

Alone in Gethsemane



If one could pile up all of his or her darkness, pain, abandonment, betrayal and loneliness, it would only be a glimpse of that which our Lord felt the night of his betrayal and journey to the cross. Perhaps the most biting part of the ordeal was that he did it alone. Much pain can be born when it is born in community and companionship.

But our Christ traveled the road, the hardest and darkest and most painful of roads, *alone*.

As congregations gather and sing “Alone in Gethsemane,” space is created for sitting with Jesus and paying the closest of attention as he bears our brokenness, our sin and distance from God, with the deepest of love. Perhaps some of your congregants are more able to sit well with Christ because they have experienced the stark pain of being alone. Perhaps some are not aware of their aloneness. Where are you today? Where are they? These and other questions arise as we sing these sobering words.

As we sit with Jesus, William Petricko invites us also to consider the actions of Christ’s companions that night. We find them sleeping while Jesus sorrows, absent while he’s judged, no where to be found as he travels the road to Calvary, scarce as he hangs on the cross. We look for them: they are not there.

Continuing to look around, trailing behind Jesus on the way to Calvary, the question turns from “where are the disciples?” to “where am I?” How would I have acted if I had been with the disciples? And more to the point: where am I now?

Hear the call out of absence into presence: “Go bear the cross and share his loss”...“Soul n’er forget, he’s yearning yet...in silence now before him bow.” This sounds very similar to the call of Christ, doesn’t it? “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it. What good will it be for you to gain the whole world, yet forfeit your soul? Or what can you give in exchange for your soul?” Matthew 16:24–26 (TNIV) Where one is in relationship to the cross, to the One who bears the cross, carries the weight of life and death. The call to life requires a threefold response: take up the cross and join in his suffering, never forget the suffering that was endured, and worship Christ who is bearing all on our behalf. Then we will really be present with Christ in His suffering.

Our Christ went the road of deepest suffering *alone*. He was alone so that we may never be alone again.

Thanks be to God.