



Christ Reformed Community Church

161 Hampton Point Dr. Suite 2 | St. Augustine, Florida | 32092 | christreformedcc.com

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Dr. Andrew Smith

“Watch and Pray” Mark 14:32–42

This morning I want you to take your Bibles and turn with me again to the Gospel of Mark. As you know, we’ve been in Mark for a very, very long time, and we come to a section in Scripture that I’ve entitled “Watch and Pray.” It’s a very familiar portion of Scripture. We’ll pick up in verse 32 of Mark 14, and I’ll read through verse 42, and I want to ask you to stand in the honor of the reading of God’s Word. Mark 14:32–42:

And they [that is, Jesus and the disciples] went to a place called Gethsemane. And he said to his disciples, “Sit here while I pray.” And he took with him Peter and James and John, and began to be greatly distressed and troubled. And he said to them, “My soul is very sorrowful, even to death. Remain here and watch.” And going a little farther, he fell on the ground and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him. And he said, “Abba, Father, all things are possible for you. Remove this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will.” And he came and found them sleeping, and he said to Peter, “Simon, are you asleep? Could you not watch one hour? Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.” And again he went away and prayed, saying the same words. And again he came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were very heavy, and they did not know what to answer him. And he came the third time and said to them, “Are you still sleeping and taking your rest? It is enough; the hour has come. The Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise, let us be going; see, my betrayer is at hand.”

Please be seated as we ask the Lord to bless the preaching of His Word this morning.

Dear God, as we prayed earlier, we pray very similarly that You would grant us ears that we may hear, holy hearts that we may love, clear minds that we may think. As we study Your Word, we ask that You would bless Your Word and the preaching of it for Your praise, for Your glory, and for our perseverance in the faith. We pray these things in Jesus’ name. Amen.

If you notice with me in the text that I read you, specifically verse number 36, and even more specifically than that, the latter part of verse 36, Jesus asks the Father, “Remove this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will.” “Not what I will, but what you will.” That prayer by Jesus really touches upon what we celebrate at Christmas, and that is the mystery of the incarnation. How does the divine and human nature exist together in the God-man? To put it in a very practical way, how could Jesus here in verse 36 ask on the one hand, for Jesus to remove the cup, and yet on the other hand, ask that the will of the Father be done? In the year 451, the Council of Chalcedon dealt with this issue of the incarnation of Christ, saying that Christ was *vera homo, vera deus*,

“truly man and truly God,” that there are two natures in one person. They were countering the Monophysite heresy. The Monophysite heresy was a heresy that said that Jesus didn’t have two natures. Monophysite, made up of really two words, *mónos* meaning “one” and *physis* meaning “nature.” They said that Jesus didn’t have two natures, and that His one nature was either a deified human nature or a humanized divine nature, and it was this position that really essentially denied the full deity of Jesus as well as the full humanity of Jesus.

Well, texts like Mark 14:36 cause confusion surrounding Jesus’ incarnation, and that’s why the Council of Chalcedon clarified that in dealing with the mystery of the incarnation and in affirming Jesus’ two natures, the council was saying that these two natures are united in a perfect way. They are not confused. They are not mixed. They are not divided. They are not separated, so that in simple terms, the incarnation tells us that the Son of God did not give up any of His attributes of deity. Jesus did not stop being divine when He took on human flesh, though He did give up the right to use some of those divine attributes, nor did the Son of God fail to experience his humanity in things that marked true humanity, such as limitations of knowledge at certain times, limitation of the full use of his divine power. And so, while Chalcedon Orthodox Christians today see a perfect unity of the two natures, they are not confused. They are not mixed. They are not to be divided. They are not to be separated, but they are to be distinguished, and yet in all of that, we say we are still confused and there is still mystery. Well, join the club. That’s kind of the point. You can’t figure God out and I can’t either, but there’s enough to know about God to be able to be clear about these issues.

Christ’s divine nature never stops being divine. His human nature never stops being human, and that is even true today. Jesus is not here with us physically; He is in heaven at the right hand of God, but Jesus is here with us spiritually because Jesus is God and God is everywhere. You say, “Why are you bringing all that up?” Well, because one of the benefits of this tension surrounding the two natures of Jesus is that it allows us to identify with Him, or maybe better put, it allows God to identify with us. That’s really the point of the incarnation. You remember the author of Hebrews puts it this way, he says, “*For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.*” The practical tension of the two natures of Christ and His ability to sympathize with our weaknesses as humanity is set before us in this very passage, Mark 14, and the grief that is associated with what Jesus experienced in his passion prior to being arrested and crucified. In the context, Jesus has already predicted the falling away of the eleven disciples. He has already predicted the betrayal of Judas. Judas is away from their company. They have had the Last Supper, as it’s called, the last Passover, the first Lord’s Supper in the upper room. And now with the looming reality of experiencing the cup of wrath that Jesus would drink for sinners, Jesus, as they make their way to the garden of Gethsemane, they come to the entrance of that garden and the focus of these verses is the prayer of Jesus to the Father. And what do we learn in verses 32 through 42? Well, it’s this. We see the sort of effective praying that should mark our lives, which is modeled by Jesus, Jesus the God-man, a Jesus that is fully divine but Jesus that is fully human.

In His greatest hour of grief in His earthly life, He pours out His heart before the Father in deep prayer, and from this, we learn that there are three attributes of our own prayer lives that we need to learn today. Jesus has come to the end of His earthly life in our text. We have come to the end

of another long year. What will your prayer life be like in 2023? What will your dependence upon God and your trust in His sovereignty look like for the new year? Well, let’s look at these three attributes of prayer. Like Jesus, our prayer should be marked, number one, by what I want to call an emotional articulation from the soul, an emotional articulation from the soul. Effective prayer is rooted in the depth of your soul being poured out in sincere emotion before God, at times, as it is the case with Jesus here in front of others, and sometimes privately. We see this in verses 32 through 34. Notice, first, in verse 32. It says, “*And they went to a place called Gethsemane. And he said to his disciples, ‘Sit here while I pray.’*” Now, they’ve already been journeying to Gethsemane. We saw that the last time we looked at this text together earlier in Mark’s account here in chapter 14, but now they’re at this garden of Gethsemane. The word *Gethsemane* simply means “oil press.” This would have been a private garden surrounded by a fence or a wall owned by a man, very likely a follower of Jesus, who allowed Jesus to have free access to this garden as a spiritual retreat for times of prayer with the disciples and times of teaching, the place where olives were cultivated and crushed.

It’s here that Jesus would feel the crushing weight of anxiety at the prospect of not only the abandonment of Him by the disciples but also the darkness that would separate Him from the Father at the cross. And as this experience crushed His soul, His emotions poured out in prayer, and at the same time, He directed His disciples to pray. The end of verse 32 says, “*And he said to his disciples, ‘Sit here while I pray.’*” That is to say, “Sit here at the entrance while I go in further,” as the text will indicate, “to pray,” and the course of the text reveals to us that the whole intent of this is for them to watch Jesus pray so that they could learn. It becomes very clear as we move through this text that Jesus wants the disciples to watch Jesus praying so that they can learn how to pray, and if we look at verse 33 it says, “*And he took with him Peter and James and John*” that’s the inner circle, “*and began to be greatly distressed and troubled.*” Further in the garden, He takes the three, Peter, James and John. He leaves the others at the entrance, and He goes to pray a little further into the garden. In one sense, He needed them there. This was his greatest hour of grief, and in another sense, they needed Him because they didn’t understand the full depth and agony of His mission, and there He showed them what He felt. It says, he began, as verse 33 says, “*to be greatly distressed and troubled,*” and verse 34 says, he even said to them, “*My soul is very sorrowful, even to death. Remain here and watch.*” Verse 33, it says He was “*greatly distressed.*” That could be translated “greatly amazed.” It’s actually the same word that’s used in chapter 10 and verse 32, the Greek word *thambeō*, which means that He “was amazed.” It’s literally translated that way there.

The disciples in chapter 10 were amazed as Jesus walked ahead of them resolutely to Jerusalem where He said He was going to be arrested, tried, crucified, and they were amazed at His boldness and resolutely taking steps to Jerusalem. But here it says Jesus was “*greatly distressed,*” *thambeō*, “greatly amazed.” He was amazed at the depth of the suffering He was going to endure. This marks a watershed moment in our Lord’s life from the perspective of His humanity where the depth of His agony exceeded the expectations and anticipation from what He had earlier. He’s facing this agony squarely on, and it even says at the end of verse 33 that he was “*troubled,*” an interesting word that has to do with the idea of being homesick. Jesus was homesick for heaven. He was troubled and bothered in His soul, unable to bear the thought of being separated from His Father under the cruel judgment of the cross. And so, while in chapter 10, He walked resolutely to Jerusalem at the prospect of His suffering, here He walks probably rather slowly in the garden,

just steps away from His journey to the cross, and His emotions stop Him in His tracks. He has the homesick reality that He’s never been further away from the home He had with His Father until now, and terror strikes within His soul as it becomes clearer and clearer to Him what it will mean to suffer for the sins of His people.

Jesus was not merely staring the devil in the face as He did in the wilderness. Oh, no, as He treads the ground of the garden, He realizes in a stark way like never before the horrors of hell itself, and this was so much the case that Jesus could have died prematurely. He says there in verse 34, *“My soul is very sorrowful, even to death.”* From an emotional perspective, this was the lowest point in His life, and it wasn’t merely because He knew Judas had betrayed Him. The others were going to fall away. Peter was going to deny Him. The Sanhedrin was going to condemn Him with false accusations. Pilate was going to sentence Him. The soldiers were going to crucify Him. No, this was like a man standing on the ocean shore exposed to a tsunami with nowhere to run. This was the—mark it—the tidal wave of God’s furious wrath that was headed directly toward Him, the wrath that He would endure for sinners. That’s why Jesus would cry out on the cross in chapter 15, *“‘Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?’ which means, ‘My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?’”* Verse 34: *“My soul is very sorrowful, even to death.”* The word order in the Greek literally translates it *“Sorrowful is my soul,”* or *“Overwhelmed is my soul.”* Overwhelmed and sorrowful is in the first position in the sentence for emphasis, but we know the theme verse of Mark, right? The Son of Man has come to give up His life as a ransom for many.

He has *“not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.”* Galatians 3: *“Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, ‘Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree.’”* Jesus knew that, but at this moment, He felt—and rightly so—Godforsaken because here’s the reality, folks. The curse on Jesus would not be lifted until He said, *“It is finished,”* on the cross, but the curse on us would not be lifted unless He chose to go to the cross, and this is the tension Jesus is dealing with in this passage. This tidal wave of God’s curse that would physically crush Jesus on the cross is now emotionally crushing Him within His soul, creating deep, deep distress. The curse was coming, and it was almost too much to bear. So, what does Jesus do? Well, He says at the end of verse 34, *“Remain here and watch.”* He wants the disciples to see this agony, and He says as it says at the end of verse 32, *“Sit here while I pray.”* They’re watching Him go through this. Do we wonder why our prayer lives seem dry and stale? Well, if you feel that way this morning, and all of us do from time to time, let me ask you a question: Do you pray the way Jesus prays, as in this passage, in verse 34, *“Remain here and watch”*? Verse 32: *“Sit here while I pray.”* That’s the point of this passage, that from the depth of bitter anguish, dread, and even terror, Jesus turns to His Father in prayer, pouring out His emotions in desperate pleas and cries for help and comfort and understanding. And let me just say, those are always the most effective prayers; prayers that are humble, prayers that are focused, prayers that are sincere, prayers that focus upon the felt needs of our greatest anxieties. God wants us, God expects us to pray that way. As I said earlier by reading Psalm 42:

*Why are you cast down, O my soul,
and why are you in turmoil within me?
Hope in God; for I shall again praise him,
my salvation and my God.*

*My soul is cast down within me;
therefore I remember you
from the land of Jordan and of Hermon,
from Mount Mizar.
Deep calls to deep
at the roar of your waterfalls;
all your breakers and your waves
have gone over me.*

Did Jesus have that psalm? Was that His prayer, that the waves and the billows of the distress that were being poured over His soul by God the Father, was He praying for relief? Well, as the billows pour over us, we should do as Jesus did. We pour out our hearts like a waterfall, an emotional, desperate pleading, and you say, “Well, that’s sounds too Pentecostal. Well, that sounds too emotional.” Jesus didn’t think so. Jesus was very emotional in the garden, extremely emotional. Sinclair Ferguson says: “Gethsemane was unique. We do not go through our own Gethsemane. Jesus has done that for us, but we must learn to place our feet in the footsteps of faithfulness which He planted there if we are to be His disciples.” We are to walk like Jesus, pray like Jesus, and there is no shame in the prayers of Jesus with His troubled and distressed heart, allowing others and asking others to watch Him as He pleads with the Father. We don’t all have a Gethsemane in the same sense Jesus does, but this is true:

All paths that have been, or shall be,
Pass somewhere through Gethsemane.
Joy and woe are woven fine,
A clothing for the soul divine:
Under every grief and pine
Runs a joy with silken twine.
It is right it should be so:
Man was made for joy and woe;
And when this we rightly know
Safely through the world we go.

Folks, because Jesus willingly walked through the darkness of the garden, which was His valley of the shadow of death, we know He is with us in our lives. His rod and His staff comfort us in our valley of the shadow of death. He holds the scepter of sovereignty, having been raised and ascended to the right hand of God. Through the gospel, darkness has turned to light, and because of His darkest hour and because of His Godforsaken moment, the Bible says He will never leave us nor forsake His saved sheep. The Good Shepherd stood where we stand in our emotional grief, and He stood where we should have stood, but He stood in our place, dying as a willing substitute. And here is the reality; there are two natures of Christ. And from the standpoint of His humanity, Jesus is troubled and distressed, and He pours His soul in prayer before His Father in an emotional articulation and expression of words and prayer.

But our emotional articulation in our prayers need to be balanced with a second thing, and that is doctrinal affirmation. The first attribute of a prayer life that is modeled after Jesus is what we described as an emotional articulation from the soul, but the second attribute is found in verses 35

and 36, and it’s doctrinal affirmation of God’s will. Emotional articulation from the soul, yes, verses 32 through 34, but second, doctrinal affirmation of God’s will, verses 35 and 36:

And going a little farther, he fell on the ground and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him. And he said, “Abba, Father, all things are possible for you. Remove this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will.”

The doctrinal affirmation is found there at the end of verse 36: “*Remove this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will,*” really teaching us that effective prayer always finds one’s own will lost in God’s perfect will, and that was Jesus’ perspective. He’s affirming doctrine here that this is the will of God. As horrific as it was, Jesus knew deep down it was the only way. The cross was the only way. It was the perfect plan of the triune God from before the foundation of the world, but notice again verse 35: “*And going a little farther, he fell on the ground and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him.*” That’s where Jesus began. He began by praying for relief. He goes a little farther than Peter, James and John, and in His battle of grief, they can still see Him; and this battle is really a battle of temptation, but where Jesus was shuddering at the drinking of the cup of the Father’s wrath. But later, Luke records for us that Jesus referred to this whole experience as the hour of the power of darkness, which means Satan was involved. Satan was in the garden. John MacArthur says, and I quote: “If the devil had succeeded, he would have succumbed to temptation.” MacArthur says:

Jesus would not have accomplished God’s redemptive purposes. His messianic mission would have ended in failure. God’s Word would be untrue. The gospel would be meaningless. Heaven would be empty. Satan would have claimed the victory. So, knowing what was at stake, He earnestly petitioned His heavenly Father.

As verse 35 says, He goes a little farther. Luke tells us about a stone’s throw away, and He’s praying during this onslaught of temptation in contrast to the disciples who aren’t praying. What does He do here in verse 35? It says, “*He fell on the ground,*” and He prayed. This highlights His humanity, really I think that which is echoed in Hebrews 5: “*In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to him who was able to save him from death.*” The disciples could see Jesus in the darkness, and what they could not see of Him, they could hear from Him, pleading with the Father in the darkness for what God was able to do—remove the cup, but what He was unwilling to do. He fell to the ground with loud cries. This is not the normal posture for prayer. The normal posture for prayer is standing with hands lifted toward heaven. Jesus is so overwhelmed with grief that He falls on His face in loud cries and screams, prays to His Father. And Mark continues to tell us this general petition. He’s spiritually desperate, and notice it says He prayed, “*if it were possible,*” verse 34, “*that the hour might pass from him.*” Now, “*the hour*” refers to what Jesus knew to be true. It’s that predestined moment of suffering for sinners.

Jesus oftentimes spoke about that the hour had come. You remember that earlier in Mark’s Gospel, and John tells us that before the feast of the Passover when Jesus knew His hour was to come, He went to Jerusalem. The High Priestly Prayer of Jesus in John 17, He prays to the Father, “*The hour has come.*” The hour God had predestined was here, but here we see a glimpse of Jesus’ humanity in verse 35. He knew the predestined hour of His suffering had arrived, and yet He prays—listen to this—that if there is another way within the scheme of God’s glorious and sovereign redemptive

plan, “Father, may the cross be avoided.” You say, “Well, I don’t like the sound of that,” but you pray like that all the time. I remember as a young man when my mother was passing away. She had cancer, and she was dying for two years from bone cancer, in immense suffering, in immense pain, and I remember up until the last moments praying, “Heal her. Heal her, O God. Perform a miracle, O God,” even though I knew that that wasn’t the Lord’s will. Even though I knew that that wasn’t going to happen, from my heart I wanted her to live, and you pray that way all the time. You may know or sense what God’s will is. You don’t know His secret providence.

Here, Jesus did know God’s secret providence, and yet from the standpoint of humanity, He’s praying that if God could do it, if God was able, that He would remove the cup. But this is why verse 36 is important because it provides the more specific words of Jesus’ petition. Verse 35 in general—if it’s possible that the hour might pass—but verse 36, here’s an insight into the more detailed prayers of Jesus: “*And he said,*” notice your Bibles, “*Abba, Father, all things are possible for you. Remove this cup from me. Yet now what I will, but what you will.*” This is nothing short of full submission to the hour of suffering that was predestined for Him. He begins it with “*Abba, Father.*” Of course, as God’s unique Son, He prayed to the heavenly Father using this title of deep intimacy, “*Abba,*” which is an Aramaic term some people say is the equivalent to calling God “Daddy,” and Jesus is the unique Son of God. But on a sidenote, we are the adopted sons of God, and we have the right through our union with Christ to pray this way. Galatians 4:6: “*And because you are sons,*” Paul says, “*God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, ‘Abba! Father!’*” This is a prayer of deep intimacy and deep devotion. This is not the will of the Son pitted against the will of the Father. This is Jesus, in His humanity, praying for something that He knows can’t happen out of the emotional state of His soul, but now He’s coming to grips and doctrinally affirming what He knows has been predestined, and so He says, “*All things are possible for you.*” That is, nothing is outside the limits of God’s doing, but Jesus understood that what God does must always work in accord with His character and His sovereign will before He acts; and so, the rest of the request is, “*Remove this cup from me,*” quickly modified by the phrase, “*Yet not what I will, but what you will.*”

You see, folks, and here is the point, Jesus is affirming doctrinally what He knows must happen. The predestined hour, the clock is striking, and Jesus is now embracing it. What did He say over and over again from the time of His youth in the temple? “Why were you looking for me, Mom and Dad? Didn’t you know I was to be in my Father’s house?” John 4, the food: “*My will is to do the will of him who sent me and to accomplish his work.*” John 6:38: “*For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me.*” John 10:18: “*I lay down my life that I may take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord.*” So, you ask why would He ask for the removal of the cup if He was going to submit to the drinking of that cup? Well, two very important reasons: number one, by asking it that way, it reveals His perfect humanity. Let me ask you a question: How could you ever believe Jesus to truly be human if He didn’t take the time to pause and reflect upon the seriousness of God’s hellish judgment upon His only begotten Son, the reality that He would drink down God’s holy wrath? You wouldn’t believe in His perfect humanity. Jesus was fully human. He understood the seriousness of what He was going to experience, and even the thought of it, much less the experience of it on the cross, but the thought of it, caused Him such grief and anguish to begin to question, “Is there another way?” And secondly, He knew that that cup symbolized, as a figure, God’s outpoured wrath. He knew that as a reader of the Old Testament, as a preacher of the Old Testament, for example, Isaiah 51, that

drinking down God’s wrath upon the cross He was drinking, and I’m quoting from Isaiah 51: *“From the hand of the Lord, the cup of his wrath...the dregs the bowl, the cup of staggering.”*

It was used in the Old Testament to describe God’s judgment upon sinners. He was going to force them to drink His judgment. They were going to stagger in drunkenness and feel the consequences of their action. The consequences of Jesus’ obedience were manifestly distressful emotionally, physically agonizing, the cruelty and the violence of the cross. And so, as He represented God’s people, Israel, and even as He represented the other nations, as Jeremiah says that the cup of God’s wrath was reserved for, Jesus was dying for the select and elect ethnic Jews, and He was dying for the elect gentiles, the Israel of God. He was drinking, as Ezekiel says, a cup *“filled with drunkenness and sorrow. A cup of horror and desolation,”* Ezekiel 23. It was, Habakkuk 2, *“the cup in the LORD’s...hand,”* that came to Christ, a cup of *“utter shame”* that would come upon His glory. It would overwhelm His glory and reveal His shame, even though He was perfect, sinless, and undefiled. And so—mark it—the cup of God’s wrath, Jesus knew He would be drinking down, as the perfect Son of God, the judgment due to all sinners. Jesus Himself would drink down.

It is impossible to put into words the type of physical and emotional and spiritual stress and anxiety that Jesus faced. Do you experience anxiety? Do you experience fear? Do you experience the crushing weight of a panic attack or a nervous situation? You’re in good company. We have a Great High Priest who can sympathize with your weaknesses, yet He was without sin. He has been where you have been, in your garden of grief. That’s the whole point, except it was far worse for Him—the Father being separated from the Son in darkness. As the psalmist says, *“For in the hand of the LORD there is a cup with foaming wine, well mixed, and he pours out from it, and all the wicked of the earth shall drain it down to the dregs.”* That’s why He’s praying, *“If it’s possible, is there another way?”* The cup is reserved for sinners, not spotless, holy Lambs of God, of which there is only one. And in spite of the horrors of the cross, Paul tells us in Philippians 2, He became obedient, *“obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.”* Jesus was cursed so we could be blessed, as Paul says. Jesus was crushed so we could be saved, as Isaiah says. Jesus was condemned so that we could be justified. He asked for the cup to be removed because it’s utterly unthinkable for Him, perfect as He was, to undergo such judgment, and He asked for the Father’s will to be done because He was in agreement with the unthinkable.

So, think with me for a moment about the unthinkable. The gospel itself is unthinkable. God could have done the possible. He could have removed the cup, but through the gospel, God did the impossible. He did the unthinkable. He turned the bad news of our sin into the good news of the gospel through the unthinkable death of Jesus on the cross, and God is still just in all of that. By the way, have you ever thought what it was that Jesus saw when He gazed down into that cup of wrath? Well, He saw hell opened up to swallow Him, as it were, as He swallowed the foam and the fury of God’s hellish wrath. And you say, *“Well, Jesus didn’t descend into hell.”* You know, that’s the great debate of the Apostles’ Creed. You’re right, Jesus did not descend into hell. Jesus experienced and suffered a far worse hell than that. Maybe He didn’t go to hell, but the hell of Gethsemane and Golgotha came to Him. Hell didn’t swallow Him down, but He swallowed hell down by drinking in full measure the Father’s wrath. And in the garden, He is getting just a taste of what is to come. As one commentator says, and I quote: *“Jesus suffered the full equivalent of that which His people would have suffered if He had not died in their stead. So, in this sense I say, Jesus suffered the worst of all possible hells.”*

And as He descended further into the garden, and the agony of anxiety climaxed there in His soul and then later at Calvary in his body, Jesus was descending into the dark abyss of God’s judgment as He would take upon His shoulders the curse of sin, though He was perfect. *“He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness,”* Peter says, *“By His wounds you have been healed.”* He became unrighteous so that we could become righteous. He was considered sinful so we would be considered sinless. He was condemned so that we could be justified. He was killed so we could be saved, and because He was raised, we’ve been raised with Him. You know, Peter has a way of putting things. Peter, who was an eyewitness of all of this says in the book of Acts to the Jews in chapter 3, he says, *“But you denied the Holy and Righteous One, and asked for a murderer to be granted to you.”* That’s what happened prior to Jesus’ crucifixion. A murderer was released. They *“denied the Holy and Righteous One.”* There is only one who is holy, only one who is righteous, but Jesus was counted unholy and unrighteous for His people, to save them.

Jesus drank the cup of suffering and sorrow so that we could drink the cup of salvation, and this morning, we come before the Lord’s Table to do that. We come before the Lord’s Table to see and experience and taste the emblems of His death, burial, and resurrection. We come to drink of this cup, which symbolizes the blood poured out for His people, but here in Mark 14, the agony of drinking that cup was a soul-wrenching experience for Jesus. We drink it in salvation and celebration; Jesus drank it in judgment. And it ended up in celebration because of His resurrection, but that doesn’t take away from the pain. And though I’m tempted, so as not to remove our worship this morning of Christ, to which I think this text draws us, I would be delinquent not to mention the helpful counsel I think the Holy Spirit gives to us in this passage because Jesus wanted—don’t forget—the disciples to watch Jesus pray because trials for us can be so wrenching, and trials oftentimes lead to temptation to sin; or if we fall into sin, we seek more sin because we don’t have the comfort of God’s forgiveness. The disciples should have been watching and praying lest they entered into temptation, but I think that one of the most effective ways to pray with doctrinal affirmation of God’s will as Jesus did is to pray the Scriptures. Dr. Don Whitney taught me this when I was in seminary. Praying the Scriptures means as you read the Scriptures you pray what you are reading. For example:

Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing. If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him.

In other words, we are to pray that God would strengthen us and sustain us and help us persevere and make us stronger spiritually in whatever trial we face; and if it be God’s will He would deliver us, and if we don’t understand the trial, that we ask God for wisdom and He will give it. And, as James says, we aren’t to *“be deceived,”* because *“Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change.”* We aren’t to think that trials aren’t in a sense a gift from God. God gives all perfect gifts. What’s the point of trials? Well, one of the points is for God calling us to bow before Him in prayer, to pray for wisdom, to pray for deliverance; but at the same time, effective prayer doesn’t just emotionally express one’s heart. It doctrinally affirms what God’s will is for our lives.

Submission and trust in God—that was Jesus. Peter says, “*When [Jesus] was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly. He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree.*” Jesus entrusted himself to the Father in prayer. He came to the point in prayer where He embraced God’s will, and that’s really the point.

We’re looking at three attributes of prayer from this passage that marked Jesus’ prayer life that can be applied to our own prayer lives. Our prayers should be marked, number one, but emotional articulation from the soul, verse 32 through 34; secondly, doctrinal affirmation of God’s will, verses 35 and 36; finally, number three, practical application for one’s life, verses 37 through 42. You see, Jesus’ actions in the garden were meant to instruct the disciples, as I’ve said, on the power of prayer for their lives. And here we read in verses 37 through 42—we’ll go through it fairly quickly—that three times Jesus returns to the sleeping disciples. Two times He warns them to “*watch and pray,*” and then the third time He says something interesting, but notice the first return to them after His first season of prayer, verse 37. It says, “*And he came and found them sleeping, and he said to Peter, ‘Simon, are you asleep? Could you not watch one hour?’*” I mean, it’s somewhat understandable, right, given the activity of the night? They’re fighting in the upper room. Jesus humbles them by washing their feet. Jesus announces that the betrayer is going to be among them. He predicts the falling away of the disciples. All of that emotional turmoil, you can understand, wore them out emotionally. You’re always your most tired when you’re emotionally and spiritually tired. But Jesus only gently reproves them. In fact, He doesn’t even speak to all of them. He speaks to the leader. He speaks to Peter, and He says to Peter—notice what He calls him, verse 37: “*Simon.*” That’s his old name. He’s not acting like a strong rock, Peter, *petros*, he’s acting like Simon, the old man; weak physically because he’s tired, but more importantly, weak spiritually because he’s not praying. He’s sleeping.

“*Simon, are you asleep? Could you not watch one hour?*” That indicates the fact that Jesus had been praying at least one hour, pouring His soul out before the Father, and Peter and the others are sleeping. And then we read in verse 38 the gentle rebuke: “*Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.*” “*Watch and pray,*” and I think Jesus means more here than just physically staying alert. He’s telling them to spiritual stay alert. That’s what Jesus did, and He passed the test, right? He embraced His suffering. The others, chapter 14 and verse 50, it says, “*They all...fled.*” And that is true as the verse says. Verse 38: “*The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.*” Prayer always helps us overcome our weak flesh at times of doubt and temptation: “*No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape.*” But how do you avoid that except through prayer? Peter later understood Jesus was talking not just merely about physical alertness but spiritual alertness because Peter uses this occasion to instruct the church on how to pray in 1 Peter 5:8: “*Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.*” Peter’s writing out of this exact experience. He was in the garden with Jesus. The devil was there. The Lion was there. He failed; Jesus succeeded, and one of the reasons Jesus succeeded from a human standpoint was that Jesus was praying to the Father lest He fall into temptation.

Well, after another season of prayer, Jesus returned a second time to the inner circle, notice verse 39: “*And again he went away and prayed, saying the same words,*” pouring out His heart before

the Father. Verse 40: “*And again he came and found them sleeping.*” And Mark sort of takes up for them here because, remember, Peter is his eyewitness source, and Mark says, “*For their eyes were very heavy.*” Let’s cut them a break here. They’re tired physically, they’re tired emotionally, and it says, “*They did not know what to answer him.*” This time their lack of prayer turned into deep sleeping. Their eyes were very heavy. They had maintained that they would never be disloyal to Christ, but that was said out of the flesh, right? And here in the flesh of their eyes, they’re not alert. Instead of praying, they’re caught sleeping, and later they would fall away. They’re trusting in their flesh. They’re sleeping instead of praying, and it’s hard not to affirm that they understood what Jesus was praying for and they understood what Jesus was going to do. Perhaps they didn’t pray because they had a moment of hyper-Calvinism. I mean, after all, Jesus was praying, “*Remove this cup from me,*” and it wasn’t working. God had already predestined the hour to come, that Jesus was going to die, Jesus was going to suffer.

What a sobering warning to us. We dare not sleep off or shrug off our problems, refusing to pray because we say God is going to do what He’s going to do because He’s already ordained it. That’s an excuse, and it’s disobedient. That sort of attitude leads to the type of stumbling that the disciples were guilty of: bad decisions, justifying our lives, justifying our laziness in not praying, saying, “Well, God’s sovereign and it’s going to happen anyway.” Jesus didn’t view it that way. He prayed, trusting in God’s sovereignty, praying for God’s will, and yet seeking direction. At least on the second occasion, their pride is gone. The end of verse 40 says, “*They did not know what to answer him.*” That’s sort of like a silent admittance of guilt. Let me ask you a question: How will you respond this new year to the reality that you don’t pray as much as you should? You say, “Well, pastor, you have no clue about my prayer life.” Yes, I do, because none of us pray as often and as earnestly as we should. Will you go home today realizing your prayer life is inactive and then sleep in the rest of the year, not engaging in the hard work of desperate prayer? That’s Jesus’ point here. His point is, “Watch me, I’m praying. You didn’t watch, you failed. You succumbed to temptation. I prayed; I had victory.”

The disciples are just like us, aren’t they? Awakened by the reality of the importance of prayer, they fall right back to sleep. They fall right back to their old habits, not taking Jesus’ words at heart. It is amazing to me that on the Mount of Transfiguration these same three—Peter, James and John—were eager to watch and to see what they saw, that scene of victory. But here in this scene of seeming defeat, they have no faith. And not only are they not watching, they’re not praying, and they’re sleeping. May I suggest that it’s in moments of faithlessness, it’s in moments when we don’t feel like praying, those are the very moments we should pray. Those are signs to us that we need to reintroduce ourselves to God in prayer. Surely, the eleven would have responded differently if they had been prayerful. Well, certainly, as Jesus walked away the third time and before He came back, He felt the height of loneliness, but something visibly happened in His appearance and His demeanor in verses 41 and 42. It says, “*And he came the third time and said to them, ‘Are you still sleeping and taking your rest?’*” Apparently, no answer, and so Jesus says—I love this—“*It is enough; the hour has come. The Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise, let us be going; see, my betrayer is at hand.*”

See, after praying, Jesus came to a lifechanging realization and resolve, the practical application for His own life. “*It is enough; the hour has come.*” There comes an end to your prayer sometimes when God’s will has been revealed, as in this case. Jesus was praying, and it led not only to a

solution but to a resolution, resolved, “I will go to the cross.” Jesus was done praying, and now He would make the practical application to His own life, flowing from His prayers. The prayers were enough. Jesus would go to the cross—resolved. Even as He said this, perhaps hearing or seeing, maybe pointing His finger, “*The hour has come. The Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise, let us be going; see, my betrayer is at hand.*” He walked steps toward Judas and the others because His prayers elicited a holy resolve to do the Father’s will. That’s what prayer does. It strengthens us by the Holy Spirit to see the will of God for our lives, to walk onto that path and to walk toward it with resolve and resolution and commitment, and the Father’s will was the Son’s pain, so He walked, and He took His steps to Judas and the betrayers that would later lead to the cross. You know, prayer is the same for us. Prayer makes us resolve to do God’s will. We talk all the time at the beginning of the new year about resolutions. Prayer helps us to resolve what we have committed to God to do. As Thomas Watson the great Puritan said, “Prayer is not for God’s information. Oh, no! Prayer is for the creature’s submission.” It’s for us to understand God’s will, to embrace His plan and His will for our lives, and this is how practical Scripture is. This is exactly what Jesus did. It’s identical to what He did—prayed to His Father and embraced the Father’s will.

Now, I want you to turn forward with me to Hebrews chapter 5 because I quoted this text earlier, and I want to show something interesting to you here in Hebrews chapter 5 because you may think that the Father didn’t answer the Son’s prayer. He said, “*Remove this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will,*” and the Father didn’t remove the cup, and therefore you may conclude, “Well, the Father didn’t answer His prayers.” Not really. Hebrews 7:5: “*In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to him.*” Notice what it says, underline this, “*who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverence.*” He prayed to the Father “*who was able to save Him from death, and he was heard because of his reverence.*” My dear friends, the prayer of Jesus was answered because although He would suffer and die, He would be raised. He would be saved from death itself. Paul says, “*We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.*” By the glory of the Father, the prayers of the Son were answered. He did not save Him from the cup of wrath, but He did deliver Him from ultimate eternal and final death. That’s the good news of the gospel. Because He died, we died with Him. Because He was raised, we have been raised with Him. His prayers not only saved Himself, but they saved us. You don’t need another mediator. You don’t need a priest to go confess your sins to at the end of the year to get right with God. You need the Great High Priest, the one who’s already prayed for you, the one who’s already died for you, the one who’s already been raised for you, the one who’s already ascended and calls for you and tells you to pray to Him from earth so that we might walk in newness of life.

Jesus walked to the cross, and He was raised so that we can pray to God in Jesus’ name, and He can answer us. He can empower us to walk in newness of life; and maybe you don’t make new year’s resolutions, but will you commit to greater prayer this year, trusting that your prayers for greater holiness, walking in newness of life, will be answered because we’ve been raised to walk in newness of life? It’s a promise. It’s been predestined that we will do it, but God requires us through prayer and the power of the Holy Spirit to pray that God will enable us to do that thing, that 2023 will be a walk in newness, newness of patterns and habits and disciplines for greater holiness. There are those times in our lives where it’s appropriate to pray the psalms just as Dr.

Whitney taught me to do, and to pray the full force of the psalms. You say, “What are you talking about.” Well, psalms like this:

*For you will not abandon my soul to Sheol,
or let your holy one see corruption.
You make known to me the path of life;
in your presence there is fullness of joy;
at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.*

Or what about this one, Psalm 22:

*My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?
Why are you so far from saving me, from the words of my groaning?*

Have you ever prayed that way? If you’ve never prayed that way, I’m going to suggest to you you’ve never prayed. Those are the prayers of the psalmist. We don’t end there. We end the way Psalm 22 ends when the psalmist says:

*Deliver my soul from the sword,
my precious life from the power of the dog!
Save me from the mouth of the lion!
You have rescued me from the horns of the wild oxen!*

*I will tell of your name to my brothers;
in the midst of the congregation I will praise you:
You who fear the Lord, praise him!
All you offspring of Jacob, glorify him,
and stand in awe of him, all you offspring of Israel!
For he has not despised or abhorred
the affliction of the afflicted,
and he has not hidden his face from him,
but has heard, when he cried to him.*

That is my God. That is your God. That is the God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ, to say this, prayer itself is only one expression of our obedience. So, we watch and pray so as to not fall into temptation, but as verse 38 says, we do this and we do His will and we obey Him not merely by praying but by following through what He makes clear to us in our prayers in terms of what we need to do, how we need to live.

So, after our prayers are marked with an emotional articulation from the soul, we balance them with prayers of doctrinal affirmation of God’s will, so that we also pray with the view to the practical application for one’s life. It all goes together, and we pray the way Jesus prayed. And may I suggest, when we pray like this, we don’t merely sound like Jesus in our prayers, but we look like Jesus in the way that we live our lives. Resolutions or no resolutions, how often do you pray and trust God to deliver your soul from death through the shed blood of Jesus Christ, to deliver you ultimately from all the fears and anxieties of life, and to empower you through the blessed

Holy Spirit to walk in a new way that glorifies Him before a watching world? Let us pray, but let us pray like Jesus prayed, for that is the will of God.

Father, we thank You for these Scriptures, which reveal to us in no uncertain terms not only the importance of prayer but the blessed quality of prayer. We thank You, dear God, that we have modeled before us the two natures of Christ; two natures, one person. Father, You did not merely have a humanized divine nature or a deified human nature. He has two distinct natures, not confused, not mixed, not separated, not divided. We don't understand what all that means. There's a mystery to it, but we do know this, as our Great High Priest, He sympathizes with us. He became like us so that we could relate to our Great High Priest so that in our times of despair, we could call out to Him, knowing that He hears us, knowing that You, our Father, hears us because we come in His name. So, now Lord, as we come to the table to feast together, be reminded in a visible and a tangible way of the gospel, be reminded of the comfort we have through Christ, the Good Shepherd because of His saving death and resurrection. Lord, we ask that You would meet with us in a special way that You can only do through the supper. We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.