

## Scene 3 Isolation

Each of us have had extended times of being away from those we love because of the pandemic. We reflect on the experience of Jesus feeling isolated and alone in the garden of Gethsemane, and we explore what it means to truly 'be there' for someone – in alternative and creative ways – through times of separation.

### The garden of Gethsemane – Mark 14.32-42

They went to a place called Gethsemane; and he said to his disciples, 'Sit here while I pray.' He took with him Peter and James and John, and began to be distressed and agitated. And he said to them, 'I am deeply grieved, even to death; remain here, and keep awake.' And going a little farther, he threw himself on the ground and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him. He said, 'Abba, Father, for you all things are possible; remove this cup from me; yet, not what I want, but what you want.' He came and found them sleeping; and he said to Peter, 'Simon, are you asleep? Could you not keep awake one hour? Keep awake and pray that you may not come into the time of trial; the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.' And again he went away and prayed, saying the same words. And once more he came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were very heavy; and they did not know what to say to him. He came a third time and said to them, 'Are you still sleeping and taking your rest? Enough! The hour has come; the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Get up, let us be going. See, my betrayer is at hand.'



### Voices

#### Here Relative making a Covid-secure visit to a residential home

I keep hearing the phrase, 'We stay apart so that when we can meet again, no one is missing.' Doesn't make it any easier in the meantime. But we're doing this because we love each other and want to protect one another. It's for the best – keeping our distance, relying on phone calls and letters. It's frustrating – I want to be there for you, just as we always have been, but it's impossible right now. We're both exhausted, you and me, it's been a long road since this virus first started. We don't know when respite is coming – the vaccine is out there but the timing isn't in our hands. It broke my heart to hear you upset on the phone, begging me to come and see you when the first lockdown lifted, but I knew it still wasn't safe. It's tough on all of us, but I know you feel cut off, isolated from the rest of the family. But you're doing great – the staff tell me you're keeping your spirits up for the most part, you always have a smile for them. Don't worry, please, we're almost there. We just have to keep each other going. We have to trust, believe, that we'll see each other properly soon. You're in safe hands, I'm carrying on keeping everyone else going. I'd do anything to be there for you, I really would, but this pandemic divides us, physically. But not in spirit. No, not in spirit.

#### There Disciple in the garden

Lord, I want to be there for you, just as you asked, but it's so hard. We're exhausted, it's been such a long day – a long week – a long road since we started out on this journey with you. We don't know when the next rest is coming, it's draining, and when we do lie down, we're asleep as soon as our heads hit the ground. It broke my heart when you got angry with us, shouted at us, pleaded with us to stay with you. I want to. If willpower alone was enough, I'd always be there, by your side, day and night, ready to act, ready to defend, be whatever you need me to be. I know you're struggling, I hear the distress in your voice, see the look in your eyes. Is it fear? Doubt? This is tough on all of us, and I know it affects you more than us, you're cut off in a way, isolated, taking the brunt of all this. But you're doing great – did you hear those crowds the other day?! We just have to keep each other going. Don't worry, Lord, please, we're almost there. I'd do anything to be there for you in this moment, I really would, but my body won't let me.

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### Conversation and reflection

- 1 Invite one another to talk briefly, or reflect on your own about the sacrifices you have made during the pandemic to keep one another safe, and how it has felt.
- 2 How have you felt or experienced Jesus' presence during times of isolation?
- 3 Share some 'good news' stories about new and creative ways people have found to support one another in the last few months.

### Listen

[I am Here for You](#) Stuart Townend

[Can you hear me?](#) Thomas Hewitt-Jones, sung by the Choir of Royal Holloway

### Prayer action

Suggest that people look through a window, stand facing a wall, or hold a family photograph, as you pray for those in care homes, still unable to see loved ones regularly and 'normally'.

Caring, compassionate God, it's not easy for those who are far from family. Those in residential and nursing homes have been particularly affected by this pandemic. They have lost friends and relatives, and haven't been able to see their family. As we age, communication can become more difficult and we adapt less easily to new technologies. We ask your blessing on each person living in a care home, and for each of the staff looking after them. We pray for their families and friends. God grant that we may feel connection despite distance. Amen.

### Follow-up activity

During this coming week, contact someone who may be feeling especially isolated at this time, and/or consider sending a gift to care staff at local residential and nursing homes, to encourage them at this time.