

MOUNT OLIVET

THE GOD WHO IS NEAR

LUKE 22:39-44

More often than not, when we think about mountaintop moments or experiences, we think positive thoughts. We don't think about tough times and trials that we had to go through. We consider the down times the valleys. Those dark and lonely times though, can bring us to a fuller understanding of God and richer experiences with Him.

When we think about mountain experiences in the Bible, you probably didn't think about the Garden of Gethsemane. But here it is. Jesus had just finished celebrating Passover and sharing the Lord's Supper with His disciples. After they had sung a hymn, Jesus led them across the Kidron Valley. They made their way to a mountain called Olivet or as we've come to call it, the Mount of Olives.

Jesus knew He was about to be betrayed, arrested by the authorities and put to death in just a few short hours. And yet He still chose to go to the place where His journey to the cross would begin. He chose Gethsemane, a garden on a mountain, to spend time in prayer with His disciples.

The Bible says that it was His custom to go there and pray. Jesus had a habit of using the Garden on the mountain, to get alone with God.

This trip was different. Jesus knew what awaited him. He was feeling the burden of the cross. He was aware that the judgment of sin would be on his shoulders and he would have to drink the bitter cup of man's sins.

The battle was intense. Jesus prayed for a way out. "Is there not some other way? Does it have to be the cross? If it be possible, let this cup pass from me."

This picture of Jesus suffering in the Garden of Gethsemane shatters the idea that those who love God and walk with Him will never endure heartache.

In Scripture, Christian suffering is not the exception but the norm. Jesus didn't pull any punches when it came to this truth.

John 16:33 These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.

2 Tim 3:12 Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.

Jesus never promised His followers easy and comfortable lives. What He did promise is that we would not be forsaken or forgotten.

Yes, we will all suffer, but we must not allow our suffering to cause us to lose sight of God's promises and the fact that He is near. The Bible says that "The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit. Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the Lord delivereth him out of them all.