



Speaker:  
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## Thy Will be Done

Series: The Gospel of Mark • 50 of 50

5/31/2021 (MON) | Bible: **Mark 14:26-42**

And when they had sung a hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives.

And Jesus saith unto them, “All ye shall be offended because of me this night; for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered. But after that I am risen, I will go before you into Galilee.

But Peter said unto him, “Although all shall be offended, yet will not I.” And Jesus saith unto him, “Verily I say unto thee, that this day, even in this night, before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny me thrice.” But he spake the more vehemently, “If I should die with thee, I will not deny thee in any wise.” Likewise also said they all.

And they 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 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 he said, “Abba, Father, all things are possible unto thee. Take away this cup from me. Nevertheless, not that I will, but what thou wilt.”

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

And again he went away and prayed, and spake the same words. And when he returned, he found them asleep again (for their eyes were heavy) neither wist they what to answer him.

And he cometh the third time and saith unto them, “Sleep on now, and take your rest. It is enough. The hour is 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.”

Our message today concerns an event that’s both amazing and sad.

By now, everything has been revealed. Jesus’s earthly ministry of teaching and healing has come to an end. The conclusion of the Jewish era and its temple religion has been announced. Now we see these events unfolding which will end in the death of Jesus Christ, just as he predicted. His blood was about to be spilled, and this would be a powerful symbol of the new covenant his death and resurrection would launch.

Having given his followers a way to remember his death, in the sharing of bread and wine, the Passover feast ends. The proceedings are brought to a close with the singing of a Psalm.

The party leaves the city and make their way over to the garden of Gethsemane. It's here Jesus has determined to pray. You'll notice they all go over, but most of them are told to wait, and he takes three of his closest associates with him. It's the same three who went in with him when he raised Jairus's daughter from the dead and who went up the mountain to witness the transfiguration.

When he makes his way to the place of prayer, Jesus leaves those three behind. He's on his own now as he prepares to speak to his father in heaven.

In our Bible study last Wednesday, we looked at the way in which Moses approached God on the mountain. We described different levels of access to God, with only Moses getting to speak to God face-to-face. And we compared that to the arrangement in the Tabernacle. There we had a court, a holy place, and finally the holy of holies which the high priest alone had access to.

As we see the company of Jesus being thinned out as they went, it brought these things to mind. It emphasises his solitude when he was involved in that tortuous prayer. It was **he alone** who was worthy to suffer and die for the sins of mankind, and this he would have to do alone, his friends having abandoned him and with not even the comfort of the Holy Spirit to lighten the suffering.

This prayer in Gethsemane marks Jesus's final moments of freedom. Even while still in communion with his father in prayer, Judas the betrayer, with a mob behind him, is making his way to Gethsemane.

Our focus today will be on the great example of submission to God Jesus leaves us, and there'll be some encouragement to challenge ourselves as we observe the failures of the disciples.

## Christ's submission to God

I know you've read this account probably numerous times. You've no doubt heard several sermons on the Gethsemane incident. But I don't know if it's possible to read this again today and not still be affected by it.

Never in his life has Jesus felt this way. Not even the inspired words of Mark can truly describe the terror Jesus felt. We see verbs describing him as deeply distressed, troubled, and overwhelmed with sorrow. He tells the disciples he feels so full of anguish he feels like he might *die* of it.

What exactly was it that caused him so much internal torment? The thought of dying isn't pleasant to start with. But it wasn't that. If it were just no longer being alive Jesus had to face, he could accept it in a dignified way at least as well as the Stoics did.

Was it the knowledge of what he'd likely go through before his actual death? I'm sure he was aware of the brutality of Roman soldiers. He knew he'd be strung up on a tree until he was dead. But even these can't account for the intensity of his soul's agony.

Above all these things, **what he feared more than anything else in the world was his own father**. He feared God. He understood what the all-holy God does in punishing sin, and Christ would have the punishment of MILLIONS of people redirected onto him. He alone understood the ferocity of the wrath of God he would soon face.

There he was, in his place of prayer. He threw himself on the ground. “Abba”, he begins. It’s an Aramaic word, and it’s a more intimate title than “father”. In our culture, it’s usual for us to use a similarly intimate word for our own fathers. We’d maybe say “dad”. And believe it or not, it’s this same intimate word Jesus uses that believers are encouraged to use when they approach God in prayer:

And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, “Abba, Father”.

**Galatians 4:6**

This shows us again just how exalted the believer is. Our adoption into the family of God is so complete we get to use the exact same title of affection the son of God uses.

It looks like one of the disciples, probably Peter, overheard bits of Jesus’s prayer and relayed it later to Mark as he was composing his gospel. And we get a glimpse of some of that communication between Jesus and his father. What we hear astounds us.

Jesus came to this world primarily to die. The prophets of old knew it, and he knew it. He’d been trying to get the reality of it across to his disciples for several years. He was unswervingly committed to carrying out his mission of sacrificing himself for the sins of his people.

But now, as he began to be singed by the fires of God’s anger, the anxiety rises within him. Despite all that he knew of the necessity of his suffering, he asks his father in prayer **if the whole thing could be called off**.

We see in v.36 he asked his father if there was any way he could escape this awful destiny. In his human weakness, he didn’t want to *go* to Calvary. Maybe he hoped the father could come up with a plan of redemption which didn’t involve this immense suffering. And so it was in the three seasons of prayer he wrestled with the father.

Then we see this change taking place in the manner of his prayer. Such was his faith that his attitude became more and more aligned with God’s will. He knew what needed to be done. He knew his father couldn’t break his promises by saving his son’s life. Jesus knew that, even witnessing such fear and horror in the soul of his own son, **GOD THE FATHER STILL STOOD READY TO DROWN HIS OWN SON IN THE FLOODS OF HIS WRATH**.

This was a victory for Jesus! We’re not told, but I expect Satan was there pouring everything he had into stopping this plan. But in his submission to the will of God, Jesus dealt a mighty blow to the enemy. Now he’d accepted his destiny, it was just a matter of time before Satan’s kingdom would be dealt that *fatal* blow.

“Let *your* will be carried out, dear father.”

We read about this episode in the New Testament:

Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death and was heard in that he feared; though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered.

**Hebrews 5:7–8**

I want to emphasise this: what happened in the garden was not theatrical act. Jesus didn't pretend to be in turmoil just so he could show that God's will prevails in the end. If you're doctrinal beliefs force you to deny the reality of Jesus's inner upheaval, those beliefs are wrong.

As we think about this, it quite naturally brings to mind those doctrines about the two natures of Jesus Christ. Throughout Mark's gospel, we've seen examples of Jesus's human weakness. We've also seen examples of his divinity. But it's in Gethsemane and at Calvary especially that we see those two natures come to the fore at the same time.

I mentioned to you several weeks ago about how people can have imbalanced views of these two natures. Age-old heresies have left their mark even in the beliefs of people today. In liberal Christianity, the tendency is to think of Jesus as human but not divine. Reformed folk, on the other hand, will often emphasise Jesus's divinity at the expense of his humanity.

Both of these are wrong. And as one *of* those Reformed folks, *with an audience of* mostly Reformed folk, I think I ought to address the fault we're more likely to make. With our very high view of God, we are more likely to err on the side of Jesus's divinity.

And I'll simply repeat what I said a few weeks ago: the humanity of Jesus is equally important as his divinity. You should avoid thinking of Jesus as God inhabiting a body and switching off his almighty power from time to time to look like a proper human. He's not even 60% divine and 40% human. He is fully man *and* fully God, and these two natures are not independent of each other.

It was in the year 451 AD the Council of Chalcedon met. It was there they hammered out a doctrine about the person of Christ. This is what they said:

"[Jesus is] to be acknowledged in two natures, inconfusedly, unchangeably, indivisibly, inseparably; the distinction of the natures being in no wise taken away by the union, but rather the property of each nature being preserved, and concurring in one Person and one Subsistence, not parted or divided into two persons."

## **The disciples' weakness**

You'll see in v.27 Jesus tells them all they're all going to abandon him. You might remember when he announced the existence of a betrayer, he made the point the betrayal was going to be carried out according to scriptural prophecy.

And it's the same here. He quotes from Zechariah 13. It talks about God striking down the Shepherd and seeing the sheep scatter. Why such a drastic move? Well, if you read

Zechariah 13 later, you'll see God's purpose in all this was ultimately for the benefit of the sheep. The remnant of genuine sheep would return and be blessed.

There's even a note of comfort in the prophecy itself. Although the striking down of Jesus the Great Shepherd and the scattering of his followers was inevitable, **it would all be done for their good**. Brothers and sisters, it's because of Jesus being struck down you're where you are today, with all the gospel promises treasured up in your heart.

Not only this, but you'll also see in verse 28 how Jesus comforts them by promising his resurrection and his visiting them in Galilee.

Instead of believing Jesus, and seizing hold of those comforting promises, Peter jumps up to make an objection. Peter is sure (v.29) he's more loyal than the rest of them. *They might let you down, but I won't!* It doesn't surprise us, does it?

Jesus would teach him a lesson. He makes a very specific prediction about Peter. Before a cockerel crowed twice the following morning, Peter would deny him. Not once. Not twice. Peter would betray his friend and saviour **three times**.

In their culture, night-time was the period right up until dawn. Cockerels can crow all night, but the intensity of it increases as it approaches dawn, so the ancients used this as a rough indication of time. Peter's act of cowardice would have probably been all over even before the sun rose.

We see in verse 31 that even now Peter won't back down. Even having these details given to him about how he would fail his master, Peter just steps up his protestations a notch. *Even if they KILL me, I won't deny you*. The thing is Peter—listener—it's easy to make such boasts about your love for God in times of ease. It's only in times of trial we see the true nature of our love for God.

It wasn't long before Peter starts to regret his confidence. We see him failing Jesus *even before he met* with any trouble. Between Jesus's sessions of prayer, he took a couple of breaks. He went back to the three disciples to see how they were getting on. He was expecting them to have stayed awake and been in earnest prayer on his behalf. Instead, he discovers they'd all fallen asleep.

They were speechless, it says in v.37. Being tired isn't an excuse. I found an interesting description in one of the Bible paraphrases. It says the disciples were "drugged with grief". This is verified by Luke's account, which says one of the reasons they were so tired was through sadness.

I had to go and look this up. I just assumed the disciples were tired because they've had a long day, had a hearty meal, and maybe a glass of wine afterwards. But it turns out fatigue is a known symptom of sadness. Perhaps at last they'd now finally accepted their master was going to die, as he said.

Jesus had no desire to make his disciples suffer sleep deprivation. He knew they needed sleep every night. He slept himself. He knew that if a person never slept, they'd die. This was

a special occasion, and he simply asked them to make an exception and stay awake with him in prayer.

Seeing this lack of determination in them, he warns them to be watchful and always pray (v.38). And we should take notice of this too. We might venture to say the bulk of our sin is caused by spiritual sleepiness. Okay, we do sometimes intentionally sin, and that is awful. But it's this...*weakness* and lack of commitment that's the cause of most of our sin.

Remember: **being spiritually lazy is our default behaviour**. There has to be a conscious putting on of our spiritual armour. There has to be a daily effort to remain alert and pray strenuously.

When Jesus's prayer had finished, and he went back to see the trio for the final time, they'd fallen asleep again. With a cutting sarcasm, Jesus tells them they may as well go back to sleep.

Three times Peter failed to watch and pray. Three times he would fall into temptation and disown Jesus. No wonder Jesus calls him "Simon", his old name, rather than "Peter", the rock.

Looking at the disciples behaviour, I have to ask the question: would any of us have done any better? Is our commitment to God so great it would have acted like a spiritual adrenaline, keeping us wide-awake in prayer?

The truth is I doubt we'd have fared any better than they did. But at least we have that bad example we can learn from use to daily remind us how prone we are to slothfulness and that we must do something about it. Several years later, the same Peter would write:

Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour:

**1 Peter 5:8**

You know, it says something of the trustworthiness of Mark's gospel that he's so honest. If you were trying to put the best spin on these events, you certainly wouldn't mention that God manifest in the flesh was having second thoughts about going to Calvary, and neither would you include details of such great failings in the chief band of his followers.

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What do we have here then? We see the Great Shepherd about to be struck down according to prophecy. We see that it was his own heavenly Father who would deal the fatal blows. And just like in Zechariah, the Shepherd was innocent. His willingness to go through all this was because of his love for his sheep, his elect people.

Despite all these terrible events about to happen, the disciples at least were given some words of comfort. They'd see their master again, soon.

Why is it Mark says the reunion would take place in Galilee (v.28)? Jerusalem is out of the picture. His reappearance in Galilee was meant to be symbolic. He'd just announced a new covenant. His resurrection was the confirmation of it. And his resurrected self would go to

that region where he'd revealed so much of his power in exorcisms and healings. Galilee was an ethnically diverse region, and this would show that this new covenant was an inclusive one, gathering in the souls of men and women from all around the world.

The twelve disciples knew they were a privileged bunch. It's now that we see them experiencing the opposite aspect of being a follower of Jesus Christ. *Those who receive much from God are expected to give more.* More of their own selves.

I want to end with just a few words of encouragement regarding prayer. If Jesus teaches us anything in this episode, it's about the importance of prayer.

Because we're encouraged to pray without ceasing, many of us will communicate to God throughout the day with very short prayers. And even though most of these prayers will be silent, it's still a great habit to get into. If you enjoy a meal or have a safe car journey, it's good to express your appreciation to God for them.

Having said this, I believe we all still need to make time for a different type of prayer. One which takes time. One that involves emotional and psychological effort. There are lots of things to pray about, and it's often necessary to wrestle with God in prayer.

Taking Jesus as our great example, I want us to encourage ourselves to understand how we can align our will with God's. Here are three points:

- *Asking to know God's will.* It might sound a little strange, but we often don't know what God's will is, so we need to ask him to show as it:

Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God.

**Romans 8:26–27**

- *Asking according to God's will.* Once we know what God's will is, we can then use it to ensure our requests are proper:

And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us: and if we know that he hears us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.

**1 John 5:14–15**

- *Asking for help to carry out God's will.* We don't make requests to God for other people only but ourselves too. And one of the things we should be asking him to do is help us to obey him:

Teach me to do thy will; for thou art my God: Thy spirit is good; lead me into the land of uprightness.

**Psalms 143:10**

Today, we can learn from these disciples. We can let their behaviour be a warning to us to remain watchful, vigilant and daily in fervent prayer.

And most especially can we learn from Jesus Christ himself. In every aspect of our Christian lives, let this be our motto: *Lord, let your will be done, not mine.*

Amen.