

**March 4, 2012**  
**"24 Hours that Changed the World" Series**  
**2<sup>nd</sup> Lent; *Mark 14:32-52***  
**preached by Kelly D. Turney**  
**at ELUMC**

"The last supper likely concluded sometime just before midnight. Jesus had broken bread with the disciples, washed their feet, predicted Judas' betrayal, and taught the disciples the final lessons he wanted them to learn before his death."<sup>1</sup> The last thing they would've done is sing the Hallel, the blessing song quoting the Psalms. It's an invitation to trust in God even in the face of enemies that would destroy. With the singing of these words, Jesus prepared himself and his disciples for what lay ahead, and they headed out into the night. The journey to the Mount of Olives, took them out of the walled city, along a dusty roadway down into the Kidron valley past the tombs of priests, prophets and ordinary people buried facing Jerusalem and into the ancient olive tree grove known as the Garden of Gethsemane. The journey was made in the dark, and I can't help wondering if it was overcast, or if they could see the stars over the rocky hillsides where shepherds kept their flocks. Jesus would've realized the significance of traveling through the Kidron valley, the place the prophet Joel had said would be where last judgment happened—the site where all the nations of the earth would one day be gathered to be judged.<sup>2</sup>

It was very late, or rather very early, but Jesus apparently needed to travel to the place he had been visiting every day since the week began. He wanted to pray in the shadow of olive trees, some maybe even 1,000 years old--the picture of the tree on the front of the bulletin is estimated to be 3,000 years old meaning it would've been ancient even in Jesus' time. He choose to be among a grove that produced the fruit that was so central to their lives—not only the olives themselves but the oil pressed from them.

The scripture says Jesus was distressed and agitated, maybe even fearful. A couple of weeks ago we talked about what helped us get beyond our fear when we were children—a nightlight, the presence and reassurance of those we love, maybe even the telling of a story, going to a special place we felt safe (maybe our parents' bed or a treehouse), maybe even the singing of special song that soothed our soul. For some a physical response was required: jumping on the bed, a tantrum perhaps, sipping hot cocoa. It's not so different as adults. On this evening Jesus and the disciples had the company of one another, they told their favorite story of liberation through the Seder, complete with singing and comfort foods, and then they walked off the wine and the troubling talk of betrayal, by seeking solace in a natural place that had spiritual significance for them, they took a moonlight hike (at camp, we still take such hikes without flashlights). People talk about Muir Woods in these terms with its redwoods that are the tallest living things, and the oldest ones at least 1200 years old. I can understand why Jesus might've wanted the witness of ancient trees in his time of spiritual agony.

He must've wondered on that night, if he had put in the necessary time with his followers to equip them to be on their own. He didn't have the benefit of 10,000 hours

with the disciples (see: "It takes time" video on social science research that says you can become proficient at those things you put the disciplined time into, specifically 10,000 hours of practice, at [www.workofthepeople.com](http://www.workofthepeople.com) )– more like 6,240–a rough estimate, but I had my mathematician spouse check my figures. Did Jesus wonder if the table sacrament he had initiated just a few hours before would speak to our recurring need to reconcile with God and one another? Did he question whether the washing of his disciples' feet was a sufficient example of servanthood for future generations? Did he wonder if how he had spent his time the last three years–welcoming the outcast, loving the unlovable, proclaiming the realm of God where justice and peace reign, if his actions would be enough? Did he fear the presence of the Holy Spirit would not be sufficient to inspire and empower the disciples to continue without him? Did he doubt whether this last example of retreating to a place of silence and prayer would speak to our need for the same? Surely, he feared he was leaving his work unfinished, in the hands of imperfect disciples.

But that's the good news. Even in those hands, the good news continued through the ages. Through them, he initiated the way of hope in God's realm on earth. And now with the benefit of the social science research Diana Butler Bass spoke of in the video "It takes time," we too know we can become an imitator of Jesus if we're willing to put the time in. It's not a quick fix, but a choice to live a disciplined life, which, this season of Lent invites us to. We too can take on the central activities of Jesus. We can regularly pray and worship and study scripture with others. And if we took just 15 minutes a day for such activities and one hour on Sundays, we might be proficient in living a spiritual life in just under 70 years. Of course many of you spend more time than that in daily devotional reading, or you participate in Bible studies, you go on retreats, so you may get there much quicker but you'll have to do your own math to determine how long it takes you to get to 10,000 hours.

Jesus also spent a great deal of time caring for the sick, loving enemies, and including the outcasts.... and we have several members who have been practicing those behaviors. If you serve every Wednesday at the Pioneer Valley Free Health Service, and add that to the above, you could become a better servant disciple in just over 40 years.

It doesn't take a miracle to become more like Jesus. It just takes time, it takes practice, it takes some disciplined choices like the ones you take on once a year in Lent.... which are meant to transform not only the 40 days leading up to Easter but your living beyond. How will you spend your time?

Each time we gather around the table of Christ, our time is redeemed and our choices renewed.

---

<sup>1</sup>. Adam Hamilton *24 Hours that Changed the World: 40 Days of Reflection* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2009) 41.

<sup>2</sup>. Adam Hamilton *24 Hours that Changed the World* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2009) 33.