

“We will be faithful! Will we not?”

April 2010

Hymn “When the Son of God was dying” VU 153

Scripture *Mark 14:27-40, 50 (Contemporary English Version)*

Jesus said to his disciples, “All of you will reject me, as the Scriptures say, ‘I will strike down the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered.’ But after I am raised to life, I will go ahead of you to Galilee.”

Peter spoke up, “Even if all the others reject you, I never will.” Jesus replied, “Before a rooster crows twice, you will say three times that you don’t know me.” But Peter was so sure of himself that he said, “Even if I have to die with you, I will never say that I don’t know you!” All the others said the same thing.

Jesus went with his disciples to a place called Gethsemane, and he told them, “Sit here while I pray.” Jesus took along Peter, James and John. He was sad and troubled and told them, “I am so sad that I feel as if I am dying. Stay here and keep awake with me.”

Jesus walked on a little way. Then he knelt down on the ground and prayed, “Father if it is possible, don’t let this happen to me! Father, you can do anything. Don’t make me suffer by having me drink from this cup. But do what you want, and not what I want.”

When Jesus came back and found the disciples sleeping, he said to Simon Peter, “Are you asleep? Can’t you stay awake for just one hour? Stay awake and hope that you won’t be tested. You want to do what is right but you are weak.”

Jesus went back and prayed the same prayer. But when he returned to the disciples, he found them sleeping again. They simply could not keep their eyes open, and they did not know what to say.

All of Jesus’ disciples ran off and left him.

Prayer

An upper room did our Lord prepare for those He loved until the end;
And his disciples still gather there to celebrate their risen Friend.
A lasting gift Jesus gave his own: to share in bread, his loving cup.
Whatever burdens may bow us down, He by his cross shall lift us up.
And after supper He washed their feet, for service, too, is sacrament.
In Christ our joy shall be complete: sent out to serve, as He was sent.

Lesson I began to prepare this on Maundy Thursday prior to our celebration of the Seder meal, similar to Jesus’ last supper with his disciples. I could not help thinking of how the twelve must have felt. They had followed this ‘man’ Jesus for many months and now he was telling them they would soon desert him. “We’ll show you how faithful we can be!” they thought to themselves, but they couldn’t even stay awake for one hour while Jesus prayed.

Following the Seder meal, we hold a prayer vigil with one-hour shifts from 9 p.m. to 9 a.m. on Friday morning with one or more people praying in the sanctuary and one AOTS man at the door of the church to welcome the next persons. Regardless of your hour, it’s a good time for reflection and contemplation.

The disciples temporarily gave up hope

In the April, 2010 issue of 'the Observer', Keith Howard notes how 'folks ride a spiritual teeter-totter between despair and hope, wondering if they have it within them to cope with, much less embrace, what lies ahead.'

And he goes on, 'yet, from my vantage point, the church has been blessed with a remarkable spiritual resource – women, of a certain age, as they say.'

But, what about the men of the church? Do we drop off when times are tough? We're in tough just now – our numbers are dropping; our clubs are folding; it's almost impossible to find younger people who will commit to continuing leadership.

It's not that Jesus has "deserted" us.

Just because our neighbours, the men of nearby churches, are not active, it is no reason why we who are devoted to AOTS and to men's ministries should fall asleep. From what we read, men are seeking to find spiritual meaning in their lives. The call to help to deepen the spiritual life of our neighbour is strong. We're just not sure what we should do. Let us prayerfully prepare to eagerly and joyfully go out "as one that serves".

Discussion When things aren't going the way you would like, do you react with outrage or with action? Is there room in your reaction to struggle for God's justice and for the benefit of your neighbour? Where is your faith in your response?

Prayer Let us pray – God, grant me serenity through all life's trials. Bless me with honesty in my relationship with you, with courage in my actions, and with a faith that allows me to believe without yet seeing. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.