

# Mark 14:26-52 (PM)

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Preacher: Rev. Aaron Roberts

[ 0 : 00 ] So we are in the passion narrative of Mark's gospel now. When it comes to the cross, artists and filmmakers tend to focus on the physical suffering of Christ.

So Mel Gibson's *The Passion* is probably the most well-known example of that. But the New Testament writers give very little attention to that aspect, actually.

In the next chapter of Mark, when it comes to the crucifixion, Mark simply says they crucified him. That's it. They crucified him. It's a very economic retelling. There's no mention of the physical agony.

No mention of any sort of gory details. What the Bible does emphasize, though, is the huge mental and emotional cost to Christ.

And this really comes across in our passage. So that's where we're going to start. We'll look at what was happening in Jesus' heart and in his mind the day before the crucifixion. And we'll do that because it tells us something really, really important about the meaning of the cross.

[ 1 : 06 ] Verse 33. And he took with him Peter and James and John and began to be greatly distressed and troubled. And he said to them, My soul is very sorrowful, even to death.

Remain here and watch. And going a little further, he fell on the ground and prayed. So we're in Gethsemane here. It's probably some type of olive tree garden or grove. And as Jesus walks in there with his friends, as he enters, the reality of the crucifixion just hits him.

Just hits him. I remember when my wife, Amy, was pregnant with our daughter, Bea, and the doctors had told us that there was about a 30% chance that she wouldn't survive the womb. Her heart was too damaged.

And for the rest of the pregnancy, I would just periodically just fall apart. So I'd be in the middle of doing something quite normal and doing the dishes.

And then I'm just on the floor, just weeping. And I don't know if you've ever had any kind of experience like this, but grief, sometimes it can just blindsides you like that.

[ 2 : 13 ] And this sin in Gethsemane, it has that sense. Look at the words used to describe Jesus' state. Distressed, troubled, very sorrowful, even to death.

Jesus was experiencing an anguish so deep, it says it felt like even the stress of it all could kill him. Now you might be thinking to yourself, other people seem to have faced death better than Jesus. Right? I mean, there's lots of Christian stories about martyrs who seem to be a little bit braver at the end when compared to Jesus. So what's happening with Jesus? Like, why was he so troubled? Well, there's two reasons. A very small reason and a big reason. A very small first reason is that, I mean, he's fully human as well as being fully God.

So partly he was just experiencing sort of the natural human desire to escape pain. Many years ago, I went to the doctor because I caught the tip of my finger in a door.

[ 3 : 26 ] It's his finger. And I caught it in just the tip, just this last sort of centimeter. I caught it in the hinge end of the door. Thank you. I caught it in the hinge end of the door.

And all this blood pooled underneath the fingernail and the blood couldn't get out. So it was just pushing down on the finger. So it's throbbing pain for like two days.

So I went to the doctor. I showed him my finger. I explained what had happened. He said, that must have hurt. And we agree on that. And then he pulls out a Bunsen burner.

Do you know what a Bunsen burner is? It's like a little silver thing with a flame that comes out the top. They're like chemists and stuff. He pulls out a Bunsen burner and a paper clip. And he says to me, I've always wanted to try this.

This is a true story. This is a true story. I swear to you, this is a true story. And he bends out the end of the paper clip. So he has like a handle end and like a stabby, like a stabby end.

[ 4 : 27 ] And he holds it over the tip of the flame until it's red hot. And he says nothing to me. Just quietly, just cooking the end of the paper clip. So I feel the need to break the silence.

And I say, is this going to hurt? Which is a reasonable question.

And he lies to me. And he does what doctors say. And I'm going to say a lie right now that you have heard. There's a few doctors in the room here. You have also lied to people. Because you say this. You say this. When somebody says, is this going to hurt? You say, wow. You may experience some level of discomfort.

During this procedure. Which I discovered later is kind of like telling somebody standing in the path of a tsunami. That they may experience some moisture.

[ 5 : 29 ] So he holds my hand down. He says, put your hand down on the table, son. Put my hand on the table. He puts his hand on top of mine. He puts all his weight on it. Because he knows. But I'm tempted to clock him into like a runner.

Like, get out of there. And then he pulls a red hot poker over towards me. And then he drives it through the top of the fingernail. And all this blood just all of a sudden has got an exit.

And it just bursts. That's a slight exaggeration towards the end.

The thing is, I'm looking at your faces. You can't even hear a story of pain without kind of recoiling, right? We're humans. We don't like pain. Jesus was fully human as well as being fully God. He didn't want pain.

But here's the thing. That wasn't the big reason for his anguish. In fact, the physical pain of the cross was a flea bite compared to what he would go through spiritually on the cross.

[ 6 : 36 ] And what he would go through is something that no one had ever faced before and will ever face again. So what caused him to be so sorrowful it was like it could kill him, just the sorrow and stress of it.

And the answer to that is in his prayers. In his prayers, what is it that Jesus asks to avoid? It's not death. It's not pain. It's not the beatings.

It's not the mockery. It's not the shame. Verse 36. And he said, Abba Father, all things are possible for you. Remove this cup from me.

Remove the cup. Jesus is terrified of something called the cup. Drinking the cup. What does that mean? In the Old Testament, the cup is code word for judgment.

I'll read a couple of verses to you. Isaiah 51, 17. Wake yourself, you who have drunk from the hand of the Lord the cup of his wrath, who have drunk to the dregs.

[ 7 : 36 ] Jeremiah 25. The God of Israel said to me, Take from my hand this cup of the wine of wrath, and make all the nations whom I send it drink it. They shall drink and stagger and be crazed because of the sword I'm sending among them.

See, the cup represents God's rightful anger against evil. God hates evil. He hates people ruining his creation. He hates it when people hurt each other.

God does not like it. He is angry at evil. Rightfully angry at it. So Jesus' anguish is not so much about the physical pain of the crucifixion.

It's that he knows on the cross he will drink in God's judgment. And he'll do that for us. There's one thing for us to stand before God and answer for our own mistakes.

Now imagine doing that for the sins of the whole world. Doing that for every crime, every murder, injury, exploitation, for every theft, for every injustice.

[ 8 : 38 ] Imagine answering for every human trafficker, every abuser, for every assault. Imagine being the object of God's anger for every thought, word, and deed in the world.

Jesus is terrified of facing the cross. Not because of the nails, but because he will drink in the cup of God's wrath to the dregs. That's what Jesus feared. That's what he asked to avoid.

That's why he prayed and said, is there another way? Now, we know that Jesus did go through with the cross. So given the magnitude of it all, how does he do it?

How does he pull this out? How does he go through with it? I mean, think about it. Christ has the right, you know, not to get killed. But he willingly lets it happen.

How does he, like, steel himself to do it? How does he find the strength and the focus? The answer is, he prays. It's a simple answer, right?

[ 9 : 37 ] He prays. I mean, that's why he goes to the garden. In verse 32, he says, he said to his disciples, sit here while I pray. Like, he doesn't go to get standing to me to have, like, one final night out with the boys.

He goes to the garden. He tells the disciples to be on watch. So he can go off by himself and pray for the strength to go through what the Father was asking him to go through.

In Mark's gospel, there are three times, including this one, three times where Jesus goes off to the wilderness to pray. In Mark 1, here's the scenario.

He's been healing people all day, doing great stuff, right? And then all these people find out about it. A huge crowd gathers around the house he's staying in. And they all have real needs.

Jesus goes off into the wilderness and he prays. And he comes back and he says, right, we're leaving. We're leaving. We're out of here. I've got to go to the next town to preach because that's why I came.

[10:38] And the disciples are in shock. They're in shock about this. It seems like what was happening here was Jesus was tempted here. He was tempted just to have a healing ministry.

And that's what it would be, just a healing ministry. What he did for a few people, he could do for everyone. And as great as that sounded and as important as that is, in prayer, Jesus knows that's not what God has for him.

He steals his focus. Another example in Mark 6, he feeds 5,000 people. That's really awesome. Feeding the hungry, fantastic ministry. Christians should be involved in it. But after feeding the 5,000, Jesus straightaway leaves, goes to a quiet place and prays.

It seems like another moment of decision and temptation, refocused through prayer. His time here with us, these three years, is not going to be just about feeding people. He's come here to preach and to die.

And it's a moment where he steals his focus. And the third place is Mark 14. Faced with a decision where guidance and resolve was needed, Jesus prays. And it's a wonderful prayer.

[11:49] He prays and it's very honest. It says, Lord, if it's possible, take this cup from me. But it's humble. He submits his desire to the Father's will. Now, I've heard people say, you shouldn't qualify your prayers with the phrase, if it's your will.

You know, just believe it's God's will. Just believe it's God's will. And, you know, whatever it is. But obviously there's problems there, because that sounds a bit more like it's faith in faith, rather than faith in God. I actually think it's great to pray, if it's your will.

You don't have to say it every single time. Maybe you don't have to say it at all, but it should be the underlying assumption when talking to God. Because remember, the purpose of prayer is not to bend God's will to fit your desires.

The purpose of prayer is for your desires to come into alignment with God's. And that's the fundamental issue of discipleship, isn't it?

It's, Lord, help me live your will. So this is how Jesus faced temptation, with honest, God-honoring prayer. And we can finish the sermon there. But there's a great contrast in the passages in there.

[12:58] See, we have Jesus' strategy for dealing with, like, great challenge in life is prayer. How is it the disciples face temptation? What's their strategy?

It's pride. It's their strategy is to will themselves to do better. Peter, to will themselves to just be really great at life.

In verse 31, Jesus says, you will all fall away. And they're like, there's no way, Jesus. There is no way. You've got it wrong. We've got your back. Peter actually separates himself out from the other guys.

And you can imagine the scene. He puts his arm around Jesus and walks them away. And he's like, not me. Like, maybe some of these other bozos. But, like, honestly, not me. Like, I'm Peter. Like, I'm Peter.

Like, rock. As an aside, did you notice how Jesus calls him Simon in the passage? Not Peter. So Peter is full of, you know, beans and gusto.

[13:58] And he's just feeling pretty good about himself. And then Jesus says to him, he gives him a very specific word. And he says, before the rooster crows, you will deny me three times.

Which is way worse, actually, than the other guys who just kind of slinked away. So what's the big issue here? The big issue is Peter didn't know his own heart. He didn't know his own heart. He didn't realize his capacity for cowardice.

He was spiritually just so overconfident. And that can lead to bad decisions. You know, when it comes to facing the great challenges of life. Relying on sort of just a really sunny opinion of yourself.

Instead of relying on God. Instead of relying on the transformative work of the Holy Spirit. That can be a place. It can be a place of real spiritual danger for us. Peter is such a great example for us. You know, like, he's just said, he's just said, I would rather die than deny you. And then he nods off at the very first test.

[15:00] And it's not even a big test. It's just stay awake. I never fail you, Jesus. Oh, no.

Come on, man. Presumption is a very, it's a dangerous thing in the Christian life, presumption. Just to dig a little bit deeper before we finish it. Do you notice that Jesus invites them to the garden? And he says to them in verse 38, watch and pray, lest you fall into temptation. So he doesn't say to them, watch and pray for me.

Because what I'm going through is really hard. He says, pray for yourselves, disciples. Because a great challenge is coming. And you need to go to the Father and ask for strength. But they failed in their task to watch and pray.

Which is why they failed later. That's why they abandoned Jesus later. They didn't bring their hearts to God. They trusted their own sort of willpower. They trusted their own willpower was good enough. And in our story, folks, it is no coincidence that Jesus, that, sorry, Peter, fell asleep three times.

[16:05] And then betrayed Christ three times later. Jesus summarizes all this in verse 31, in 41, when he says, our flesh is weak.

Folks, we endure temptation. We endure challenges in life through prayer. It's like, as an example, if somebody offends you or really wrongs you, what's our inclination?

Our inclination is to kind of just rehearse the offense over and over in our brain, right? Or for men, I'm just speaking for men here, we are prone to fantasizing about violence when offended.

It's terrible. We should use that great imagination we have and bring it to God and just pour it into prayer. I mean, humans, we are capable of such incredible things, like astonishingly wonderful things.

But we are capable of really stupid things as well. Very cowardly acts. So we need to watch and pray. Watch and pray.

[17:17] Folks, no amount of telling yourself, I am good, is going to fix your heart. No, we bring our broken hearts and situations to God in prayer and ask for his transformation. Let me finish here.

If you could summarize this passage, one way to summarize this passage would be like this. You could say, the passage asks us to believe something and asks us to do something. To believe something and do something.

And the belief part, what is it? Believe that Jesus took the anger of God on himself so it wouldn't fall on us. That's the amazing thing Jesus did for us. No one loves like Jesus. Nobody loves like Jesus. You could put it like this. We were so messed up, Jesus had to die for us. But we were so unbelievably loved that Jesus prayed for the courage to go through with it.

Now if you find it hard to believe in a God that would really love you, knowing what he knows about you, remember the story. Remember the garden. Jesus saw humanity at its worst in the garden.

[18:20] There's even a guy in the story who would rather run away naked into a forest than stick with Jesus at this point. He sees us at our worst, our most cowardly here, and still prays for the courage to save us.

Nobody loves like Jesus. That's what it asks us to believe. And what does it ask us to do? It asks us to watch and pray. To give ourselves over to a regular prayer.

To steel ourselves to follow Jesus. To ask for the strength to follow him. Watch and pray. We're made in the image of God. We can do astonishing things, amazing things.

But there is darkness in our hearts. We're almost certainly worse than we think we are. And great temptations are ahead. So watch and pray. For example, you might be tempted to despair.

I've said this before. I just often feel like such a failure as a parent. But I must take that fear of messing my children up. I must take that fear to Jesus.

[19:30] And confess it to him. And say, Father, help me trust you with my kids. Or it could be, Lord, I don't trust you with my health.

Father, I don't trust you with my future. Folks, we take these fears to Jesus. We take it all to him. Amen.