

Gethsemane

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Well, grab your Bibles and let's go to the Gospel of Mark, Mark 14 as I'm beginning today a journey from really the garden of Gethsemane, or what I call the olive farm outside of Jerusalem, all the way to Easter Sunday morning when we will have a message on the resurrection, "He is not here," and I call this God's unrelenting love for his children. Now originally I had four sessions because I had to skip one the first Sunday of April because I'm scheduled to be in south Florida with one of our church partners preaching that Sunday, but it looks like that's gonna be canceled. If it is so, we're gonna go from Gethsemane to the crucifixion, to his burial, to his death, and then to his resurrection but we'll begin this morning with Gethsemane.

Would you turn there with me, Mark 14, beginning in verse 32.

32 They came to a place named Gethsemane; and He said to His disciples, "Sit here until I have prayed." 33 And He took with Him Peter and James and John, and began to be very distressed and troubled. 34 And He said to them, "My soul is deeply grieved to the point of death; remain here and keep watch." 35 And He went a little beyond them, and fell to the ground and began to pray that if it were possible, the hour might pass from Him. 36 And He was saying, "Abba! Father! All things are possible for You; remove this cup from Me; yet not what I will, but what You will." 37 And He came and found them sleeping, and said to Peter, "Simon, are you asleep? Could you not keep watch for one hour? 38 Keep watching and praying that you may not come into temptation; the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak." 39 Again He went away and prayed, saying the same words. 40 And again He came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were very heavy; and they did not know what to answer Him. 41 And He came a third time, and said to them, "Are you still sleeping and resting? [These are powerful words here] It is enough; the hour has come; behold, the Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of sinners. 42 Get up, let us be going; behold, the one who betrays Me is at hand!"

This text of Scripture, the narrative on Jesus' agony in the garden of Gethsemane is a difficult passage to contemplate. It's a difficult passage to understand, matter of fact, I

don't think any mortal has ever fully understood it. It's a difficult passage to preach and yet at the same time it contains within it one of the most wondrous and joyful hopes and encouragements that we find in all the Canon of Scripture, and you ask yourself, "Why was it that this is even included? Why does Jesus leave the Upper Room in Jerusalem, go back out to the olive farm where he has a retreat for this last week of his earthly ministry, he, remember he ministered during the day in Jerusalem, he'd go out to the little olive farm in the evenings, get some separation to be protected. Why did he go back this last day? This is Thursday. He's gonna be crucified tomorrow on Friday, why does he go back to the garden? Why do we have this whole event? Why didn't they just come and arrest him and take him right on to Calvary? Well, I don't know all the answers but I believe one answer stands out perhaps above any other and that is to establish for all time that his obedience was not forced upon him; that this was voluntary. He came to lay down his life for his sheep and no matter the cost, the difficulty, the burden, the trial, he would not be deterred. He was going to fulfill his mission, honor the Father's will, and save his children. The unrelenting love God has for his children.

Let's notice first of all as we attempt to unpack this, the deepest burden in verses 32 through 34. Again, he's left the Upper Room where they had the Passover. He journeys out of Jerusalem. He goes about a mile outside of the wall of the city. He comes back to the olive farm. They're gathering together there. In the journey, Peter's reminded Jesus again, "If everyone else fails You, I will not. I'll stay faithful to the end." And then the Bible says in verse 32, they come to Gethsemane. Literally that word means the oil press. It actually was one particular area of the olive garden, that where they pressed the olives and gathered the oil together. It's an enclosed estate. It's still there today at the foot of the Mount of Olives. And Jesus says to his disciples as they arrive back at their retreat center there in the olive farm, "Sit here until I have prayed." The burden he carried could not be shared with even his closest companions. Something was afoot that only God the Father and God the Son would share in. The nature of it, the magnitude of it is far outside the realms of human capacity and human understanding.

In verse 33, the Bible tells us, "And He took with Him Peter and James and John, and began to be very distressed and troubled." Now Judas has already forsaken him, as such. We don't see it played out yet but he left him, of course, at the Passover meal. He's meeting with the enemies of Jesus, planning the betrayal so there's only 11 there now and he leaves eight behind and he brings Peter, James and John with him. Remember Peter, James and John were also invited to the, ah, Mount of Transfiguration while the others stayed aside, and Peter, James and John also went to the sickroom of Jairus' daughter while the others were left aside. In this setting, I believe the other eight are left to protect or guard and Peter, James and John are brought with the Lord because they were his closest, they were the leaders of the leaders. Spurgeon used to say that the 12 apostles were the elect out of the elect. Well, I guess Peter, James and John are the elect out of the elect out of the elect.

Anyway, there's a, a division of leadership here, responsibility, and our Lord is burdened deeply and he wants these three men with him. He picks these three to be with him and the Bible says and he "began to be very distressed." Scholars tells us that word

"distressed" actually can be translated "greatly amazed." Matter of fact, in an earlier part of Mark, Mark 10, this word is translated "amazed" as the, the apostles are amazed at the wisdom and the teaching of Jesus as he unfolds for them how the kingdom will be played out and it's not what they expected. They're shocked. They're amazed. That's an interesting thing our Lord is experiencing, that he's in his humanity while he never lost any of his deity, there's an amazement at the events that are unfolding at this point in his pilgrimage to the cross. Was this distress and this amazement, was it not because he saw the tidal wave of God's wrath that would be put upon him because of his, our sin?

Verse 33 continues and uses the word that he was troubled. It's an old word that literally means to be not at home. I think the point is as Jesus Christ contemplates becoming the vicarious atonement for our sins, as he contemplates he'll stand in the place of judgment for his children; that in these events nothing could be farther from home for him. It's, it's farther, further from him from anything natural to him. He'll become sin. He'll bear the weight of sin. That's radically opposite of who he is as the holy and righteous and sinless Son of God. He's carrying this.

Verse 34 continues on that he was deeply grieved even to the point of death. Less than 24 hours from now he will hang on the cross and bear the sin of the world and suffer in agony of separation from his heavenly Father. So the Bible text literally is saying here in verse 34 he is overwhelmed to the point of death. Matter of fact, his whole life was a life of, at least from his commitment to his earthly ministry, about three years ago, was a, a season of suffering and burden-bearing. He lived a sinless life yet the religious authorities called him a sinner, a blasphemer and even a devil. He did so many good things, meeting so many needs, he would heal this sick and feed the hungry and teach his wisdom to the masses, but now practically all of them have fallen away and they will by the time he's condemned to be crucified. He gathered no real material wealth. He had a rock for his pillow and stars for a roof, and now the religious authorities planned to even take his life. Knowing Judas was going to betray him, yet he showed love for Judas. He allowed Judas to sit by his side. He fed him. He washed Judas' feet. Yet while he's here in the garden in agony and this great burden, Judas is meeting with the enemies of our Lord. Jesus as a human faced all these earthly sufferings and they had to be weighing heavily on him at this time, but there was infinitely more here than just human sufferings or earthly type sufferings.

In verse 35 the Bible tells us that, "He went a little beyond them." I think this is picturing that at this point our Lord's burden is so great and so intense that he finally has to say, "I, I can't be around anyone, even Peter, James and John. I must leave them behind." Maybe in his humanity there's a practical lesson for us here. Are there not some valleys and burdens too deep to be shared with anyone but the heavenly Father? Some crevices in the innermost part of the soul that should only be exposed to the one who already knows us and loves us wholly and unconditionally? Praise the Lord that we can go to him.

Verse 35 says in this great burden, he "fell to the ground." It does not mean he dropped to his knees, it means he's laying on the ground, his face in the dirt. Sweet in his commentary says he had long foreseen the passion of the cross but when it came clearly

in view, its terror exceeded his anticipation. I believe our Lord is overwhelmed by the curse, the curse he knew he would become for those who would place their faith in him.

Galatians 3:13 tells us, "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us--for it is written, 'Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree.'" Mark 10:45, "For the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many." 2 Corinthians 5:21, "He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him." That's what was before Jesus, becoming sin, becoming a curse for us, in our place as he died on the cross and the stress, the weight, the burden of becoming that curse drives him to the ground. This is a burden he carried throughout his life, it intensified through his earthly ministry, and a burden he will carry on his shoulders until on the cross he cries, "It is finished."

2. Petition denied. Petition denied. Interesting as we see something playing out here and talk about being in a realm we can't comprehend. There are things we can grasp but so much we cannot. The second half of verse 35 says as he's there laying on the ground, his face in the dirt, he "began to pray," he petitioned his heavenly Father "that if it were possible, the hour might pass from Him." The word "hour" there is a word that means a predestined moment, a predestined season of time for redemption to take place.

In verse 36, he continues crying out, "Abba! Father!" Poppa! My intimate, loving Father, "All things are possible for You." Then he says an, he uses another metaphor, "remove this cup from Me." Cup is a, is a word that now takes the place of hour. The cup is like what Isaiah was talking about in Isaiah 51:17 where he says the cup of God's anger. Or in Jeremiah 25:15 where the Bible speaks of the cup of God's wrath. Mark 10:38, "Jesus said to them, 'You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink?'" This is a cup only Jesus could drink. This is an hour that only Jesus could fulfill and perform. Yet in his humanity, in his suffering under this burden, never becoming sinful, he petitions the Father, "Is there another way? Can this not be my destiny, this cup of taking wrath, this hour of paying the cost of redemption?"

Some verses that parallel this hour to show you how it was sovereignly ordained before the foundation of the world. John 7:30, "So they were seeking to seize Him; and no man laid his hand on Him, because His hour had not yet come." Brothers and sisters, Jesus, Jesus did not die on the cross because something tripped up and something messed up and something got out of hand, this was ordained to play out perfectly and it is playing out perfectly. They couldn't lay hands on him until the heavenly Father said, "Now's the time."

John 8:20, "These words He spoke in the treasury, as He taught in the temple; and no one seized Him, because His hour had not yet come." On the human side, they didn't seize him because they were cowards. They wanted to come to Gethsemane out at the farm in the dark. They wouldn't come in the daylight. But behind God, man's actions is God's sovereignty.

John 13:31, "Therefore when he had gone out, Jesus said, 'Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in Him.'" That means now's the hour, now's the time.

So here our Lord is facing what he and the heavenly Father and God the Holy Spirit had foreordained in eternity past but now the hour is upon him. Literally the text shows us that as a human, he was terrified and amazed but he will pray it through and face the hour bravely and we see this quite clearly, do we not, the last part of verse 36, "Not what I will but what You will." So here we see something again we can't wrap our understanding or minds around completely, the humanity of Jesus in his fullness yet with not, without sin facing the severest of temptation, that is, to draw back from the cross. And did we not see this in the temptation experience in the wilderness when Jesus is out there and Satan comes and Satan says, "If you'll bow down to me, I have temporal authority over the earth, I'll give you kingdoms, I'll give you everything. I can, I can make you royal and master and head of your own kingdom if you'll just do it my way, if you'll just avoid the cross." And he didn't yield there either.

So here he prays it through and wins the victory. We can't grasp the severity of his burden, we can only touch the hem of the garment but let's try to touch it. The Father because of his absolute holiness will turn his back on the Son on the cross, despising our sin. Then the blow of eternal punishment for us will be spent on Jesus. Then Jesus, the author and sustainer of life will taste death for the wages of sin is death, and in his death the punitive righteousness of God against the children will be satisfied and redemption's work will be finished.

We think for a moment that on the cross just ahead of where we are now, for the first time for time and all eternity there's gonna be a chasm in the Godhead. They had, God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit, they had a unity incomprehensible to the mortal mind, incomparable to any union ever known, but in this hour a chasm is about to occur. I believe that was the weight of the distress, the greatest weight, I should say. This is holy ground we are treading upon. We are compelled by the nature of the passage to walk by slowly and reverently for here the pleading of the Son of God to the heavenly Father concerning redemption's work is an arena of sacred holiness to be approached with humility and reverence. Yet in his petition to the Father, can it be any other way? Jesus asked his Father to remove it in full submission and then in full submission accepted the Father's will. Petition denied.

3. Alone in suffering. Look at verse 37 in our text. Peter, James and John are not far away and it looks like our Lord was hoping he'd get some affirmation, some encouragement from their presence but they're sleepy, "And He came and found them sleeping, and said to Peter, 'Simon, are you asleep? Could you not keep watch for one hour?'" Notice he speaks to Peter. Peter is the leader of the three, the three are the leader of the other eight. But he doesn't call him Peter, he says Simon. Is that not interesting? Peter means rock. Well, Peter's going to be the rock, that's sort of prophetic when the Lord called, named him that, but he's not the rock now. He's kind of rocky in his rock-ness at this point. He's sort of a sedimentary rock. Sedimentary rock is formed over time as pressure pushes the elements in the soil and a rock forms. Well, the lot of pressure's being applied right now

to the Apostle Peter but right now he's acting like Simon, not like Peter the rock.
"Couldn't you stay awake?"

Verse 38, alone in his suffering, he tells them, "Keep watching and praying that you may not come into temptation; the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak." Does anything else need to be said about that? Sure is.

Verse 39, "Again He went away and prayed, saying the same words." He's still in petitioning and calling out to the Father full, in a fully submission in his petition and a full submission in his acceptance of the Father's will.

And then verse 40, "And He came again and found them sleeping, for their eyes were very heavy; and they did not know what to answer Him." It means they were embarrassed, they were ashamed. We have the same type thing happening on the Mount of Transfiguration where another divine moment of God the Father with God the Son, we're, we're allowed to peek a little bit behind the veil and a, again the, the humans there, Peter, James and John are again not able to handle it, can't take it in and there too they are failing and weak and not able to do what they ought to have done. Alone in his suffering.

4. And finally, faithful to duty. Faithful to duty. Let's remind ourselves that Jesus was appointed by the Father and fully accepted the holy office of Christ which means the anointed one, and as the Christ, there was three subsets to that office: prophet, priest and king. The Father had a purpose to save for himself a people which would know him and love him and enjoy him and he would enjoy them for all eternity, but to achieve that mission, the Father needed one to stand in an office, to perform an office, to fulfill the duties of an office, the office of the Christ, the only one truly anointed of God, and Jesus not only was assigned that by the Father but joyously agreed to that office, and in doing so obligated himself to the performance of the duties of being God's one true prophet, God's one true priest, God's one true king. Prophet who gives us the truth of God. Priest who is the mediator who connects a holy God with sinful men. And king, the one worthy for all to bow down and worship and follow and honor. So who knows the counsel of the Godhead in moments like this but in an anthropomorphic illustration perhaps, the Father said, "Son, I gave You this duty, I gave You this office." And the Son says, "Yes, Father, that's My job." He fulfills the duty he's obligated to as the Christ. This was not a begrudging duty to Jesus because he loved his Father and he loved obeying his Father's will. John 14:31 tells us, "I love the Father, and do exactly as the Father commanded Me." Is that not good? "I love Him. I'm gonna do exactly what I'm supposed to do."

So here we have this dark, burdening, difficult, maybe even woeful narrative that reeks with wondrous glory and joy because Christ would not fail the duty. He'll do it. He'll do it.

Verse 41, right in the middle of the second half of verse 41, "It is enough." Let me stop there for a moment. They're still sleeping and, and resting and he's agonizing in his soul about going to the cross and all that's involved in that and then he says, "Okay, guys, wake up. It's enough." The scholars tell us the phrase means paying in full. In other

words, "I've done all I can do." Two parts to that, I believe. 1. "There's no need rebuking you guys anymore. Times up. If you're gonna pray and watch, you should have already prayed and watched. There's no more time. It's enough. The time has fulfilled." And secondly, "I've already prayed this through. I've won the victory. I'm honoring My duty. I'm honoring My Father's will. I will perform the duties of the Christ. It's all set. Let's get going." That's where he is right now.

The Lord Jesus struggled through the dark strain of Gethsemane and he came out on the other side wholly committed to his duties as the Christ which included the cross whereupon he would purchase redemption for his children. Why? Well, first of all, for his own glory. As he performs the Father's will and purchases redemption for the church, he will be honored and glorified for the wisdom, the beauty and the power of that for all eternity but, secondly and wonderfully important for you and I, he did it because of God's unrelenting love for his children. Unrelenting love for his children.

Verse 42. The victory of this thing just overwhelms me, it's just bursts out of the text to me. Verse 42, "Get up, let us be going. I'm heading to the cross. And even lazy, sleepy, unfaithful companions aren't gonna get in my way. Get up, let's be going." The Father's perfect plan unfolds. The path to the cross and the children's redemption includes Judas' betrayal and his enemies arresting him. That's what he says, "behold, the one who betrays Me is at hand," verse 42. "Get up, guys, let's go on. Let's be going." It pictures his total resolve to the Father's will. He will yield to his enemies for in yielding he defeats his and his children's enemies.

This is the path that must be taken if the children are to be saved. He reports for duty. He's faithful to his duty as the Christ. He perfectly performs and honors the plan and fulfills it. He will be arrested. He will be condemned. He will be crucified and he will rise again out of God's unrelenting love for his children. Brothers and sisters, in our darkest hour, this was a dark hour, he's the victor. We always have victory, we always have hope, we always have assurance because he fulfilled his duty. Praise his name.