

The Garden of Gethsemane: Jesus' Prayer & Arrest

A. The Meditation.



Imagine yourself in a garden. Around you, small trees are rustling in the breeze. It is a cool clear night, and the moon is shining. A few metres away from you, a group of people, in rough clothes, are huddled up against the foot of a tree, snoring loudly. An owl hoots. Further away, you see a figure, kneeling on the ground. His face is turned up at the moon and scrunched up in a look of pain. You know that it must be Jesus. You can see drops of sweat falling off his face. You creep further forward. As you come closer, you see that the drops of sweat are in fact drops of blood running down his face in small streams. He is so stressed about what God wants him to do, that he is sweating blood.

You come still closer and you can hear his prayer: "Father, do not let this suffering come to me, do not let this suffering come to me". And then suddenly, you hear him look up, in his face a ray of hope and relief through the tears - perhaps an angel has just touched him, to strengthen him. He cries out, in a loud, strong voice, as if he was defying someone: "Not my will, but yours be done!" There is a moment of stillness, a strange quiet. All of nature seems to be shocked and unable to react to this moment of self-surrender. Jesus has just agreed to accept suffering, humiliation, death - in fact, he has just agreed to suffer any pain that God wants to give him.

Slowly, unsteadily, Jesus gets up from the ground. He walks towards his disciples. "Peter, John," he says, "why are you sleeping? This is the third time I have come back and found you sleeping while I was praying. You were supposed to be praying with me! Supporting me with your prayer, so that I don't run away what my Father is asking me to do! But now, it is all over. Take your rest. The time has come. My betrayer is on his way."

B. What happened next...Bullet point what happened next.

One of the disciples stirs, and says something. Just then, there is the noise of footsteps coming up the path and the light of torches being carried. Judas appears. He has agreed to with the soldiers that the one he kisses, is the one they must arrest. The disciples are up on their feet now. Judas comes up to Jesus, and kisses him on the cheek. "Master", he says. Jesus answers: "Do you betray your master with a kiss?". At that moment, the soldiers surge forward and grab Jesus. One of the disciples pulls out a knife. A soldier cries out in pain, holding his ear, which has been sliced off. There is a fight. Jesus shouts "Stop! Put your swords away! This is not the way I want it to be!". He stretches out his hand towards the soldier, and heals the man's ear. Then he says to the soldiers "If it is me you want, let these others go". For a second, the soldiers feel uncertain about what to do. Something about Jesus makes them hesitate. And then the moment of uncertainty is over. The soldiers grab Jesus, tie up his hands, and start pulling him along back down the path, to the house of the High Priest, Caiaphas.



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Activity 1

Read out the first part as a meditation: ask the pupils to imagine their way through the scene, and notice anything they see/ hear/ touch/ smell.

Activity 2

Ask the students to bullet point what they can remember from the story as a group.

Feedback the main points: these should include

- Jesus praying (sweating blood, what he is saying, an angel strengthening him, his acceptance), - the disciples sleeping & Jesus is telling them off for this

Activity 3

Ask students if they know what happens next.

Handout the text. Ask the students to look at Part B. Ask the students to bullet point what happened next individually eg. Judas' betrayal, the soldiers arriving, the fight, the healing of the ear, Jesus taken away).

Feedback these points.

Activity 4

Look at the points on the board (which are a summary of the events)

Ask the students to identify which of the points need an explanation eg. Why was Jesus praying, were the disciples supposed to be awake, why didn't Jesus want the disciples to use their swords? Etc. Brainstorm a few questions that could be asked, adding them above the corresponding points on the board.

Ask the students to

- write their own questions about any of the events.
- feedback these.
- ask students to write their own explanations to the any of the questions they have asked.