

A dark night in the garden

The Garden of Gethsemane, from Luke 22, Mark 14, John 18

THE WIND WAS picking up now, blowing clouds across the moon, shrouding the garden in darkness.

"Stay up with me?" Jesus asked his friends. They said yes and waited under the olive trees, but they were tired and soon they fell asleep.

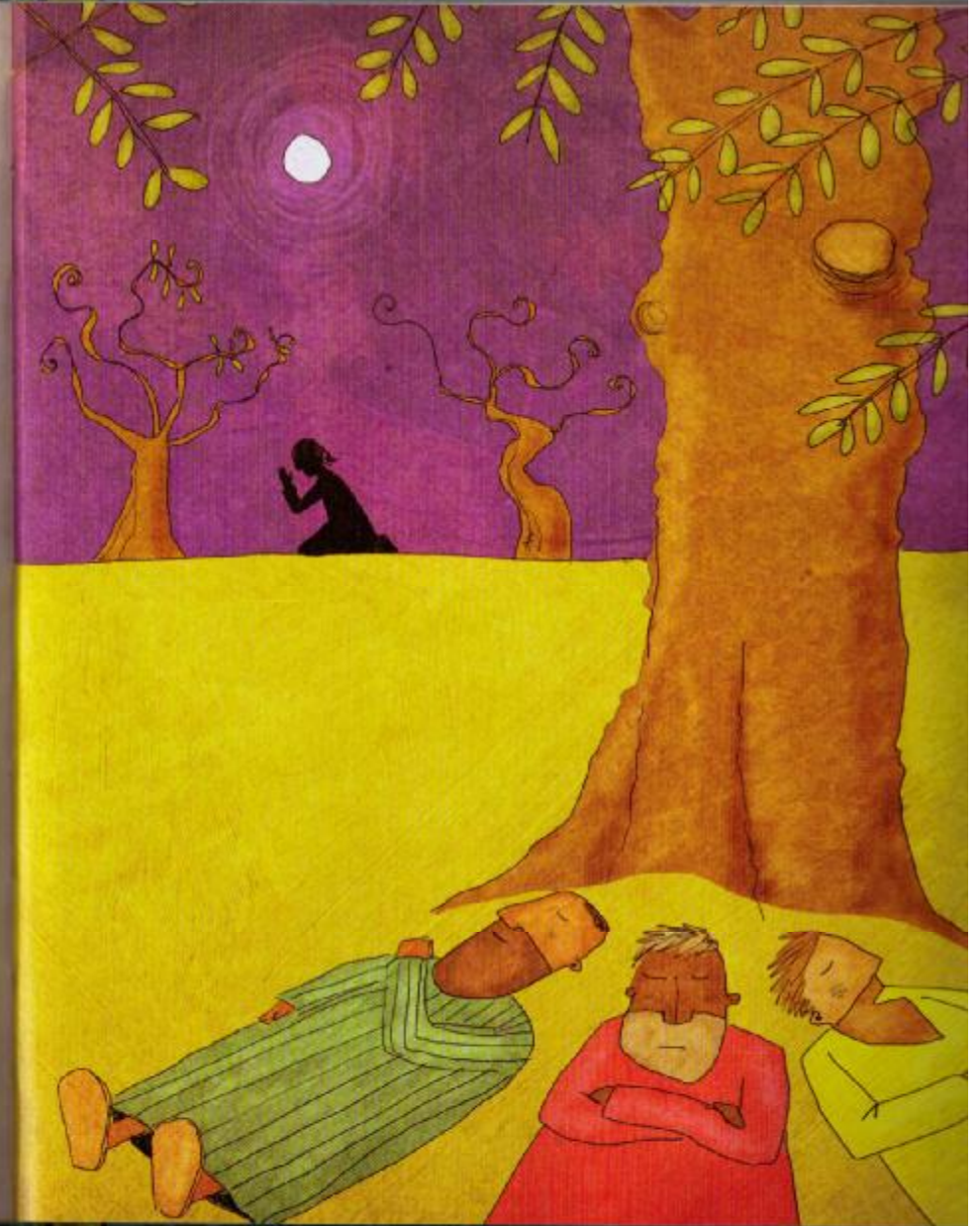
Jesus walked ahead alone, into the dark. He needed to talk to his heavenly Father.


He knew it was time for him to die. They had planned it long ago, he and his Father. Jesus was going to take the punishment for all the wrong things anybody had ever done, or ever would do.

"Papa! Father!" Jesus cried. And he fell to the ground. "Is there any other way to get your children back? To heal their hearts? To get rid of the poison?"

But Jesus knew — there was no other way. All the poison of sin was going to have to go into his own heart.

God was going to pour into Jesus' heart all the sadness and brokenness in people's hearts. He was going to pour into Jesus' body all the sickness in people's bodies. God was going to have to blame his son for everything that had gone wrong. It would crush Jesus.





But there was something else, something even more horrible. When people ran away from God, they lost God — it was what happened when they ran away. Not being close to God was like a punishment. Jesus was going to take that punishment.

Jesus knew what that meant. He was going to lose his Father — and that, Jesus knew, would break his heart in two.

Violent sobs shook Jesus' whole body.

Then Jesus was quiet. Like a lamb. "I trust you, Papa," he said. "Whatever you say, I will do."



Suddenly, through the trees, a glitter of starlight flashed off steel. Into the quiet garden came whispers, muffled voices, clanking metal — and the sound of boots marching.

Jesus stood up.

He woke his friends. “Now is the time,” he said gently. “Everything that was written about me — what God has been telling his people all through the long years — it’s all coming true.”

And into the night, with burning torches and lanterns, with swords and clubs and armor, they came — an army of soldiers. Judas led them straight to Jesus so they could arrest him.

Jesus was waiting for them.



Peter leapt up, took a sword, and tried to defend Jesus. He sliced off a guard's ear. Jesus immediately touched the guard and healed him.

"Peter," he said, "this is not the way."

Peter didn't realize that no army, no matter how big, could ever arrest Jesus. Not unless Jesus let them.

Then Jesus, who had never done anything except love people, was arrested, as if he were a criminal.

Jesus' friends were afraid. So they ran away and hid in the dark shadows.

The guards marched Jesus off and took him to the Leaders.

The Leaders put Jesus on trial. "Are you the Son of God?" they asked.

"I Am," Jesus said.

"Who do you think you are? To call yourself God? You must die for calling yourself the Son of God!"

Only the Romans were allowed to kill prisoners, so the Leaders made a plan. "We'll tell the Romans, 'This man wants to be our king!' And then they will crucify him."

But it would be all right. It was God's Plan.

"It was for this reason that I was born into the world," Jesus said.

