

# The Mount of Olives

*Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.*

Date: 10 May 2026

Preacher: Colin Dow

[ 0 : 00 ] Let's read now together in Luke chapter 22, page number 882. This is our final sermon on Luke until after the summer, pausing our series.

! Hopefully by Christmas we'll be finished Luke's Gospel, which is good because we began it in 2021. Luke chapter 22, verse 39.

Bless, not my will, but yours be done. And there appeared to him an angel from heaven strengthening him. And being in an agony, he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground.

And when he rose from prayer, he came to the disciples and found them sleeping for sorrow. And he said to them, why are you sleeping? Rise and pray that you may not fall or enter into temptation. Heavenly Father, bring your ancient and powerful word into the present, so that it can be delivered and heard with all the freshness of a new day, with all the immediacy of a friend's embrace, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

[ 1 : 46 ] Amen. There are certain places which carry more emotion for us than others. For me, one such place is in my home village of Golsby in the north of Scotland.

There's a cottage hospital in the village called the Lawson Memorial. And beside the large blue front door of the Lawson is a window.

The room to which that window belongs was where my dad took his last breath. So I can't look at that window without thinking of my father. I'm sure we've all got places like that which hold for us a very special emotional meaning.

For Jesus and for every Christian, the Mount of Olives, a garden overlooking the city of Jerusalem, is a place filled with great emotion. Something happened here which we cannot but remember with great sorrow, but also with great joy.

This was the scene of the agony of Jesus. We read in Luke 22 verse 44 that Jesus was in so much agony that his sweat became like great drops of blood falling to the ground.

[ 2 : 59 ] That blood-stained dust of the Mount of Olives is precious to us, for it was here the battle for our salvation was fought and won by the Lord Jesus Christ.

I want us this morning to consider the main players in this account of Jesus' agony. The disciples, the angel, Jesus our Lord, and the Father.

It is impossible to do full justice to this passage in Luke 22 in the short time we have this morning, but let me urge you to spend some time with it this afternoon, pondering it, praying through it, remembering that the hero of this story is Jesus, and he did all this for us.

First of all then, the disciples, the disciples. Having gone out to the Mount of Olives, as was Jesus' custom, he took with him Peter, James, and John. He wanted them to be with him because he needed the strength only friends can give.

They'd been with him the longest. They'd seen his works. They'd heard his words. They'd seen his righteous life, a life lived loving God and loving others.

[ 4 : 16 ] And even though Peter would deny him three times, Jesus took him also. Now, it's interesting to note that these were the three disciples Jesus took with them up to the Mount of Transfiguration.

Remember, there they'd seen him transformed into glory. His face had shone like the sun. And they'd heard the voice of the Father saying, This is my beloved Son. Listen to him.

And they'd seen Moses and Elijah talking with Jesus about his exodus. Peter, James, and John had wanted to stay on that mountain, in that place of glory, enjoying the majesty of Jesus.

Because that's the kind of Messiah they thought Jesus would be. The glorious Son of God who would save his people in his power. They thought that if Jesus stayed in the form of glory, he could

assume the kingship of Israel and set up an earthly kingdom of God on earth by force. They didn't realize that the path to our salvation does not rest in the majesty of Jesus, but in the misery of Jesus.

[ 5 : 27 ] It does not lead onto the top of the mountain. It leads to the bottom of a valley. The Mount of Transfiguration is not where our salvation was won.

The Mount of Olives was where our salvation was won, through the agony of Jesus. Nevertheless, for all these misunderstandings, these three disciples were Jesus' closest friends, and he chose them to be with him, to witness him suffering.

Is that not what we would do also? To have those we love the most and who love us the most comforting us in our weaknesses? When they came to the appointed place, Jesus said to them, Pray that you may not enter into temptation.

And then he went a few yards distant. But when Jesus returned, he found them asleep. They were stressed. They were tired. They were sleeping for sorrow.

He woke them and said to them, Why are you sleeping? Rise and pray that you may not enter into temptation. The temptation to which Jesus refers here is the temptation to fall away from him when he is arrested and crucified.

[ 6 : 37 ] Because when Jesus was crucified, it might have appeared to the disciples as if God had abandoned them. The devil would have whispered lies into their ears.

They'd have been tempted to run away. Jesus is telling them, You need to stay awake and be ready for these temptations so that you will not fall under their pressure.

You need to pray for God's strength to withstand the temptation, to abandon your faith in me.

Something we need to listen to also, don't you think? How tempting it is to settle for a faith-free life, to blend into the rest of society when times get tough.

Watch and pray, Jesus says, that you may not enter into temptation. I've been to Jerusalem, but I've never been to the Mount of Olives.

If I did find myself there, I'd reflect on these disciples of Jesus, their friendship and their failure.

Jesus needed the company these men brought, but in his hour of need, they failed him.

[ 7 : 45 ] The thing is, though, I wouldn't be overcritical of them, for I know, as you do too, that if we had been in their situation, we'd probably have fallen asleep also. The message for us is this.

Though we might give up on Jesus, he will never give up on us. He died on the cross for failures like Peter, James, and John.

He endured agony for them and for us, the disciples. Well, secondly, the angel, the angel.

Having withdrawn a few yards distant, Jesus knelt down to pray. And we read in verse 43, and there appeared to him an angel from heaven strengthening him. I find this a particularly moving moment in the life of our Lord.

Let's not forget who Jesus is. He is the King of glory. He is the incarnate God. Through him, the physical and spiritual universe was created.

[ 8 : 49 ] He created the planets, and he created the stars. He created the very angels, one of whom was sent by the Father to strengthen him in this garden. Jesus was God in the flesh, but he chose not to rest in his divine power to cope with the stress of this moment.

Rather, as a human being of the same substance as us, he faced this trial alone. alone. This is the doctrine of incarnation. Jesus never relied upon his divine nature to keep the law of love, to perform the miracles he did.

He did these things by the strength God gave him, the strength he gained through prayer and by the Spirit. But what I want us to think about is how this must have been for the angel.

We don't know an awful lot about angels. We know that they are spirits. We know that they are servants. They are glorious beings. They are resplendent in light. When they appear to human beings, the automatic effect on the part of the human is fear.

We also know from Isaiah 6 that they fly before the presence of God in heaven. Now, can you imagine the shock and surprise of this angel? But whereas he had only ever seen God the Son enthroned in the majesty of glory, he now sees Jesus humble, kneeling on the ground, weeping, and sweating great drops of blood.

[ 10 : 19 ] Could you imagine that? What a privilege for this angel, but also what a surprise. Did the angel wonder at the meaning of all this as he obeyed the instructions given to him by God the Father to go and strengthen my Son?

Did the angel understand the implications of what was happening in that garden? We don't know. How did the angel strengthen Jesus? Did he wipe Jesus' brow?

Did he give Jesus something to drink? Or did he just bring a message whispered into Jesus' ear from God the Father? You are my beloved Son.

With you I am well pleased. I'm always with you. We don't know. I've never been to the Mount of Olives, but if I ever found myself there, I think I'd want to reflect on this angel being sent to strengthen Jesus and is out of need.

And I kind of wish I could have been that angel wiping my Savior's brow. But more than that, I'd thank God that from time to time he sends angels in human form to strengthen me when I need it most.

[ 11 : 43 ] Third, the Lord. The Lord Jesus. Ultimately, this passage, as all the others in the Gospel, is about Jesus. Jesus the man.

Jesus the mission. One of the reasons I love the Bible, one of the reasons you can have confidence in the authority and inspiration of the Bible is because it shows our heroes in the good times and in the bad.

What other holy writings would present a picture of its Lord in the way the Bible presents Jesus here?

Weeping, stressed, agonizing. Let's consider Jesus' prayer. Father, if you're willing, remove this cup from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but yours be done.

Notice how Jesus addresses God. Father, here's the core of his relationship to God, not servant to king, but son to father. It's the father's son who is in agony in that garden.

[ 12 : 46 ] In his time of greatest need, Jesus wants to pour out his heart to his Abba, to his father. Of course, Jesus also encourages us to call God Abba when we pray because through what he will do, Jesus, we shall become sons and daughters of God and we also shall have him as our father.

And as our father, he wants us to pour out our hearts to him just as Jesus did here. If you are willing, remove this cup from me.

The cup is the Old Testament symbol of wrath, anger, punishment, suffering. Isaiah 51, verse 17. Wake yourself, wake yourself, stand up, O Jerusalem, you who have drunk from the hand of the Lord the cup of his wrath. Ezekiel 23, verse 33, we read of a cup of horror, desolation, judgment. Once more, Psalm 11, verse 6, a scorching wind shall be the portion of their cup. The cup is the judgment of God against human sin.

[ 14 : 05 ] Jesus will drink the wrath of God. Jesus will endure the judgment of God and pay the penalty of our sin and guilt.

That's why he's going to the cross. Not to pay the price of his own sin, but to pay the price of ours. He's going there to drink the cup of God's judgment.

But he prays, remove it from me. Remove it from me. God knows how serious a thing sin is and how his infinite justice must be served with infinite punishment.

And Jesus, as the Son of God, knows what it's going to cost him to pay the penalty of our sin. His physical sufferings will be tiny tip of the iceberg of his agonies.

Deeper still shall be the spiritual sufferings of being punished on our account by his Father of being forsaken by God on the cross. On the cross, God does not abandon his Son.

[ 15 : 13 ] As if to suggest that somehow the Father is neutral and does not help his Son as he suffers. That somehow the Father is passive while his Son dies on the cross.

He does not abandon his Son. On the cross, the Father crushes his Son. For those long hours of deep darkness, the Father actively torments his Son with the infinite sufferings of hell, crushing, pulverizing, punishing his Son even as his Son is bearing our sin and guilt.

That's what we deserved. But Jesus took it for us. We affirm that the sufferings of Christ make no sense at all without a firm doctrine of the Trinity.

That on the cross, a loving Son was being actively punished by his beloved Father. Now, many people have gone to their deaths with more courage than Jesus displayed on the Mount of Olives. many people have gone to their deaths stoically, bravely, no tears, no stress. Jesus, by contrast, cries out to God.

[ 16 : 34 ] He's pleading for God to take the cup away. He is sweating great drops of blood. But nobody has ever died knowing that physical death is but the beginning of all they must suffer.

Jesus was the bravest of all men because he went willingly to the cross to be crushed for us. Jesus would not have been human had he not pled for God, not pled with God for another way to be found to save his people.

This is the most human response. given how much Jesus knew about what he would have to suffer, any other prayer that he made would have been subhuman.

It would have been absurd. And you know, this makes the idea of self-salvation a mockery of and a blasphemy against Jesus our Lord.

Do you think, well, if there had been any other way for our sins to be forgiven and for us to be saved, Jesus would not have had to endure the agony of the garden and the agony of the cross.

[ 17 : 47 ] If it was possible to earn our salvation through our good works, to pay for our sins by religious festivals, don't you think that a loving father would have chosen that way instead of punishing his beloved son?

Sweating blood is a medical condition called hematidrosis. According to the dictionary, hematidrosis is a condition in which capillary blood vessels that feed our sweat glands rupture, causing them to exude blood, occurring under conditions of extreme physical or emotional stress.

Severe mental anxiety causes hemorrhage of the vessels supplying our sweat glands. can you imagine the eternally blessed and beloved son of God being so extremely stressed and so acutely fearful that he should have sweat blood?

This is how far Jesus in his love for his father and for us was willing to go down, the agony he's willing to endure for us.

It is often assumed that Jesus did not want to go to the cross, that it was not his will so to do. Jesus had no natural connection with sin.

[ 19 : 21 ] How could he? The prospect of infinite suffering and being crushed by his eternally beloved father horrified him.

But that is not to say he was not willing to do these things. If it had not been Jesus will to go to the cross for us, he would not have prayed, yet not my will but yours be done in the first place.

He would not have left himself open to the path of suffering which lay before him. He would not have prayed, nevertheless, not my will but yours be done. It's an example of us, of course, how to pray and how to live.

Rather than insist upon our own will, we defer to the will of the Father for us. Especially in times of personal suffering, we want things to be different, so we pray. And it's right to do that.

But the question for us is this, whose will do we really want for our lives? Whose will do we really want for our lives? What if God's will for us is not that the suffering we're enduring goes away, but that we learn to lean on his grace to depend more upon him and experience more fully his grace?

[ 20 : 40 ] And what if our suffering served to benefit others? It may well be the hardest thing for any of us in life to come to terms with what God's will is for us, but it is most definitely the best thing for us in life.

But this passage is far more than an example. It is not so much a specimen as it is a sacrifice. In the garden, the weight of our sin is being placed upon the shoulders of our beloved Lord, and weighed down by the sheer horror of them, he writhes in agony.

The cross doesn't begin when the nails are driven into Jesus' hands. The cross begins here on the Mount of Olives as Jesus becomes our sin bearing substitute.

Of course, arguing, it began at his incarnation, but here in the garden, it is driven home, it's emphasized, and Jesus experiences it for himself as Jesus lays himself on the altar of sacrifice for us.

that through his endurance of the punishment of our sin, we might experience the blessedness of Christian forgiveness and salvation. Jesus, our substitute, is suffering in the place of sinners like us.

[ 22 : 01 ] It should have been me who was being eternally crushed under the judgment of God on account of my own sin, but Jesus took my place and suffered in my stead. As the hymn of Servant King says, there in the garden of tears, my heavy load he chose to bear.

I've never been to the Mount of Olives, but if I was there, I'd be thinking of how the Lord loved me, gave himself for me, of how he suffered in my womb and in my stead, so that I could experience God's blessing and not his curse.

love and trust him, that through what Jesus did there, I can be saved from all my sin and guilt and enjoy forgiveness and eternal life with him.

Filled with thankfulness, I'd like to think that I'd echo the sentiments of the psalm writer, Psalm 116, when in faith he commits himself to God saying, I love salvation, take the cup, I'll take this cup of salvation, because he took the cup of judgment, I love salvation, take the cup, on God's name will I call, I'll pay my vows now to the Lord before his people all.

So we have the Lord, and then finally and briefly we have the Father, the Father. Never are the righteousness and love of God the Father more on show than here on the Mount of Oz.

[ 23 : 46 ] The righteousness of God is demonstrated in that he is fully punishing our sin in the body and soul of his Son.

Jesus is fully receiving the punishment our evil deeds deserve. Divine justice is on full display. If God had failed to punish our sin, he would have been unjust and unrighteous. He would have been a judge who winks at evil.

You might think to yourself, this is all very severe, Mr. Preacher boy. How do you feel when you read in the paper that a vicious rapist and murderer receives a sentence from a judge which is pathetic?

When it really rhymes at your sense of justice, right? Where do we get the sense of justice from if not from a righteous God? In that fateful garden, our sin is being fully punished in the broken body, in the broken mind, in the broken soul of our Lord Jesus.

[ 24 : 59 ] Because Jesus suffered here in the garden and will go on to suffer even more painfully in the next few hours, we can be assured that our sin and our guilt is fully dealt with.

It would be unjust of God the Father to punish our sin given that he has already punished it in his Son, Jesus Christ.

You know, if you're anything like me, I'm sure you are, our guilt over sins we committed years ago plagues us, haunts us to things we did decades ago maybe.

It plagues us, spooks us, disturbs us. But if in faith and in the name of the Jesus who suffered for us in this garden, we have confessed it to God, that sin we committed all those years ago is gone.

God does not count it against us because he has already counted it against his beloved Son. Be assured, your sins are gone. God the Father has set you free.

[ 26 : 15 ] By faith, see Jesus suffering for you in this garden and be free from your sin's guilt. But by far, it was the love of God the Father which was on full display in this garden.

God, he loved his Son. And that's why he sent the angel to strengthen his Son. But he loves us.

See how much he loves us in that he was willing to subject his infinitely beloved Son to the curse of our sin.

He did not spare his one and only Son for us, for black hearted sinners like me, who for all those years before he caught me, did not want him.

For a sinner like me, God the Father subjected his beloved Son to the curse of the Mount of Olives. No wonder it that in a few moments at the end of our service, we leave with the words, through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, ring in your ears.

When you hear these words, the love of God, think of how God loved you, and that he crushed his Son on your behalf in the garden, and subjected him to the penalty of your sin.

[ 27 : 49 ] You know, as I look into the mirror in the morning, I don't see much to love. And that's the truth, that God the Father loves me.

And perhaps, when you look into a minute in the morning, you don't see much to love either. But know this, God the Father loved that person looking into the mirror so much that he gave his one and only beloved Son for that person, for you.

to be your substitute. And if ever life should throw curved balls in your direction, if ever you're going through difficult times, I know some of you are right now, and you question, does God love me at all?

Go back to the garden and see there God's Son, God's Son, and he is weeping, and he is sweating great drops of blood for you, pleading that the cup of wrath you deserved to be taken away from him.

See him, and no more doubt that God loves you. If ever I went to the Mount of Olives, I'd like to think of how much God the Father must love me, given that he was willing to crush his infinitely beloved Son in my place.

[ 29 : 17 ] And I think I'd be sorry for ever doubting him. There are certain places which carry more significance for us than others, and the Mount of Olives for every Christian is of central importance,

for it was there, there in that garden, Christ fully resolved himself to give himself for us.

The question is this, how significant is the Mount of Olives for you? Have you trusted in the Lord Jesus Christ as your Savior and Lord?

You face two options. It's not everyone. You face two options. Be punished for your own sin with the agony of the garden, or trust in the Jesus who was punished in agony in the garden on behalf of sinners.

supposing I had a TARDIS and could transport all of us today to the Mount of Olives, though I doubt we'd get visas for Israel right now. But suppose I could transport all of us to the Mount of Olives and sit there where Jesus sat, that fateful night, what decision would you make?

Trust him or reject him? Let us pray. our gracious, righteous, loving Father, we can scarce believe how much you must love us, that you are willing to give your infinitely beloved son to the agony of Gethsemane for us.

[ 30 : 59 ] Jesus, we thank you that you have dealt with our sins, Lord Jesus. We thank you that there in that garden, as you bore the agony, as you wrestled with the Father's will for you, fully resolved to be our sin-bearing substitute.

You have dealt with them once and for all. They are no longer standing against us, no longer lodged against our account, but thanks to what you have done, Lord Jesus, we are fully forgiven. And we thank you, O Holy Spirit, for sending an angel to strengthen Jesus in that garden. And we thank you for applying that agony of Jesus, that wonderful forgiveness to us.

May the beloved gospel of Jesus Christ, O God, our Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, one true and living God, may that beloved gospel, the good news of Jesus, spread across the world, from Japan to Great Britain, from Africa to Asia to Europe to America.

In Jesus' name, amen.