

First, I want to thank YOU for participating in our Prayer Vigil. I've tried to design a program for our Youth & Families here at Grace Covenant that will reach you no matter where you are in your walk with Christ. That's why we have fun things like THE Great Pumpkin Chase which really has nothing specifically religious about it, to serious, deep, and Spiritual things like our trips to Give Kids the World and UP. This morning it's time for the serious, Spiritual side of the program. No matter how old you are, I'm sure you've been taught how important it is in everyone's journey with Christ to find some quiet time alone with Christ, to be in His presence, to talk, and to listen. Take *YOUR* time during this next 15-30 minutes. This isn't a timed thing so don't rush through it. Really let the connection between you and Christ be your focus for your time. When you're asked to pray, *REALLY* pray, pray with passion. It truly is rare in our society today that we can spend significant, uninterrupted time with Christ because of our busy lives, even during our recent "stay-at-home" policy. So take advantage of this while you can. You can print out a copy for everyone in your family as this may be the easiest way to really give yourself to this. But you can share a copy, it's just hard to get your home quiet if some are participating while others are not. Now, take a few **minutes** to be alone and in silence, and observe what's around you before continuing.

We have a huge stained-glass window on the west side of our Sanctuary. If you can remember, do you think the scene depicted in the window is Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane (*pronounced* geth-SIM-ma-nee)? If you can't remember, that's OK, but I bet you'll look at this window differently the next time you're in church. Has the lighting where you are changed since you started this Prayer Vigil? The custom of spending an hour with Jesus in prayer came from the desire of devout souls to say "yes" to the question that Jesus asked His disciples in Gethsemane.

Read this, it's from **Matthew 26:36-46**. "Jesus went with His disciples to a place called Gethsemane. When they got there, He told them, 'Sit here while I go over there and pray.' Jesus took along Peter and the two brothers, James and John. He was very sad and troubled, and He said to them, 'I'm so sad that I feel as if I'm dying. Stay here and keep awake with Me.' Jesus walked on a little way. Then He knelt with His face to the ground and prayed, 'My Father, if it's possible, don't make Me suffer by having Me drink from this cup. But do what You want, and not what I want.' He came back and found His disciples sleeping. So He said to Peter, 'Can't any of you stay awake with Me for just one hour? Stay awake and pray that you won't be tested. You want to do what is right, but you are weak.' Jesus went to pray and said, 'My Father, if there is no other way, and I must suffer, I will still do what You want.' Jesus came back and found

them sleeping again. They simply couldn't keep their eyes open. He left them and prayed the same prayer once more. Finally, Jesus returned to His disciples and said, 'Are you still sleeping and resting? The time has come for the Son of Man to be handed over to sinners. Get up! Let's go. The one who will betray me is already here.'"

Here is Jesus, the waiting sacrifice on the altar. Jesus has been your friend since He called you to follow Him. For the disciples, this was one *crazy* week! Put yourself in their place. At first you knew very little about this Man who called you out. As a disciple, during your time together, you have come to understand HE is the Messiah, you have been told about it since you were old enough to understand what was going on in the world. Through Him as a disciple, you have questioned your beliefs, made new friends, seen miracles, and have been both equally accepted, and hated by the people for believing in this Man. As a disciple, you have been separated from everything you have known except from God and this Man. You and the other disciples began this week (which we now call "Palm Sunday") by obtaining a donkey for Jesus to ride into Jerusalem where people gathered to watch Him ride in to the cries of "Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!" On Monday, Jesus enters the Temple courts and cleansed the temple of moneychangers' tables and driving out the animals for sacrifice. Tuesday, Jesus is confronted by the religious authorities who question His authority to do what He has done. It is at this time that Jesus predicts the destruction of the Temple and describes the end of times. Wednesday, Jesus is anointed with costly perfume, which you and the other disciples criticize the woman because the perfume could have been sold and the profit used for other things. It also the night that Judas deserts you to make his bargain with the high priests. Yesterday on Thursday (which we now call "Maundy Thursday"), Jesus invited you and the other disciples to dinner and instead of taking the seat of honor, He takes the place of a servant and washes your feet. Then just as you settled down for dinner, He announced His death and betrayal at the hand of one of your friends. And instead of trying to flee from His fate, He went to the Mount of Olives. He has asked you to come with Him and watch out while He prays. Did you watch?

You may be able to relate to how Peter, James, and John felt. You may be still half-asleep. The disciples had to have been tired from the previous day's activities as well. And like the disciples, you were asked to get up, pray, and to keep watch, instead of sleeping. How soothing, quiet, peaceful, dark, and tranquil the garden must have been. How quiet and tranquil is your bed right now? Take a few minutes, close your eyes, and listen. **REALLY** concentrate on your surroundings. Then open your eyes and continue with this devotion.

Again, imagine Jesus in the garden. In the moonlight, you saw Him in agony because He's starting to take on my sins, your sins, sins made by your friends, your parents' sins, all the sins of the world. You know that sin upsets God's plan for our peace and happiness. It hurts the innocent as well as the guilty. So now, let's turn your energy towards others and silently pray this prayer, *"I pray for the world and the peoples of the world. I pray for this country, its officials, and its people. I pray for ALL Christians throughout the world. I pray for my church and its congregation. I pray for those near to me. As much as it hurts and is difficult, I pray for my enemies and those I just don't like. And I pray for those who have died."*

Read this, its **Psalm 139: 1- 16**. "O Lord, You have searched me and You know me; You know when I sit and when I rise; You perceive my thoughts from afar; You discern my going out and my lying down; Before a word is on my tongue You know it completely, O Lord. You hem me in-behind and before; You have laid Your hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, too lofty for me to attain. Where can I go from Your Spirit? Where can I flee from Your presence? If I go up to the heaven, You are there; if I make my bed in the depths, You are there. If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea, even there Your hand will guide me; Your right hand will hold me fast. If I say, 'Surely the darkness will hide me and the light become night around me,' even the darkness will not be dark to You; the night will shine like the day, for the darkness is as light to You. For You created my inmost being; You knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise You because I fearfully and wonderfully made; Your works are wonderful, I know that full well. My frame was not hidden from You when I was made in the secret place. When I was woven together in the depths of the earth, Your eyes saw my unformed body. All the days ordained for me were written in Your book before one of them came to be."

Jesus trusted in God because He knew that God knows everything, everything about us and our world. God has a plan for all of us. Jesus trusted in that.

Can you trust in that?

Have you given your life to God?

And if you have, do you fully give yourself over to His will?

If you haven't, what is keeping you from doing so?

Your time for this Good Friday Prayer Vigil is almost over. You have spent around 10 minutes with Jesus, maybe loving and adoring Him, maybe asking for forgiveness, maybe asking Him questions on your heart. Before your time in here is up, reflect on what particular thing in your life is going to be different because you've been in the Garden with Jesus.

Answer this question, just where are you going to act different with your particular circumstances in the world?

In our culture, people make New Years resolutions, something they want to change about themselves. Losing weight is the most common one. Why not make one special, *very definite* resolution about your life with Jesus, for Jesus, before you end this Vigil?

In just a short time, you'll be back in the "real" world. The world you left when you came to your quiet place will be the same as before, and especially in a few weeks when we go back to school or work. You'll have the same problems, the same circumstances in which you live. It's my hope that despite your problems and circumstances, YOU are not the same. For YOU have been with Jesus, YOU have placed your problems at His feet in the Garden. I pray that you go back into the world with a new strength, a new power, because Jesus now goes into the world with YOU, in YOUR heart.

Read and think on this prayer of self-dedication

Almighty and eternal God, so bring our hearts to You, so guide our minds, so fill our imaginations, so control our wills, that every part of us is all Yours, totally dedicated unto You, and then use us, we pray everlasting God, to do Your will, and always to Your glory and the welfare of Your people; through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Please be reverent and observe silence as other family members may be are using this time to draw closer to Christ. Thanks, and God bless YOU!