

# Arise, Let Us Be Going

by Carl McMurray

In Matthew 26:37-46 Jesus is in the Garden of Gethsemene preparing Himself for the emotional and physical struggle of the cross. Choosing His three closest disciples and friends, He goes aside to pray and requests that they wait and watch with Him. Jesus is “grieved and distressed to the point of death.” He knows that He is being betrayed and will be put to death in the next 18 hours, and He needs the encouragement of His friends to stand by Him. When He finishes His prayer, He returns to find them sleeping. After waking them and making request for their watchfulness again, He returns to praying. When finished, once more He finds them asleep. Finally, the third time He comes and finds them sleeping He awakens them with the instruction, “Arise, let us be going...” It appears the time for help and support was now past. I wonder if the disciples ever thought back to these early morning hours and regretted that they had been a disappointment, at least at this time, to one who needed them so badly.

And while I’m reading this passage and considering the thoughtlessness of these “friends” of our Lord, it occurs to me to wonder how often has Jesus needed me, and I ask myself, was I sleeping? When that new person moved into the neighborhood and Jesus needed me to go over and welcome them and invite them to worship, was I sleeping? When my co-worker’s marriage came apart and they were emotionally “grieved and distressed” and needing a sharing heart, was I sleeping? When that last visitor showed up at services with that nervous look of not knowing anyone, did I cross the room to welcome them and invite them to sit with me or was I sleeping?

We might deal harshly with those three disciples because, after all, weren’t they blessed richly by Jesus’ friendship? And I suppose Peter might turn and ask you or me the same thing. Haven’t we been blessed by the Lord? Haven’t our prayers been answered by a friend who is always listening? Haven’t we turned to Jesus time and time again for His help and forgiveness? And how many times has He really needed us... to be there for Him? ... to be His friend?

Let’s be determined to be true friends of Jesus. Let us not be overcome by the flesh or by our own weariness. Let’s not wait till it’s past time to hear those words of Christ, to look around and listen to him say, “Arise, let us be going...”