



HOLD ONTO THE LORD

Matthew 26:47-56

- In the days leading up to Easter, we're challenging our whole congregation to **SERVE** their community, **PRAY** for the Lord to transform people's lives, and **SHARE** their faith or an invitation to church (Romans 12:1-2).
- ***Who are some Friends, Relatives, Associates, or Neighbors I need to pray will experience God's transforming power this Easter?***
- In our **CHALLENGING TIMES** series we are learning from the challenges Jesus faced in the last days before His death and resurrection.
- Jesus - *"I have told you all this so that you may have peace in Me. Here on earth you will have many trials and sorrows."* (John 16:33)
- **In challenging times, we are often tempted to grow distant from the Lord, or manage in our own strength.**
- *"So let's not get tired of doing what is good. At just the right time we will reap a harvest of blessing if we don't give up."* (Galatians 6:9)
- ***How can we hold onto the Lord when facing challenging times?***

Holding Onto The Lord Requires:

REFUSING TO COMPROMISE IN OUR COMMITMENTS

- *"Then Judas Iscariot, one of the twelve disciples, went to the leading priests and asked, 'How much will you pay me to betray Jesus to you?' And they gave him thirty pieces of silver. From that time on, Judas began looking for an opportunity to betray Jesus."* (Matthew 26:14-16)
- **We betray the Lord any time we sin against Him.**
- *"Don't you realize that friendship with the world makes you an enemy of God? I say it again: If you want to be a friend of the world, you make yourself an enemy of God."* (James 4:4)
- **The only fact that matters is whether we could abandon our commitment to the Lord - the devil will always find our price.**

- *“Let us hold tightly without wavering to the hope we affirm, for God can be trusted to keep His promise.”* (Hebrews 10:23)
- **We often make a decision to betray the Lord and then try to justify that decision.**
- **The essence of the Gospel is that Jesus offers us a choice between earthly blessing and eternal blessing, between earthly suffering and eternal suffering.**
- *“So we don’t look at the troubles we can see now; rather, we fix our gaze on things that cannot be seen. For the things we see now will soon be gone, but the things we cannot see will last forever.”* (2 Corinthians 4:18)
- **Even when we betray Jesus we have the hope of forgiveness and restoration.**
- *“If someone among you wanders away from the truth and is brought back, you can be sure that whoever brings the sinner back from wandering will save that person from death and bring about the forgiveness of many sins.”* (James 5:19-20)
- **What can you do to reach out to someone who has wandered from the Lord?**

Holding Onto The Lord Requires:

PRESSING BEYOND IMMATURITY IN OUR EMOTIONS

- Peter - *“Even if I have to die with You, I will never deny You!”* And all the other disciples vowed the same.” (Matthew 26:35)
- **Peter vowed to die, but he couldn’t even pray for an hour.**
- *“Then He returned to the disciples and found them asleep. He said to Peter, ‘Couldn’t you watch with Me even one hour?’”* (Matthew 26:40)
- **We must never let our confidence exceed our character.**
- Peter - *“Supplement your faith with a generous provision of moral excellence, and moral excellence with knowledge, and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with patient endurance, and patient endurance with godliness, and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love for everyone.”* (2 Peter 1:5-7)
- **Even Christians struggle with valuing the outward appearance of success, but the Lord looks into our hearts.**
- *“The Lord doesn’t see things the way you see them. People judge by outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.”* (1 Samuel 16:7)
- **Our emotional health is critical to our spiritual health.**
- *“It is impossible to become spiritually mature while remaining emotionally immature.”*
-Peter Scazzero
- **How has emotional immaturity stunted my spiritual growth, and how can I move past it?**

Holding Onto The Lord Requires:

TRUSTING IN GOD, PERSEVERING IN PRAYER

- Jesus - *“My soul is crushed with grief to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch with Me.”* (Matthew 26:38)
- **Our anxiety should always be matched by the depth of our surrender.**
- Jesus - *“My Father! If it is possible, let this cup of suffering be taken away from Me. Yet I want Your will to be done, not Mine.”* (Matthew 26:39)
- **Our anxiety should always be matched by the intensity of our prayer.**

- “[Jesus] prayed more fervently, and He was in such agony of spirit that His sweat fell to the ground like great drops of blood.” (Luke 22:44)
- **What should we pray for during challenging times?**
- **We Will Be Praying Like Jesus When We Pray For God To Be Glorified.**
- Jesus - “Father, the hour has come. Glorify Your Son so He can give glory back to You...I brought glory to You here on earth by completing the work You gave Me to do.” (John 17:1,4)
- **When we open our prayers by praising and honoring God, it keeps us from reducing Him to a blessing vending machine.**
- **Even when challenging times come, we can trust that those challenges will: 1) work for our good (Romans 8:28), and 2) glorify the Lord (Psalm 115:1).**
- “And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to His purpose for them.” (Romans 8:28)
- “Not to us, O Lord, not to us, but to Your name goes all the glory for Your unfailing love and faithfulness.” (Psalm 115:1)
- **We Will Be Praying Like Jesus When We Pray For God’s Church To Be Unified.**
- Jesus - “My prayer is not for the world, but for those You have given Me, because they belong to You. . . Holy Father, You have given Me Your name; now protect them by the power of Your name so that they will be united just as We are.” (John 17:9,11)
- Jesus - “I am praying not only for these disciples but also for all who will ever believe in Me through their message. I pray that they will all be one, just as You and I are one—as You are in Me, Father, and I am in You.” (John 17:20-21)
- **Challenging times can threaten our unity, but we must stay committed to the Lord.**
- “I appeal to you, dear brothers and sisters, by the authority of our Lord Jesus Christ, to live in harmony with each other. Let there be no divisions in the church. Rather, be of one mind, united in thought and purpose.” (1 Corinthians 1:10)
- **We Will Be Praying Like Jesus When We Pray For The World To Be Evangelized.**
- Jesus - “And may they be in Us so that the world will believe You sent Me.” (John 17:21)
- “You are the light of the world—like a city on a hilltop that cannot be hidden. . .let your good deeds shine out for all to see, so that everyone will praise your heavenly Father.” (Matthew 5:14,16)
- **It is tempting but tragic to allow the temporary burdens of this life distract us from eternal burden making Jesus known.**
- **How can I pray more like Jesus in the days ahead?**

- **We don’t have to like the challenges we face, but we do have to trust that ultimately God uses everything for our good.**
- Jesus - “But this is all happening to fulfill the words of the prophets as recorded in the Scriptures.” (Matthew 26:56)
- **We will be able to hold onto the Lord in challenging times when we: 1) Refuse To Compromise, 2) Press Beyond Immaturity, and 3) Persevere In Prayer.**
- **Who are some people I need to pray will encounter Jesus this Easter?**
 - **This Easter, I need to pray for:**
 - **Friends:** _____

- **Relatives:** _____
- **Associates:** _____
- **Neighbors:** _____

QUESTIONS TO PONDER

- **What do you think would have happened if Judas had repented of his betrayal of Jesus?**
- **When have you been a little immature in your relationship with Jesus?**
- **What are the barriers in your prayer life right now and how can you overcome them?**
- **Who are the people God has strategically placed in your life, and how can you pray for them?**