

I Watch With Thee

Throughout this season of Lent I have had a particular hymn running through my mind and heart. Perhaps you are familiar with it.

*Throned upon the awful tree, King of grief, I watch with thee.
Darkness veils thine anguished face: none its lines of woe can trace:
None can tell what pangs unknown hold thee silent and alone.*

It is this idea of watching with the Lord that has captured my imagination. I think of his words to his disciples that sacred evening in Gethsemane's garden: "My soul is very sorrowful, even to death. Remain here and watch." And yet they could not stay awake. Though they were not far from him physically they had deserted him long before words were spoken and the cock crowed. I wonder if they were perhaps too overwhelmed by the sorrow of the moment to remain alert to share some of the great burden under which our Lord was suffering. Or maybe they were just too sleepy – their minds fogged by physical tiredness. Whatever the cause they simply could not keep their eyes open and their minds awake. "Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."

How often do I feel like those men must have felt that evening. Life presses in around me. Spiritual battle just seems too exhausting to undertake at the moment. It can wait until tomorrow. Surely I am doing well if I can just keep myself from committing major sins. Does it really matter if my heart is not alert to Christ at every moment?

And yet our Saviour never allowed his mind to soften or his will to grow slack under the great pressures and temptations that he experienced. Every moment was taken captive that he might complete his Father's Will to the very last and most minute detail. Every thought in his mind was directed toward his Father. Every intent of his heart was taken up with accomplishing the great work he had been given to do.

And what must his burden have been those last few weeks and days as that monumental event drew ever nearer. How his heart must have weighed heavily within him as he approached Jerusalem and the impending doom grew before his face. Did he have trouble sleeping those last few nights? Did he spend his free moments imagining what kind of suffering and pain he was to endure? Did he look at his hands and try to imagine the scars that would soon imprint themselves forever? Did he ever wonder to himself in moments of privacy what it would be like to be counted sinful – he who was perfect righteousness? And how must he have longed to see his Father's face, to hear his voice, to be comforted by his presence and his love.

This Holy Week I want to watch with my Lord. I want to shake the sleepiness that clouds my vision and obscures the beauty and majesty of my Saviour. I want to watch as each sacred day passes and the moment of my salvation draws near. And of course Good Friday is not the end of this story! If I watch Christ as he suffers, dies and is buried, I will watch him rise to life, defeat his enemies and return to his Father to there prepare a place for his beloved children. Watching him die this Friday I will watch him rise this Sunday and cry glory to my risen Lord!

Bryonie Moon

Day 1

Mark 14: 32-38

“And they went to a place called Gethsemane. And he said to his disciples, ‘Sit here while I pray.’ And he took with him Peter and James and John, and began to be greatly distressed and troubled. And he said to them, ‘My soul is very sorrowful, even to death. Remain here and watch.’ And going a little farther, he fell on the ground and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him. And he said, ‘Abba, Father, all things are possible for you. Remove this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will.’ And he came and found them sleeping and he said to Peter, ‘Simon, are you asleep? Could you not watch one hour? Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.’”

Lord Jesus, you have commanded us to watch and to pray and to see you in all things. Yet we are weak and forget you. Grant us this week the eyes of faith to see you and your work every moment, knowing only you and you crucified.

Day 2

Isaiah 53: 4,5

“Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows: yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his stripes we are healed.”

Holy Saviour, our minds are dull and our hearts are hard. Reveal to us the greatness and the horror of your suffering. Teach us to know our sin and to know it nailed to the cross that we might see the cost of our sins and live holy lives.

Day 3

Hebrews 5: 7,8

“In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to him who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverence. Although he was a son, he learned obedience through what he suffered.”

Lord Jesus, whose obedience took you even to death, be merciful to us for whom obedience comes so slowly. Teach us to submit ourselves to your perfect will that we might become like you, our humble King.

Day 4

Hebrews 4: 14-16

“Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathise with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.”

Precious Saviour, we are more privileged than any other people to worship a God who

took to himself a human body and lived a life of weakness and sorrow so our tears would be wiped away and our mourning turned to dancing. Make us draw near to you with confidence that we might find mercy in our time of need.

Day 5

Philippians 2: 5-11

“Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

Holy Father, who heard Christ’s prayers throughout his life, hear ours as well. Look with kindness on us, the possessors of life through his resurrection. Bring us to that day when we shall see you and gaze upon your Son, risen and glorified.