

The King Who Suffers Alone

Mark 14:26-52

Introduction: 1) Jesus drank the cup of God's wrath that we might drink the cup of salvation (cf. Ps. 116:13). Jesus submitted himself in the Garden of Gethsemane that He might save sinners on the cross. Jesus is the King who suffers alone for His people.

2) Jesus has celebrated Passover with the disciples and in so doing instituted the "Lord's Supper," a memorial that pictures His bloody atonement (v. 24) and anticipates the coming of the Kingdom of God in all its glory (v. 25). The evening, however, has a dark cloud hanging overhead because our Lord has revealed that one of his closest friends will betray Him (vs. 18-20). Jesus will suffer at the hands of His enemies who have been plotting His death for quite some time (3:6). He also will suffer at the betrayal of His friends who fail Him in His hour of need (vs. 37, 40-41), sell Him out (vs. 44-45), abandon Him (v. 50) and deny Him (vs. 66-72). And, He will suffer at the hands of His Father whose will it was that He should drink the cup of divine wrath that each of us should have drunk (vs. 35-36, 39). Yes, to the amazement of angels and the wonder of sinners saved by grace, "it was the will of the Lord to crush Him" (Is. 53:10). It was the will of the Father to kill His beloved Son (1:11; 9:7) so that He would not have to kill you and me.

3) The suffering of this great King is multi-faceted. The dimensions are personal, physical, mental and, most of all, spiritual. Jesus saw His loving Father's hand in it all. He trusted Him in His most trying and darkest hour, an hour our finite human minds can never fully comprehend. Our text highlights three aspects of the solitary suffering of the Savior King. We should meditate carefully on the drama that unfolds.

I. The King would be abandoned and left alone 14:26-31

- 1) As they finished the Passover dinner, the Lord and His disciples "sang a hymn", one of the final Hallel psalms (Pss 115-118), and then "went out to the Mount of Olives" (v. 26).
- 2) On the way (v. 27) Jesus again shakes up the 12. He tells them that not only will one of them (Judas) betray Him, "You will all fall away." This prediction is grounded in the Old Testament prophecy of Zechariah who wrote, "I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered" (Zech. 13:7). This prophecy referred to the death and "martyrdom of the eschatological prophet." (Edwards, 428). The Father will strike His Son, the Good Shepherd (John 10). His suffering, His death, is divinely ordained and sanctioned. Using the evil intentions and actions of sinful men, God will work the greatest possible good in saving sinners. The disciples will scatter like frightened mice but hope will not be lost. "But

after I am raised up, I will go before you to Galilee” (v. 28). Where I first called you I will meet you again. There I will return, reclaim, and recommission you for the work of taking the gospel to the nations.

- 3) Proverbs 16:18 painfully reminds us, “Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall.” Unfortunately we often forget these words of wisdom and suffer the consequences. The apostle Peter joins us in our folly. Hearing Jesus predict their defection, he steps up and with both arrogance and bravado proudly announces to Jesus, “Even though they all fall away, I will not” (v. 29). Wow, what a declaration of faithfulness and fidelity! But, did you notice in making this bold pronouncement Peter, in essence, calls Jesus a liar! Jesus says they will fall away. Peter responds, “No I won’t!” Our Lord responds in v. 30, and though His words contain a rebuke, I cannot help but imagine they were delivered with compassion and kindness, “And Jesus said to him, Truly, I tell you, this very night, before the rooster crows twice, you will deny me three times.”
- 4) You would have thought our Lord’ words would have silenced Peter, or at the least quieted him a bit, but not so. In fact He raises the stakes with an even bolder declaration, “But he said emphatically, “If I must die with you, I will not deny you.” (v. 31). Apparently the rest of the disciples got caught up in this frenzy of loyalty because “they all said the same.”

5) I think all of us would like to think we would have succeeded where Peter and the other disciples failed. I think we would also hope that we would exhibit greater humility and a more controlled tongue! And, if we are honest, I think many, if not all of us, recognize we probably would have said the same thing and acted in the same way. But, we would also be the recipients of our Savior's gracious forgiveness and restoration. Jesus accepted the fact He would be abandoned and left alone so that you and I would never be abandoned and never left alone. Hebrews 13:5 rings more precious than ever, "I will never leave you or forsake you."

II. The King would agonize over His passion and do it alone 14:32-42

1) These verses constitute sacred, holy ground. We will never know the depths of agony and pain our Savior endured that night alone for love of sinners like us. Jesus takes the disciples to a place called Gethsemane (v. 32). The word means "olive press." It was a garden of olive trees at the base of Mt. Olivet. John 18:1-2 informs us He would often go there with the disciples, probably to pray. That is why He is here this time as well. He told the disciples to "sit here while I pray." Verse 33 tells us that He took His inner circle of Peter, James and John away from the others as He prepared to pray. This is the third and final time Mark records our Lord

praying alone in this gospel (cf. 1:35; 6:46). Each occasion was a time of significant importance, but none more than this one.

- 2) Our text says Jesus was “greatly distressed and troubled” (v. 33). He told His friends, “My soul is very sorrowful, even to death” (v. 34). James Edwards says it so well, “My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death echoes the haunting lament of the downcast and dejected soul of Pss. 42:6, 12 and 43:5.” And yet, “Nothing in all the Bible compares to Jesus’ agony and anguish in Gethsemane – neither the laments of the Psalms, nor the broken heart of Abraham as he prepared to sacrifice his son Isaac (Gen. 22:5), nor David’s grief at the death of his son Absalom (2 Sam. 18:33). Luke 22:44 even speaks of Jesus’ “sweat falling to the ground like drops of blood” (Edwards, 432).
- 3) Jesus asked Peter, James and John to stay and watch (v. 34). Sadly they will stay and sleep (vs. 37, 40, 41). He left them and went a little farther away, fell to the ground under the massive burden He was carrying and asked His Father that, “if it were possible, the hour might pass from him” (v. 35). Indeed verse 36 provides the precise plea He put before His Father. The intensity and intimacy of the request is staggering; “Abba, Father, all things are possible for you. Remove this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will.” He would pray the same prayer again in

v. 39. Matthew 26:44 informs us He prayed it a third time as well. So much can be said but let's focus on two important issues. First, in spite of the incredible trauma of the moment and the certain future that lay ahead, He trusted in God as His loving Father and in His will. Second, and this is so very important, the "cup" that he prayed might be removed was not the physical pain He would endure on the cross. Indeed many Christian martyrs have gone to their death with thanksgiving and joy with no evidence whatsoever that they wished to avoid the hour of their martyrdom. No, the cup that so distressed and troubled Him was not the physical suffering He would experience, but the spiritual suffering He would endure as He would bear the sins of the world and drink to the last drop the fierce wrath of God as our substitute. Tim Keller says it so well, "in the garden of Gethsemane, he turns to the Father and all he can see before him is wrath, the abyss, the chasm, the nothingness of the cup....Jesus began to experience the spiritual, cosmic, infinite disintegration that would happen when he became separated from his Father on the cross. Jesus began to experience merely a foretaste of that, and he staggered" (*Kings Cross*, 176). The anguish and pain of the cross was not what concerned His soul. It was knowing that He would be abandoned by and separated from His Father as He answered "for every

sin and crime and act of malice and injury and cowardice and evil in the world.” That is what brought Him to His knees and moved Him to make His pitiful plea. (Edwards, 433).

- 4) As Jesus struggled for the souls of men, his closest friends slept soundly some distance away. Simon Peter receives a specific rebuke in v. 37, though the tone of our Lord’s chastening words were, no doubt, mild and full of grace. Verse 38 bears this out as He encourages them to be watchful and prayerful. Temptation is always lurking nearby. And, redeemed spirits are still attached to sinful flesh. The flesh’s weakness actually acts too often as a strength to take us where we do not want to go. Jesus knew they wanted to be strong for Him. He also knew they would fail.
- 5) Jesus has wrestled with His Father. He has agonized over His passion and He has done it alone. “Enough sleeping!” (v. 41). “The hour has come. The Son of Man (Dan. 7:13-14) is betrayed into the hands of sinners!” The issue is settled! Our wills are united! For the joy that is set before me I will endure the cross and all that it entails (Heb. 12:2). “So get up and let’s get going! Look! Here comes my betrayer!” (Paraphrase, v. 42).

6) Gethsemane was “hell” for Jesus but I am so thankful He went through it. You see if there is no Gethsemane there is no Calvary. If there is no Calvary there can be no empty tomb. And if there is no empty tomb, there is only hell for us.

III. The King would be arrested and forsaken alone 14:43-52

1) The betrayal that began in v. 10 now comes to fruition. While Jesus is talking Judas, “one of the twelve” (the emp. is intentional) comes with an armed crowd from the Sanhedrin (v. 43). These are the “temple police,” though they may have been accompanied by Roman soldiers as well (cf. John 18:3, 12). By a prearranged sign and plan (v. 44), Judas goes directly to Jesus (“he went up to him at once”, v. 45), gives Him a greeting of respect (“Rabbi!”, meaning “my great one”), and plants kisses of betrayal and death on His cheek. The kiss of Judas is where we get the phrase “the kiss of death.” The word for “kiss” means that he kissed Jesus lavishly and passionately. His overt affection of betrayal would enable the blood-thirsty mob to clearly identify the one they came to arrest. Judas made sure Jesus was a “marked man.”

2) Immediately and quickly the religious Gestapo springs into action: “they laid hands on him and seized him” (v. 46). The *CEV* says, “the men

grabbed Jesus and arrested him.” No charges were made. Following legal protocols are not on their agenda this night!

- 3) The disciples may have been taken by surprise but they are not void of a quick and decisive response as v. 47 makes clear! [read] A comparison with the other 3 gospels is helpful and fills out some details. John 18:10-11 tells us it was Peter who struck the man. His name was Malchus and he was probably a servant of the high priest Caiaphas. (John 18:13-14). Luke 22:51 informs us that Jesus “touched his ear and healed him.”
- 4) Mark keeps the focus on Jesus who rebukes the mob for their extreme and unnecessary overkill [read vs. 48-49]. He is no robber or bandit, no rabble-rouser or political revolutionary. Day after day He taught in the temple. They knew who He was, what He was like. Furthermore, they could have arrested Him at anytime. Arresting Him late at night in a quiet, secluded location showed their cowardice. It was shameful. And...it was also a fulfillment of Scripture for the prophet Isaiah has prophesied of the Suffering Servant of the Lord:
- “He was despised and rejected by men” (53:3)
 - “By oppression and judgment he was taken away” (53:8)
 - “He was numbered with the transgressors” (53:12)

5) Verses 50-52 records the sad defection of the disciples: all of them!

Those who had a short time earlier boasted that they would die for Him now are no where to be found. Verses 51-52 contain the unusual story of an anonymous “young man” who followed in his pajamas! He was nearly captured but was able to escape. However, his “linen cloth” was captured and so he “ran away naked” (v. 52). Church tradition says the young man was Mark the author of our 2nd gospel. That is certainly a reasonable possibility. And so again, as it was in the Garden of Eden, our nakedness is exposed as we desert the God who loves us and has graced us so abundantly with His kindness and good gifts.

6) And Jesus? He is arrested and He is forsaken. He is all alone to face the wrath of men and the wrath of God. He will receive all that we deserve that we might receive all that He deserves. The “Great Exchange” has begun.

Conclusion: 1) Gethsemane is the prelude to Calvary. Before He could surrender His body to be beaten and crucified on the cross, He must first surrender His will to His heavenly Father in the garden. In the first garden, the Garden of Eden, Adam said to the Father, “not your will but mine be done,” and all of creation was plunged into sin. In this second garden, the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus, the 2nd

Adam, says, “not my will but yours be done,” and the redemption and salvation of all creation begins! Eden brought death. Gethsemane begins new life.

2) Stuart Townend and Keith Getty penned in 2009 a hymn entitled “To See The King of Heaven Fall.” It is also known as the “Gethsemane Hymn.” The words beautifully capture what this King who suffered alone did on our behalf:

To See The King Of Heaven Fall
 In anguish to His knees
 The Light and Hope of all the world
 Now overwhelmed with grief
 What nameless horrors must He see
 To cry out in the garden
 “Oh, take this cup away from me
 Yet not my will but Yours
 Yet not my will but Yours.”

To know each friend will fall away
 And heaven’s voice be still
 For hell to have its vengeful day
 Upon Golgotha’s hill
 No words describe the Saviour’s plight
 To be by God forsaken
 Till wrath and love are satisfied
 And every sin is paid
 And every sin is paid.
 What took Him to this wretched place
 What kept Him on this road?
 His love for Adam’s cursed race
 For every broken soul
 No sin too slight to overlook
 No crime too great to carry
 All mingled in this poisoned cup
 And yet He drank it all
 The Saviour drank it all
 The Saviour drank it all.