



Mark 14:27-42

Where do you turn in troubled times?

Summary: Jesus reached out to His friends and up to Father when faced with the biggest challenge in His life.

I want to ask you an honest question – have you ever been disappointed by God? Have you ever prayed and prayed, believed, and hoped for something and it just didn't turn out? Most of us have. *And you need to know that.* You need to know sooner or later, in some way, God is going to disappoint you.

This morning we're going to haul that fact right out into the open, stare it in the face, and see what we can learn about why it happens and how we should react.

I hope the things we discuss are helpful as you try to process what you've been through in the past, what you're going through right now, and how to work through whatever lies ahead. Are you ready?

We've come to the final 24 hours of Jesus' life. He and the disciples just celebrated the Last Supper where Jesus told them He is the fulfillment of what they always celebrated as Passover and now, He has transformed that holiday into what we call communion.

He knows He is headed to the cross. He knows His body will be broken and His blood poured out. He knows that He will die. Terrible things are coming so, He tries to prepare His followers and Himself.

Mark 14:27 Then Jesus said to them, "All of you will be made to stumble because of Me this night, for it is written:

*'I will strike the Shepherd,
And the sheep will be scattered.'*

28 "But after I have been raised, I will go before you to Galilee."

Sometimes God disappoints us

I want to direct your attention to nine very important words in verse 27. Jesus tells His disciples **you will be made to stumble because of Me**. The Greek word behind stumble is *skandalizo* – from which we get our English word scandalize. Many English translations render it as 'to cause someone to fall away.'

The Message, a paraphrase of the Bible, says it this way: “You’re all going to feel that your world is falling apart and it’s my fault.”

Notice the two important pieces there. First, you feel like your world is falling apart. That’s bad enough. But then, second, it seems like it’s God’s fault.

So, let’s go back and ask that question again – have you ever been disappointed with God? Well, if you were one of the disciples, Jesus Himself is saying, prepare for the answer to be yes.

And remember He says this to the twelve disciples, minus Judas who is off betraying Him right now. Jesus tells *these men* they will ALL stumble, *they* will be scandalized.

Here’s why that’s important - no one else on earth has more reason to trust Jesus, to believe Jesus, than these eleven men. They’ve heard everything He said. They’ve seen His miracles. They received private mentoring, and experienced the supernatural. And yet Jesus says, *all of you will fall away*.

Why? Because they’re about to see and experience things they won’t understand.

Isn’t that the same reason we feel disappointed with God? We see and experience things we don’t understand.

God doesn’t do what we were hoping for or expecting. God allowed something bad to happen. He could have stopped it, but He didn’t. We want the bad thing to stop, or we want to understand what’s going on, and sometimes we don’t get relief or an explanation either.

And so, sometimes, for some people, the disappointment with God is so real, so strong, it leads to a crisis of faith. They walk away, or simply drift away and if you ask them about it, they’ll say, they tried the whole God/church/religion thing and it just didn’t work. It didn’t make a difference. They prayed and it didn’t help. They wanted to believe, and they might even be able to believe again, if they could just make sense of what happened. If you could fix it, or tell them why it had to go this way.

Friends, I want to say this morning – divine disappointment is real. Jesus knew it, *and He tried to tell the disciples about it*.

Sometimes God is going to disappoint you.

Now, I’ll say why in just a minute, but first, I think it’s really important that we sit here for a minute and absorb this. Jesus is trying to tell His disciples, you’re going to be offended by what happens. You’re going to be shaken by it. You’re going to be disappointed and unsure of what to think or do as a result. I’m telling you, that’s real, and it’s coming.

So, my friends, it is very possible that you have been legitimately disappointed by God. He didn't do something you hoped for. He allowed something to happen that you didn't ask for. You prayed and prayed and things didn't get better. That's real and it hurts.

But remember what else Jesus said, (vs 28) *"But after I have been raised, I will go before you to Galilee."* There's going to be a crucifixion, but there's also going to be a resurrection, temporary suffering will lead to eternal salvation. There may be momentary disappointment, but there will also be eternal delight.

The challenge is: can you trust God in the process? Can you walk, by faith, in the darkness, when you cannot see the sun, believing that it will rise again? Can you hold onto the promise in the midst of the pain?

It's a big ask, I know. But so does Jesus. In fact, He goes through it Himself as we'll see in a minute. But first, we need to notice how the disciples respond to His announcement.

Jesus has tried several times to tell them what lies ahead, but they haven't been able to accept it. It seems impossible. They have seen Jesus do so much, work so many miracles. They just can't accept that He could actually be harmed. And so, they resist the news again:

29 Peter said to Him, *"Even if all are made to stumble, yet I will not be."*

30 Jesus said to him, *"Assuredly, I say to you that today, even this night, before the rooster crows twice, you will deny Me three times."*

31 But he spoke more vehemently, *"If I have to die with You, I will not deny You!"* And they all said likewise.

How could they be so sure of themselves? Well, you have to remember they just ate the Passover meal together. Jesus just wrapped Himself in a towel like a servant and washed their feet. He served them and prayed for them. The hearts of these men are stirred, they feel loyal and so they speak impulsively and make rash commitments without thinking things through or asking Jesus for more details.

And when Jesus pushes back on their enthusiasm, Peter doubles down – he seeks to distinguish himself from the crowd – *"even if everyone else lets You down Jesus, I'll be there for you!"* And the rest of them nod their head and say, yeah, yeah, me too!

Most of us know how this turns out, right? In just a few hours when Jesus is arrested, they're going to ditch Him and run off into the darkness to protect themselves. Before the sun rises Peter does deny Jesus three times. Everything Jesus said would happen, happens. Their self-confidence may have been well intended, but it was an empty promise. They thought they were better than they really were.

Right now the problem is Peter and the rest of the disciples are ignorant. They're ignorant about the strength of the challenge they're going to face, and they're ignorant of their own weakness.

Jesus knows difficulty is coming. He tries to tell them, “This will happen. You will be made to stumble because of Me. I know it’s going to happen.” And they, essentially, call Jesus a liar. Nope, not going to happen Jesus. We’ve got this. They think they can handle it. They’re full of self-confidence and bravado – they say, in effect, *I won’t disappoint you* Jesus.

Contrast that with the way Jesus responds to coming events. The one person who would have been most justified in saying “I’ve got this,” turns to His friends and He turns to the Father, and He asks for help.

32 Then they came to a place which was named Gethsemane; and He said to His disciples, “Sit here while I pray.” 33 And He took Peter, James, and John with Him, and He began to be troubled and deeply distressed. 34 Then He said to them, “My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, *even to death. Stay here and watch.*”

35 He went a little farther, and fell on the ground, and prayed that if it were possible, the hour might pass from Him.

Jesus reaches out to His friends and up to the Father

Jesus knows what is coming up, knows what He is facing, knows His own death is imminent. It’s going to take tremendous strength to face what lies ahead, and instead of trusting in Himself, in His experience, in His past achievements, instead of doing a little meditation and positive self-talk, or visualizing success Jesus does two things – He reaches out to His friends and reaches up to His Father.

Let’s start with His friends. When Jesus knew everything in His life was about to fall apart, He turned to the group of people He had spent the most time with over the past three years – and from that group, He asked a select few, Peter, James, and John to come, be with Him.

We often do this ourselves, you have your broad circle of friends, and then you have those few you are closest with and who know the most.

Jesus opens up to them. He shares His burdens with them. He says, “*My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, crushed, overwhelmed, deeply grieved, to the point of death -- would you sit here with Me?*”

My friends, can you take notice of this? Jesus is setting an example and giving you permission. When He faced the greatest crisis of His life, Jesus opened up to His friends and told the truth about what He was feeling.

He didn’t turn to these men and say get Me out of here. He didn’t ask them to save Him or protect Him, but He did ask them to be with Him, to encourage Him.

Why do you think He did that? And why do you think Mark and the other disciples included this bit when they wrote their gospels? Doesn’t it make Jesus seem a little soft, a little

vulnerable? I mean, if you were looking back and trying to tell the story of Jesus wouldn't you want to paint Him in the best possible light – wouldn't you want to give the impression of bold, fearless, unshaken Jesus who knew they were coming to get Him and just didn't care?

That might be how others would want to tell the story, but it's not what happened. In the hours leading up to the most trying moments of His life, Jesus reached out to His friends and up to the Father. I think this moment in history was preserved instead of being covered up because it's meant to show us something important.

I think God in human flesh is showing us - we are supposed to care about each other. And that means we're supposed to open up and share with one another about what we're going through, what we're feeling and what we're thinking. Whether we're rejoicing or weeping, we are not meant to be alone.

And, the other side of that is true too – we're not only supposed to be the one who opens up and invites others in, we're also meant to be the one who receives the invitation - we're supposed to listen, help, and care when others open up to us.

Friends, if Jesus did this, it's OK for you to do it too!

Part of my hope for our church has always been that we would be a particularly safe place for sheep, a refuge where you refuel, repair, and resupply and then go out to face the trials of life in our broken community and country. I have seen it happen time and time again, when storms hit, we walk through them together. I have watched you reach out to each other, strengthen each other, care for, counsel, and provide for one another and I hope it continues.

But, remember we said Jesus did two things – yes, He reached out to His friends, but He didn't put all His hopes and needs on them. He didn't expect them to fix everything or make it all better on their own. He invited them in, He was transparent *with* them, but He wasn't dependent *on* them. I'll say that again – Jesus was transparent with His friends, but He wasn't dependent on them.

For that reached *up* to His Father.

36 And He said, "Abba, Father, all things *are* possible for You. Take this cup away from Me; nevertheless, not what I will, but what You *will*."

The cup He's referring to is the suffering He's about to endure. It was a common figure of speech for wrath. And here is where our first and second points this morning collide.

We're looking at the fact that when crisis came into Jesus' life **He reached out to His friends and up to His Father**, but we also said that **sometimes God disappoints us**. And

if you'll allow me the space to say it poetically and not precisely, that's what we see Jesus working His way through right here.

Jesus understands the pain and agony, the stress and pressure that are involved with what He needs to do and He says, "Father, if there's another way, let's take it. I don't want to go through this unless I absolutely have to."

I want you to notice the honesty and the implication of Jesus' prayer when He says, "[all things are possible with You.](#)"

I think anyone who has ever prayed for something serious understands this prayer because it's the foundation of all prayer – it's the belief that God can do things, change things, affect things that we can't. In fact, *that's why we're praying.*

Jesus is saying, Father, I know what You can do. I know who You are. I believe if anyone could do something here, it's You.

For those who have a crisis of belief, this is where the crisis starts. They believe God can. They believe He's good. They believe He's kind and loving. And so, in light of that, *why doesn't He just do this good thing that I'm asking for?*

The inability to find a satisfactory answer to that question leads to one of three places – either they give up on the belief that God is good and loving and that He cares, or they give up on the belief that He can do good things, or they lose faith that God is even real.

Friends, *the journey to disbelief often begins with disappointment.* God didn't do something, so I gave up.

Which is why this moment is so important. Jesus faced exactly what we face, head on. He asked the Father – is there any other way? Do I really have to go through this?

He said, [Father, all things are possible for You. If there is any other way, take this cup away from Me.](#) But then He said *the most important words we could ever speak* – words that form the structural foundation of the Christian life: [nevertheless, not what I will, but what You will.](#)

Friends, most of our prayers are some version of "God, give me what I want." Jesus prayed, "Father, I am Yours."

Jesus faces the greatest challenge of His life, so He reaches out to His friends and up to His Father. How's that going? Well,

[37 Then He came and found them sleeping, and said to Peter, "Simon, are you sleeping? Could you not watch one hour? 38 Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."](#)

Remember, these are the guys who just said they would go through anything for Jesus.

So, what's going on? Well, there is something in each of us that wants to do the good thing, the part that wants to help, the part that wants to be there for people. And then there is the part that says, but I'm tired, it's late, I've already done so much or I'll just take a break and come back again later.

Jesus understands all of that. He knows there is a noble ambition inside of us. He knows [the spirit is willing](#). He doesn't berate His friends or belittle them, He doesn't mock them. But He also knows we're human and [the flesh is weak](#). We need sleep. We need food. We get tired. There is only so much stress our bodies can handle.

And that is why He is encouraging them to pray! He's saying, *in light of what's about to come* PRAY. Being *with each other* and being *in the presence of God* is the single best thing you can do in this moment because what's about to come isn't just a physical or mental test, it's going to test your soul. Pray to prepare for it.

Friends, when it comes to facing a crisis, or just doing daily life for that matter, do you see the example we need to follow? If there was a better way to prepare wouldn't Jesus have done it?

If the best way to endure our circumstances was to sit around a firepit, smoke a cigar and share some whiskey, wouldn't Jesus have done it?

If the answer was to just share all His thoughts and feelings with His friends, to talk it all out, wouldn't Jesus have done it?

If the answer was to shove it all down inside and press on with Stoic confidence, wouldn't Jesus have done it?

Was there ever a greater challenge, a greater trial, a greater temptation or test faced by man this? And how did Jesus handle it? By reaching out to friends and reaching up to the Father through prayer. *And now that's exactly what He's encouraging these men to do as well*, to be present with each other and pray.

[39 Again He went away and prayed, and spoke the same words.](#)

[40 And when He returned, He found them asleep again, for their eyes were heavy; and they did not know what to answer Him.](#)

[41 Then He came the third time and said to them, "Are you still sleeping and resting? It is enough! The hour has come; behold, the Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of sinners. 42 Rise, let us be going. See, My betrayer is at hand."](#)

Notice the finality and acceptance here. There's no going back, only moving forward. The crisis is coming, and it's too late to prepare your heart and soul if they aren't prepared yet.

Jesus had encouraged the men to pray, to be ready to face what was coming. He set the example for them and tried to include them. If they had followed His example, who knows how things would have turned out?

But this much we can know – His was the right response. As the storm crashes down upon them, they will scatter and He will stand strong. He will work for their eternal good while they run off seeking immediate safety.

What can we learn from this?

First of all, you cannot miss what God is trying to tell us about how to respond to difficulties in life – we should **reach out to our friends and reach up to our Father**. Jesus had an inner circle. We are made for community, friendship, and relationship – with God in Heaven and with people on earth.

That's something you need to consider today – in light of what you just saw in Scripture, who do you need to reach out to, share what you're going through, or what you're facing, share what's coming up, and ask them to pray with you?

Don't let pride get in the way of sharing what you're really feeling, what you're really facing. It's always awkward to open up and be real. But what's the alternative? To suffer on quietly alone? How's that working out for you so far? And, is that what Jesus did?

The Second thing we learn from this passage is **how to navigate our inevitable disappointment** in those relationships.

When it comes to our family and friends, we have to remember - their spirit is willing, but their flesh is weak. They won't always be there for us in the way we hope, but, like Jesus, we should still keep coming back and inviting them in.

Remember, you're going to be a disappointment at times too. We can think too highly of ourselves. We promise we'll do this or that, or we would never. And then we do. But, God still loves us. Notice: Jesus never walked away from the disciples even though they let Him down. Even though they didn't come through. Even though He opened up and shared His deepest struggles with them and they fell asleep, He still loved them and was on His way to suffer for their eternal good.

My friends, Jesus is all about grace. You don't deserve what He offers to you, but He offers it anyway.

Of course, the truth is, sometimes it feels like God is disappointing us. But usually, even when we feel disappointed or confused, He's actually doing more for us than we can see or

understand. He never abandons us or neglects us, even when we can't see it or understand it immediately. Jesus told these men, *He would see them again, after the resurrection*. Which leads us to our third point.

Jesus is the hero. No one saved Jesus, no one helps Him get through. He pours Himself out, at all costs for you, for me. Jesus invited the disciples to come with Him, but ultimately, He endured without their help. Jesus did for us what we could not do for ourselves.

Fourth and finally, you can't miss the fact that Jesus made open and honest requests in prayer but ended it with **"nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will."**

What is your goal in prayer? To get your wish fulfilled, or see God's plan unfold? How many of your prayers are you really, honestly willing to end with, "nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will."

We're going to take some time to pray right now, right there in your seat, where you are. There will be time to reach out to your friends in a moment – but first, this is your chance to reach up to the Father. Talk to Him – tell Him about your disappointment. Ask Him for help. Ask Him for whatever you want, and then ask Him for help to be able to pray, nevertheless, not my will, but Yours be done.

Take this time to pray based on what you've seen in Scripture, lived in life, and what the Holy Spirit is speaking to you.

We're going to end with a closing song and there will be men and women in the back of the sanctuary to pray with you and for you. If you need to turn to a friend and invite them in, to ask for prayer, do that today – reach up to the Father, but also, reach out to your friends, pray for and pray with each other church – just like Jesus.



Sermon Application and Discussion Questions

Mark 14:27-42

Where do you turn in troubled times?

Summary: Jesus reached out to His friends and up to Father when faced with the biggest challenge in His life.

- Have you ever been disappointed by God? What happened? Have you ever been able to make sense of it?
- Have you seen disappointment lead to disbelief? What happened?
- How does the truth of Romans 8:28-30 intersect with our seasons of spiritual stumbling?
- Which is easier for you in hard times – reaching out to friends or up to the Father? Or, are both difficult for you?
- When have you been disappointed by friends – people you reached out to, people you invited in, and they did the equivalent of falling asleep when you needed them?
- What does it mean for the spirit to be willing, but the flesh to be weak? How have you experienced this?
 - o What does it mean for the people you count on?
 - o What does it mean for the people counting on you?
- Why is it so hard to pray, “Nevertheless, not my will, but Yours be done?”
 - o Why did Jeff say these words are the structural foundation of the Christian faith?
- How do you react to the observation that most of our prayers are some version of, “God give me this” and Jesus prayed, “Father, I am Yours.” What would sounding more like Jesus mean for you?
- What do you need to reach out to your friends and up to your Father about today?