

Jesus Messiah: Seeing Christ In The Gospel Of Mark

*“The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.”
(Mark 1:15 ESV)*

*And the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. And when the centurion, who stood facing him, saw that in this way he breathed his last, he said,
“Truly this man was the Son of God!”
(Mark 15:38–39 ESV)*

They All Left Him and Fled
June 3rd, 2018
Mark 14:27-52
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Introduction:

Good morning! I want to invite you to turn with me in your Bibles to Mark 14. We are approaching the end of Mark’s Gospel. The adoring crowds are gone. Jesus will be abandoned by his closest friends. He will be tried before a mocking crowd. He will be hung naked on a criminal’s cross with a crown of thorns pressed into his skull. He will bear the wrath of God against our sin. He will do all of this according to the sovereign plan that he set in place before the foundation of the world. Jesus is not surprised by these developments. He ordained them.

We are going to be reading a large portion of Scripture this morning, and there will be a number of lessons for us scattered throughout the text, but if you take nothing else from this sermon I hope you will be helped to see this in the text: The Son of God was abandoned and rejected so that we could be adopted and accepted and this all happened according to HIS perfect plan. He was betrayed so that we could be restored, and he was in control every step of the way. Look with me now at Mark 14 beginning in verse 27.

Hear now the holy, inspired, living and active Word of the Lord:

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.’”²⁸ But after I am raised up, I will go before you to Galilee.”²⁹ Peter said to him, “Even though they all fall away, I will not.”³⁰ And Jesus said to him, “Truly, I tell you, this very night, before the rooster crows twice, you will

deny me three times.”³¹ But he said emphatically, “If I must die with you, I will not deny you.” And they all said the same.

³² And they went to a place called Gethsemane. And he said to his disciples, “Sit here while I pray.”³³ And he took with him Peter and James and John, and began to be greatly distressed and troubled.³⁴ And he said to them, “My soul is very sorrowful, even to death. Remain here and watch.”³⁵ And going a little farther, he fell on the ground and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him.³⁶ 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.”³⁷ And he came and found them sleeping, and he said to Peter, “Simon, are you asleep? Could you not watch one hour?³⁸ Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.”³⁹ And 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 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.⁴² Rise, let us be going; see, my betrayer is at hand.”

⁴³ 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.⁴⁴ 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.”⁴⁵ And when he came, he went up to him at once and said, “Rabbi!” And he kissed him.⁴⁶ And they laid hands on him and seized him.⁴⁷ But one of those who stood by drew his sword and struck the servant of the high priest and cut off his ear.⁴⁸ And Jesus said to them, “Have you come out as against a robber, with swords and clubs to capture me?⁴⁹ Day after day I was with you in the temple teaching, and you did not seize me. But let the Scriptures be fulfilled.”⁵⁰ And they all left him and fled.

⁵¹ And a young man followed him, with nothing but a linen cloth about his body. And they seized him,⁵² but he left the linen cloth and ran away naked. (Mark 14:27-52 ESV)

This is the Word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.

We began our sermon with the main point and that is where we will conclude, but this passage is full of examples – both positive and negative – that should shape the way that we live. We see in the disciples a portrait of the sin that lingers in each of us. We see in Jesus a model of the perfect obedience that God created us for. Ultimately, this text gives us a further glimpse into God’s plan of salvation. So, let’s consider the text in these categories. First, we should ask:

What Do We Learn About Ourselves?

Now, this text is clearly about Jesus, and we will spend most of our time this morning unpacking all that we learn about him here. But along the way, the disciples act out in ways that provide glimpses into our own sinful inclinations. Their place in this story is preserved so that we can learn from their weakness so as not to make the same mistakes. The first thing we learn about ourselves in this text is that:

1. We are over-confident

Peter was the spokesman for this over-confidence, but he was not alone. Look with me at verse 31:

But he said emphatically, “If I must die with you, I will not deny you.” And they all said the same. (Mark 14:31 ESV)

They ALL said the same! 12 disciples looked Jesus in the eyes and swore that they would follow him even unto death. Look now at verse 50:

And they all left him and fled. (Mark 14:50 ESV)

Every one of them. The over-confident man looks at the moral failings of others and assures himself that he could never fall so hard. Peter and the other disciples could not conceive of a time when they would desert their Saviour. They did not set out to betray Jesus, yet they would desert him that very night. Let that serve as a warning to us.

Very practically, I have never once met a person who entered into their marriage with intentions of seeing it fail. Most people don't set out to be an adulterer, or a murderer, or a crook. We all set out with the best intentions, but when we let our guard down, we allow sin to creep into our lives unchecked. When we are too prideful to confess our sin and to cry out to the God who is rich in mercy, the house of cards comes tumbling down. We think we can tame our sin. We think we can muster up the strength within ourselves to hold it all together.

But this is the one to whom I will look:
he who is humble and contrite in spirit
and trembles at my word. (Isaiah 66:2b ESV)

We cannot obey God in our own strength. We need a Saviour because:

2. We are weak

The more I study the Bible, the more I am astounded by how these events that took place 2000 years ago sound like they could have happened yesterday. The world around us changes, but sin doesn't change.

Consider this story: The disciples have just sworn their allegiance to Jesus and now Jesus takes them to a garden to pray. He pulls aside Peter, James and John – his trusted inner circle – and he pours his heart out to them. Look with me at verses 33-34:

And he took with him Peter and James and John, and began to be greatly distressed and troubled. ³⁴ And he said to them, “My soul is very sorrowful, even to death. Remain here and watch.” (Mark 14:33-34 ESV)

Jesus – the man who calmed the raging seas and who stood in the temple and boldly preached against the religious leaders – this same Jesus is now distressed, troubled and sorrowful even unto death. So, he asks his trusted inner circle to keep watch for him while he prays.

And he came and found them sleeping, and he said to Peter, “Simon, are you asleep? Could you not watch one hour? (Mark 14:37 ESV)

Jesus addresses Peter directly as if to say: “You claim that you are ready to die for me, but you can’t even stay awake for one hour?” This happened three times. Time and time again Jesus found the disciples sleeping so he warned them:

Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.” (Mark 14:38 ESV)

One commentator summarizes the warning this way:

Jesus warns the disciples to guard against the kind of sinfulness of which most of us are guilty: sins of weakness and irresoluteness rather than sins of intention. We do not plan on sinning, but neither do we hold the fort when we ought.¹

How many of our noblest intentions are undermined by our weakness? We resolve to pray more, to obey more, to love more, but we consistently fall short. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak. This leads to our final lesson about our own sinfulness:

3. We are capable of horrific failure

¹ James R. Edwards, *The Gospel According to Mark*, PNTC; Accordance electronic ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 428.

Even the best of us. This is why we are called to humble ourselves. This is why Paul wrote to the church in Ephesus to be continually filled with the Spirit (Ephesians 5:18). In our flesh – in our own strength – we are capable of jaw-dropping, horrendous failure.

Even those who spent years walking with Jesus, learning from him and trusting in him found themselves running in the wrong direction when persecution came. Peter was the champion of the disciples – he was the alpha male if you will – but within a day he fell asleep on the job and denied his saviour three times. The warning is clear: I don't care if you are a new Christian, a mature Christian, an elder or a pastor. Be on guard. Don't think too highly of yourself. Plead with God every day for the leading of His Spirit. There is a reason why Jesus taught us to pray: "And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil." The example of these disciples should create in us a real spirit of humility.

Now, let's turn our attention to the positive example that we see in today's text:

What Do We Learn from Jesus' Example?

It is so important for our theology that we remember this essential truth: Jesus was both fully God and fully man. In today's text, Jesus humanity is on full display and, in contrast to the disciples, he sets an example of how we ought to live as God's chosen people. The first lesson we learn is that we should:

1. Be patient with the weaknesses of others

Jesus knew that his disciples would desert him. He told them:

“You will all fall away, for it is written, ‘I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered.’ (Mark 14:27 ESV)

Have you ever felt betrayed? Have you ever had people walk out on you when you needed them the most? If you knew about that betrayal beforehand, would you still have invested in those

relationships anyway? Jesus would have. Jesus did. He washed Judas' feet. He poured himself out to invest in these twelve disciples knowing full well that they would run away and leave him in the hands of Roman guards. They would leave him to stand trial alone. They would leave him to carry his own cross. and when his body finally gave way, it wasn't a disciple but a STRANGER that stepped in to carry the cross.

People are weak. Can you love them anyway? I hope the answer to that question is "yes" because, friend, you're weak too. It's easy to justify our grudges. "He hurt me, she gossiped about me, they owe me money, no one was there for me when I needed them." But those grudges fall to the floor when we remember that our sin nailed Jesus to the cross... and he still loves us! In fact, the Apostle Paul was careful to note:

but God shows his love for us in that **while we were still sinners**, Christ died for us.
(Romans 5:8 ESV)

If you are a Christian, then you are fundamentally a forgiven forgiver. You have signed up to live like Jesus and he taught:

"But I say to you who hear, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you,²⁸ bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. ²⁹To one who strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also, and from one who takes away your cloak do not withhold your tunic either. ³⁰Give to everyone who begs from you, and from one who takes away your goods do not demand them back. (Luke 6:27-30 ESV)

Jesus knows what it feels like to be betrayed. But in his great mercy he has forgiven his betrayers, and if we are in Christ, we are called to do the same. We also learn that we should:

2. Submit to the will of God

Jesus was the true Adam in that his life was the ultimate display of humanity as it should be. When he was faced with his greatest trial his first instinct was to withdraw from the crowd and to pray. He informed his closest friends and he asked for their support, but then he withdrew by himself and spent hours on his face before the Father presenting his requests.

Prayer, at it's very essence, is an act of submission. Every time we stop to pray we say to God:

“You are in charge and I am not.” And that is very good news, because God is worthy of our submission. Listen to the language of Jesus’ prayer. He prayed:

Abba, Father, all things are possible for you (Mark 14:36a ESV)

“Abba” is an Aramiac word for “father” and it was the language that children used in the home. Jesus understood God to be intimate, near and compassionate. Commentator R.T. France notes:

There is general agreement that to address God as ‘Father’ was both Jesus’ normal practice in prayer... and was distinctive of him, not a matter of general Jewish piety at the time.²

And Jesus’ didn’t intend for this language to be reserved for himself. He taught us to pray: “Our Father who art in Heaven.” We are to come before God, not as strangers, but as His children. In the garden of Gethsemane, Jesus sets a clear example for us to follow. He was standing face to face with an insurmountable challenge. His response to that challenge was not to grumble or to retreat, but it was to humble himself and to submit to the Father.

Peter – who was with Jesus in the garden – obviously learned this lesson because he wrote in his letter to the church dispersed throughout the Roman Empire:

Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, ⁷ casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you. (1 Peter 5:6-7 ESV)

Whatever trial you’re facing – whatever burden you’re carrying – bring your concerns to your Father who is in Heaven. Let us be a people of prayer. And when we pray, let’s pray the kinds of prayers that Jesus prayed. He said:

“Abba, Father, all things are possible for you. Remove this cup from me. **Yet not what I will, but what you will.**” (Mark 14:36 ESV)

Jesus, with respect to his human nature, did not want to be whipped with 39 lashes. He did not

² R. T. France, *The Gospel of Mark (The New International Greek Testament Commentary)*, Reprint ed. (Chicago: Eerdmans, 2014), 584.

want to endure the cross. He did not want to bear the wrath of God. The text says that he was mournful even to the point of death. Jesus, in his humanity, asked God to find another way – any other way.

But he made that request with an important disclaimer: “Yet not what I will, but what you will.” And isn’t that good news?! If Jesus had decided to turn back at this point in history, you and I would still be dead in our sins. We were saved because Jesus submitted to the Father’s will. Now, we were enslaved when we put our own will before God’s. Think back to the Garden when Adam and Eve took the fruit. Think in your own life of all the times when you knew what was right but willfully did what was wrong. In this moment in history, Jesus set his will aside and submitted himself to the will of the Father. This submission in the garden of Gethsemane changed history.

Very practically now, this prayer in Gethsemane should shape the way that we pray. We must resolve ourselves to submit to God’s will, even when it seems contradictory to what we want. I remember when I was a young man, praying with an older saint. We were praying for healing and I concluded my prayer with these words of Jesus. After we finished praying he rebuked me saying: “Do you not believe that God can heal? When you add that disclaimer it’s like adding a safety net in case the prayer isn’t answered. It shows that you don’t trust God.” I quickly eliminated the language from my vocabulary until, one day I realized: “Jesus prayed that way!!”

It’s not a sign of faithlessness to acknowledge that our ways are not God’s ways. It’s a sign of humility and understanding! If you’re staring in the face of a seemingly insurmountable mountain this morning, I want to encourage you to ask God to MOVE IT! Pray in faith! Believe with every fibre of your being that God can and does answer impossible prayers. He DOES want what’s best for you and He does see what you’re facing. It could be cancer, it could be a wayward child, or it could be a conflict in your marriage. If you are looking at an obstacle and it is causing you anxiety and grief, then:

let your requests be made known to God. ⁷ And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 4:6b-7 ESV)

But, when you’ve finished making that request to God, you should follow the example that Jesus sets before us here. You should say: “God, I don’t see it, but maybe this trial is good for me.

Maybe you're going to use this to draw people to yourself. I am asking for you to take it away because that's what I believe would be best, but I want YOUR will for my life." That's how Jesus prayed, and that is how we ought to pray. J.C. Ryle said:

We can imagine no higher degree of perfection than that which is here set before us. To take patiently whatever God sends, – to like nothing but what God likes, – to wish nothing but what God approves, – to prefer pain, if it pleases God to send it, to ease, if God does not think fit to bestow it, – to lie passive under God's hand, and know no will but His, – this is the highest standard at which we can aim, and of this our Lord's conduct in Gethsemane is a perfect pattern.³

Amen. Now, as we conclude, I want to ask one final question of the text, and that question is this:

What Do We Learn About God's Plan of Salvation?

This is the most important question that we can ask of the text. This story is told as one piece of the passion narrative. The passion narrative is the story of how God saved us by sending His Son to die in our place. So, why was this particular section of the story included? The first thing we learn about God's plan of salvation is that:

1. It was foretold

The death of Jesus was foretold all throughout the prophecies of the Old Testament. The cross was the plan from the very beginning. If you have been to our church more than once, then you have heard us mention the sovereignty of God. "Sovereignty" is a big word explaining how God is completely in control of every single thing that happens. Daniel 2:21 says:

He changes times and seasons;
He removes kings and sets up kings;
He gives wisdom to the wise
and knowledge to those who have understanding; (Daniel 2:21 ESV)

Every king in the history of the world has sat on his throne because God's plan put him there.

³ J. C. Ryle, *Expository thoughts on Mark* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1994), 319.

Now, we make real decisions that have real consequences, but the Bible teaches that ultimately everything that happens, happens according to God's perfect plan. We see this in today's text in two clear places. In verse 27 we read:

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.'²⁸ But after I am raised up, I will go before you to Galilee." (Mark 14:27 ESV)

We see it again in verses 48-49:

And Jesus said to them, "Have you come out as against a robber, with swords and clubs to capture me?⁴⁹ Day after day I was with you in the temple teaching, and you did not seize me. **But let the Scriptures be fulfilled.**" (Mark 14:48-49 ESV)

Jesus knew that the disciples would betray him, and he knew that he would be seized like a common criminal because it was all written about him in the Old Testament. Jesus was not some unsuspecting chump who was acted upon by forces outside of his control. Elsewhere Jesus said:

No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from my Father." (John 10:18 ESV)

Very practically, this means that nothing can hinder God's plans. We are often surprised, aren't we? We lay out a solid plan and then something terribly unexpected happens and we're thrown for a loop. But it's not like that with God. Nothing surprises Him, and nothing acts upon Him. He is the Mover. In case this strikes you as some obscure theological point with no practical relevance for your life, consider this incredible passage from Romans 8:

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword?³⁶ As it is written,

"For your sake we are being killed all the day long;
we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered."

³⁷ No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.³⁸ For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers,³⁹ nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 8:35-39 ESV)

Isn't that a comforting verse? But, if God were not sovereign, then this verse could not be true. How can God protect us from things that are outside of His control? When my Son goes to bed at night and he's scared of the dark and of the monsters I tell him that I will keep him safe. But that's an empty promise, isn't it? I have no control over the dangerous people who might sneak in the window, or the appliance that might spark the house on fire, or the illness that might befall him in the night. Is that the case with God? Are His promises merely sentimental?

Christian, God's plan for your salvation has been fixed before the foundation of the world. It will not be altered, and it will not be changed. Not by some outside force, not by the devil, and not even by you. God's sovereign will is stronger than anything and everything that you will ever face. This leads to the second thing we learn about God's plan:

2. It includes suffering

Now, we will be brief here because this point will be central in the text we will be considering next week, but I want to draw your attention back to the prophecy that Jesus quotes in verse 27. Jesus quotes Zechariah 13 when he says:

“You will all fall away, for it is written, ‘I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered.’²⁸ But after I am raised up, I will go before you to Galilee.” (Mark 14:27 ESV)

Who will strike the shepherd? God says: “**I** will strike the shepherd.” The suffering that Jesus is preparing to endure will come through the human means of the Roman guards and his Jewish opponents, but ultimately, Jesus will be struck down by the Father. The careful Bible reader will notice that this sounds an awful lot like the prophecy in Isaiah 53 about the suffering servant. There we read:

Surely he has borne our griefs
and carried our sorrows;
yet we esteemed him stricken,
smitten by God, and afflicted.
⁵ But he was pierced for our transgressions;
he was crushed for our iniquities;
upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace,
and with his wounds we are healed.
⁶ All we like sheep have gone astray;

we have turned—every one—to his own way;
and **the Lord has laid on him**
the iniquity of us all. (Isaiah 53:4-6 ESV)

The betrayal of Jesus, the desertion by his closest companions, the suffering, the death, the wrath of God poured out on him – all of this was an essential part of God’s plan of redemption. Jesus asked if there was any other way. He mourned to the point of death. But there is no other way by which man can be saved. In his suffering, Jesus paid the debt that we deserved to pay. This one point deserves an entire sermon, and that will come next week.

Finally, we learn of God’s plan of salvation that:

3. It is for undeserving sinners

The disciples proved to be self-confident, weak and cowardly at the time when Jesus needed them the most. We reflected on how those same traits are true in each of us: We are prone to wander, and we FEEL it. We are capable of tremendous moral failures – perhaps you have been reminded of that recently. There are days when we are on fire for the Lord! But then there are days, often in the same week, when we are so selfish that we can’t muster up a single holy desire.

We are weak, fickle, changeable, rebellious, self-confident, self-absorbed and self-destructing sinners. But if we have confessed our sin and placed our trust in Jesus Christ then we are at the same time righteous, justified, loved, Christ-reflecting, Christ-exalting, Christ-treasuring saints. Praise the Lord! There is a battle waging in our souls on this side of heaven. The Holy Spirit is putting to death that old sinful man in us. There are days when that sinner rears his ugly head again, and the Devil whispers: “God could never love a sinner like you!” But our text this morning reminds us that God saves wretched sinners just like us! I want to quote J.C. Ryle one more time because he says this so well:

It is His glory to pass over the transgressions of His people, and to cover their many sins. He knew what they were before conversion, – wicked, guilty, and defiled; yet He loved them. He knows what they will be after conversion, – weak, erring, and frail; yet He loves them.⁴

⁴ J. C. Ryle, *Expository thoughts on Mark* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1994), 313.

The Apostle John said it this way:

In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. (1 John 4:10 ESV)

If you are here today and you feel like you have fallen too far to receive God's grace, I want to tell you that is a lie from the devil! God saves wicked, awful sinners. He saves hypocrites. He saves cowards. Do you feel like you deserve God's wrath? Do you feel like you should be cast away from God's presence? Hear this good news! The Son of God was abandoned and rejected so that you could be adopted and accepted! He was condemned so that you could be forgiven! He has made a place for you at God's table. Turn from your sin. Repent of it. Let go of it. Cling to Christ. This is the good news of the gospel and this is the Word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.