldn’t believe Him. They wouldn’t even understand Him. Or He could try asking them (quizzing them about what the scriptures say) and thus prove He’s the Christ.

Nah. They’d anticipate where He’s heading and not cooperate.

Next Jesus blurts out something even more cryptic. *“But from now on the Son of Man shall be seated at the right hand of the power of God.”* What’s that about? It’s in the third person; is Jesus talking about Himself?

Yes, but it’s complicated. No matter; the council understands perfectly. So, they ask Him to confirm the implications of what He just said. *“Are you the Son of God, then?”*

Again, Jesus says something that doesn’t seem to make sense. *“You say that I am.”* This is a colloquialism similar to, “You said it.” Again, the council understands just fine. *“What further testimony do we need? We have heard it ourselves from his own lips.”*

Guilty!

We cannot emulate Jesus’s incredible disinterest in self-preservation. He’s actually trying to get crucified.

But we can at least not make self-preservation an absolute. This has been the hallmark of great Christians throughout the centuries. From Peter, to Paul, to Joan of Arc, to Martin Luther King Jr., great saints have consistently demonstrated that they value truth above life.

We should exude confidence when we talk about the gospel. Our society pressures us to cower from sharing our faith. This isn’t about a single upcoming conversation; it’s about a change in attitude.

Ask the Lord to give you the confidence that comes from knowing something and knowing that it’s true.

Questions for reflection or discussion

1. Do you know any missionaries who are struggling?
2. How do you cheer someone up?
3. How do you keep a discussion with a non-believer from turning into an argument?
4. Have you ever been slow to recognize (or respond to) a door being closed by God?
5. Why do we hesitate to talk about Christ to non-believers?