

Jesus in Gethsemane

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[0 : 00] Well, I'd invite you to turn with me to the passage we read in Mark's Gospel in chapter 14, Mark chapter 14. And we're going to be considering verses 32 down to 42, Mark chapter 14, verses 32 down to 42.

But if you could look with me at verse 32, we read, And they came to a place which was named Gethsemane. They came to a place which was named Gethsemane.

The Apostle Paul tells us that communion, participating in the Lord's Supper, is a time for self-examination. But it is also time for us to rekindle our love for the Lord Jesus Christ as we focus in on him and his person and his work.

And so this evening I want us to focus on the awesome events that we find taking place at this garden called Gethsemane. And as we stand on this holy ground, I want us to note four key things that it shows us about the Lord Jesus Christ in these last few hours of his earthly life.

And for those of you who are taking notes, they each begin with the letter C. The first thing we see is the consternation. The consternation. Verses 32 down to 34.

[1 : 28] And he came to a place which was named Gethsemane. And he saith to his disciples, Sit ye here while I shall pray. And he taketh with him Peter and James and John and began to be sore and amazed and to be very heavy.

And saith unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful unto death. Tarry ye here and watch. And he went forward a little and fell on the ground and prayed that if it were possible, the hour might pass from him.

And what we see in these verses is the consternation or agony of Jesus in Gethsemane. The consternation or agony of Jesus in Gethsemane.

We're told in verse 32 that Jesus went to Gethsemane. Now, Gethsemane was a garden built on the slopes of the Mount of Olives which contained an oil press.

And this place, Gethsemane, the Mount of Olives, was a place that we see Jesus coming to frequently in his earthly life. It was a place where he taught the disciples. It was a place where he communed with his Father in prayer.

[2 : 33] It was a place where he rested at night from his labors with his disciples. It was a place where Judas knew he was to be found. And so we are to imagine Jesus and the disciples leaving the upper room and ascending the Mount of Olives and arriving in this garden while Jerusalem below is active and alive with noise and excitement as the whole nation celebrate at this Passover time of year.

And we read in verse 33 that Jesus takes with him Peter, James and John. He takes them further into the garden. He leaves eight of the disciples near the entrance to this garden.

And then he takes these three men who will become leaders, who will become pillars within the New Testament church. But he also takes these men because they are the most volatile and they are the most vulnerable of all of his followers.

James and John have just boasted that they will drink the cup Jesus will drink if they might have places of honour in his kingdom. Peter has boasted that even if every other disciple fail Jesus, Peter will not.

Peter will stand by him through thick and through thin. Peter will go all the way to death with Jesus. And Jesus wants these volatile and vulnerable men to be spiritually prepared for what is going to come next.

[3 : 51] He wants them to be spiritually prepared for what is to happen to him so that they will not make an eventual shipwreck of their faith. And so he takes them further into this garden.

He's experienced consternation. And this brings us secondly to the crisis. The crisis, verses 35 down to 36. We read, He went forward a little and fell on the ground and prayed that if it were possible, the hour might pass from him.

[9 : 35] And he said, Abba, Father, all things are possible unto thee. Take away this cup from me. Nevertheless, not what I will, but what thou wilt. And what we see in these verses is the crisis in the life of Jesus as he wrestles with accepting the cup.

The crisis in the life of Jesus as he wrestles with accepting the cup. We read in verse 35 that Jesus falls to the ground and he prays that the hour would pass. Now, no self-respecting, Jew fell in prayer.

The only time we read of people falling to pray is at crisis moments in their lives or in the life of the nations. So in Genesis 17, Abram falls to pray as he wonders whether God's covenant promises will come to fruition.

In Leviticus 9, the Hebrews fall to pray when they are confronted with the holiness of God. In Numbers 14, Moses and Aaron fall to pray when they see the people rebel against the Lord. Those were times when the desperation of the situation led those people to fall to the ground and almost convulsed with either fear or agony. And here we see Jesus falling to the ground in agony and fear and praying that the hour that the triune God had chosen in the councils of eternity for a son of God to die would pass by him.

[10 : 57] Jesus is seen praying that the cup would be taken. You see, if we want to understand what Jesus did for us, if we want to understand what it cost Jesus to save us, we need to understand this prayer regarding the cup.

So let's go into it. Jesus begins the prayer by calling God Abba. It is an intimate expression for God. It can be translated as Daddy or Oh dear Heavenly Father.

The sentiment is the same. There is this close bond, this close love, this close connection between Jesus and his Father. And he says, Father, all things are possible.

You can do everything, Father. You are the all-knowing God. You are the all-present God. You are the all-powerful God. You are in sovereign control. Stop there. Because isn't this the attitude, isn't this the confidence that we have as we come before God in prayer?

We are doing business with a big God for whom all things are possible. And Jesus says, Father, all things are possible. Take this cup away from me.

[12 : 08] Now in the Old Testament, the cup was symbolic of God's judgment, God's condemnation, God's hatred, His wrath against sin. Isaiah speaks of the cup that causes men to stagger.

Jeremiah speaks of the cup that makes men an object of horror and scorn and cursing. It is the cup that is filled and brimming with the covenant curses, the penalty of death that awaits every person who hasn't lived a life of wholehearted commitment to God.

Jesus knows that for you to be forgiven by God, for me to be forgiven by God, He must take the punishment our sin deserves. He must drink that cup down to its last dregs in my place and in your place.

And Jesus says, let this cup pass from me. Take this cup away from me. This strength is what Jesus wants. He doesn't want to experience His Father's condemnation.

He doesn't want to experience His Father's wrath. He doesn't want to experience His Father's hatred against sin as He becomes our sin bearer.

[13 : 19] Every fibre of His being is recoiling from this cup. Every fibre of His being is shrinking away from this cup. And He is saying, Father, I don't know if my body can cope with what's ahead of me.

I don't know if my mind can cope with what's ahead of me. I don't know if my soul can cope with what is ahead of me. And so if there be any other way by which men may be forgiven, then let this cup pass.

I don't want to drink it. I want your will to be different. I want your providence to be different. This is the crisis moment in the life of Jesus.

The crisis moment in salvation history. The salvation of the world from a human perspective seems to hang in the balance as Jesus wrestles with accepting this cup and drinking from this cup.

He is willing to give almost anything not to drink this cup, not to tread this path, not to die this death. But the prayer is not finished because He goes on and He says, Yet not what I will, but what thou

wilt.

[14 : 35] Jesus' great desire is to avoid this cup, but He has a greater desire still. And that is to avoid, that is to obey the will of the Father whom He loves.

And so He cries out, Father, is there any other way? And heaven is silent because there is no other way. Jesus now knows what His Father's will is, that He must drink this cup.

And so He, in full submission, bows to His Father's will. And this evening, as we look at the crisis in the life of Jesus, we are reminded that there is salvation, there is forgiveness, in no other place, in no other name, in no other person, but Jesus Christ, our Lord.

When Jesus cries out, Father, all things are possible. If there be any other way, then let this cup pass from me. There is no voice from heaven saying, well, if these people are good, if these people are kind, if these people are loving, if these people go to church, if these people put money in the collection plate, if these people have been baptised, if these people go to the prayer meeting, if these people are members of the free church, they will enter fullness of life.

There is no such post-modern, pharisaical nonsense coming from the heavenly skies. The confidence of the Christian as we go to the Lord's table isn't what we have done for God, it is what God in Christ has done for us.

[16 : 11] And if you go away with anything this evening, that is it. The confidence of the Christian as we go to the Lord's table isn't what we have done for God, it is what God in Christ has done for us.

In our place, Jesus drank the cup. In our place, Jesus stood condemned. And in our place, Jesus cried, it is finished.

We do not come either this evening or on Sunday morning boasting in our achievements. We come resting on Christ's accomplishment.

It's all about Jesus. And this brings us thirdly to the concern. The concern. Verses 37 down to 40 we read.

And he cometh and findeth him sleeping and saith unto Peter, Simon, sleepest thou? Couldst thou not watch one hour? Watch ye and pray, lest ye enter into temptation. The spirit truly is ready, but the flesh is weak.

[17 : 13] And again he went away and prayed and spake the same words. And when he returned, he found him asleep again, for their eyes were heavy. Neither wist they what to answer him. And what we see in these verses is the concern and anguish Jesus has for his faltering, failing, flawed disciples.

The concern and anguish Jesus has for his faltering, failing, flawed disciples. The Lord Jesus is in agony as we've seen in verses 33 to 36. He is in physical agony.

He is in mental agony. But above all, he is in spiritual agony. He is the man of sorrow, those that Isaiah spoke of, with such pain etched on his face, that if you and I were to be in that garden that night, we would say, is this even a man?

And all he can do in the midst of this agony is to pray to his father. He has got nowhere else to turn. No other refuge. No other strength. No other present aid.

But he keeps breaking off his prayer and returning to the disciples. Verse 37, he goes to the disciples. Verse 40, he goes to the disciples.

[18 : 26] Verse 41, he goes to the disciples. Now the disciples have failed. In verse 34, he had commanded them to keep watch. In verse 40, we're told their eyes were heavy and they slept.

And even Peter sleeps. Even this bold, brash, brave Peter. This Peter who is going to stand by Jesus through thick and through thin. This Peter who is going to follow after Jesus, even if all those apparently worse disciples would forsake him and fail him.

Even Peter is asleep. And Jesus comes to him saying, Simon, could you not keep watch for one hour? Simon, is this all your commitment to me amounts to?

Simon, is this all your love for me amounts to? And you remember that any time Jesus calls Peter Simon, he's saying, Peter, you're not acting like Peter the rock man.

You're acting like Simon the fisherman. You're acting like regenerating grace has never taken place in your life. You're acting as if we had never met. But Jesus doesn't keep returning to his disciples to point out their failure.

[19 : 40] But like a shepherd tending his sheep, he is seeking their spiritual well-being. He's concerned about them. And he calls them in verse 38 to literally keep watching and keep praying.

And he calls them to keep watching and keep praying because he knows their weaknesses. He knows in verse 38 that they're about to face a great temptation. And any time the Bible speaks of temptation, it's speaking about being untrue to God, unfaithful to God, denying God, lacking in covenant commitment.

And Jesus says to the disciples, pray that you will not enter this temptation. Pray that you will not fall into this temptation. Pray that you will not succumb to this temptation. He doesn't say, pray that you will avoid this temptation.

Because every Christian is tempted. I'm tempted, you're tempted. We all face temptation. The devil knows our weakest thoughts and where to tempt us.

But there is a world of difference between being tempted and falling into temptation, succumbing to temptation. And Jesus is seen in these verses saying to his disciples, my dear friends, I know you are so eager to stand by me.

[20 : 59] I know you are so eager to remain faithful. But I also know how weak your human frame is. And so watch and pray. Fortify yourselves by depending on God.

Fortify yourselves by leaning on God. Fortify yourselves by waiting on God. And three times, Jesus breaks off his own prayer and goes to the disciples to encourage them in this way.

In his deepest agony, Jesus is concerned for the spiritual well-being of his followers. And you'll know that's a wonderful encouragement, isn't it?

It's wonderful to be reminded that in the greatest agony and the greatest anguish of his entire existence, Jesus is concerned about these faltering, failing, flawed men.

That is the kind of high priest you and I need. A sympathetic, compassionate, faithful, concerned high priest. A high priest who, when in the midst of a cosmic struggle of epic proportions, incomprehensible to us, breaks off his prayer and goes out to his friends because he is concerned about them.

[22 : 19] And he is concerned about their spiritual plight. Do you ever wonder whether in the busyness of Jesus' activities, whether in the busyness of what is going on in the world, that Jesus might just forget about you?

Yes, he knows about what's going on in North Korea. Yes, he knows what's going on looking for a plane that's crashed near Australia. Yes, he knows what's going on in the Houses of Parliament. But does Jesus care about what's happening to me in Thurzl or to you in Point? Well, this passage is the remedy for any such notion because this passage is the reminder to us that our names are graven on Jesus' hands.

It is a reminder to us that Jesus lives to make intercession for us. It is a reminder to us that we are near and we are dear to Jesus' great heart. Jesus has a deep concern.

He has a deep interest in even His most failed, flawed, faltering followers. You might be coming into this communion season thinking, I really messed up. I'm such a useless Christian.

[23 : 30] I wonder if Jesus will ever bother with me. And I want to assure you from the Gospel that He is concerned for all of His sheep. We can sing the words of Psalm 103 that speak of Him as having the pity of a father.

The words of Psalm 103 that remind us that He remembers we are dust. He knows our frame. He's concerned. We matter to Him.

And this brings us finally to the conquest. The conquest, verses 41-42. And He cometh the third time and saith unto them, Sleep on now and take your rest.

It is enough. The hour has come. Behold, the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise up, let us go. Lo, he that betrayeth me is at hand.

And what we see in these verses is that Jesus goes to the cross in obedience to His Father's will. Jesus goes to the cross in obedience to His Father's will.

[24 : 38] Jesus makes a third trip to the disciples and He tells them that the hour has come for Him to be betrayed. In this hour, He is going to become the sin bearer. In this hour, He is going to drink the cup of wrath.

In this hour, He is going to be handed over to sinners. He is going to face the unbridled judgment of His Father who hates sin. And at the same time, He is going to be to face the unbridled sin of men who hate God.

Do you see what is going on? In this hour, He is going to face the unbridled judgment of His Father who hates sin. And at the same time, He is going to face the unbridled sin of men who hate God.

He is going to be betrayed by one of His closest followers, a man He shared bread with. He is going to be accused by a blasphemous religious court. He is going to be beaten and His beard pulled out and His face punched and spat on.

He is going to be mocked by a puppet king. He is going to be condemned by a biased judge. He is going to be rejected by an apostate nation who will say, away with this man. We have no king but Caesar.

[25 : 51] He is going to be tortured by a foreign army. He is going to be hung, suspended, naked, nailed, outside the walls of Jerusalem amidst the Jews of the onlookers.

If you are a son of God, come down from that cross. And He knows all this. He knows it is all going to come His way. And He says, rise up, let us go.

And He is not fleeing. He is not running away. He is not seeking a backdoor exit. He is riding off, yes, but not into the sunset but into the darkness where He will conquer sin, conquer death, conquer the devil through His redemptive suffering.

This isn't the weak, effeminate Jesus of much Christian art. This is the Jesus who strives out to meet His enemies as the Son of Man, the Son of God, the Saviour of the world, the Jesus who is sovereign over sin, sovereign over Satan, sovereign over sickness, sovereign over storm, sovereign over death itself and has come to defeat them all.

And there is rejoicing in heaven as He gets up. Because the angels have been waiting and watching the scene with bated breath. Because they have seen so many deliverers raised up in the Old Testament who failed.

[27 : 16] Adam failed. Noah failed. Abraham failed. Judah failed. Moses failed. The judges, Gideon, Samson, Barak, the rest failed.

Saul failed. David failed. Solomon failed. They all failed. And now the angels see this anointed one, this representative of humanity, standing like Adam in a garden.

And he is being tempted to disobey the will and the word of God. God, and he takes this cup in his hand. And he is not trembling. He stands with blood like sweat coursing down his exhausted face, soaking into his clothes.

He is bloodied, but he is unbowed. He is bruised, but he is not broken. And he gives a triumphant order that only a victorious captain assured of their victory could give.

Rise, let us be going. And the angels burst into song as they hear these words. Who is this exalted king? What glorious king is this?

[28 : 26] The Lord Almighty, he is king and strong and battle is as this king, this savior, this Jesus goes out bowing, not in submission to his will, but in submission to the will of the Father whom he loves.

Jesus goes to the cross in obedience to his Father's will. And this evening, as we enter into this communion season, we are reminded that it is all about Jesus' victory.

It is all about his conquest. Communion is a solemn time, yes. It is a time when we gather to remember the body of Christ broken, the blood of Christ shed.

But you know what? It should also be a time of joy, a time of thanksgiving, as we publicly and corporately celebrate Jesus' victory over sin, death, and the devil.

And so this evening we are all encouraged from this passage to embrace this Jesus by faith.

Receive him, rest on him, rejoice in him, and leave this building and enter this communion season rejoicing that he drank the cup for us.

[29 : 47] He won the victory for us. we do not come into this communion season celebrating our victories. I'm sure many of us probably are coming into this communion season very aware of our failures.

We come celebrating the one who looked death in the face, who took the cup in his hand and said with full assurance of his impending victory, rise up, let us go, lo, he that betrays me is at hand.

This is our Jesus, one who experienced consternation, one who went through a crisis, one who is concerned about his people, and one who has achieved an unmistakable conquest and victory for his people.

Amen. Let us pray.