

Gethsemane

Mark 14:32-42 (11/22/15)

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Acts of terror have recently produced deep anguish around the world. What has been the most anguishing experience in your life? Have you had something affect you to the point where you buckled over in convulsions of grief and tears? It could have been a threat, a betrayal of a trusted friend, a loss of a loved one, a wayward child, news of a terminal disease eating up your body or that of a loved one. For Jews in Poland and Eastern Europe it became the gas chambers. For some Christians today at the hands of Jihadists, it's the horror of beheading tomorrow.

When we know people who are facing tragedies of epic proportions, we don't know what to say. We certainly don't laugh and make jokes about it. This morning in our text we will see our Jesus face an epic event. And we are going to just be quiet and ponder with deepest reverence. Without exaggerating, no human being has even endured the gut-wrenching anguish that our Savior is going to face in the Garden of Gethsemane. In fact, no human being can possibly grasp what is really going on in Jesus' soul. We do get enough of a glimpse to know this is way beyond anything we can imagine. Let's watch and learn about the horror of the hour and cup Jesus faces for the redemption of sinners.

In Mark 14:32 Jesus led his disciples over the Kidron Valley to the base of the Mount of Olives to this garden called Gethsemane, which means "oil press." One of Jesus' friends apparently owned this garden and gave Him use of it whenever He desired. He often met with His men here. That's how Judas knew where they'd be. There were olive trees there and oil was pressed from the olives into a vat. On this night there's a spiritual press at work, crushing down on Jesus so heavily that not oil, but blood came out of His sweat pores (Luke 22:44).

The words "hour" and "cup" are figures of speech to describe what Christ is facing. This is what makes these dark hours in this garden so horrific. Jesus is facing the hour and cup of unspeakable agony. Nothing in Christ's entire life has crushed Him down before, but here we will see Him even beg God for the hour to pass and the cup removed (vss. 35-36).

Christ endures overwhelming soul anguish as He faces the cup appointed for Him – vv. 32-34

32 They came to a place named Gethsemane; and He said to His disciples, "Sit here until I have prayed." 33 And He took with Him Peter and James and John, and began to be very distressed and troubled. 34 And He said to them, "My soul is deeply grieved to the point of death; remain here and keep watch."

So as they enter this garden, Jesus stations eight of his disciples probably close to the gate to keep a watch. He desperately needs one-on-one prayer time with the Father. Never has He prayed like He'll pray tonight! Have you ever felt that way? When something is so pressing that you just need time alone with God?

But He takes Peter, James, and John with him further into the shadows of the trees, back from the entrance. Why these three? First, they were His inner circle, the ones closest to Him. But also remember these three had made promises to be faithful to Jesus. James and John had said they could drink the cup He was going to drink. And Peter had assured Jesus he would never deny Him. Maybe since they were the leaders, Jesus wanted them to realize something of the agony that faced Him in providing salvation for mankind.

They don't get very far into the garden until Jesus is hit with the most savage soul-wrenching anguish of His life. He knew it was coming, He had assured His men He would face death, but never did it hit Him like it did now as He faces this hour and cup head on. Though words can't carry the weight of the reality, three phrases give us a small window into Jesus' soul.

First, "very distressed." In His soul He is utterly terrified. His coming sufferings become so real that the horror of what He faces exceed His expectations.

Second, "troubled." The idea in this word is strong discomfort, alone, alienation, desertion. He is reeling under the intense reality to the point He is so terrified He is disoriented. What does this tell us about Christ? He is here beginning to fulfill Isaiah 53:4; He is carrying your griefs and your sorrows. Before His eyes are the dreadful judgments of God meant for you and me!

The third phrase is even more vivid, "My soul is deeply grieved to the point of death!" He was crushed in heart, in feelings, in mind. The word "deeply grieved" means so overwhelmed by grief you feel like you are dying, so crushed down by grief you can't even function! People, this is holy ground. Just reverently watch and ponder what your salvation, what your eternal life required from this Man, this One who came to our planet 2000 years ago, named Jesus, to save His people from their sins. Take your shoes off, this is holy ground.

Jesus faces this hour and this cup like a great warrior flailing and fighting in the fog of war! Surely Satan and his demons are very involved here, determined to keep Jesus from fulfilling the Father's will! When Jesus says he is grieved, "to the point of death," this may have been Satan at work trying to kill Jesus now. Satan did not want Jesus dying on that cross as our sin bearer! If He could kill Him now, he would win! One author wrote, "The massed powers of darkness launched a terrific blitzkrieg during the next hours, in one final attempt to overthrow Him." But the enemy failed, thanks be to God.

So here Jesus is looking at this imminent hour, this awful cup, appointed for Him by His Father. Under this horrendous anguish He tells His three closest human friends to stay there and keep watch, probably so no one would interrupt Him as He prays with greatest fervor and vehemence.

Christ pours out His soul to His Father as He looks into the cup – vv. 35-36

35 And He went a little beyond them, and fell to the ground and began to pray that if it were possible, the hour might pass Him by. 36 And He was saying, "Abba! Father! All things are possible for You; remove this cup from Me; yet not what I will, but what You will."

Jesus then goes deeper into this dark garden, Luke says a stone's throw, so maybe 40 feet in. The darkness probably made him invisible even to the three, but through the stillness of the night they would be able to hear Jesus as He cries out to the Father. What a sound that would have been to hear Jesus crying out with "strong, loud crying and tears" (Hebrews 5:7). He literally is crushed to the ground, to His knees first, then onto His face before His Father!

When your heart is nearly wrenched out of your chest, this is the time to go to God and just unload your heart. You aren't doing this publicly before others. There is no ostentation here. Just you crying out to God, pouring out your wishes, your groans and anxieties and fears and hopes and joys into the bosom of God in a manner you simply would not do with others. (John Calvin).

What does Jesus pray? I paraphrase: "Oh Father, this is so overwhelming! I don't think I can do this; I just can't! Is it possible for Me not to go through with it? I am crushed! My grief seems unbearable! Can this ordeal You ordained for Me possibly pass Me by? Is there no other way?"

This is God's hour, God's cup for His Son. God ordained this in eternity past before the Garden of Eden for the salvation of sinners. God determined this coming hour, sandwiched between the Old and New Testaments. All the Old Testament headed to it and all the New Testament and the future will flow from it. This is where God will reconcile sinners to Himself! This is where propitiation will take place! This is where the serpent will bruise Jesus' heel, only to have his head crushed through the resurrection! THERE IS NO GREATER HOUR IN HUMAN HISTORY, AND NO CUP MORE HORRIBLE FOR ANY HUMAN BEING TO DRINK!

Look at verse 36. Jesus cries out like a child, "O Papa, Father, you can do anything! You are sovereign and powerful! You can remove this cup from Me."

Now, what is in this cup? What does Jesus shrink back from as He looks into this cup? It's not the coming kiss of betrayal, the arrest, the false accusations, the mocking and scourging, or even the crucifixion with all its physical agonies. That's not what He is shrinking back from!

What is this cup? Look at Jeremiah 25:15, "For thus the LORD, the God of Israel, says to me, 'Take this cup of the wine of wrath from My hand and cause all the nations to whom I send you to drink it.'" And then Revelation 14:9-10, "Then another angel, a third one, followed them, saying with a loud voice, 'If anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives a mark on his forehead or on his hand, he also will drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is mixed in full strength in the cup of His anger; and he will be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb.'"

When Jesus looks into this cup, He sees the horrors no one else will ever see. He is seeing God's just and holy wrath deserved by millions of sinners, all pinpointed to fall on and curse His spotless, pure, and holy soul. He is being called to swallow millions of eternities of divine wrath for sinners, wrath you and I deserved! And it isn't for people who loved Him. Jonathan Edwards describes it like this, "Why should I yield myself to be thus crushed by the weight of divine wrath, for them who have no love to me, and are my enemies?"

So the cup is full of the wrath of God against sinners. And Jesus says, "Daddy Father, can't you take it from me? Can't you take it out of my hand?" Prayer isn't always getting God to do what we want! Prayer isn't bending God's arm to get Him to do our will. No, prayer is God bending our hearts to submit to His will. That's exactly what happens here. Instead of running away, instead of rebelling like Adam did who essentially said "Not Thy will but mine be done," Jesus submits to His Father. Here Jesus, in the face of something we can't fathom, something that has crushed Him to the ground, draws His heart into God's will. He submits to the Father's will. He says so powerfully, "Yet not what I want, but what You want!" His love for sinners and submission to His Father held out. Satan ground his teeth and heaven cheered.

Isn't that amazing? How many people in far less anguish or pain instead run from God or attack God or even come to hate God for what He allowed to happen to them. Their situation may be a rebellious child, false accusations, loss of a job, something very difficult. As you face pain and hardship and something crosses your grain and feels like splinters in your fingernails, look to Jesus. He shows us how to submit to the Father's will and the importance of doing so. This is a large part of progressive sanctification. Allow hardships and trials to drive you closer to God and draw you into submission to the Father rather than away from Him.

Christ urges His men to prepare themselves for their own cup of temptation – vv. 37-40

37 And He came and found them sleeping, and said to Peter, "Simon, are you asleep? Could you not keep watch for one hour? 38 "Keep watching and praying that you may not come into temptation; the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak." 39 Again He went away and prayed, saying the same words. 40 And again He came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were very heavy; and they did not know what to answer Him.

Jesus is going to come back to these three sleepers three times and then return to prayer. But right now He comes back and instead of doing what He asked them to do, simply to keep watch, what do they do? What I would probably have done – fall asleep! Here comes Jesus out of this spiritual vortex of soul anguish, and He finds them sleeping!

Notice He targets Peter in verse 37, "Sleeping, are you? You are the one who boasted you'd never deny Me and now you couldn't even stay awake for one hour?" Watching and praying isn't easy when it's the middle of the night, but if Jesus asks you to do so, you should!

Jesus isn't asking them to pray for Him. I don't think Jesus ever asked them to pray for Him. No, He is going to correct them and teach them right here. Their own temptation is coming. They will face their own hour and cup. How will they survive? Two things are necessary when facing temptations.

1. Keep watching! Stay on the alert! How often God tells us this. *Gregoreo* – Be Gregorys! You have three enemies tearing after your soul – your own flesh, this God-hating world, and a vicious devil who wants to destroy your life. He wants to get you to choose your own way rather than God’s, and that always leads to destruction!
2. Keep praying! In fact, one way to stay on the alert in your life is to be sure you have a habit of praying. Stay close to God. Abide in Him. “Temptations lose their power, when Thou art near!”

And along with this, be aware of how much you need God’s Spirit in your life. You may have great resolves, but in your flesh there is only weakness. “Without Me you can do nothing,” Jesus told them back in the upper room. You need the Spirit of God to strengthen your heart for every temptation.

So, keep on watching and keep on praying! The second time Jesus comes back to the three disciples, their eyes were heavy. Those eye lids feel like they’ve got bricks weighing them down. Oh, how we need Jesus to pray for us! And He does! He told Peter in Luke 22:31-32, “Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has demanded permission to sift you like wheat; but I have prayed for you, that your faith may not fail; and you, when once you have turned again, strengthen your brothers.”

Christ resolves to embrace the coming hour and cup – vv. 41-42

41 And 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. 42 “Get up, let us be going; behold, the one who betrays Me is at hand!”

What we have here is resolution. He has faced His hour and cup and submitted to the Father. When you face something you shrink back from, you pray about it, you ponder it, and at some point, rather than turning from it, you determine to obey God and go forth to do what God has called you to do. That’s exactly what Christ does here. It’s time. The enemy is at the gate. And Jesus goes forth with the dignity of a King who goes to His death with honor. He is in charge. He’ll prove it in a moment when one little word sends all the arresting soldiers to the ground.

Joni Eareckson Tada describes these moments in her book, *When God Weeps*,

Eleven men who would later change world history – some, accustomed to working all night on their fishing boats – could not keep awake for the scene. Yet sixty feet away their eternal destinies were being fought over. Except for the heaving of those shoulders that bore the weight of the world, nothing could be seen in that shadowy spot where the Son of God groaned. But the bleachers of heaven filled to capacity that night—and hell strained its neck to see how the spectacle in that lonely acre would end. The Father gazed down and gave his sober nod. The Son stared back, and bowed his acceptance. A line of men and torches snaked down from the city, through the blackness, toward the garden. God in the flesh saw them coming through tear-blurred eyes that refused to blink. “It’s time to get up,” he quietly told the eleven.

The torches arrived. The sheep fled. The shepherd stood. The hurricane struck.

SO WHAT? What is God teaching us through Gethsemane?

1. How much Christ loves sinners! O, how He loves you and me! He didn’t turn back.
2. The horror of sin and cost of salvation. He drank the cup we deserved to drink.
3. No matter the anguish and horror we face, the only way to please God is to pray, “Not my will, but Thine be done.”