

Mark 14:12-26

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[0 : 0 0] Lord, we ask that you would, by your Holy Spirit, in a very deep way, touch our minds and our hearts and also our mouths this morning as we encounter your word, that we would think differently, we would speak differently, and we would feel differently, Lord, that we would grow closer and closer to you, that we would behold your Son in a new way this morning, a deeper way, a more loving way, but more than that, Lord, I pray that we would know the deep love that you have towards us and that you show in such an incredible way through your blessed Son.

So, Lord, we ask that by your Spirit, you would move in such a deep way among us this morning, we pray in Christ's name. The past few days, I'll turn this off, the past few days have seen a lot of evil things happen here in Canada, in the States, abroad.

Just a few examples. In the news, there's been a rash of attacks on Toronto Transit. It's been completely, it seems, unprovoked.

People have died. People have been hurt. We see a situation in the South where an innocent black man, I mean, it seems completely innocent, he was beaten to death by five police officers that were there to uphold the law and to protect.

We see in Jerusalem, two gunmen, one, 13 years old, opened fire on people on their way to Sabbath prayers.

[2 : 0 1] There, I'm sure, is scores of other tragedies that have gone on in this time frame, unreported, maybe even worse, than those that we have read about.

Scores and scores of tragedies, both at home and abroad. Evil, clearly, on full display. How about in our own lives?

The tragedies that may be, the difficulties, the lows that we have gone through. Some of the heartache that we have felt in the past, maybe have been in the present, maybe has continued on from our earliest memories to today, the pain, the lows, the heartache that we have felt.

And it's a good thing to consider, a very hard thing to consider. How can we hope to make sense of injustice and evil done to others and to us?

Especially if the hurt comes from those we ought to trust or situations completely, completely out of our control. How do we make sense of this? Trials and temptations.

[3 : 1 8] So today, we're going to look at Jesus giving instructions to his disciples to prepare the Passover meal for him. And although we read verses 12 to 21, really, we're going to focus on verses 12 to 16.

The other part where Jesus, 17 to 21, we're going to do a bit more of a deep dive next week. There's some minefields in that text.

And I think in some ways, it would be better to have more of a devoted time to that. But in verses 12 to 16, in this short little section, Jesus, through the instructions given to his disciples, will help us to answer some of the important questions about how we are to make sense of evil and suffering.

So we'll consider two items from our texts. That first, Jesus is in complete control and knowledge of what is about to happen to him, his passion and his death.

He is in complete control and knowledge of it. And the second thing is that Jesus is the true host of the Passover meal. That the Passover meal that he is about to partake in, that he sends his disciples to prepare for him, that it is all about him.

[4 : 35] So first part, Jesus is in complete control and knowledge about his passion and death. And the second thing is that Jesus is the true host of the Passover meal. So a bit of a background.

But first, it is warm. And I'm going to take off my sweater. A bit of a background. Mark has detailed the account of Jesus' ministry in the Galilee for two-thirds of the gospel account.

And then the last third, he slows it right down to the last week of Jesus' ministry in Jerusalem. And now in chapter 14, the longest chapter in Mark's account, he will slow it down even further to the last, more or less, 24 hours of Jesus' life before he is crucified.

He slows it right down because he wants his readers, us, to understand the importance of the last 24 hours of Jesus. The Passover meal, what's happening in our text today, leading into Gethsemane, where Jesus prays, where he's handed over to the religious leaders and then handed over to Pilate, where he stands trial, where he's tortured and where he's ultimately crucified.

So we're at the beginning, in a sense, of this last 24 hours. Jesus' whole, and that's a bit of a background. We'll get into the first point. Jesus' whole, it seems like this whole ordeal, this last 24 hours, it reads like a tragic story.

[6 : 17] There's this huge affront to justice. It's a great disaster. Jesus is simply at the whims of the ruling elites who are trying to consolidate their power to snuff out this wonderful light that is opposing them, Jesus.

And Jesus here is without agency whatsoever. He is clearly at the whims of the religious establishment. And although a lot of that is true, Jesus' story is certainly, it's unjust.

He was innocent. He did have a conspiracy against him by the religious elites. He will be handed over. The big and defining difference between this tragic story that seems to be Jesus' story and the actual reality of Jesus' story is simply that Jesus is in complete control and knowledge of everything that is happening to him.

Everything. Not one detail is new to Jesus. It doesn't take him by surprise. Throughout Mark's Gospel, and especially since chapter 8, Jesus has made it clear in no uncertain terms that he is heading to the cross.

He is going to die. And that he will rise again, but that he will be handed over to be crucified. And time and time again, Jesus, he validates his ability to have foreknowledge, to prophesy what's going to happen by supernatural means.

[7 : 48] He peers, in a sense, into the inner life of people, knowing what they think. What's happening in Jesus' ministry, what Mark shows us, is Jesus is a man like no other.

He is not like a regular woman or man like you or I. He is fully God. There's something divine about him, something supernatural about him.

And Jesus, from the earliest bits of chapter 1 to right now, he is not surprised. He knows what is happening. He has full knowledge of his crucifixion.

The disciples obviously struggle with this time and time again. We'll see more of that next week. But in this scene, Jesus once again gives extremely detailed, detailed instructions for preparation to his disciples.

And if you have your Bible, you can turn with me. And at any time, you can grab a Bible. I think they're at the back or in a box. You can follow along. But look with me in verses 12 and following.

[8 : 48] And on the first day of unleavened bread, that's another way of talking about the Passover, when they sacrificed the Passover lamb, his disciples said to him, where will you have us go and prepare for you to eat the Passover?

We'll just pause really quickly right there. What's coming up is something that we have seen before. Back in chapter 11, when Jesus is entering into Jerusalem, he sends two disciples ahead of him with very detailed instructions.

And in chapter 11 and chapter 14, we see a string of 12 identical words in consecutive order. And Jesus, once again, is giving detailed instructions that will completely come to pass.

And here they are in verse 13. And Jesus sent two of his disciples, and this is where the consecutive wording is the same with chapter 11. He sent two of his disciples and said to them, go into the city and a man carrying a jar of water will meet you.

Follow him and wherever he enters, say to the master of the house, the teacher says, where is my guest room where I may eat the Passover with my disciples? And he will show you a large upper room furnished and ready and there prepare for us.

[10 : 07] And the disciples set out and went to the city and found it just as he had told them and they prepared the Passover. So the consecutive wording here is, and he, Jesus, sent two of his disciples and said to them, go into the city.

And just like in chapter 11, the disciples, those two, find exactly what Jesus instructed them. And what's interesting is that a man carrying a jar of water was a woman's job.

take it up with first century Jerusalemites, if you don't like that, but a woman would carry water. So to see a man carrying water would be a bit of a bizarre thing. And to know the exact house, to ask the specific person, to reserve an upper room that is furnished for a big enough gathering that's at least Jesus and his 12 disciples, it's something that you can't, you can't just think that I'm going to say, I'm going to predict the future, there's going to be a coincidence or something like it.

And Jesus clearly is not going into the city and setting all of this stuff up so he could go back to Bethany and pretend as though he has foresight. Jesus, at this point, knows that Judas is looking for ways to betray him.

The city, in a sense, is looking to identify Jesus and the religious elites are trying to arrest him. So what Jesus, what we see here, is Jesus, he is prophesying the future.

[11 : 42] He knows exactly what is happening. And it also tells us that Jesus does not suffer a tragic and avoidable death, but deliberately and unflinchingly walks towards the cross.

He goes to Jerusalem knowing what's going to happen. He partakes in this Passover meal, this Last Supper, knowing that right after a few events that will come after it, he will be arrested and beaten and tortured.

He knows what's going to happen. And he does it without a hint of desperation in his demeanor. Apart from his time of prayer to the Father in Gethsemane, Jesus does not show anguish.

He's not double-minded about his impending death. What we see is that Jesus is freely following the Father's plan in full submission as the Son of God. He says as much in verse 21.

We see this. If you want to go down to verse 21. For the Son of Man goes, and that's a very loaded goes, he's going to the cross, as it is written of him.

[12 : 51] It's always God's will. Always God's will for God, the Son of God, to take on human flesh, to die for the sins of many and to rise again. Illusions and inferences and prophecies and Scripture, it is of Jesus, what he will do, is peppered throughout the Hebrew Scriptures, the Old Testament.

It's everywhere. Jesus isn't surprised or taken aback. He goes on his own accord, submitting himself to the will of God.

And what's interesting is that no one has power over him to upend God's plan in any kind of way. And this is what is the difference between a tragic story and Jesus' story. If it was a tragic story, Jesus, the great liberator, is being snuffed out.

His flame is being quenched. But instead, the conspirators are actually playing a part in this grand plan. Remember that last week, the conspirators, they were trying to capture Jesus after the Passover because they wanted to avoid all the messianic fervor.

And then Judas comes up to them and says, listen, I'm going to betray Jesus. And they're excited. And then they shelf all of their plans and totally get on board to God's plan.

[14 : 12] And we'll see in next week, especially, that Jesus will end up being slain on this, in a sense, the same day of the Passover. Even the enemies of God can't upend the plans of God.

They are participants in it in an unwilling way. Jesus does not suffer a tragic and avoidable death, but deliberately and unflinchingly walks towards the cross.

He does it. Unflinchingly walks towards the cross. And this can be a very deeply comforting thing to us because we can trust that Jesus is in complete control and has full knowledge of what will happen to us in the future because he knew what was happening to him in the future.

Including the highs and the lows of life. And our difficulties and even our tragedies are not wasted with him. But like his unjust murder hung up on the cross that resulted in redemption and healing, so too can he take our difficulties and use them for redemption and healing and refining us precisely because of the example of his suffering.

We become, in a sense, conduits of God's plan of redemption. The evil that was intended for us is used by God for good. And that sounds nice and hopeful, but life is full of tragic events and talking about things in an abstract way is great, but when you're in the midst of heartache and tragedy, it is hard, it's hard to say, oh, it's deeply comforting that Jesus goes to the cross.

[16 : 03] It can be very hard. It sounds very nice. However, an injustice that is deeply grievously done or a loss that is felt in a deep way, they are tragedies and they are hard to overcome.

How are the people that have lost loved ones in Jerusalem, how are they supposed to cope? How about the parents of the young man, the 29-year-old man who was beaten to death or the countless family members of those that have been assaulted or killed in the metro in Toronto?

How are they supposed to deal with this tragedy in a very kind of real way, you know? Instead of these kind of cliché niceties, these, they can be kind of, I don't know, they can make us gag sometimes.

They seem fake. It's okay. God has you. How does he have me? How on earth am I supposed to see this as a potential thing that God will use for my good?

The fact is, evil truly exists. No one can deny the morality, can deny that morality and truth are relative concepts. Real evil exists.

[17 : 22] How are we then to make sense of them? Our tragedies, the tragedies in the world. In the case of Jesus' death, we can see how this unjust death, it achieved a great redemption for the world.

And the reality is, I do not know how God will use such tragedies and evils to achieve his ends. We just don't know. I'm not sure. He has ultimate purposes that are at play.

We think of the story of Joseph, where he is getting the, he's getting done dirty on, it seems like, every turn.

And yet, at the end, God uses it for his glory. But we don't always get to see that, do we? We don't always get to see how it is, things are redeemed, our difficulties are redeemed.

God clearly allows us to make evil and sinful decisions that affect other people. And yet, he uses such things to achieve his four ordained purposes.

[18 : 28] And we're going to get into the weeds later on because there's this bit in verse 21 that's really kind of, it's difficult for us to really grapple with. It's the second part of what I read in verse 21.

But woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed. It would be better for that man if he had not been born. We're going to jump into that next week. But here's the thing.

God does not owe us a look at his playbook. He has not promised us that we will get to peek behind the curtain and see how he is going to unravel history and our difficulties, how they're going to be used to achieve his ultimate ends.

He doesn't promise that at all. It is very difficult for us in a sense to come to grips with that reality because we want to know. Instead, what does he do?

He beckons us to have faith in him and to trust in him and to look to him for comfort in our afflictions whether or not we get to understand the why. And the reason?

[19 : 34] Because our king and elder brother, Christ Jesus, did just that. He's our example. And we can trust if God can take the most unjust act done in human history taking the perfect, the only perfect human being ever to walk and to string him up naked upon a cross for crimes he did not do and he uses that for redemption.

We can trust that God makes bad things good and we just have to have a faith and a trust in him that he will do that and that is not easy and it's hard and it might not be satisfying but this is what he is calling us to do.

And here's the thing, we can trust that whether we see it play out frame by frame or we are ignorant of it, the triune God will use tragedies and lows, also victories and highs to achieve his will.

So like Christ, we too are to pray, not my will but yours be done. And if God's ways are always the best ways, we have to trust that in the end, in the end, it will be okay.

Even if it's a season of grief, it will be okay. And I'll give an example of how God can use incredible things, incredibly tragic things for incredibly wonderful things.

[20 : 59] I remember, I think I was like 11 and my mom came home crying and it was a friend from church, one of her friends from church and her friend's little boy died in a really tragic way at home.

And my, like the whole church, everybody was just absolutely gutted by it. and of course they would be, little boy named Isaiah. And they grappled with it, asking questions why, but in the meantime, what they ended up doing was they started a grief group.

There's other people in the town we grew up at that struggled through loss, whether it was, you know, an elderly parent or, you know, an untimely death of a child or a brother, a sister, or husband.

And out of this grief group developed a ministry where people, in a sense, were able to process loss in a way that, that had God in a, I mean, they weren't overtly pressing God onto people, but just the hope of the gospel was clearly there.

And a big ministry developed out of this and many people came to faith and had a network of people to, to share their births and maybe it would not have happened if little Isaiah didn't pass away.

[22 : 24] And that's not to say that, you know, their parents would have, you know, traded it all for that little boy to come back. But look how God can use a tragedy to achieve blessing.

And oftentimes that's how the deep blessing happens through deep tragedy. It's a case with Christ. There's a case with this little boy. And if we choose by God's strength, by the encouragement of each other, to have faith in this God, because faith many times is a choice.

If we choose to have faith in this God, we will become glass half full, maybe all the way full, people in a non-superficial, fully authentic way.

And that is an incredible thing to consider. Romans 8, 28 to 30 says this, I'll just read verse 28, And we know that for those who love God, all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.

Even the bad stuff. That all right here, it's without exception. All. Even the most terrible tragedies we have gone through.

[23 : 47] And the Apostle Paul in 2 Corinthians, he talks about this good, and he gets even more specific, and he talks about it being an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison.

Oftentimes, the tragedies and the brokenness of this life, if we are trusting the Lord, and that doesn't mean we paint on a smile, but we trust in the Lord, he will use it for incredible blessings, whether we see it or not.

And we know this, why Christ, the innocent one, will die like the Passover lamb, spotless and without blemish, and through his death, through his suffering, will bring eternal life that will be beyond all comparison.

The Apostle Paul in 2 Corinthians 4, he talks about the difficulties of life aren't worthy to be compared. And Paul went through stuff. He went through the ringer.

And I don't think it's Paul downplaying the difficulties that he went through, but he is keeping an eye on eternity. And this is what Christ is giving to us as he will die in our stead as the Passover lamb.

[25 : 01] So Jesus does not suffer a tragic and avoidable death, but deliberately and unflinchingly walks towards the cross as the true Passover lamb.

And this means for us that we can trust him even with our tragedies and our difficulties. Who else can you trust with your tragedies and your difficulties?

Who else can bear that weight? It is only Christ. So what does it mean then for Christ to be the true and greater Passover lamb? What does this mean?

And this goes into our second point. As I mentioned earlier, Jesus sends out two disciples ahead of him with very specific instructions of which no one could have predicted.

And we saw this in chapter 11. The same pattern. And what ends up happening in chapter 11, chapter 12, and into chapter 13, but really chapter 11 and 12, is that Jesus, he teaches and condemns the false worship at the temple.

[26 : 11] And by doing so, he makes it very clear that he is the true temple. He is that place, the temple was the place where, in the ancient world, where the divine would meet the human, God would meet man, and that the temple in Jerusalem, as grand as it was, no longer had that purpose.

But that the new temple, the ultimate temple, the true temple, was Jesus himself. Likewise, here in chapter 14, this pattern that we see is not just Jesus predicting what's going to happen once again, but it should tip us off that Jesus is going to, in a sense, appropriate something else that is dear to the Jewish religious mind.

Before it was a temple, now it's going to be the Passover. So let's take a look at what all this means, and let's take a look again at the text. We'll start in verse 13.

And he sent the two disciples and said to them, Go into the city, and a man carrying a jar of water will meet you. Follow him. And wherever he enters, say to the master of the house, The teacher says, Where is my guest room where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?

We'll actually go back to verse 12. The disciples, whether they know it or not, they say, in a sense, they're tipping their hand at what is happening with Jesus. They say, Where will you have us to go and prepare for you to eat the Passover?

[27 : 48] We'll continue on in verse 15. And this man who owns the house will show you a large upper room furnished and ready there prepared for us. And the disciples went out to the city and found it just as he told them, and they prepared the Passover.

The Passover meal was a commemoration of God's, a yearly commemoration of God's deliverance of the nation of Israel from Egyptian slavery. The meal itself remembered the specific event of the tenth and last plague.

It would be the death of the firstborn. And if you have time, we're not going to do it this morning, but Exodus 12 recounts all of this. So that Israel, the Israelites, would be safe from the tenth plague.

A lamb without blemish, one year old, would have to be slaughtered and the blood would have to be smeared on the doorposts of the home of the Israelite family.

And when the angel of death, the destroyer, the plague, would come looking for the firstborn and would see the blood smeared on the doorposts and would pass over that house.

[28 : 57] This is what commemorates, or this is what the Passover commemorates. It's more than just the Passover of death of the firstborn.

It really is God's deliverance from Egyptian slavery for the Israelite people. But what we see here is that a lamb without blemish is slaughtered and its blood is spread on the vertical and the horizontal doorposts.

This communal meal was supposed to be celebrated in such a way as if you were actually there. You're supposed to do this every day. Now, it's not the case now where there's slaughterings of animals all over the world at Passover.

But even today at Passover, you wear your shoes at the meal because you had to eat in haste. You had to wear your belt. You had to act as if you were present at the first Passover because if God didn't deliver your people, your forefathers, you'd still be in Egyptian slavery.

That's kind of the idea behind it. So it's a communal meal, a family meal, young and old, remembered what would happen in the past, how God had delivered them from slavery and made them into a nation.

[30 : 10] And this was, at the time of Jesus, the most important holy holiday of the calendar. Three pilgrimage fests, feasts, people of Israel would come to Jerusalem and the Passover among them was the most important.

And on that day, there was hope that God would restore what was lost like he did in the past. It was a meal of thankfulness for the past but also a meal of great hope for the future.

So it's interesting that Jesus takes this communal meal and both him and the disciples speak of the Passover not as the feast that God or even Moses commanded them to keep but with a suggestive language that the Passover was all about Jesus, that he was the host, that it was about him, that this meal was his meal.

It is seemingly subtle in verses 12 to 16 but the emphasis is there and especially if a Jewish reader in the first century would read this and something would be off.

Why is Jesus talking about this meal as if it was his? And it is Jesus' meal not simply because he is a leader of the disciples and a small but growing group of Messianic followers but because this meal is about him.

[31 : 36] That the hope that the meal communicated would only be a thin hope if it did not point to him. So the original Passover saved the firstborn of Israel from death by the lamb that was slain but this ultimate Passover, this new Passover, this new and true and ultimate Passover that is the life and death and resurrection of Jesus sees the Son of God, the firstborn of all creation being slain as the Lamb of God that would take away the sins of the world but instead of his blood smeared on the doorposts, his blood would be smeared on the vertical and horizontal beams of a cross.

We see the same imagery and symbolism taking place at the cross as with the Passover. His death would be the ultimate death where the ultimate enemy of God's people, eternal death would pass over all those who have trusted in him.

So you see, Jesus does not suffer a tragic and avoidable death but deliberately and unflinchingly walks towards the cross but as the Passover Lamb who was slain for the sins of the world as the embodiment of the Passover.

So once again, just like with the temple, Jesus interprets a key pillar of the Scriptures to show how he is what the Passover is truly about.

That he is the ultimate Passover that all of Scripture points to him. He is the head over the Passover meal and he is the meal himself.

[33 : 19] Very interestingly, next week we're going to take a look at the Last Supper and we're going to take a look at again, what it means for Jesus to be that Passover meal. So to wrap things up, the Bible is clear that evil exists.

It makes no mistake about it. Evil exists. And if we are just to have a shred of honesty, we can see it everywhere we go. In the news, in the lives of those around us, evil exists.

And it exists because humanity is bent on making themselves God, glorifying ourselves, putting ourselves in the place of God, treating all others with varying degrees of contempt and shame.

And the fact is that the brokenness has seeped into the very fabric of this existence. An evil that needs to be dealt with in its fullness, in its fullest way.

So what does God do? Instead of hitting a cosmic reset button, compelled by love, God, the Son of God, condescends, comes down, takes on human flesh and bears the punishment for us all, willingly and lovingly as the ultimate Passover lamb.

[34 : 36] Not in any way getting tripped up, not in any way getting upended, but completely by his own desire and his love, compelled by love, his own agency, he goes to the cross as the Passover lamb.

And us, finding ourselves united to him, we will enjoy an eternal glory that will be far exceeding anything we could hope for.

And that, in a sense, when you're feeling low and broken, that can be a hard thing to see. And when you're feeling elated, you can't really imagine things being better than they are. But the scriptures tell us that it will be better than anything we could imagine or hope for.

But we have to have this eternal perspective like Christ did. And it helps us to understand that even our most difficult earthly trials and pains can have meaning that go beyond this life into the life to come and are used by God as Christ's trials were used to redeem and heal and restore.

and all of a sudden when we can have meaning on our suffering, that takes, in a sense, the edge off of hopelessness. That can give us hope.

[35 : 54] Friends, let us have faith and trust and hope that Jesus, who is in complete control, he will not leave us or forsake us, but instead give us strength and grace to endure and to be conduits of his blessing to a broken and broken and broken and bent and bent and bent and evil and evil and evil world.

He can redeem, he can restore, he can heal. Let's pray. Lord, we thank you that your son, he did not suffer a tragic and avoidable death, but deliberately and unflinchingly walked towards the cross and that he suffered something that was not due to him.

This was not justice being fulfilled, it was a complete abdication of justice and yet you use it to pour grace upon grace on us. You do not deserve this kindness and yet you give it to us because you, compelled by love, sacrificed your son on the cross for our sins.

Lord, help us as we consider our own sufferings, our own trials, whether we are in the midst of them, whether we have gone through them in the past or whether they are coming up in the future, that we will look to Christ and how he suffered well and how he entrusted his very person to you and that you used him to redeem and to heal and to restore.

And Lord, that is our prayer in our lives, that not only will you comfort us when the difficulties and the hardships come, but Lord, whether we see it or not, we ask that you would use our trials and our brokenness and our pain for your glory, for the blessing of others, for the restoration and the healing and the redemption that only you can bring.

[37 : 44] Lord, we thank you for the cross and we thank you that we, week after week, can behold your son afresh and be thankful in deeper measures for what he has done for us.

We pray these things in Christ's mighty name. Amen.