



Kirknewton and East Calder Parish Church of Scotland

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Sermon: Rev Dr Jonanda Groenewald

Reading: Mark 14: 32-42

Background:

The Garden of Gethsemane was at the west, or the city side, of the Mount of Olives, just outside of Jerusalem. Gethsemane literally means “press of oils”. It was a gardenlike enclosure in an olive orchard near the foot of the Mount of Olives. This secluded spot was one of Jesus’ and his disciples’ favourite meeting places, which explains why it was easy for Judas to find them there.

Jesus went there to pray. To earnestly ask God if he could be spared the suffering that lay ahead of him. He calls God *Abba*, a word young Jewish children used to intimately address their fathers. Just like a young boy who trusts his dad with his life, Jesus knows that God is able to change his fate, but he also knows that he doesn’t have to.

He asked this 3 times, which in his culture meant that he asked it as many times as he could. If God wanted to grant his wish, he would do it after the 3rd time. But after asking this 3 times, Jesus gets up and accepts his fate – he knows that God wants to use him, he knows that as God’s son, he needs to drink from the same cup of suffering that God just did, he can’t just sent it along to the next person...

Because nobody else could do what he was about to do – the 3 disciples he took along with him to pray couldn’t even stay awake, let alone *die* to save other people...

Amen

Reflection:

Hope. What is hope, exactly? I googled it, and believe it or not – there are *pages* full of definitions for hope! It can be used as a verb – if you

hope something will happen it means that you want it to happen; or it can be used as a noun – if you *have hope* it means that you have a feeling of expectation that something good may happen.

But the best explanation I found was in somebody called Delta's blog. I want to read you some of it:

Today I saw a grown woman cry. I watched her fight the tears and I watched her lose the fight. I watched her battle to contain her emotions and I watched her fail.

I watched as a tide of feelings overwhelmed her and all she could do was cry. And all I could do was watch.

She leaned against a 40-foot container; ignoring the snow, the cold and the people who had spent the greater part of the day loading boxes into the container...

Somewhere, someday...soon, within the next three months – the contents of that container will find their way into the eager hands of children in Zimbabwe's obscure town of Chivhu sent by one woman from the State of New York, in the city of Albany in the United States of America.

The crying woman is known as Teresa Dangwa; I do not know her age and until 72 hours ago, I had never heard of her.

I know she grew up in Tshabalala, I know she comes from Chivhu and that although she has travelled thousands of miles from her home town – her heart never left.

I know that she is a rare breed of Zimbabwe's emerging philanthropic women – with the desire and commitment to sow back into the land where her roots are imbedded and today she sent a 40-foot container of books, hospital beds, toys, clothes, cutlery, bedding and furniture to Africa.

Over a thousand boxes, over a dozen pair of hands that worked over a period of 6 hours in the ice, cold and snow to load these boxes; but they packed something more than boxes – Teresa shipped hope to Africa.

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In a strange way this story reminded me of the time when Jesus and his 3 closest disciples went to Gethsemane to pray.

If Peter could write a blog about what happened, he probably too would say:

Today I saw a grown man cry. I watched him fight the tears and I watched him lose the fight. I watched him battle to contain his emotions and I watched him fail.

I watched as a tide of feelings overwhelmed him and all he could do was cry. And all I could do was watch, until I could watch no more. And then I closed my eyes. And then I fell asleep.

* * * * *

As most of you probably know very well, sorrow and anxiety wears you out - no wonder Jesus' closest friends couldn't even stand by him and support him in his hour of need.

Jesus was all alone. There was no one to support him, to give him a cuddle, to tell him that he would be okay. He knew what was coming. He was praying, *hoping* that God would spare him, but nonetheless accepting his fate.

How could Jesus do it? How did he manage to get up after his breakdown and look his fate straight in the eye? How did he manage to keep his head held high through all the humiliation and suffering? He could manage to do all this, because he had *hope*. He knew that God had a plan, and if he played his part, something good would come from it.

And every single one of us knows that He was right. His suffering brought about our salvation.

But that's not all. That same *hope* that kept Jesus going 'till the very end has been passed on to each one of us too. This hope, together with faith and love, will keep us standing through the storms of life, because if we have hope, we can face anything.

Teresa shipped hope to Africa, because those boxes would not only provide poor kids with beds and books and clothes, it would also give them a sense of worth and help give meaning to their lives. She did it, because that was what she believed God expected her to do. And she could manage to do it, because she had hope – hope in the everlasting love of God.

Many, many years ago, Jesus gave us hope. Let's treasure it, and share it, with people we love and people we don't even know... let's ship containers full of hope throughout the world, because that's what Jesus did, and that's what he wants us to do.

Amen.