

The Final Hours: Betrayal
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Wasilla Bible Church
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As you're turning to Mark 14: 27-52, just want to give a brief picture of where we're at in the gospel of Mark. As Larry mentioned just a few moments ago, before the offering, we are looking at the final hours of Jesus' life. This is, in many ways...it's the last twenty-four hours of His life. And last week we covered the preparation, where Jesus was preparing Himself and His disciples for the death that was about to come as He was anointed for burial, and as He was having this last supper with His disciples. This week we're gonna be looking at the betrayal, where Jesus was betrayed, He was rejected, people turned...even His closest friends turned their backs on Him. And then, in the next two weeks, we're going to cover the trial of Jesus and finally His death, His crucifixion. But for this week we're going to be looking at Mark 14: 27-52, and this is where Jesus is betrayed.

And just in case you weren't here last week, to get you up to speed on what happened during the preparation...that time concluded when Jesus left the room, the upper room, this house where they were staying with His disciples. They went out to go to the Mount of Olives, and Jesus had finished His time of teaching with them and He wanted to go out and pray in the garden. And that's where we pick up; He's taking His disciples with Him. And in verse 27 it says

Then Jesus said to them, the disciples, "All of you will run away, because it is written,

'I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered.'

"But after I have been resurrected, I will go ahead of you to Galilee."

And Peter told Him, "Even if everyone else runs away, I will certainly not."

"I assure you," Jesus said to him, "today, this very night, before the rooster crows twice you will deny me three times."

But he kept insisting, "If I have to die with You, I will never deny You." And they all said the same thing.

Then they came to the place named Gethsemane; and He told His disciples, "Sit here while I pray." He took Peter, James, and John with Him, and He began to be deeply distressed and horrified. Then He said to them, "My soul is swallowed up in sorrow to the point of death; remain here and stay awake."

Then He went a little further, and fell to the ground and began to pray 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."

Then He came and He found them sleeping. "Simon, are you sleeping?" He asked Peter. "Couldn't you stay awake one hour? Stay awake and pray so that you won't enter into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak."

And once again He went away and prayed, saying the same thing. And He came again and found them sleeping, because they could not keep their eyes open. They did not know what to say to Him. Then He came a third time and said to them, "Are you still sleeping and resting? Enough; the time has come; look, the Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of sinners. Get up; let's go. See, my betrayer is near!"

While He was still speaking Judas, one of the twelve, suddenly arrived. With him was a mob, with swords and clubs, from the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders. His betrayer had given them a signal. "The one I kiss, He is the one. Arrest Him and take Him away under guard." So when he came, he went right up to Him and said, "Rabbi!" and kissed Him.

Then they took hold of Him and arrested Him. And one of those who stood by drew his sword, struck the high priest's slave, and cut off his ear.

But Jesus said to them, "Have you come out with swords and clubs, as though I were a criminal, to capture Me? Every day I was among you, teaching in the temple complex, and you didn't arrest Me. But the scriptures must be fulfilled."

Then they all deserted Him and ran away.

Now a certain young man, having a linen cloth wrapped around his naked body, was following Him. They caught hold of him, but he left the linen cloth behind and ran away naked.

Let's pray.

Lord God,

As we look at Your word here, I ask that You would truly just give us eyes to see and ears to hear, Lord; minds to understand and hearts to hold onto the truth that is here. Lord, I pray that this would be a time where we are drawn close to You, and we are transformed by Your grace.

And we pray this in Your name.

As we look at this passage there are a variety of different takes and impressions of this passage. Not all of them are correct. I think of...when I was at UNC (North Carolina) I had a professor. His name was Bart Ehrman. He took particular pleasure in questioning things of scripture, questioning what we believe of Jesus or that sort of thing. And he's written a lot of books, things like "Misquoting Jesus", or if you've heard of "The Gospel of Judas"; or he writes stuff on evil, and God, and all kinds of things; and basically he questions a whole bunch. Which it's fine to question, but I very strongly disagree with the conclusions that he comes to when he questions. And what he looks at here is he looks at this passage and he says, "See, this is an example of where Jesus lost His faith."

Where Jesus lost His faith...how does he come up with that? Well, the passage...it starts out seeming very...everything is going well for Jesus. He's with His closest friends, He's at the time of the Passover, there's this big festival going on. It seems as though everything is going His way up to this point. He's a popular preacher. He's going along...but by the end of this passage what we see is that His disciples, His closest friends, are running in fear. And Jesus is standing alone with His enemies as His disciples, His closest friends, are running in fear in the middle of the night; so much so that when one of the guards grabs one of His disciples, this guy just runs straight out of his clothes. He tears out and he runs away, butt-naked, in the middle of the night like a scared rabbit. I mean, that's scared—you are runnin' naked as the day you were born, and you were just tryin' to get out of there. And Jesus is left, totally abandoned and alone.

And Bart Ehrman would look at this and he looks at this passage and he says, 'You see Jesus beginning to lose His faith here.' Because what he talks about, and this is something that probably many of us can identify with in one way or another, is this—where Jesus, in verse 33 and 34, He starts sharing with His disciples that He is horrified, He is grieved; He feels as though He is swallowed up by sorrow. This isn't the same Jesus that we've seen, it would seem, as Bart Ehrman would argue, through the remainder of Mark. What happened to the guy who was sleepin' on the pillow on the boat in the storm-tossed sea as the fishermen, as the disciples—trained fishermen—thought they were goin' down with the ship, and He was calm? What happened to the Jesus who faced thousands, or I don't know how many ever, legion of demons, and they bowed down and fell at His feet and begged for mercy? Where's the Jesus who came into the temple just a few days prior to this and looked around and didn't like what He sees, and so He pulls off His belt and starts cleanin' house? Where's that Jesus? I mean, is Jesus just losing His faith? Why? What's goin' on here? Jesus is tellin' His disciples, 'You know what? I am so heavy-hearted, I am so weighed down, the weight on my heart is so much that I feel like I am just trying to tread water, and something just keeps pulling me down, and down, and down, and it's all I can do to keep my head above water.'

I'm guessing that probably a fair amount of people in this room can identify with that, because they are either in a moment or a time of their life that they are in a similar situation where that could describe how they feel, or they have been there before. I guarantee you will be there at one point or another in your life. And Jesus has been there. He's saying, 'That's where I am right now. I feel as though I am so weighed down that I can barely breath, and I feel like I'm about to die.' And He asks His disciples to stay and to pray. And they fall asleep on Him.

But as we look at it, the question that kind of would come to mind is this: If Jesus can stare down an army of demons, if He can be in the middle of a storm-tossed sea and not be worried at all, if He can sit here and walk into a courtyard that is acres huge, and pull off His belt, grab a strap of leather or whatever else, and start flippin' tables and nobody is gonna stand up to Him, what in the world has this man, our God, so sorrowful and so burdened?

And what we look at is here, shortly thereafter, where He prays. Jesus says, "Take this cup from Me." He's praying to God the Father, and He's saying, 'God, listen, if there is any other way for what is about to happen, if there is any other way, don't make Me go through this. Take this cup from Me.' And the thing is, you think about...through the majority of my life I've sat here and I've looked at it, and I've said, well ok. Take this cup from Me. What's He talking about?

It's the crucifixion. That's true, but that's not all of the truth. It goes so far beyond the crucifixion. Jesus has stared death in the face, so to speak, plenty of times before, whether it's in the storm, whether it's facing demons, whether it's a courtyard of people. He's had people try to stone Him before; He's had people upset with Him. It's not the crucifixion itself. The crucifixion is a part of it. But to understand the full depth of it, we have to understand what this cup is that He's talking about. And see, as we talked about last week, there... Jesus, the disciples, the people of His time, they were so immersed in scripture—they thought throughout time, in many ways, in scripture—it would come out in their prayers, in their thoughts, in their speech and what they did; it was so ingrained up here that it would come out. We talked about that with the covenant, and how Jesus mentioned the covenant.

What's here is the cup. This is something where, throughout the Old Testament, particularly in the prophets, the cup is a symbol of God's judgment and His wrath, His righteous indignation at injustice. And Isaiah is one of these prophets where he's talking about this regularly, and he's giving this picture of what God's judgment looks like. And that's what this cup is. It's the cup of God's judgment. And what ends up happening is Jesus is about to experience the judgment of God. He is about to experience, in the next few hours, this sum total of what it would take you and I an eternity to experience of God's judgment, where God is about to pour out... It's as though the picture...it's almost like God just has this nasty pile of whatever you think of as punishment, the worst punishment, judgment, everything else, justice, in this bowl, in this cup, and He's pouring it out, and somebody is sitting here and they have to drink it all, until it's all gone. And the image that Isaiah uses in one part, there's...in Isaiah 52 and 53, what it talks about is the fact that the Father, that Jesus is about to undergo an intense trial, not just physically but spiritually, emotionally, mentally; every aspect of His being, He is about to undergo God's judgment. That's the one thing that's more frightening than demons, nature, than all the people that could get upset with him, the fact that of God's judgment.

And what Isaiah 53 tells us is that Jesus...what Isaiah is talking about here in Isaiah 52 and 53 is there's this servant, this Messiah. He's gonna come and He is going to make it possible... Because see, here's the thing—what happens is with God's judgment is this. To understand it we need to understand the depth of sin. And we talked a bit about it last week, where if we...if we sin, it is an infinite offense. It's an infinite offense, and it deserves this punishment. And what ends up happening is...Isaiah 52 and 53 it talks about Jesus, this servant, this Messiah...He will take that offense, and He will pay that punishment. And He'll take it on Himself, and He will die in others' places so that they can be forgiven of their sins. And so what it talks about is as He is being punished, in Isaiah 52-53, as He is receiving this punishment that He did not deserve, He is going to be crushed. And not only is He going to be crushed, but that the Father God is going to take pleasure in crushing Him. And the image that Isaiah draws, and he does this throughout, and kind of is most vivid in Isaiah 63, is almost...you guys have seen pictures or footage or something...you know the people who've been pickin' the grapes; they've got it all in the vineyard. I picture this in France or Italy or somethin' like that. They put 'em, all these grapes, in the great, big, vat, and they roll up their pant legs and everything else, and they just start playin' the music, and they are goin' to town—just stompin' and stompin' and stompin', until every little ounce of juice is pressed out of those grapes, until there is nothing left but just pulp; and the grapes have been pulverized, and they're just covered in the grape juice. That's the image that Isaiah paints of what the Father does to His Son, the servant. It's as though He puts Him in this wine press and He starts stomping until there is nothing left.

What in the world deserves that sort of punishment? As I was thinking about it this morning God really...God really impressed upon me the depth of sin. See, because I'm a finite being. I have limits. My mind can only comprehend and understand so much. God is not that way. He has no limits. And so here's the thing—not only, we talked about last week, if God has always existed, always will exist, and He knows everything that ever has happened, ever will happen, then the moment that He first saw you sin was before time began. And for all eternity your sin is there, in front of Him, demanding that a price and a punishment, a fitting punishment, be paid. And we talk about God's love and His mercy, and God is love. He is merciful. But He is also just.

And here's the thing—if He is an infinite being, He has no limits. And here's...I can't explain this with words sufficient to express this, but just bear with me for a second and think about this. If God is the source of all goodness, and He is the source of all beauty, He's the source of anything that we have in our lives that is worth having, He is the source, He is the creator of everything. His all-powerful; He deserves all respect, all admiration, all honor that has ever happened, ever will happen, ever will be—because He is infinite, and He is so far beyond what we are, or anything else that exists. And if He is that great, then He deserves an infinite amount of honor and respect and worship.

It's kind of like...was talkin' with some people yesterday, and it's kind of like if we have a race here...ok, there's a little elementary school track meet out behind Tanaina, I don't know. And they have this little track meet, and in the track meet, you know, everything is done. And after this race somebody hands the first-place ribbon to the wrong person. You know, there may be some parents who say, 'Hey! What's up with that?' you know, but it's kind of...it's not...people understand. Ok, a mistake was made, and it's not a big deal. If you did the same thing in the Olympics, where you gave the gold medal to the wrong country, to the wrong person, to the wrong athlete, and said they are the winner, they are the one who deserves it, there would be international scandal. We'd see it all over the news, there's all kinds of... Why? Because of the degree to which honor is due. The more that honor is due, the more outrage and scandal there is when it's not properly given.

So the question is not only has God always seen our sin and will He always see it, but the question is—how infinite is the honor He is owed, and how infinite an insult is it when we don't give Him the honor He deserves? And that's really where the problem comes in. See, because the thing is I am a small creature with limits. And so I could sit here and God could punish me for all of eternity and it would take me all of eternity to begin to pay that price, to begin to pay back, to pay the punishment for the offense that I have given to God.

But that's where the beauty of the gospel comes in. You see, what ends up happening is this. Jesus...Isaiah not only talks about this...you would think 'Why in the world would Jesus go through this? Why...what would make Jesus agree to go through this?' And it's this right here. Isaiah tells us that in the midst of His anguish, here in the garden, while He is on the cross, while He is being beaten and flogged and everything else, He sees your sin, and He sees my sin, and He says, 'You know what? Ashley is worth it to Me. You are worth it to Me.' And He knows that by His sacrifice He has made it possible for me to not go through that for all of eternity. And He says, 'I am satisfied with this knowledge.'

And so that's where we see Jesus at the conclusion of His prayer. He says, 'Father, if there is any other way, please let it be any other way. Don't make Me go through this if I don't have to go through it. But God, I trust You.' And He says, 'I will follow Your will even though it terrifies Me.' And when He's arrested He looks and He says, 'Scripture must be fulfilled. I know this is the way that it has to happen.'

Jesus didn't lose faith. Jesus had faith—more than I could have—in the depth and the deepest, darkest moment of His life, where He had infinite trust in the Father. And here's the beautiful thing, because Jesus is both man and God in the same person in a way that I cannot fully comprehend, because He is both. He is the only one who could pay my punishment, because you can't trade an apple for an orange. It's apples to apples. A man has to die for a man. A human has to die for a human. A human must pay the price of a human offense. It does no good for me to punish somebody if...it would do no good to practice capital punishment on somebody's parakeet simply because they committed murder. There's a one-for-one exchange. Jesus was man, and so He could step into my place. He could assume my place. But here's the thing—because He was also God, He is the only one who could take up the sum total of what it would take me an eternity to pay off, a debt that I would never be able to pay. And because He is an infinite being that has always existed and will always exist He could take it on, and He could finish it in a matter of moments and hours what would take me an eternity to pay. And He says, 'You know what? You're worth it.' In a matter of moments here, He is experiencing on the cross...He is experiencing what would take me an eternity to comprehend. And Jesus said, 'You're worth it.' See, that's the beauty of the gospel.

There's two points, there's kind of two sides of application here. One is this. If you are a follower of Christ, if you've come to the point where you say, 'You know what? I understand that my sin is an infinite offense and it will never stop being so,' then guess what? What Jesus says is, 'I will pay your price. I will step into your place and I will pay the debt that you owe.' And what happens is, as we mentioned last week, what happens is the fact that we are covered in Jesus' blood. And so instead of God seeing for all of eternity my sin, instead what He is seeing for all of eternity is the blood of His Son. And He says, 'My Son died for this one. This one is Mine.' And I can rest in the assurance that no matter how evil, how...what I have done, God is willing to forgive me because my price, an infinite price, has been paid by an infinite being who is willing to step into my place—God Himself. And that's something that is awesome.

And here's the thing...if you are a follower of Christ, if you have come to that point, then here is the beauty of it. For the rest of your life you can rest assured, you can be totally assured that you know what? Jesus has paid the price. You don't have to worry about whether or not it's been paid. And not only that...He looks at it and even in the depth of His sorrow and despair, even in His darkest moment on the cross, He looked at it and He knew, He saw that you were worth the cost. He loves you that much. And no matter what you encounter in life, the thing is this: He's the same one who has said that "I will never leave you or forsake you." 'I'm not ever going to abandon you; even if you don't quite see that I'm there, I will always be there. I'm never gonna leave you.' That's the beauty of the gospel. That's the hope of the gospel, is the fact that we've been washed. We're no longer standing guilty before a judge. Our debt has been paid.

And so the application for us, for those of us who have chosen to follow Jesus is just—bask in the beauty and the glory of that, that God of the universe loves you that much. And don't forget it. Don't forget it.

And then there's another point of application. Perhaps you're not at this point, where you've come to this point that you say 'I understand that my sin is this serious,' or 'I'm not totally sure about this whole Jesus thing.' Here's...I mentioned last week...there's this book I read recently, "The Trial" is what it's...it's the title of it. It's by Kafka, and it's about this guy who wakes up, finds out he's been arrested, and he goes throughout the whole book trying to clear his name of charges that he's not even sure of. He doesn't even know what the charges are, who's charging him, or what. And he can't really seem to clear his name, but he has this sense that not only is he on trial, but he's convicted.

And the thing is, that's how we go through life apart from God. Because what ends up happening is we're searching for something to justify our existence; we're searching for something that, somehow, it will make me feel accepted...whether it's working on my own respect, I'm working on my own self-esteem, maybe it's how I work, I earn the respect of my peers for my work, maybe it's my family...maybe if I just pour my life into 'em, maybe if I just earn enough money, if I become famous, something...something has to fill this emptiness and finally I will feel like I am enough and I don't have to justify myself any more. I don't have to defend myself.

What ends up happening is this—you're never going to be able to pay it. It's an infinite debt, and you are not an infinite being. You will go on for all of eternity feeling the weight of that debt. The only one who can pay it is Jesus. And that's the offer that He gives you. He says, 'You bring your sin to the table, one-for-one trade; I'll give you My life and you give Me yours.' That's the only qualification that He has, that you say, 'Yeah, I understand I'm not gonna be able to do it. And I trust You to pay the price for me on my behalf. And I trust that that will be enough, and I'm Yours.'

In just a moment we're gonna pray. As Larry mentioned, there's a little 'prayer zone', kinda what we call it up here. Feel free to come up if there's anything you want to pray about, anything that's on your heart...please feel free to come up. We'll have some people up here. We'd love to pray with you. But please stand with me.

Lord God,

I thank You so very much for the sacrifice that You've made possible. Lord, I just ask that You would help this to become a transforming, a life-transforming reality in our lives; that it would be something that those of us who've chosen to follow You, that Lord, that we would live in light of that every day; that it would be something that defines us, that we don't take for granted. And Lord, for those of us who are not there yet, God I ask that You would bring them to the point where they embrace You, and they embrace the gift that You offer, the grace that You offer.

We pray this in Your name, amen.

Go in grace.