

"The Agony of Our Redemption" - Mark 14:32-72

The prophet Isaiah tells us this about our Lord:

He is despised and rejected by men, A Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And we hid, as it were, our faces from Him; He was despised, and we did not esteem Him. Surely He has borne our griefs And carried our sorrows; Yet we esteemed Him stricken, Smitten by God, and afflicted. (Isaiah 53:3-4)

We cannot possibly comprehend what our redemption cost Jesus. He was indeed a Man of sorrows. His grief, His sorrow, His affliction did not begin at the cross, nor did it begin when He was mercilessly flogged by the Roman soldiers, or when He was subjected to a series of illegal and unjust trials. It didn't begin with His betrayal in the garden, or even when He wept at the grave of Lazarus. His grief began when He set aside some of the attributes of godhood so He could share our common lot and walk among us.

And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us ... (John 1:14)

Every day of His earthly life He witnessed with human eyes the damage human rebellion had done to the perfect world He spoke into existence.

Yet on the evening of His betrayal, His grief would be magnified. His sorrow in the Garden of Gethsemane exceeded the greatest degree imaginable. He would cry out to the Father with wails of despair, stressed to the point where He would sweat great drops of blood. All four Gospels describe His travail on that awful Thursday night and Friday morning, and to get a full account requires that we study all four. Yet even when we do, we cannot comprehend the depth of His anguish.

It was horrible for Him, but as bad as it was, His agony in the garden would be exceeded by what He would experience the next day as He hung on the cross, when He would take on Himself the undiluted wrath of Almighty God, bearing millions upon millions of eternities in Hell so we would not have to bear the punishment we richly deserve.

This morning, as we continue our study of Mark's account, if you have eyes to see and ears to hear, you will catch a glimpse of the agony of our redemption.

Then they came to a place which was named Gethsemane; and He said to His disciples, "Sit here while I pray." And He took Peter, James, and John with Him, and He began to be troubled and deeply distressed. (Mark 14:32-33)

Now, just to remind you, Jesus and His disciples had left the upper room. They walked outside the walls of Jerusalem to the Mount of Olives. Jesus told them that they would all stumble and be scattered. Peter, of course, insisted that it wouldn't happen to him.

"Even if all are made to stumble, I won't." (Mark 14:29)

Jesus said, "Dude, you're not even going to make it until dawn."

But he spoke more vehemently, "If I have to die with You, I will not deny You!" And they all said likewise. (Mark 14:31)

Well, they would soon learn a very hard lesson.

On the Mount of olives, they went to a place they knew very well. It was a garden ... an olive grove. I suspect that the Garden of Gethsemane was a place owned by a believer because it was a place they frequented often. And Judas knew they would be there.

As we see in the text, He split His disciples up. He told eight of them to sit and wait near the entrance, but He took Peter, James and John with Him deeper into the garden. These, of course, had been His inner circle, along with Andrew. They were the ones closest to Jesus and they would be leaders of the Apostolic Church. But first, there was a lesson they needed to learn, and they would learn that lesson by their own failure.

The text said He began to be troubled and deeply distressed. Why was He so distressed? It is because He knew what He was about to experience. Understand that He had never experienced sin. He walked in perfect obedience to the Father. He resisted Satan at every turn. He lived the only sinless human life ... ever. And He had never been separated from God the Father. We're talking forever ... through eternity past. He dwelt in perfect communion and unity with the Father and the Spirit. Yet He was about to embrace our sin and take our punishment.

For He 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)

Jesus would become our sin and then subject Himself to the full measure of God's wrath. The magnitude of that wrath is absolutely staggering. The wrath that I have earned warrants an eternity in Hell. Multiply that by every believer who has lived or who will ever live. We cannot begin to imagine.

Then He said to them, "My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even to death. Stay here and watch." (Mark 14:34)

It wasn't just that He wanted them to witness His prayer. Jesus wanted them to pray along with Him. He wanted them to pray that they would not enter into temptation. Remember the model prayer: "Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from the evil one." It is a prayer that we need to be lifting up constantly.

He went a little farther, 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 for You. Take this cup away from Me; nevertheless, not what I will, but what You will." (Mark 14:35-36)

Luke tells us that He withdrew about a stone's throw away – about as far as you can throw a rock. He absolutely poured out His soul to the Father. The word "Abba" denotes a personal, intimate relationship. The Son loves the Father; and the Father loves the Son. It is a love so deep that we cannot fathom it.

Jesus said, "Papa, I don't want to do this. This is too much for me to bear; isn't there another way?"

Understand that Jesus is perfectly holy and so, He has a perfect hatred of sin. You might hate your own sin. You don't like it when you fail. I hate it when I fail. But we can't hate sin like Jesus hates sin. Jesus never fails and so He hates sin perfectly.

And please don't misunderstand; His prayer was not just a two-sentence popcorn prayer. This was an extended, agonizing plea for deliverance that covered hours. He was so stressed that He actually sweat great drops of blood and God the Father had to send an angel to sustain Him and strengthen Him. Why? Because His agony in prayer brought Him to the very edge of death. Yet at the end of His petition, He makes this resolution: "... *not what I will, but what You will*" Perfect submission!

Then He came and found them sleeping, and said to Peter, "Simon, are you sleeping? Could you not watch one hour? Watch and pray, lest you

*enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."
(Mark 14:37-38)*

Okay, at some point, perhaps about an hour in, Jesus interrupts His prayer and He comes back and finds Peter, James and John asleep. I find it interesting that Jesus addresses Peter by his given name, Simon. It seems like He always does that when Peter messes up. I can relate; when I messed up as a kid, I'd hear the name "Kenneth Alan Ainsworth", and I knew I was in for a rebuke.

Nevertheless, it is so profound that even in the middle of Jesus' agony, He is still so vitally concerned about His friends. Hey, you guys have to wake up! Your flesh is weak. The only chance you have is prayer. You need to pray!

These guys would learn that lesson, but only by their failure.

Again He went away and prayed, and spoke the same words. And when He returned, He found them asleep again, for their eyes were heavy; and they did not know what to answer Him. (Mark 14:39-40)

Of course, they didn't know how to answer Him. I get why they were tired. It had been a long day. They'd enjoyed a nice meal and taken a walk ... up hill. By now it is the middle of the night. Maybe they actually deserve a break here.

Maybe, but their failure to pray was going to result in a failure of faith. There's a lesson here for us. Listen, if the Son of God needed to pray, how much more do we need to pray? Without ceasing we need to pray!

Then He came the third time and said to them, "Are you still sleeping and resting? It is enough! The hour has come; behold, the Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise, let us be going. See, My betrayer is at hand." (Mark 14:41-42)

Jesus' time of prayer is now over and He emerged victorious. "It is enough!" is an interesting statement, a single word in the Greek. It means it is sufficient ... I am ready!

And here comes Judas. He brought a crowd! It was a big crowd ... carrying torches, swords, clubs. It had to be a rowdy bunch. Notice that Jesus turns to face them. He doesn't try to run out the back gate. He doesn't try to sneak away. When He says "Rise, let us be going," He means that they are going to rejoin the rest of the disciples and face this mob head-on.

And immediately, while He was still speaking, Judas, one of the twelve, with a great multitude with swords and clubs, came from the chief priests and the scribes and the elders. Now His betrayer had given them a signal, saying, "Whomever I kiss, He is the One; seize Him and lead Him away safely." As soon as he had come, immediately he went up to Him and said to Him, "Rabbi, Rabbi!" and kissed Him. (Mark 14:43-45)

I'm not even going to try to describe the depth of depravity demonstrated in Judas Iscariot. To betray the Son of Man with a kiss? Really? In fact, it wasn't even necessary. Nobody was going to step up and try to take His place. Nobody was going to say "I'm Jesus", so the Lord could slip away.

But there's something else, something amazing that happened at this very moment. The Apostle John tells us about it. Jesus called out to the mob and asked, "Who are you seeking?" And they said, "Jesus of Nazareth." Jesus said, essentially, "You found Him, that's me."

Now when He said to them, "I am He," they drew back and fell to the ground. (John 18:6)

This is an awesome display of divine power. There were a bunch of guys here. There were representatives from the Chief Priests, the Pharisees, and the temple police ... those guys would have had the clubs. But also, Judas had been granted a cohort of Roman troops. They would have been carrying the swords. A cohort could be as many as 600 men. So, you add all those together, there could have been as many 1,000 guys who came up the hill to the garden.

Jesus said, "I am He", and bam! They all fall down.

Jesus said:

"My Father loves Me, because I lay down My life that I may take it again. No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again." (John 10:17-18)

Jesus went to the cross voluntarily. If he didn't want to go, no power on earth could have made him. "I am He" and they all fall down.

Now Peter, perhaps emboldened by seeing the mob on their backs, does what Peter so often does.

Then they laid their hands on Him and took Him. And one of those who stood by drew his sword and struck the servant of the high priest, and cut off his ear. (Mark 14:46-47)

We know it's Peter from Luke's account, and we know the guy's name was Malchus from John. And I'm sure you know that Peter wasn't really going for the ear. He was a fisherman, not a swordsman. He missed! Jesus told Peter to cool it, then He gave Malchus a new ear. That's just the sort of thing Jesus does. He blesses His enemies ... as should we.

Then Jesus answered and said to them, "Have you come out, as against a robber, with swords and clubs to take Me? I was daily with you in the temple teaching, and you did not seize Me. But the Scriptures must be fulfilled." Then they all forsook Him and fled. (Mark 14:48-50)

They all forsook Him and fled. Mark is talking about His disciples, you know, the guys who all said, "If I have to die with You, I will not deny You!"

Now a certain young man followed Him, having a linen cloth thrown around his naked body. And the young men laid hold of him, and he left the linen cloth and fled from them naked. (Mark 14:51-52)

What are these two verses all about? None of the other gospels mention this particular event and it doesn't seem to add much to the narrative. Most scholars speculate that this young man is none other than John Mark, the author of this gospel. If that's the case, Mark was present in the garden. I think it's true.

Now we come to the account of Jesus' first illegal trial. Everything about Jesus' murder was contrary to Jewish Law. His arrest came before even before charges were brought. In fact, they really had to work at coming up with something they could agree on ... after the trial started. That was completely contrary to law. It was illegal to physically abuse a prisoner, but of course, they did Jewish law said it was illegal to try somebody at night, but they wanted to get this out of the way as soon as possible. I could go on and on ...

And they led Jesus away to the high priest; and with him were assembled all the chief priests, the elders, and the scribes. But Peter followed Him at a distance, right into the courtyard of the high priest. And he sat with the servants and warmed himself at the fire. Now the chief priests and all the council sought testimony against Jesus to put Him to death, but found none. For many bore false witness against Him, but their testimonies did not agree. Then some rose up and bore false witness against Him, saying, "We heard Him say, 'I will destroy this temple made with hands, and within three days I will build another made without hands.' " But not even then did their testimony agree. And the high priest stood up in the midst and asked Jesus, saying, "Do You answer nothing? What is it these men testify against You?" But He kept silent and answered nothing. Again the high priest asked Him, saying to Him, "Are You the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?" Jesus said, "I am. And you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven." Then the high priest tore his clothes and said, "What further need do we have of witnesses? You have heard the blasphemy! What do you think?" And they all condemned Him to be deserving of death. Then some began to spit on Him, and to blindfold Him, and to beat Him, and to say to Him, "Prophecy!" And the officers struck Him with the palms of their hands. (Mark 14:53-65)

Since they couldn't agree on something to charge them with, they had Jesus "incriminate" Himself. That was contrary to their own Law as well. He didn't deny the fact that He is the Christ; in fact, He explicitly claimed the title. And, it would have been blasphemous, except that ... He is the Christ!

Next week, we'll pick up the story of Jesus' agony, but this morning, we need to finish with Peter. Remember Peter. He's the guy who said, "Even if all are made to stumble, yet I will not be." And even more vehemently, he cried, "If I have to die with You, I will not deny You!" Well, let's see how that worked out.

Now as Peter was below in the courtyard, one of the servant girls of the high priest came. And when she saw Peter warming himself, she looked at him and said, "You also were with Jesus of Nazareth." But he denied it, saying, "I neither know nor understand what you are saying." And he went out on the porch, and a rooster crowed. And the servant girl saw him again, and began to say to those who stood by, "This is one of them." But he denied it again. And a little later those who stood by said to Peter again, "Surely you are one of them; for you are a Galilean, and your speech shows it." Then he began to curse and swear, "I do not know this Man of whom you speak!" A second time the rooster crowed. Then Peter called to mind the word that Jesus had said to him, "Before the rooster crows twice, you will deny Me three times." And when he thought about it, he wept. (Mark 14:66-72)

Peter thought he would remain loyal to Jesus. He really did, but He didn't even make it until daybreak. Just as Jesus said, Peter denied even knowing his Master not once, but three times. It certainly broke his heart. It taught him a lesson he would never forget. It was a lesson learned by his failure.

It is also a lesson for you and it is a lesson for me. Do not even try to remain loyal to Jesus in your own strength. You will fail every time. No matter how hard you try to live a life in concert with His will, you will continue to stumble.

If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. (1 John 1:8-9)

We need His grace and His mercy. You need to, “*Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.*” (Mark 14:38 Pray, “Jesus, I know I’m a sinner, but I believe you died and rose for me. Please forgive me, save me, and help me live my life in a manner that honors You.”

For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. (Ephesians 2:8-9)

Jesus endured the agony of redemption so that you could be saved. Please, just accept His gift of grace! Every day. No matter how long you have been a Christian, pray, “Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!”