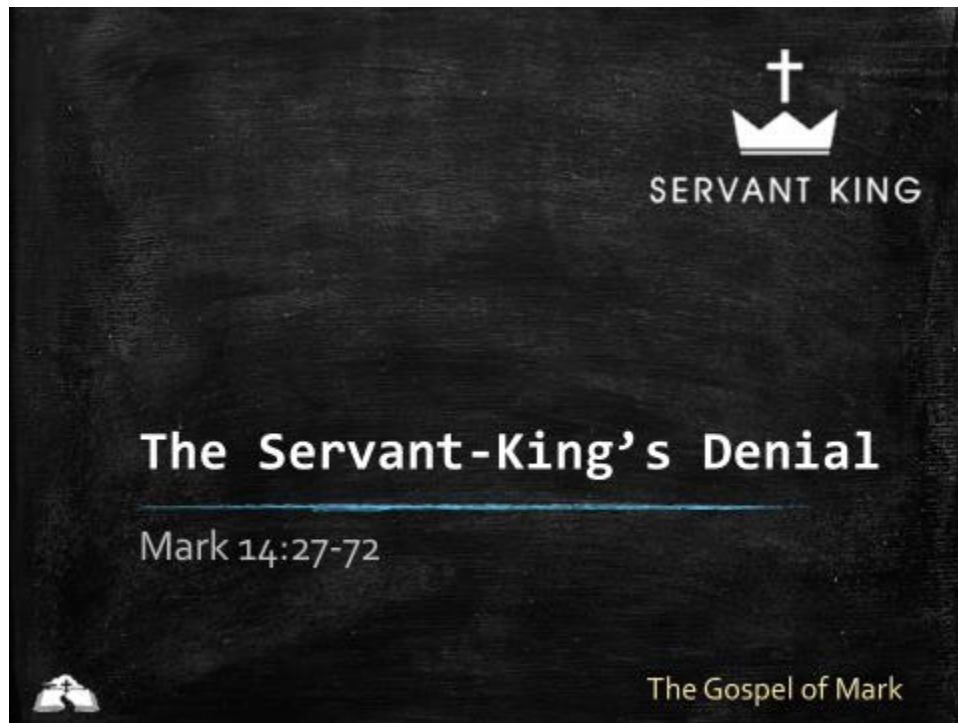


The Servant-King's Denial

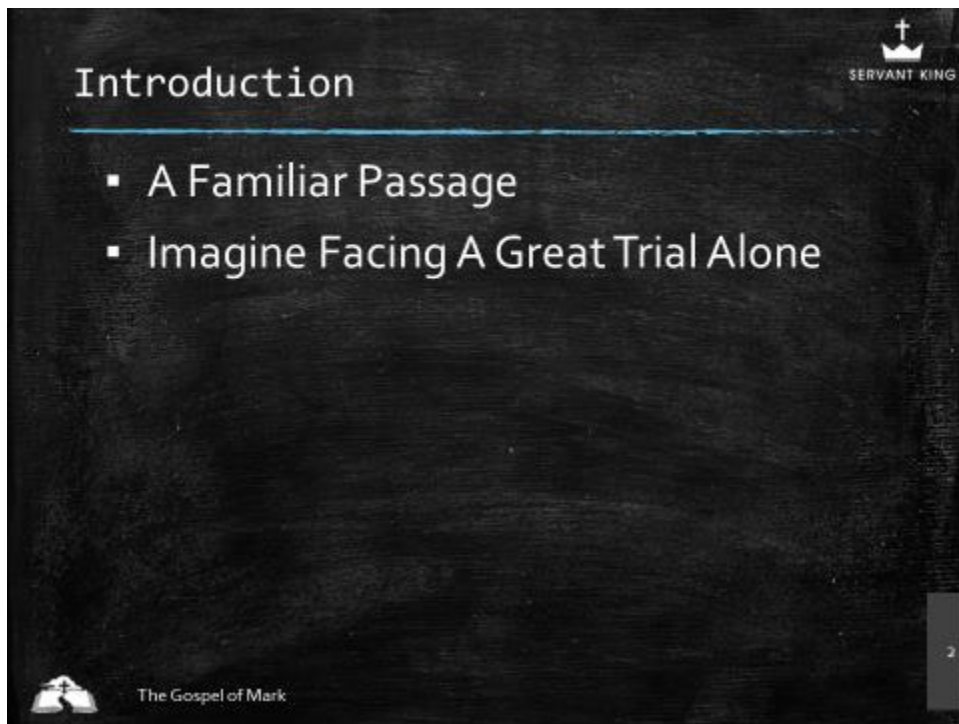
Mark 14:27-72

Speaker: Pastor Mark Schindler

Apr. 10, 2016 AM



Our passage this morning takes us to a dark and somber place in Jesus' journey to the cross. Last week we saw the beginnings of this journey in Jesus' revelation that one of the twelve would betray Him. Mark now begins a series of accounts that show us the desertion, denial, and betrayal that builds, grows and will soon culminate in his crucifixion. The path of the servant King is going to go from bad to worse.




The events of this passage are familiar to us and it is easy to view them with a historical disinterest that keeps us distant from the reality of the circumstances and people. I would ask that as we study this text, engage in the thoughts and interactions of Jesus and those around Him. He is not unaware of the cross before Him. Each account in our text this morning is a step closer to the pain and suffering of the cross. Each encounter a painful reminder that he would die alone.

Imagine yourself facing a difficult and undeserved trial. Consider the numbing ache of being abandoned by your closest friends and supporters. Imagine the extreme sense of loneliness in facing great suffering alone. This is what our Savior willingly endured for the sake of our salvation. In our passage this morning, His self-sacrificing example stands in stark contrast to the disciples who fall away in His time of trouble.


We have a large section of Mark to get through this morning. We will start in Mark 14:27 and make our way through the end of the chapter. So as Russ likes to say, fasten your seat belts. We have a long way to go and a short time to get there. There is much for us to uncover and we will need to move quickly through these verses.

[opening prayer]

Mark 14:27-72



- Peter's Three Denials Predicted
- Three Failed Requests To Watch
- Betrayal and Desertion
- Three Fabricated Accusations
- Peter's Three Denials Fulfilled



The Gospel of Mark

3

Turn in your copies of God's Word to Mark Chapter 14 verse 27. We begin with Jesus and the disciples back at the Mount of Olives. This has been a familiar location in the last half of Mark's account. Recall that the disciples had just learned in our previous passage that one of the twelve would betray Jesus. As if that was not bad enough, they are about to hear that they will **all** soon fall away as Jesus predicts Peter's three denials. **Follow along as I read beginning in verse 27 to verse 31.**

"And Jesus said to them, "You will all fall away, for it is written, 'I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered.' But after I am raised up, I will go before you to Galilee." Peter said to him, "Even though they all fall away, I will not." And Jesus said to him, "Truly, I tell you, this very night, before the rooster crows twice, you will deny me three times." But he said emphatically, "If I must die with you, I will not deny you." And they all said the same."

Verses 27 and 28 provide Jesus' prediction of the disciple's desertion. "You will all fall away", He says. Jesus is quoting Zechariah 13:7, applying this passage of Old Testament prophecy to Himself and the disciples. But note that Jesus makes one small change from the original text where He adds the words "**I will**" to the words "strike the shepherd". This is to remind them that it is by God's design and action that these things will happen.

Yet even in the midst of this dark prediction comes a ray of hope in verse 28. There is a hint of the ultimate victory that is to come. Jesus tells them that He will be raised up and that they will meet again in Galilee. This is an important point in Mark's account to his Roman audience as he points out that despite the apparent defeat of Jesus the King, there will come a greater victory at the end. There may be dark days ahead, but they have been ordained by a sovereign God and after their desertion Jesus will gather them again in Galilee.

In verses 29 to 31, Mark records the disciple's response. While Peter is the focus here, symbolically he represents the unfaithfulness of all the disciples. He tells Jesus that even if the others fall away, it is not true of him. But as Peter expresses his loyalty, Jesus counters his boast saying "you will deny me three times before the rooster crows twice". Peter strongly denies Jesus' predictions and remarks that he would die before he would deny Jesus. The other disciples nod their heads with Peter, and agree by saying the same thing.

But we must also see our own failures here. We are often self-confident in the face of sin and suffering. We swear our allegiance to Christ in one moment and then fall away to sin and deny the power of the cross in the next. In the faithlessness of the disciples, we see our own infidelity in contrast to the faithfulness of the One who died to give us life. And in their failure to follow, we see our own failure to follow. So we must turn to Christ whose righteousness and faithfulness has been made ours.

Let's pick up again in verse 32. From the general area of the Mount of Olives, Jesus and the disciples now move to Gethsemane. What the other Gospels refer to as the Garden was actually an olive grove that contained an olive press. Once in the garden area, Jesus asks the three closest disciples to come away from the others to pray and seek strength for the trial ahead. But as the evening unfolds, Mark records their three failures to watch as Jesus prays and agonizes over what is before Him. Please follow as I read verses 32 to 42.

"And they 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.""

Mark's account in these verses paint a vivid picture of Jesus struggling at Gethsemane. As Jesus nears the final hours before His death, He experiences the human emotions of distress and instincts for self-preservation. He says to the disciples that His soul is in deep sorrow, even to the point of death. Mark conveys to us the powerful emotional struggle Jesus is going through.

But in this time of sorrow and struggle, we see Jesus turning to prayer for the strength to obey God's will. To such an extent that in verse 35 we see Jesus falling to the ground in a passionate prayer to the Father; that if it were possible this moment would pass Him by. For it is not just death that Jesus is facing in the hours ahead. We are to see the depth of Jesus' suffering and grief as He also prepares to willingly face the wrath and abandonment of God upon the cross.

Once again, we also have a contrast between the prayerful suffering of Jesus and the weary disciples. Before each time of praying Jesus instructs the disciples to keep watch. But each time after praying Jesus comes and finds the three asleep. Each time Jesus wakes them and exhorts them to stay alert and be praying so that they would not fall to temptation. For Jesus is aware of the severe test that they are to come under with Jesus' arrest and crucifixion. And so He encourages them to ready themselves for what is now immediately ahead.

The example of Jesus at Gethsemane to watch and pray in moments of struggle and temptation should fall heavy upon our own lives. Let us confess our weakness to draw near in prayer to our God. May we fall down before Him and plead for help in times of trouble. And when like the disciples we grow weary and fail, may we remember that the victory Jesus won at the cross is our own. He has gone before us. It is in our weakness He is made strong.

The three failures of the disciples to keep watch clearly parallel Peter's three denials and demonstrate their inability to stand strong in their moment of crisis. What an irony that in His moment of struggle we see Jesus drawing near to God, while the disciples, who have been warned to be strong, will fall away from God when the trial comes. We also see the intimacy of the Jesus' prayer here is revealed as He calls out to God in Aramaic as "Abba", or in a more familiar word to us, "daddy". This account reveals that Jesus is facing a real human struggle with great temptation and physical stress.

Just as in the wilderness, Jesus is again victorious over temptation. And perhaps it is no accident that the temptation of the first Adam is in a garden. A garden where human kind **fails** to obey the will of God. In the same way Jesus, the second Adam is also tempted in a garden. But in Gethsemane Jesus does not fail or succumb to temptation. Jesus' success here points us to His ultimate victory over sin and death. Praise God that the curse that came into the world through the first Adam's failure was overcome through the second Adam's triumph.

Let's move on to the next set of verses which stand at the center and heart of our text this morning. From the disappointing failure of the three closest disciples to keep alert, we move to the heartbreak of betrayal by a false friend and the desertion of all others. The peaceful quiet of the garden is broken with the sounds of an armed crowd; an unruly mob sent by the religious leaders to take Jesus by force. The moment of Jesus' arrest and surrender is at hand. Follow along as I read verses 43 to 52.

"And immediately, while he was still speaking, Judas came, one of the twelve, and with him a crowd with swords and clubs, from the chief priests and the scribes and the elders. Now the betrayer had given them a sign, saying, 'The one I will kiss is the man. Seize him and lead him away under guard.'" And when he came, he went up to him at once and said, "Rabbi!" And he kissed him. And they laid hands on him and seized him. But one of those who stood by drew his sword and struck the servant of the high priest and cut off his ear. And Jesus said to them, "Have you come out as against a robber, with swords and clubs to capture me? Day after day I was with you in the temple teaching, and you did not seize me. But let the Scriptures be fulfilled." And they all left him and fled. And a young man followed him, with nothing but a linen cloth about his body. And they seized him, but he left the linen cloth and ran away naked."

The passage begins with Mark's description of the crowd that accompanies Judas. It is likely that this was a small party of official authorities and the security police of the temple and religious leadership. They were armed in order to be sure they could take Jesus by force, if necessary. Given Judas' signal and the late hour, it is likely that the arrest was meant to be quick and return Jesus to the city under the cover of darkness.

We should not miss that the signal devised by Judas is striking in its shamefulness. The customary greeting of a kiss was common in those days as a symbol of friendship. But here, a symbol of love and friendship is corrupted to satisfy Judas' greed. At the moment of the kiss, the authorities surround Jesus to seize Him. It is Jesus, and Jesus alone that they have come for. Yet Jesus makes it clear that He does not intend to defend Himself. There is a stark contrast here between the armed forces of the religious leaders and the quiet surrender of the Savior. This willing surrender further makes Mark's argument that Jesus' willingness to be captured is a part of a greater plan prophesied many years ago in the text of Old Testament scriptures.

In verses 50 to 52, Mark briefly notes the flight of the remaining disciples. The emphasis is placed that they **all** fled and left Jesus alone. Mark even highlights the actions of a young man who seems to have left in the night, possibly to follow Jesus back to the city. We are left with a haunting image of Jesus now standing completely alone in the Garden of Gethsemane surrounded His captors. His abandonment is nearly complete. His closest earthly companions have fled and He is to be led away like a lamb to be slaughtered. With a quiet dignity, Jesus is bound and led away into the night.

In the next section of verses, Mark's account begins to pick up steam as Jesus stands before the religious leaders and faces three fabricated accusations. This account records the deliberate actions and questions of the religious leaders designed to find Jesus guilty of crimes requiring his death. This is in direct fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy depicting the Messiah as being falsely accused and rejected by the religious leaders. God's plan to sacrifice His Son to save His people is moving forward and Jesus submits to His Father's will fully knowing what lies ahead. Let's continue by reading verses 53 to 65.

"And they led Jesus to the high priest. And all the chief priests and the elders and the scribes came together. And Peter had followed him at a distance, right into the courtyard of the high priest. And he was sitting with the guards and warming himself at the fire. Now the chief priests and the whole council were seeking testimony against Jesus to put him to death, but they found none. For many bore false witness against him, but their testimony did not agree. And some stood up and bore false witness against him, saying, 'We heard him say, 'I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and in three days I will build another, not made with hands.' " Yet even about this their testimony did not agree. And the high priest stood up in the midst and asked Jesus, "Have you no answer to make? What is it that these men testify against you?" But he remained silent and made no answer. Again the high priest asked him, "Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?" And Jesus said, "I am, and you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven." And the high priest tore his garments and said, "What further witnesses do we need? You have heard his blasphemy. What is your decision?" And they all condemned him as deserving death. And some began to spit on him and to cover his face and to strike him, saying to him, "Prophecy!" And the guards received him with blows."

Jesus is first taken to the home of the high priest, Caiaphas. The house Mark describes is quite large, having a courtyard and a meeting area large enough to gather the chief priests, elders, and scribes. Their purpose is to find charges, even if they have to be manufactured, that would justify a death sentence for Jesus. But not only were they having a hard time finding charges, they were having a hard time finding witnesses. However, so great is their hatred and fear of Jesus that they go to great lengths to bring serious accusations against Him. You see, this is not going to be a fair trial. They have not arrested Jesus and brought in an unbiased jury. Rather, these men are intent upon seeing Jesus killed.

Mark records three intentionally fabricated charges leveled against Jesus. The first is on Jesus' statement about destroying the temple and rebuilding another in three days. To desecrate a holy place of worship would have been a serious charge in that day. Then the second by Caiaphas, the high priest, aimed at pushing Jesus to answer His accusers. But the religious leaders are frustrated as Jesus keeps silent and does not answer their false accusations.

Because of the failure to make any charge stick, Caiaphas, the high priest finally asks a third question of Jesus. "Are you the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed One?" The use of the terms in the question are intentional. In essence, Caiaphas is asking if Jesus is both the Messiah, the Anointed One prophesied in scripture and also, if He makes the claim to divinity. That is, does He claim to be God's Son. At this question, we can imagine the religious leaders who have gathered now fall silent as they wait to see if Jesus will answer.

Jesus answers their direct question with a simple answer, "I am." The familiar phrase, "I am" would have clearly resonated in the minds of the religious leaders as a claim to be God. But to add to it, Jesus follows with a statement that combines Ps. 10:1 and Dan. 7:13. In quoting these passages, Jesus is telling them that they will see Him seating in the place of honor reserved for the Son of God next to His Father's throne. Jesus' words here provide an even greater emphasis to His claim to being the Messiah in response to Caiaphas' question. This of course fuels the fire and anger of the religious leaders and they condemn Jesus to death. Finally, they shamefully cover Jesus' head so they may spit on him and beat him with anonymity.

There is an interesting aspect to the nature of the accusations that we should consider. What is the nature of the first two accusations made? Of course, they are false. But what is the nature of the accusation of Caiaphas? It is true. The ironic end to this passage is that Jesus is condemned for being who He was. Mark intends for us to see the Jewish leaders' clear rejection of Jesus, the prophesied Messiah, who is God's Son. Though He is arrested on false pretenses, He is condemned for being who He was.

Our passage ends with the sad conclusion of Jesus' prediction of Peter's three denials. As if the sense of abandonment and desertion couldn't get any worse, Peter repeatedly denies knowing Jesus. How far he is from his confident boast that he would never deny Jesus at the start of this passage. And while Jesus stands faithfully under the accusations and humiliation of powerful religious leaders, Peter fails under the accusation of a young female servant. Let's conclude the end of our passage this morning with verses 66 to 72.

“And as Peter was below in the courtyard, one of the servant girls of the high priest came, and seeing Peter warming himself, she looked at him and said, “You also were with the Nazarene, Jesus.” But he denied it, saying, “I neither know nor understand what you mean.” And he went out into the gateway and the rooster crowed. And the servant girl saw him and began again to say to the bystanders, “This man is one of them.” But again he denied it. And after a little while the bystanders again said to Peter, “Certainly you are one of them, for you are a Galilean.” But he began to invoke a curse on himself and to swear, “I do not know this man of whom you speak.” And immediately the rooster crowed a second time. And Peter remembered how Jesus had said to him, “Before the rooster crows twice, you will deny me three times.” And he broke down and wept.”

From Mark’s account, we know that Peter has been in the courtyard and is observing or at least hearing what is going on. We can imagine that the humiliation and indignation of his master and friend would have been a terrible thing to witness. There are several reasons why Mark includes this account here. First, it concludes and affirms Jesus’ earlier prophecy that Peter would fail in his loyalty within 24 hours. Second, there is a contrast between the perfect faithfulness of Jesus to His Father and the unfaithfulness of Peter to Jesus. Peter’s failure can be seen first as an encouragement to remain faithful, even when under persecution. But perhaps more importantly it is an encouragement that those, who like Peter have denied their association with Christ, can also be restored.

While we do not know what is going on in Peter’s mind, we see the humbling of a proud and outspoken disciple. Peter is first accused by a servant girl of being associated with Jesus. The truth of the charge would have been convincing, but Peter denies it. Saying that he neither knows or even understands what the girl is talking about. The servant girl is persistent and says to those around her that Peter is one of Jesus’ followers. And again, Peter deliberately denies the charge.

Finally, someone else strongly asserts that Peter is certainly one of Jesus’ followers for his accent or appearance is that of a Galilean. Caught in the headlights, Peter now calls down an oath, swearing that he does not know the one they are talking about. The serious nature of Peter’s denial has reached its height. Immediately, the cock crows a second time just as Jesus had predicted. Peter now remembers Jesus’ words and realizes the magnitude of his failure and in his remorse is sorrowful to the point of tears.

There is nothing like a guilty heart that has been broken by the hand of God. I believe we are to see Peter’s breaking down and sobbing as deep sorrow and true repentance. Peter has failed to stand with Jesus while He prayed in the Garden. And hours later he now openly denies knowing the One whom he had lived with day and night for three years. Yet it is likely that in the crucible of this fire, Peter is being changed and molded into the apostolic leader God will use to grow the church. But how ironic here that as Peter grieves his failures, Jesus is about to die not only for Peter’s sins, but the sins of those who call upon the name of the Lord and trust Him for salvation.



Again, I have not left us much time to close. As we reflect on what we have just studied, we should **see and be struck by the amazing faithfulness of Jesus**. He is the faithful Son who follows the mission given Him by the Father even when His closest friends fail Him. Jesus is the silent Lamb as He stands before His accusers and is led away to suffer and die. Jesus the servant King who willingly lays down His life for those who were have abandoned Him, denied Him, and are so deeply unworthy of His sacrifice.

And as we reflect on the disciples, **we should see ourselves**. Are we that different from the disciples? As I prepared for this message it was like looking in a mirror. Do we not fail in our faithfulness to Him every day? Do we not deny Him to follow the idols and desires of our hearts? Caught up in our sins we act like we have never known the love and sacrifice Jesus poured out for our lives. And like Judas' kiss, we mock our Savior; pretending to love Him before others while our hearts are distant and distracted. Oh, how our failures condemn us. But even more, oh how they remind us of our need for Jesus our Redeemer.

And while it may sound odd, I believe we should be encouraged by the failures of Peter and the disciples. We are so quick to follow after lesser things, leaving the joy of walking with Jesus behind us. But brothers and sisters please hear this. **Despite our failures, we see and receive the abounding grace** that is there for those who have turned to the cross for salvation. Nothing we have done can gain our redemption; nor can anything we do, ever keep us from the love of God in Christ. He is our hope, our life, and our righteousness. For none cannot enter the Kingdom of God except through the life and death of Jesus, the servant King; who alone endured great suffering on His way to the cross for the joy of fulfilling the Father's plan to save us. To Him belongs all praise and glory, eternally forever more.

[closing prayer]

“Unless otherwise designated, Scripture quotations are from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version® (ESV®), copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.”