

## Mark 14, Part 2

Last week – we saw how all of Jesus’s friends fell away. There’s probably nothing more painful than friends abandoning you in your hour or trial. And yet he still had dinner with his disciples as they ate the last supper together.

This morning we’re not going to break the rest of Mark 14 down, except for the first 10 verses of our text today – verses 32-42.

<sup>32</sup> They went to a place called Gethsemane . . .

So Gethsemane means “olive press.” They would put olives on a stone, lay another stone on top, and then with a screw they would turn it. And olive oil would run out. That’s called in Hebrew, “Gethsemane.”

The value was in the crushing. (And think about this – in the Bible, oil is emblematic of the Holy Spirit. And Jesus said that after he would leave, he would send the Holy Spirit to work in us and in the body of Christ. But first – before the oil could flow, the olive has to be crushed.

So Jesus goes to a place where the olives are crushed for his last prayer.

Read 32-42

Up until now, Jesus has been completely in control.

But in verse 33, he starts to fall apart.

Up until now, nothing has surprised him at all – but now he’s totally dismayed.

It says he was “deeply distressed.” We’ve never seen him like this before. What he sees sends him into shock.

He is “troubled.” Troubled means to be overcome with shocking horror. (I’ve been in ministry a long time, and I think of the times I’ve gotten a call in the night, or called to the hospital ER in a moment of tragedy – times I have been totally overrun with emotion. Think about a moment of news so great, it literally stops you in your tracks. It’s a moment when you can’t think, you don’t know what to do – you’re in total shock!

Verse 34 – he is “overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death.” Jesus is so crushed with sorrow in this moment – he feels like he’s about to die on the spot. Because what he saw almost killed him. It was that intense. (Luke said that the horror was so great that he began to sweat great drops of blood). Literally, it’s something so devastating that your capillaries begin to burst.

And so – up until now, Jesus has been in total control. And yet now – he begins to fall completely apart.

So here’s the question: what is this moment about?

Well, let’s put it into context.

When you watch the movies, you know that many of the world’s greatest heroes died with their fists in the face of the evil empire. (Think Braveheart, or Gladiator). Dying defiantly – “you don’t scare me – I’ll never back down. I’ll have the last word of vengeance.”

Plato says that Socrates, when he was executed, was cool and stoic. When he was given hemlock to drink, he was calm and even cracked a few jokes before his death.

And then, history has hundreds of examples of Christian leaders being killed for their faith – thrown to wild animals, burned at the stake – and you know what? All of them face death more calmly than Jesus does here.

Polycarp, an elder in ancient Smyrna (who was also a student of the Apostle John), was brought before the magistrate, who said to him, “Deny Christ, and you will live. Refuse, and be burned at the stake.”

Here’s what Polycarp said:

“You think I’m afraid of this fire? It burns for just a minute and is gone. But you would be afraid of the fires of hell. I’m not scarred of these temporary flames. So come on, boys – bring on the fire!” (Paraphrase)

Question - do you see that kind of calmness here with Jesus? Do you see him saying, “Bring it on – I’m ready!” No.

So – why is it that all of Jesus’s followers died better than Jesus?

Here’s the answer – Jesus had to be facing something the martyrs weren’t facing. So what was it?

I suggest to you – it was something much greater than physical torment and death. Something so terrible, that physical death was like a mosquito bite by comparison.

So when it says in verse 33 that he “began” to experience something – see something – sense something in the garden – it was something he had never faced that sent him into shock.

He began to get a taste of what was going to happen on that Cross.

Yes – he knew he was going to die (which we’ve seen all through the Gospel of Mark).

But although he knew it intellectually – now he begins to experience something far beyond what is physical. (It’s like, you know fire is hot – say a large bonfire – you know it is – but it’s not until you come near to it and feel the heat from it as you approach it, that you realized you can’t bear it.)

So – what was it he experienced that was far beyond the physical?

Verse 36 tells is when he says, “Father, take this CUP from me.” It was the cup that he began to feel.

And what was that?

Al through scripture, the cup is the metaphor for the wrath of God on human evil. It is divine justice poured out on human injustice.

Ezekiel 23 – you will drink a cup of wrath large and deep and full of ruin and desolation, and you will tear your breast.

Isaiah 54 – you will drink the cup of his fury and you will stagger.

So why did Jesus struggle in a way none of the others ever struggled?

This is what he was facing. And it wasn’t just physical.

Hundreds of others faced it with poise, but not Jesus. You know why?

Because when he looked up to heaven (as he had done many times before), this time he did not find peace, he saw hell opened up before him. And he staggered and tore at this breast.

So think about it – Jesus had this amazing relationship with his Father. Whenever he turned to him in prayer, the heavens opened. (which is a great way to think about prayer, right? I’ve had that image in my mind this week – it has helped me – to think of prayer that way – you pray, and heaven opens).

But here in the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus fell apart, because he turned to the Father, and in that moment heaven wasn’t opened up, but hell was.

In this powerful moment, he sees what it will mean for him to bear our sin. (Because what is sin? It is exclusion from the light and the goodness and the love of God.)

And now Jesus begins to experience the spiritual darkness we call hell. He gets a foretaste of what is to come. (So I think – if this was the foretaste, what must have the full experience of hell have been like for Jesus?)

So here’s a question people have asked for ages: “Why does God give Jesus a foretaste?”

Why not wait until he was safely tied and nailed to the cross? Wouldn’t it be dangerous to show him what it was going to be like? I mean, there were not soldiers there, and the disciples were sleeping.

He could have just walked away. BUT – he didn’t.

(I love what the great Jonathan Edwards said (paraphrase): “God brought him to the mouth of the blazing furnace to see where he was going, so he could voluntarily enter it, and bear it for us. So when he took that cup – he knew full well what it was, and what he was about to do.”

You see the point? Jesus knew exactly what he was facing. And he chose to face it, anyway.

So (and I owe so much of this to Timothy Keller) – think of it this way:

In the beginning, Adam comes into a Garden, and God says, “See the tree? Obey me – don’t eat of the tree. Obey my laws and you will live. Don’t eat of the tree.”

And Adam doesn’t do it. And ever since then, we’ve been Adam in our rebellion.

What does God say: treat as others as you want to be treated and you will be blessed – the Golden Rule. And we don’t do it. And as a result, we face the curse of sin.

But now Jesus Christ comes, and he (according to Paul) is the second Adam – he’s our substitute.

And guess what? He too comes into a garden (a second garden) – and God asks him to obey about a tree as well – only this time the tree is the Cross.

And this will be much harder. Because the first Adam was told – obey me about the tree, and you will live.

What happened? He didn’t obey.

But God comes to the second Adam and says, “Obey me about the tree, and I will crush you.”

And what did he do? He obeyed.

And why? Because he loved you!

Because he would rather lose himself, than lose us.

And God let him see in the Garden what it was going to cost him to love you and me.

And what did he do? He obeyed his father. (“Not what I will, but what you will.”)

You and I – we deserved the curse. But because of what he did, taking the curse for us – we get the blessing.

And when you receive him by faith and baptism – he takes your punishment, and gives you his blessing.

And if you see that – you realized – that’s the love you’ve been looking for all your life.

All other loves will let you down. But not his.

And when you see that – you can trust the Father in your suffering.

(Listen – the greatest people I know, are the ones that have suffered most. And through it all – they’ve come to love Jesus all the more.”

So if you feel lost, or abandoned – you need to know – that if he didn’t abandon you on the Cross, why would he ever abandon you now?

Why would he give up on you if you’ve blown it this week?

You may have people right now who have deserted you.  
You may have friends who fall asleep on you.

But look at Jesus. They deserted him, betrayed him, fell asleep on them. And yet he still found something good in them – he said, “The Spirit is willing, but the body is weak.

He still found something good in them.

And so this morning – we fall at his feet, so that when we get up, we will be like him.

So as we read the rest of the chapter – I want you to see the trials that Jesus faced going to the Cross, and how he was totally abandoned and left all alone – and it did it all, for you and me.

In a garden known for the crushing of olives, from the production of oil, finds his own spirit crushed.

And that’s one of the many reasons why we need prayer.  
We must be a house of prayer.

Readers (come on up to the front and be ready to read when it is your time):

43-52
53-65
66-72

In the hour of trial,

His inner circle fell asleep

His friends fled from him

The authorities arrested Jesus

False witnesses lied about Him

The guards spat upon and beat him, and

His dearest friends stood outside cursing and swearing, “I don’t know who he is.”

Jesus faced such unimaginable grief for us all, prompting us all to ask, “Is it I?”

But the beauty of the story is: Jesus died for every single person, even those who betrayed him.

And the good news is – those who failed not only came back, but came back stronger than before.

He said, “I’ll be waiting for you in Galilee.” And today he waits to commune with all of us around the table of grace.

Communion

It’s amazing that many of those who betrayed or denied or failed during this hour of trial not only came back to Jesus, but they came back better and stronger than before.

And who but Peter himself, would preach the very first Gospel sermon only 50 days after this night, standing up and saying, “This is THAT of which you read in the prophet Joel, that in the last days the Spirit of the Lord will be poured out in all flesh.”

And it would be these very disciples who start the church that becomes so bold that Acts 5:13 says people were even nervous about going to that church because of its boldness.