

# TFTD L14: Owl or skylark?

ALDERLEY EDGE LENT STUDIES, 2022



**Thursday March 14th**

Today's TFTD comes from the Revd Rod Hill

## **Jesus Prays on the Mount of Olives**

<sup>39</sup> Jesus went out as usual to the Mount of Olives, and his disciples followed him. <sup>40</sup> On reaching the place, he said to them, “Pray that you will not fall into temptation.” <sup>41</sup> He withdrew about a stone’s throw beyond them, knelt down and prayed, <sup>42</sup> “Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done.” <sup>43</sup> An angel from heaven appeared to him and strengthened him. <sup>44</sup> And being in anguish, he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground.<sup>[a]</sup>

<sup>45</sup> When he rose from prayer and went back to the disciples, he found them asleep, exhausted from sorrow. <sup>46</sup> “Why are you sleeping?” he asked them. “Get up and pray so that you will not fall into temptation.”

Luke 22:39-46

There seems to be an idea around, at least in some circles, that clergy people are the kind of people who find faith and all that kind of stuff easy. Clergy are supposed, in this scenario, to be people who find it easy to be people of prayer. Mind you, clergy are sometimes also thought of, almost in the same breath it seems, as people who are so ‘heavenly minded they’re no earthly use.,’

We can’t win, it appears.

Well, I have a confession to make; like every other clergy person I know, I’m not perfect. I get things wrong, I make mistakes, I don’t live up to people’s expectations – and I don’t actually find that spiritual stuff easy – especially prayer.

I do find that having a sense of being committed to a discipline helps my prayer life. For much of my time as a minister I’ve led morning prayer in church each day

and sometimes people have joined me, sometimes they haven't. it doesn't matter. I've committed to the discipline of being there and saying my morning prayers at a particular time and I find that helps me. At the moment, because I live quite a way from Alderley Edge my prayer time is done on our Facebook page rather than in the church. But there is still that sense of discipline. I've told people that I will be there at that time , so I will, except in unavoidable circumstances.

So, I find that little phrase that Luke use here 'as usual,' to be fascinating. Jesus went out 'as usual to the mount of Olives'. This is usual practice for Jesus. Several times the gospels tell us that Jesus went out to pray. There is a sense of discipline about it; Jesus needed to pray and if Jesus needed to pray how much more do we?

But the disciples just couldn't keep awake to pray. I know that feeling too – at the end of the day there are times when I am just too tired to pray – as the years have gone by those times seem to come with increasing frequency, or is that just me? There are times in the morning too when I find it difficult to be fully awake. I'm a 3 cups of coffee and 11.00 am kind of person, on the whole. I don't wake up fully until then, but I'm fine going on late into the evening.

I well remember staring university many years ago and the university chaplain talking to a group of us newcomers. There are two types of people, he said 'Skylarks and Owls,' the skylarks will find university life hard, but the owls will be fine. I'm definitely an owl.



Whichever type of person you are I suggest that a disciplined approach to prayer, self-disciplined, will help to improve the quality of a special time close with God, by appointment, as it were. If you haven't seen it before you might like to look at the material for 'A Methodist Way of Life', which you can find here <https://www.methodist.org.uk/our-faith/a-methodist-way-of-life/a-methodist-way-of-life-resources/>

It's an invitation to be part of a group of people who share a way of life, of which prayer is a part, in a self-disciplined kind of way and a mutually accountable way.

If, like me, you find prayer hard, then you just might find that this helps in this particular 'holy habit.'

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