

Anchor Deep and Pray

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The Garden of Gethsemane is really an olive orchard, and olive trees still grow there today. The word Gethsemane itself means olive press. An olive press is made from a large stone placed on a basket leveraged by several more large stones on the end of a long pole. It literally crushes the liquid oil from the olives.

It is no mistake that Jesus spent His last evening in the Garden of Gethsemane. From there He would go to the cross and receive the weight of the world, the gethsemane of our sins. Luke describes the pressure Jesus suffered that evening: "Being in anguish His sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground." It is an image of the gathsemane crushing the oil from the olive fruit. Gethsemane ever since has come to symbolize suffering. We are surrounded by gethsemanes in our life – times when innocent people and communities have suffered.. Times when we feel pressures and situations pressing down on us. Think about Hurricane Wilma or Tropical Storm Faye. Think about the proposed US Sugar buy out or the current financial crisis around the world, but more directly around our lives. Think about the current election with all of the amendments and proposals and the future of our community and nation. As I write this, I still haven't fully decided for whom I'm going to cast my presidential vote. By the time you read this, it will have been decided along with a number of amendments and issues. In the face of such suffering and conflicting promises, in the face of the election results, in the face of our life situation, we ask ourselves: Who do we turn to? What do we do? Where do we go from here?

First, let's look at who we turn to. In the midst of our suffering or the oncoming storms, we can turn to God – an ever present help in times of need. The psalmist in Psalm 121:1-2 states it this way, "I lift up my eyes to the hills -- where does my help come from? My help comes from the LORD, the Maker of heaven and earth." I remember when Hurricane David headed our way in 1979. A college friend had a boat that he was worried about, so number of us descended south from Gainesville to help him secure his boat for the coming storm. Being a former Boy Scout, I was proud of the job we did in tying down that boat. We lashed it tightly to the dock, trees, and even to itself. We were patting ourselves on the back when a sea captain informed us that the best way to secure a boat safely during a hurricane was to anchor it away from the trees and things which would "get eaten up in the 'cane". It was better to anchor it deep with four ropes going out in different directions and pray. It was good advice then and is good advice as to what we are to do. We are to anchor deep and then we are to pray. We are to do what we can do and then turn to our Lord.

Now the 20 dollar question, "Where do we go from here?" Regardless of who won the election, regardless of whether the amendments we wanted or didn't want passed or failed, regardless of where the economy is, we are to go on. We pick up the pieces and go forward the best we can, trusting that God, family, and friends will help us. We take inventory and try to realize anew the really important things in our life, as well as those important people - and then embrace them!

Now is when the body of Christ can really become the hands of Christ. It is also a time when we can reach out and embrace our faith and God's peace as we remember the words of Jesus in John 16:33: "I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."