

I did not send a message yesterday. Our zeal finally gave out. We have been touring, and walking 10-13,000 steps a day. Days have started at 6:00 to 6:15 and ended around 10:00 pm.

Today was a free day. We walked 5-6,000 steps, had a nap before dinner and now we are packing our bags. I suspect the "free day" is a ploy to give us a chance to catch our breath before we make the trip home...which could turn out like the trip here to be 20-30 hours without sleep.

Yesterday we followed in the final steps of Jesus. We began by going to the Mount of Olives. I must admit I never saw what the Gospels say so plainly. Jerusalem, like the rest of Israel is mountainous and hilly. The hills are small mountains. The Mount of Olives is just that, an olive grove that spills down the side of a mountain towards the walls of the city.

We walked down the mountain to the place called Gethsemane. At each place we stopped to hear the appropriate part of the Gospel read. So we read of Jesus tears. We read of the disciples inability to stay awake. We read of the growing isolation of our Lord...who alone knew what was coming.

We visited the place where Jesus was betrayed. We wept and we prayed.

We visited the house of Caiphas where the first trial was held. We visited the pit in which Jesus spent the rest of the night, before being taken to Pilate. I use the word pit. In fact it was an empty cistern, much like a huge bottle. 18 or so of us stood on the floor. It would have been utterly dark in Jesus time. He unlike us would have been there, utterly alone.

We walked to the place where Pilate would have tried Jesus. We walked to the place where Jesus would have been whipped. The place where Pilate would have given way to the crowd and passed the death sentence. We walked the road of sorrow....where Jesus carried the cross until he was no longer able to do so. We walked to Golgotha. We walked to the place where Peter denied he had ever known Jesus. We walked to the place where Joseph of Arimthea's tomb was, and was donated to bury Jesus in the short time before the beginning of Shabbatt. We read of his burial, we read of the resurrection. The tomb is still empty!!

I say we walked to these places. Every one of them is occupied by a church, occupied by a church built on the archeological remains of former churches. The message in the ground is that for 21 centuries, pilgrims like ourselves, have come, and walked, and read, and prayed, and remembered.

Story. There is a church, made of stone, called ST. Anne's. Tradition says that Mary's parents lived in this city. Her mother was Anne. We sang without musical accompaniment, two choruses and the first verse of Holy, Holy, Holy. The acoustics were remarkable. As we arrived a priest in white robes was exiting, having just conducted Mass. Rebekah and I led the singing. The priest, returned and sat at the back to listen. When our 22 voices were done, he thanked us and said, "you sang like the Angels."

We start the journey for home, for Canada, tomorrow. Like our Lord we can say of our pilgrimage....."it is finished."

Morley Mitchell
God willing we will see you soon, sent in the love of Jesus.