

# The Journey to the Cross, Part 15

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[ 0 : 00 ] We're going to read Mark chapter 14 from verse 27 to verse number 52 in the journey of Jesus towards the cross.

This takes us to the night of his arrest. So let's hear God's word being read.

Mark chapter 14 at verse 27. You will all fall away, Jesus told them, for it is written, I will strike the shepherd and the sheep will be scattered.

But after I have risen, I will go ahead of you into Galilee. Peter declared, even if all fall away, I will not. I tell you the truth, Jesus answered, today, yes, tonight, before the cock crows twice, you yourself will disown me three times.

But Peter insisted emphatically, even if I have to die with you, I will never disown you. And all the others said the same.

[ 1 : 08 ] They went to a place called Gethsemane, and Jesus said to his disciples, sit here while I pray. He took Peter, James, and John along with him, and he began to be deeply distressed and troubled.

My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death, he said to them. Stay here and keep watch. Going a little farther, he fell to the ground and prayed that if possible, the hour might pass from him.

Abba, Father, he said, everything is possible for you. Take this cup from me, yet not what I will, but what you will.

Then he returned to his disciples and found them sleeping. Simon, he said to Peter, are you asleep? Could you not keep watch for one hour? Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation.

The spirit is willing, but the body is weak. Once more, he went away and prayed the same thing. When he came back, he again found them sleeping, because their eyes were heavy.

[ 2 : 22 ] They did not know what to say to him. Returning the third time, he said to them, are you still sleeping and resting? Enough. The hour has come. Look, the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners.

Rise, let us go. Here comes my betrayer. Just as he was speaking, Judas, one of the twelve, appeared.

With him was a crowd armed with swords and clubs, sent from the chief priests, the teachers of the law, and the elders. Now, the betrayer had arranged a signal with them.

The one I kiss is the man. Arrest him and lead him away under guard. Going at once to Jesus, Judas said, Rabbi, and kissed him.

The men seized Jesus and arrested him. Then one of those standing near drew his sword and struck the servant of the high priest, cutting off his ear.

[ 3 : 22 ] Am I leading a rebellion, said Jesus, that you've come out with swords and clubs to capture me? Every day I was with you, teaching in the temple courts, and you did not arrest me.

But the scriptures must be fulfilled. Then everyone deserted him and fled. Amen. Amen. This is God's word.

Now, some of us will know of, think together about verses 27 to 31 and 43 to 52, and then we'll come back next week and think about Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane.

And what we will see today very clearly is Jesus being abandoned by his friends. But we'll consider the fact that Jesus is being abandoned so that we might be reconciled to God.

Dave Eggers, the American author, wrote a book called *What is the What?* And it was a story of a 10-year-old boy originally from Sudan by the name of Achak Deng.

[ 4 : 48 ] So he was a 10-year-old who was forced to flee from his tribal village because rebels came and burned that village to the ground.

And Achak, along with others, ran first of all to a refugee camp in Ethiopia and then further on to Kenya before eventually being able to emigrate to the states courtesy of an initiative called the Lost Boys Program.

And so what follows the story of Achak Deng along with those who he flees with who came to be known as the Lost Boys of Sudan.

I don't know if any of you have read that book. It's a very powerful book. Two things stood out to me in reading it. First of all, it presented those kind of grim stories of fleeing migrants in such a way that you were drawn in.

You know, it's fairly easy sometimes on the television to hear about migrants on boats or crossing countries, and it feels far removed from us. But this story, and if you've read migrant stories, they draw us in to feel, to gain an insight into the kind of suffering that people endure.

[ 6 : 07 ] So it's difficult for us to keep it at a distance. But the other thing that stands out when you read that book, if you have a chance to read it, is how important those friends were to Achak and to his survival.

He would not have made it without his fellow lost boys. Having someone to walk the road with him was crucial. We come back to Mark chapter 14.

We come back to Jesus' journey towards the cross. And what's Mark doing for us? Mark is deliberately seeking to draw us in to the story of Jesus' suffering.

He's beginning to show to us some of the sorrow, some of the unimaginable sorrow that Jesus experienced in order to be our Savior. He wants to draw us in to feel that, to see that.

And making the agony of facing the cross still worse is that unlike Achak, he had no lost boys with him. The disciples, on the contrary, ran and left him.

[ 7 : 14 ] And so Jesus walks his path of suffering alone. Yet even here, in this dark time, we'll see that there's gospel hope that Jesus offers, first of all to the disciples, but also to ourselves.

So let's begin to think about Jesus being abandoned. Let's think about his prediction of that. And just to keep us up to date with where we are, the last time in an earlier part of chapter 14, Jesus celebrated the Lord's Supper with his friends.

So he broke bread and he took a cup of wine and he said, this represents the fact that I'm going to go to the cross in order to suffer and die, to redeem, to establish a covenant, to bring people into the family of God.

And he's left the upper room with his disciples and now they're on the Mount of Olives. And we're here on the night of Jesus' arrest. And we come to verse 27.

What does Jesus say to his disciples? He says to them, you will all fall away. He says to them, you will want to dissociate yourself from me.

[ 8 : 33 ] You will see the suffering that I will have handed out to me and you will want no part of it. Jesus, as we've seen in this journey towards the cross, has been teaching his disciples that the Old Testament makes plain that the Savior of the world must suffer and must die.

That was always part of God's plan. Jesus understood that. But before the resurrection of Jesus, the disciples cannot grasp how his suffering and his death can ever possibly be good news.

How can it be good that their friend has to die? But Jesus continues to teach that this is part of God's plan. So notice in verse 27 that he takes them again to the Old Testament.

He takes them to the prophecy of Zechariah. And in chapter 13 and at verse 7, it is written, I will strike the shepherd and the sheep will be scattered.

Zechariah 13 is a chapter well worth reading if you have some time today. In there, the prophet is speaking of God doing something in order to refine and purify his people.

[ 9 : 58 ] That he's going to do something that will create a new people of God. It speaks earlier in the chapter about God opening up a fountain to cleanse people from sin.

And it also speaks about striking of the shepherd who is close to God as being essential to this new thing that God is doing.

So Jesus says, I will strike the shepherd. But alongside that, the sheep will be scattered. Despite Peter's bold claim in verse 29, even if all fall away, I won't.

Despite the disciples all saying the same, even if I have to die with you, I'll never disown you. They do. They will. A short while later, Jesus will be abandoned and he'll be left alone.

In verse 43, we discover there, just as he was speaking, Judas, one of the twelve appeared. [11:06] There's a reminder, one of the inner circle, one of Jesus' close friends, will betray him, will become an enemy. With him was a crowd armed with swords and clubs sent from the chief priests, the teachers of the law, and the elders.

So Judas is part of this conspiracy of evil, arranging a convenient time for the Jews to arrest Jesus. They will then hand him over to the Romans, who will then crucify him.

And so as Jesus is betrayed and as Jesus is arrested, he reminds the disciples of what he'd just been teaching them.

At the end of verse 49, it says, the scriptures must be fulfilled. Zechariah 13 verse 7 must be fulfilled.

And it happens because everyone deserted him and fled. Even the strongest and the bravest. That's what the young man of verse 59 represents.

[12:14] Everybody leaves Jesus to suffer alone. This Jesus who had described himself as the good shepherd.

The one who said, I know my sheep. I love my sheep. I will lay down my life for these sheep. His sheep, however, run in fear at the height of Jesus' suffering.

At a time when he needed them most, they deserted and fled. The Scottish theologian Sinclair Ferguson reminds us that the price of our reconciliation was Christ's alienation.

We are brought near. We are given peace with God as Jesus is sent far. And this abandonment by his friends reminds us of this pattern.

Jesus suffering and dying with that sense of being alone. Jesus goes to the cross representing his people.

[13:25] Carrying our sin and our guilt and our shame. He is the shepherd who in love is willing to be struck.

So that scattered sheep can be gathered into God's fold. Can become part of God's kingdom and God's family.

I wonder if here today we have experience of being abandoned or betrayed. As we think about our own lives and our stories.

Perhaps you think of times where you were misrepresented. Slandered about. Perhaps you had a confidence broken. A secret told that then is passed around a group.

Perhaps a relationship that was ended because of unfaithfulness of one kind or another. If we have had that experience.

[14:29] If we are living with the pain of that. Then recognize that Jesus knows your pain and your tears. And not just by observation at a distance.

Jesus knows it by personal experience. He is, as the Bible says, the man of sorrows. The one who sympathizes with our grief. And so we have an invitation to come to this Jesus.

To talk to this Jesus. To bring our tears to him. And knowing that he will understand. And that he will care. And this Jesus, though he was abandoned.

He promises never to abandon his own. We discover in Jesus the one person we can always count on. We're so thankful in our own lives when we have friends and family members we can trust.

And we can share things with. And they are a rock for us. But we also discover there are times when that person is not available. Or perhaps that person doesn't have the resources in that moment to help.

[15:39] Well, Jesus is always available. And he always has resources for us. He is the friend who sits closer than any brother. And we're invited to come to him.

Mark here is also inviting us. Encouraging us to enter into his story. Not to stand at a distance. To just see Jesus suffering on the cross as an event in history that's far removed from us.

But to enter in. To see that he's on this road of suffering in order to save us. To offer salvation freely to you and to me.

To recognize the cost to Jesus. Here we find at the point that he says to his friends, Will you stay with me?

Will you pray for me? Will you pray with me? Will you stand alongside me? They turn and they run. There is no one beside him. As he goes to his arrest.

[16:46] Mark is showing us the cost of salvation. And when we realize that this is all voluntary. Jesus did not have to leave the glory of heaven.

Jesus did not have to endure this kind of suffering. But he chose to. In love for his people. That we would allow that mix as we look at it of both his agony and his love to move us.

To come to him. Not to keep him at a distance. But rather to move close to him. So we have a prediction there. And it's also tied up with that a warning.

So next week we, as I said, will return to Gethsemane. But I want us to notice words that Jesus addresses to his disciples in verse 38.

He's been saying to them all the way along in this journey. There is a point of crisis coming. And he's been warning them ahead of time that the cross was coming.

[17:51] So that they might be ready. Now he's already said to them. You will fall away. You will disown me.

But here he gives them a warning in verse 38 also. Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation.

The spirit is willing. But the body is weak. Jesus is saying to them, you're going to be tempted to be untrue to me. This moment, these days are going to be hard.

You're going to be tempted towards denial. You'll look at the cost of discipleship and be unwilling to pay. Here again we see Jesus is their shepherd.

He doesn't want them to go astray. He wants to warn them. He wants to keep them on the right path. He wants to warn them of danger that lies ahead. All the while though, he knows at this point that they will fail this test.

[18:55] The disciples' story will be very different after the resurrection. And after they've received the Holy Spirit, as they look back, then they can see that the cross makes sense.

Because Jesus didn't stay dead, but he rose again in victory. That God had received his death on the cross as the atoning sacrifice for sin.

To wash his followers clean. And so that makes sense. And so now they understand the cost of discipleship and they're willing to pay.

And they'll give their lives to serve Jesus. But not yet. So Jesus says, watch and pray. How should any disciple of Jesus face a spiritual crisis?

How do we deal with that temptation to be untrue to Jesus under pressure? And we will face that pressure. If we're a follower of Jesus, we will inevitably face the pressure to be untrue to him.

[19:56] But we too are called to watch and to pray. We're called to spiritual wakefulness. It has been well said that the Christian life is a battleground and not a playground.

We are warned to keep our guard up. Just as a boxer in the boxing ring would be encouraged to keep their guard up.

So we too are to watch out. Because there will be this temptation to deny Jesus as Lord in our practical lived out experience.

Situations will come either external or internal. And we will be tempted to deny Jesus as Lord. That temptation might come from the world around us.

Let me share with you wise words from a man called Grimbeard the Ghastly. Some of you might have read How to Train Your Dragon.

[21:03] Many of you won't. That's our bedtime reading at the moment. Well, Grimbeard the Ghastly is passing on words of wisdom to one of his descendants by the name of Hiccup.

And he says this, profound words I found last night. The sagas, those Viking sagas will tell you that the stealing of the treasure was my most magnificent moment.

But since then, it has been tearing my once happy band of burglars apart with greed and lust for power.

We are just not ready to look after this treasure. So I have decided to get rid of it. Pursuing a treasure, finding that treasure to be destructive and be wise enough to want to get rid of it.

There's a pirate worth following. There is a danger for all of us of chasing the wrong treasure. And as we listen to the voices around us, we are told to live for ourselves, to live for now.

[22:07] That leisure and pleasure and success and success in the business field, those are the things that matter. That's where treasure lies. And Jesus would say, no, he is the great treasure.

And we need to be spiritually awake to see how we can be so easily pulled away from loyalty to the Lord Jesus. But those temptations to deny Jesus as Lord don't just come from outside.

They also come from within. The Bible talks about the world and the flesh and the devil. They're all waging war against the people of God.

Again, I can't remember which author talked about the Christian life as a life lived in between D-Day and V-E-Day.

Helpful for us this week as we've seen and heard so much about D-Day. That decisive moment in the battle of World War II when the Allies gained that foothold that 11 months later would lead to victory and would lead to peace breaking out.

[ 23 : 18 ] Well, we live as Christians between D-Day, the point on the cross, where Jesus won a comprehensive victory over sin and the death and the devil at the cross.

But that victory is not complete until either we die and we go to be with him or Jesus comes back. That's our V-E-Day, ultimately the return of Jesus when sin is gone forever.

So we live in between that day and the second coming. And in between times as Christians, we discover that sin is still fights within us.

There is still the battle to claim our hearts and our minds. And Jesus says, watch out, be spiritually wakeful about that reality.

Recognize too there is a devil who wants to destroy the people of God. Who wants to wreak havoc in God's church.

[ 24 : 23 ] Who wants to weaken our witness and credibility in the world. Who wants to pull us away from our focus on Jesus. So we'd either look to our sins so we condemn ourselves.

Or we want to look around and see other things as being more desirable than Jesus. So we need to understand and be on guard because these pressures are relentless.

But in this battle, we're not alone. We are to watch and we are to pray. We are to exercise dependent prayer.

Remembering God is with us. That God is our refuge and our strength. And prayer helps us to remember that. Prayer brings us into the presence of God.

It connects us with the power of God. It's as we pray often that we find our priorities become reset. Our perspectives change.

[ 25 : 25 ] So those things that seem so attractive, as we bring them to God, as we find ourselves in God's presence, all of a sudden we see the God of the gospel is worth much, much more.

But the disciples, they stand as a warning to us here on the Mount of Olives to beware of spiritual pride or complacency.

Perhaps thinking, well, I can handle that trial and temptation on my own strength. I had success before, so I'm sure it will be exactly the same this time.

The Bible says that while we mature in our faith, our desire is to mature in our faith, to become more and more like the Lord Jesus, in a sense we always remain like spiritual toddlers in God's family.

We always need the hand of God our Father. We always need the prayers of Jesus, our elder brother. We always need the power of the Holy Spirit in our hearts and in our lives.

[ 26 : 37 ] And we also too need our brothers and sisters in Christ. We need the family of the church in order to strengthen and sustain us. We need the family of God to call on when we find ourselves struggling, when we find ourselves going through trials.

It's a remarkable thing that Jesus said to his friends, the disciples, will you pray for me? Will you pray with me?

If Jesus does it, why wouldn't we? Let's resolve to be that friend for somebody, to make time to find out how they're doing and to pray with them and for them, and to find that friend for ourselves, to be humble enough to recognize that we need others in order to keep going in our journey of faith.

So we've seen the prediction, we've seen the warning, but we also need to see the promise, the gospel promise that we find even in this dark night. As we consider the conversations that Jesus has with his disciples, they help us to see the wonder of Jesus in so many ways.

So we see him walking towards the cross, knowing he's going to die in our place for our sins. He's going to do that while being abandoned by his closest friends, but still he makes the time to love them and to teach them and to warn them, and also to give them hope beyond awful failure.

[ 28 : 12 ] I wonder, as you look back in your life, have you had one or maybe more of those moments where you feel, I've just totally blown it there.

Those moments where you feel utterly empty and devastated, and you feel that the world has come to an end, as it were. But when we think about those moments and those feelings in our own lives, we need to begin to multiply them, and then imagine how the disciple Peter must have felt, despite his bold proclamation three times, denying even knowing his friend, his God, his Savior, the Lord

Jesus.

Same too for the other disciples. But Jesus, the good shepherd, the gracious shepherd, does something, says something, so full of grace for them, offering them hope, offering them light in their darkness.

Look at verse 28. If we hear what Jesus says about the disciples in verse 27, you will all fall away. But after I have risen, I will go ahead of you. What's the grace that he brings? What's the hope that he offers?

[ 29 : 36 ] He says to them, my resurrection will bring your restoration. There is hope for you beyond the cross because of the resurrection.

The cross and the resurrection together speak of God's great and costly forgiveness for sin and for sinners.

They speak to us of undeserved love and favor poured out on those who sin, those who rebel, those who, like the disciples, at times turn their back from Jesus.

The cross and the resurrection speak to us of God's grace that brings new life, brings new creation life. Here is a wonderful promise that though his friends let Jesus down, Jesus never lets his friends down.

The cross and the empty tomb stand as our guarantee of that. Here is our assurance that Jesus is that friend, that savior who will never let us down.

[ 30 : 49 ] He's gone through death for us. He's paid the price for sin for us and he's come out the other side in victory for us. And in this little statement, we find, I think, the promise of what every heart wants.

We're all different people, come from different places, different backgrounds. But all of us at root level have certain basic human wants and desires and one of them surely is for a love that lasts. We want that happily ever after to be true for ourselves. That love that we hear about in song and story and in film, we want it for ourselves to know a love that is secure, whether that comes in a friendship, whether that comes from a family, whether that comes from a marriage.

We want someone to truly know us, to allow us to be ourselves and to still stick with us. It's why the death of a loved one is so crushing.

It's why even the prospect of losing someone can be so painful because we want love that lasts.

And when we find someone to love, we want to be able to hold on to them and we want to be able to do it.

[ 32 : 07 ] We want to be able to do it. We want to be able to do it. Well, here is gospel promise from Jesus. Jesus who says to his disciples and says to each one of us, I know you at your best, absolutely, but also I know you at your very work.

Jesus says he knows us better than we know ourselves. He knows all those dark secrets that we'd hate for anybody else in this room or anywhere else to know about. And Jesus says, and still in love, I chose to die for you.

Not reluctantly, but willingly going there to the cross to clean us from sin, to make us his own, and ultimately to bring us to glory.

He says to us, when we are faithless, I will remain faithful to my covenant promise. And what Jesus says to his people today is not after this, I will go ahead of you to Galilee.

Jesus said, after I have risen, I will go ahead of you to the glory of heaven. In John chapter 14, Jesus said to his disciples, don't let your hearts be troubled.

[ 33 : 18 ] You believe in God, believe in me. In my father's house are many rooms. I go there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I'll certainly come back and take you to be with me that you might be where I am.

That wonderful picture of life in God's family, of enjoying love from God in the presence of Jesus now and forever.

Here is the love that lasts, the only love that lasts. So as Mark has drawn us into this story of Jesus' suffering, of Jesus being abandoned, how will we respond?

Perhaps for some of us, we will consider the cost of our salvation, the cost of Jesus' love for the very first time. Maybe it's something that's always been at a distance.

And it's time to think about it. Perhaps for others, our desire will be to develop a greater spiritual wakefulness, to watch and pray that we wouldn't fall into temptation, making use of the Bible and dependent prayer and coming to church and enjoying fellowship with God's people to keep us

persevering in obedience.

[ 34 : 38 ] Maybe our response will be to ask a friend to pray for us about something that's troubling us. Or maybe we'll go to a friend and ask if we can pray for them. Perhaps our response will be to thank God for his promise of grace beyond our failures, which we feel so keenly.

And all the while, let's remember that Jesus, as he's on this journey to the cross, suffers alone, faces abandonment, so that his friends never have to.

or wife doesn't believe He CA who's dead or God . But we can prove that he's on this journey. In Jesus' ending, for sure, we can respect where He CA happens, and in Jesus, you can tell that he learned from my ■■■ in the past.

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