**The Gospel of Mark**

**Witness to the Son of God #11**

**Some Hard Sayings of Jesus – Part 2**

**Jesus at Gethsemane – Mark 14**

***End of class; Dinner Dec. 6***

*Class note: This week marks George’s final class of the semester. We hope you will join us for our end of class carry-in dinner next week, Wednesday, Dec. 6, in the E91 Friendship Room. Sign-up sheets for food will be at class, or email me if you are coming and what you are bringing. All are welcome! We love to see old friends. – Bob*

***“Take this cup”* – Mark 14:32-36**

***32*** *And they came to a place, which was named Gethsemane: and he said to his disciples, “Sit ye here, while I shall pray.”* ***33*** *And he took with him Peter and James and John, and began to be sore amazed, and to be very heavy;* ***34*** *And he said unto them, “My soul is exceeding sorrowful unto death: tarry ye here, and watch.”* ***35*** *And he went forward a little, and fell on the ground, and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him.* ***36*** *And he said, “Abba, Father, all things are possible unto thee; take away this cup from me: nevertheless not what I will, but what you will.”*

**Notes and studies**

Jesus is being depicted here in the clearest way as a weak human rather than the powerful Jesus seen throughout most of the gospels. Typically Jesus is portrayed as confident and in command even of the wind and the affairs around him. He isn’t troubled.

1. By challenges from his enemies, here he demonstrates detailed knowledge about coming events — including his own death.

2. As that the time of his arrest is nearly at hand, Jesus’ character changes dramatically. Jesus acts like almost any other human who knows that their life grows short: he experiences grief, sorrow “even to death.” When predicting how others would die and suffer because God wills it, Jesus shows no emotion; when faced with his own, he was not anxious that some other option be found.

3. Earlier, Jesus advised his disciples that with sufficient faith and prayer, all things are possible — including moving mountains, casting out demons, and healing the sick. Here [Jesus prays](https://www.thoughtco.com/the-turning-point-in-prayer-701529) and his faith is undoubtedly strong. In fact, the contrast between Jesus’ faith in the Father and the lack of faith exhibited by his disciples is one of the main points of the narrative: despite asking them just to stay awake and “watch,” they keep falling asleep.

4. Jesus expressed in this sentence, “*… not what I will, but what you will…*” that he still has the will to be one with the Father.

5. Jesus exhibits a willingness to allow the Father to continue with the plan that he die. It is worth noting that Jesus’ words here assume a strong distinction between himself and the Father, but at the same time expressed union. This was his inner union; the execution willed by the Father is experienced as something not imposed from the outside, but something freely chosen by Jesus.

6. The phrase “Abba” is Aramaic for “father” and denotes a very close relationship, yet it also excludes the possibility of identification — Jesus is not talking to himself.

7. This narrative would have resonated strongly with Mark’s audience. They, too, suffered persecution, arrest, and were threatened with execution. It is unlikely that they would have been spared any of this; no matter how hard they tried. In the end, they would probably feel abandoned by friends, family, and even God. The message is clear: if Jesus could manage to remain strong in such trials and continue to call God “Abba” despite what is to come, then the new Christian converts should try to do so as well. The narrative almost cries out for the reader to imagine how they might react in a similar situation, an appropriate response for Christians who might indeed find themselves doing just that tomorrow or next week when trials come.

**The two powers at Gethsemane: the desire of life and the fear of death.**

1. There is a difference in this Garden, not like the first one in Genesis. Note the contrast between the Garden of Eden and the Garden of Gethsemane. In Eden, the first man (Adam) fell [to evil] by yielding to temptation and disobeyed Go. In Gethsemane, the second man (cf. [1Cor 15:47](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/1Co%2015.47)) conquered [evil] by yielding to the will of God.

2. Yes, the Garden of Gethsemane was a place of victory for Jesus and consequently for us as well.

3. “Gethsemane” means “the oil press.” A garden of ancient olive trees stands there to this day. Jesus frequently went to Gethsemane with His disciples to pray ([John 18:2](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/John%2018.2)).

JESUS EXPERIENCED GREAT DISTRESS.

1. Jesus went to pray in the Garden, accompanied only by Peter, James, and John ([Mark 14:32-33](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Mk%2014.32-33)).

2. Before Jesus began praying, He was “troubled and deeply distressed” ([Mark 14:33](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Mk%2014.33)).

3. Later, Luke records that Jesus was “in agony,” and His sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground ([Lk 22:44](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Lk%2022.44)).

4. Jesus was likely troubled for He knew that His hour had come ([John 12:27](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Jn%2012.27)). He knew what was imminent, for He had told His disciples earlier ([Mark 10:32-34](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Mk%2010.32-34)).

JESUS ENDURED INTENSE SORROW.

1. He described Himself as “exceedingly sorrowful, even to death” ([Mk 14:34](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Mk%2014.34))

2. The writer of Hebrews refers to His “vehement cries and tears” ([Heb 5:7](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/He%205.7)) His grief and sorrow was partly due to the fact that He was taking upon Himself our own grief and sorrow! ([Isa 53:4-5](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Isa%2053.4-5))

3. He then saw how he will be a lamb offering for the most alien and distasteful thing “death and sin”. And he was alone because both are alien and distasteful to his Father.

**The Narrative at Gethsemane**

1. The most famous events at Gethsemane occurred on the night before His crucifixion when Jesus was betrayed. Each of the Gospel writers describes the events of that night with slight variations, so reading the four accounts ([Matthew 26:36-56](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Matt%2026.36-56), [Mark 14:32-52](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Mark%2014.32-52), [Luke 22:40-53](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Luke%2022.40-53), and [John 18:1-11](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/John%2018.1-11)) will give an accurate picture of that momentous night in its entirety.

2. As the evening began, after Jesus and His disciples had celebrated the Passover, they came to the garden. At some point, Jesus took three of them – Peter, James and John – to a place separated from the rest. Here Jesus asked them to watch with Him and pray so they would not fall into temptation ([Matthew 26:41](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Matt%2026.41)), but they fell asleep. Twice, Jesus had to wake them and remind them to pray so that they would not fall into temptation. This was especially poignant because Peter did indeed fall into temptation later that very night when three times he denied even knowing Jesus. Jesus moved a little way from the three men to pray, and twice He asked His Father to remove the cup of wrath He was about to drink, but each time He submitted to the Father’s will. He was “*exceedingly sorrowful unto death*,” but God sent an angel from heaven to strengthen Him ([Luke 22:43](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Luke%2022.43)).

3. After this, Judas Iscariot, the betrayer, arrived with a “multitude” of soldiers, high priests, Pharisees, and servants to arrest Jesus. Judas identified Him by the prearranged signal of a kiss which he gave to Jesus. Trying to protect Jesus, Peter took a sword and attacked a man named Malchus, the servant of the high priest, cutting off his ear. Jesus rebuked Peter and miraculously healed the man’s ear. It’s surprising that witnessing this amazing miracle of healing had no effect on the multitude. Neither were they shaken by His awesome display of power as described in [John 18:5-6](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/John%2018.5-6), where either at the majesty of His looks, or at the power of His words, or both, they became like dead men, falling to the ground. Nevertheless, they arrested Jesus and took Him to Pontius Pilate, while the disciples scattered in fear for their lives.

4. The events that occurred in the Garden of Gethsemane have reverberated down through the centuries. The passion Jesus displayed on that momentous night has been depicted in music, books, and films for centuries. From the 16th century, when Bach wrote two magnificent oratorios based on the gospel accounts of Matthew and John, to the present day with the film *The Passion of the Christ*, the story of this extraordinary night has been told again and again. Even our language has been affected by these events, giving us such phrases as “*he who lives by the sword dies by the sword*” ([Matthew 26:52](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Matt%2026.52)); “*the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak*” ([Mark 14:38](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Mark%2014.38)); and “*sweating drops of blood*” ([Luke 22:44](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Luke%2022.44)). Of course, the most important impact of this night was the willingness of our Savior to die on the cross in our place, not in order to pay the penalty for our sins. God “made Him who knew no sin, to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him” ([2 Corinthians 5:21](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/2%20Cor%205.21)). This is the gospel of Jesus Christ.

**Who was the young man who fled naked in Mark 14:51-52?**

This event occurred in the [Garden of Gethsemane](https://www.gotquestions.org/garden-of-Gethsemane.html) the night Jesus was betrayed and captured. [Mark 14:51-52](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Mark%2014.51%E2%80%9352) describes a young man who, wearing only a linen cloth, followed Jesus. When the Roman soldiers seized Jesus, this other young man escaped capture and ran, leaving the garment behind. The identity of the man is unknown, but since the Gospel of Mark is the only gospel that mentions the incident, many Bible scholars speculate that the young man was [John Mark](https://www.gotquestions.org/John-Mark-in-the-Bible.html) himself, the author of the Gospel of Mark.  
  
It is impossible to know for sure who the young man was, since the Bible does not specifically identify him. There are all sorts of explanations and supposed hidden spiritual/allegorical meanings on the young man who fled naked. None of them have any explicit biblical support. But we understand that the identity of the young man who fled naked must have had meaning to the original readers of the Gospel of Mark. The identity that makes the most sense, with that in mind, is John Mark (14:32-39)

We cannot begin to comprehend the weight and gravity of the situation that Jesus is enduring at this moment. He knows that he is about to die. He knows that he is going to die in a very painful way, crucifixion being considered one of the most painful ways to die. He has concern for his disciples and their safety with the arrest impending. One of his close companions is not with him because he is leading a soldier to him. So we need to relate to Jesus and see that this is a great moment of difficulty. And they went to a place called Gethsemane. And he said to his disciples,

***32****“Sit here while I pray.”* ***33*** *And he took with him Peter and James and John, and began to be greatly distressed and troubled.* ***34*** *And he said to them, “My soul is very sorrowful, even to death. Remain here and watch.”* (Mark 14: 32-34; ESV)

**Sit to pray; Sweating “blood”?**

Jesus enters the place called Gethsemane. He tells his disciples to sit, but he takes with him his closest circle of disciples, Peter, James, and John. As they walk a little further out, the weight of these final moments begin to sink in. Jesus became greatly distressed and troubled. The HCSB uses the word “horrified” which is an accurate representation of the Greek word. Jesus’ very words tell us of his great distress. He tells Peter, James, and John that he is swallowed up in sorrow, even to death. To understand the depth of this sorrow, Luke’s account tells us something rather amazing.

*And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly; and his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground. (Luke 22:44; ESV)*

Jesus is sweating so greatly that it is pouring off of his head. But Jesus is not working. He is not doing any physical exertion. He is simply sitting or lying on the ground. The intensity of this moment is so great that he is sweating. But he is not just sweating. His agony is so great that his sweat is falling from his head to the ground like blood would pour from a wound.

This text does not say that his sweat turned into blood. It does not say that blood was mixed in his sweat. It does not say that his sweat was blood. This is simply an illustration of how the sweat poured from his face. So we can put the medical examiners away, who tell us about how great agony can cause the capillaries in the forehead to burst. This work is unnecessary because the scriptures simply are not saying that he had sweaty blood. But the agony was great that, without physical exertion, his sweat began to pour from his face.

This Gethsemane scene should be enough to destroy the false teaching that if you just trust God, you will be fine. Following Jesus does not mean that we will not have distress, agony, sadness, strain, or pain. Bad things will happen to us in life. As Christians, we do not need to pretend that our lives are perfect on a daily basis. This is a false gospel time when we lie and say that life is easy if you just say a few cute words. Jesus is suffering. We suffer. Suffering distress, agony, sadness, or pain is not a statement about our faith in God. If so, then Jesus has no faith, which is simply impossible. We can expect these difficult times to come. So what does Jesus do when his time of agony arrived? He goes to pray. It is time to talk to God.

***35*** *And going a little farther, he fell on the ground and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him.* ***36*** *And he said, “Abba, Father, all things are possible for you. Remove this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will.” (ESV)*

Jesus begins this prayer in the way that we learned in Matthew 6, “Father.” Talk to God as your Father. Father, you can do anything. Everything is possible for our Father to accomplish. Father, since you can do anything, remove this cup from me.

**Cup of Wrath?**

Typically, the cup has been taught to represent God’s wrath. There are many figures in the Old Testament describing nations drinking the cup of God’s wrath because of their sins. But there are problems with this view. The text does not say that Jesus was drinking the cup of God’s wrath. Nothing in the New Testament indicates, nor did Jesus teach, that God’s wrath would be executed against him. There are other cup images in the scriptures that we need to consider before assume that this is the cup of God’s wrath. I believe we should rely on the words of Jesus.

***20*** *Then the mother of the sons of Zebedee came to him with her sons, and kneeling before him, she asked a favor of him.* ***21*** *And he said to her, “What do you want?” She said to him, “Declare that these two sons of mine will sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your kingdom.”* ***22*** *But Jesus answered, “You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I am about to drink?” They said to him, “We are able.”* ***23*** *He said to them, “You will indeed drink my cup, but to sit at my right hand and at my left, this is not mine to grant, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared by my Father.” (Matthew 20:20-23; NRSV)*

Notice the question Jesus asks, “*Are you able to drink the cup that I am to drink?*” Was Jesus asking if they could drink the divine cup of wrath that he was about to drink? No. So what cup was Jesus about to drink that the apostles would also have to drink? The answer is the cup of suffering. Jesus was about to suffer agony to accomplish God’s will. The apostles would have to do the same. In fact, the NLT translates Jesus’ request to the Father as such:

*“Please take this cup of suffering away from me. Yet I want your will to be done, not mine.”* (Mark 14:36; NLT)

Jesus is simply asking for this suffering he would experience to be removed. Jesus teaches us that prayer is about speaking honestly with God. We can speak from the pit of our emotions and agony. In our suffering, we can cry out to God for things to change and for assistance. But it is the next sentence that is just as important.

**‘Yet Not What I Will But What You Will’**

True disciples want the Father’s will accomplished. It is amazing to see the sheer volume of books written about being disappointed with God because he does not do what we tell him. Books are written about being angry and frustrated with God for not doing things our way. We offer sinful, selfish prayer. And then when things do not go the way we prayed, we get mad at God. It as if we are God and that He needs to obey our wants and wishes.

**Letter from Philemon**

**A Test of Our Love**

Brother George,

It is important for us to persist and never give up what we pray for. First because when we continue praying, the hidden desires of the heart become clear to us. Second we may not get an answer and the Father’s silence is the best test for our love.

A while ago, some Americans came to visit our monastery, and one of the ladies gave me a pamphlet in Arabic and in English, which has, “Smile, God loves you.” As a matter of teasing I told the lady that there is a typing error, it should have been typed, “God please smile, for I love you.” The whole world is in trouble and you are silent. I understand that you want us to see for ourselves whether we love you in spite of the bad things happening around us and to other people.

Always remember that the silence of our Father is a test of our love.

Philemon

**The Sleeping Disciples - Mark 14:37-38**

In this moment of agony, Jesus returns and finds his disciples sleeping. Do not be too critical of the disciples. It is the middle of the night. It is not three in the afternoon. It is not eight at night. It is probably around one or two in the morning. Further, Jesus has been gone for an hour praying. That is a long time to try to stay awake in the middle of the night.

We often do things that are not inherently sinful, but we fail to see the great need for prayer. Jesus says that they should have been watching and praying. However, they are sleeping. This picture is so “us.” We are not doing anything sinful. But we just do not understand what is more important at that moment. The disciples do not understand that the soldiers are coming and he will be arrested in moments. They do not see the pressing need of the moment. They are not sinning, but they are not doing what is in their own spiritual best interest to avoid temptation. That is us. We are not doing anything sinful. But we are neglecting the word of God. We are neglecting prayer time and studying the scriptures because we do not see the pressing need. We want to do other things. We will miss services tonight, not because we are going to be do something sinful, but because there are other things to do and we choose to neglect God.

The disciples also teach us another lesson: friends will fail us. Our Christian brothers and sisters will let us down. Jesus needed these disciples to stay awake for him and watch for him. He wants them to be praying so they are not tempted when the arrest and betrayal occurs. But Jesus finds them sleeping. The disciples let Jesus down. Our brothers and sisters in Christ will let us down. If your brethren are not there when you need it the most, you just have biblical friendships. It is going to happen. Do not lose heart. Do not get depressed. Do not be upset. Do not get bent out of shape. It happens. We are not trying to let each other down. But sometimes we are just sleeping, not realizing that there are more pressing things to accomplish.

**The Rest of the Narrative – Matthew 26:42-46**

Matthew gives us more details at this point than Mark. We learn that Jesus leaves his disciples to pray for a second time. Jesus offers the same prayer that he had prayed earlier.

We learn that we can pray for the same thing regularly. We do not have to pray once and leave it at that. We can pray frequently. Pray your desires to God and then pray for God’s will be to done.

Jesus returns and finds the disciples sleeping again. He leaves and prays for a third time, saying the same words again. It is at this moment that the betrayal begins.

Prayer can change our perception. What was the Father’s answer to Jesus’ prayer? The answer was to hear …

*“In* *the days of his flesh, Jesusoffered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to him who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverence. Although he was a son, he learned obedience through what he suffered. And being made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him, designated by God a high priest after the order of Melchizedek. (Hebrews 5:7-10)*

Prayer should cause us to learn self-surrender.

**In Company of his Favorites**

These three apostles – Peter, James, and John – were apparently especially close to Jesus. They are mentioned on multiple occasions as being the only ones who were present or whom Jesus took with Him when an extraordinary manifestation of His power or glory occurred, such as in the raising of Jairus' daughter ([Mark 5:37](https://ebible.com/query?utf=8%E2%9C%93&query=Mark%205%3A37&translation=ESV); [Luke 8:51](https://ebible.com/query?utf=8%E2%9C%93&query=Luke%208%3A51&translation=ESV)) or the Transfiguration ([Matthew 17:1](https://ebible.com/query?utf=8%E2%9C%93&query=Matthew%2017%3A1&translation=ESV); [Mark 9:2](https://ebible.com/query?utf=8%E2%9C%93&query=Mark%209%3A2&translation=ESV); and [Luke 9:28](https://ebible.com/query?utf=8%E2%9C%93&query=Luke%209%3A28&translation=ESV)), or when He was very sorrowful and in special need of strength, such as in the Garden of Gethsemane prior to His arrest and crucifixion, as mentioned in the question.

As far as I am aware, the Bible does not specifically discuss why Jesus chose these three in this way. However, just before the Transfiguration, Peter (or Simon bar-Jonah, as he was still known at that time) had confessed ([Matthew 16:16](https://ebible.com/query?utf=8%E2%9C%93&query=Matthew%2016%3A16&translation=ESV)) his belief in Jesus as the Messiah and the Son of God, which the other apostles did not seem as certain or clear about. This caused Jesus to call Peter blessed, because Jesus said that God the Father had not revealed this knowledge to Peter by human means, but, and that it was upon this "rock" (which was why Jesus bestowed the name Peter (from the Greek word for rock (Petros) on Simon) that Jesus said He would build His church. And, although Peter still subsequently showed himself capable of weakness (despite his self-proclaimed boldness ([Matthew 26:35](https://ebible.com/query?utf=8%E2%9C%93&query=Matthew%2026%3A35&translation=ESV); [Mark 14:31](https://ebible.com/query?utf=8%E2%9C%93&query=Mark%2014%3A31&translation=ESV))) by denying Jesus (as Jesus had told him he would, and not just once, but three times), Peter nevertheless emerged as the most prominent and vocal of the apostles in evangelizing the people ([Acts 2](https://ebible.com/query?utf=8%E2%9C%93&query=Acts%202&translation=ESV)) following Jesus' ascension.

As brothers, James and John were close to each other, and also to Jesus. Jesus gave them the nickname "Sons of Thunder" (or "Boanerges" in Greek), for they were both apparently of a brash, impetuous nature, such as on the occasion when they asked Jesus if He wanted them to call down fire from heaven to destroy a Samaritan town that had refused to receive Him because He was traveling to Jerusalem ([Luke 9:51-56](https://ebible.com/query?utf=8%E2%9C%93&query=Luke%209%3A51-56&translation=ESV)). They showed this same trait when they (along with their mother) came to Jesus asking that He would grant them the favored seats at His right and left sides in His kingdom, and quickly asserted that they were able to endure the same cup and baptism of suffering that Jesus was to experience.

And yet, they both undoubtedly loved Jesus, to such a degree that James would be the first apostle martyred for his faith ([Acts 12:2](https://ebible.com/query?utf=8%E2%9C%93&query=Acts%2012%3A2&translation=ESV)), and that John was the one to whom Jesus (as He was dying on the cross) entrusted the care His own mother, and who was kept alive (as the only apostle not martyred) to witness a vision of the events of the end times, as foretold in the book of Revelation). I believe that it was Jesus' knowledge of the faith and love of these three individuals, as well as His foreknowledge of the coming events in which they would be involved, and the roles that they would play in the early church, that led Him to select them to witness the prominent events at which only they were present.

***Pope’s Notes***



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