



SPRING-TIME DAILY ENCOURAGEMENTS

Carstairs-Bancroft United Church

April 7, 2023



Photo: Our Daily Bread

DROPS OF RED

His sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground.

Luke 22:44

READ Luke 22:39–44

Walking through the Scottish National Gallery, I was drawn to the strong brushwork and vibrant colors of one of many Olive Trees paintings by Dutch artist Vincent van Gogh. Many historians believe the work was inspired by Jesus' experience in the garden of Gethsemane on the Mount of Olives. What especially caught my eye on the canvas of the painting were the small red splotches of paint among the ancient trees.

Known as the Mount of Olives because of all the olive trees located on the mountainside, Jesus went there to pray on the night that He predicted His disciple Judas would betray Him. Jesus was overwhelmed with anguish knowing the betrayal would result in His crucifixion. As He prayed, "his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground" (Luke 22:44). Jesus' agony was evident in the garden as He prepared for the pain and humiliation of a public execution that would result in the physical shedding of His blood on that Good Friday long ago.

The red paint on Van Gogh's painting reminds us that Jesus had to "suffer many things and be rejected" (Mark 8:31). While suffering is part of His story, however, it no longer dominates the picture. Jesus' victory over death transforms even our suffering, allowing it to become only a part of the beautiful landscape of our lives He's creating.

By Lisa M. Samra

PRAY & REFLECT

Jesus, thank You for being willing to suffer, even to death, so that I might receive eternal life. Amen.

Why is it important for you to remember Jesus' suffering? How does His example help you when you suffer?

SCRIPTURE INSIGHT

After sharing Passover (the Last Supper) with His disciples (Matthew 26:17–30), Jesus went to the Mount of Olives to pray knowing He'd suffer and die a horrific death. Those closest to Him would desert Him, and Peter would deny Him three times (Luke 22:34, 54–62). Yet Jesus also knew that after three days He would rise again (Matthew 12:40; Mark 8:31).

The Mount of Olives, a ridge in the Judean mountains lying east of Jerusalem and the Kidron Valley, is first mentioned in the Old Testament when King David fled from his son Absalom (2 Samuel 15:30). Solomon later chose this mountain to build "a high place" for the "detestable" foreign gods of the Ammonites and Moabites (1 Kings 11:7). Jesus ascended to heaven from the Mount of Olives (Acts 1:9–12) and will return to the same place, fulfilling the vision of the prophet that the mount "will be split in two from east to west" (Zechariah 14:4). – **By Alyson Kieda**

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