

## Monthly Prayer Letter - April 2026

Dear Church Family,

Last Sunday I mentioned in my sermon that there are places in the Gospels where we get to eavesdrop on Jesus' personal times of prayer. On occasion, we even get to listen to the very words that Jesus prayed. Jesus' time in Gethsemane is one of those unique occasions in Scripture where we get to see as well as hear the Lord in prayer.

Gethsemane was one of those places where Jesus and the Twelve often retreated together to get away and pray (see John 18:2). The garden was a familiar setting for the Lord and his disciples. Perhaps it was a quiet place of renewal and comfort.

On this occasion, it was a place of anguish. By this time, the Twelve were eleven in number following Judas' departure. As the rest accompanied him to the garden, Jesus asked some of them to sit and wait, while he invited Peter, James, and John to continue on with him.

At some point as they walked along the garden path, Jesus confessed that his "soul [was] overwhelmed to the point of death." He asked his three friends to "Stay here and keep watch with me" (Mt. 26:38). Jesus then went on ahead, fell to the ground, and poured out his heart to the Father in prayer.

As I read the story of Gethsemane from Matthew 26:36-46, I can't help but notice these things about Jesus' attitude toward prayer.

### **1. Jesus knew first-hand what it was like to pray feeling overwhelmed with sorrow.**

Think about a time when you experienced pain, grief, or loss so deep that you wept uncontrollably. If you've not yet experienced such overwhelming emotion, someday you will.

Sometimes, it's hard enough to know how to express our prayers in words. You can imagine what prayer sounds like when you're sobbing. Jesus knows what it feels like to pray this way.

When Jesus took on flesh and became fully human as we are, he took on humanity in full—body and soul. If this were not the case, then Hebrews 4:15 would be false:

"For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin."

In Gethsemane, we get a vivid picture of our Lord's humanity. Thank you, Jesus that you know what it feels like to pray when your soul is overwhelmed with sorrow and you're nothing but a blubbing mess!

## **2. Jesus is patient with us when we fail to pray as we ought.**

Every time I read the Gethsemane account, I'm grateful that at least the disciples understood how easy it is to doze off in the middle of praying. Jesus asked them "Couldn't you men keep watch with me for one hour?" (Mt. 26:40).

Sometimes I don't even last five minutes.

Even when I'm not dozing, I often find myself distracted.

Yet, when I read this, I don't just take comfort in the fact that the disciples were failures just like me (though they were). I rest in the fact that Jesus is patient and compassionate with his followers even as they fumble their way through learning how to depend on God in prayer.

## **3. Even Jesus prayed the same things again, and again, and again.**

We don't know how many hours Jesus and disciples prayed in Gethsemane. What we do read is that Jesus prayed once, twice, and even "went away once more and prayed the third time, saying the same thing" (Mt. 26:44). Jesus prayed the *same thing* again, and again, and again.

Sometimes I repeat myself because I'm not thinking, and my prayers are just lazy. But most of time, if I'm repeating myself in prayer, it's because I'm still waiting on the Lord to answer.

My kids will remind me when I've forgotten to fulfill a promise I've made: "Dad, you said you would..." I don't think that's what Jesus was doing in Gethsemane. While Jesus was asking the Father again, and again, and again "if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me" (Mt. 26:39), he was also praying "Your will be done. Your will be done. Your will be done."

Jesus shows me that repetitive prayers aren't nagging; they're an act of faith and trust.

We're about to enter Holy Week once again. We begin with the triumphal entry into Jerusalem on that first Palm Sunday, move toward the arrest, trial, crucifixion, and death of Jesus on Good Friday, and await the glorious good news of Easter Sunday that "Christ is risen!"

There will be many opportunities to pray this week. I hope you will take the opportunity to pray for one another. Please continue to pray for our church. Pray for those who don't normally attend church that may be joining us for worship this week. Pray for our Palm Sunday Breakfast, Wednesday Seder Meal, Good Friday Service, and Easter Sunday Worship Service.

And pray that all of us might continue to look to Jesus and ask of him,

**"Lord, teach us to pray" (Luke 11:1)**

In Him, Pastor Eric