

Jesus Relinquished What He Rightly Cherished

Mark 14:32-42

22 November 2020, 10:30 AM

Introduction:

Today we are continuing our sermon series in the gospel of Mark.

- From chapter 8, we have seen Jesus preparing Himself and His disciples for the cross.
 - His preparations intensified in chapter 11 when He arrived at Jerusalem. We saw Him presenting Himself more openly as the Messiah, riding in on the donkey, driving out the merchants from the temple, confronting His enemies about their rejection of Him, and prophesying of the destruction of Jerusalem.
 - In chapter 14, where we are now, His preparations intensified even more as He received the anointing with the precious oil as a preparation for His burial, announced to His disciples that one of them would betray Him, instituted the Lord's Supper where He showed that He was to be the sacrifice of the New Covenant, and told His disciples that all of them would desert Him,
 - But His preparations reach a climax in the passage we come to today (Mark 14:32-42) where Jesus, with intense struggle, resigns Himself to be the one who will bear the sin of His people.
 - It is in this passage that all His preparations are completed.
 - Henceforth, He carries out what He has submitted to here.

Please give careful attention as I read this passage to you now. Mark 14:32-42.

Mark 14:32-42: Then they came to a place which was named Gethsemane; and He said to His disciples, "Sit here while I pray." 33 And He took Peter, James, and John with Him, and He began to be troubled and deeply distressed. 34 Then He said to them, "My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, *even* to death. Stay here and watch." 35 He went a little farther, 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 for You. Take this cup away from Me; nevertheless, not what I will, but what You *will*." 37 Then He came and found them

sleeping, and said to Peter, "Simon, are you sleeping? Could you not watch one hour? 38 Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed *is* willing, but the flesh *is* weak." 39 Again He went away and prayed, and spoke the same words. 40 And when He returned, He found them asleep again, for their eyes were heavy; and they did not know what to answer Him. 41 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. 42 Rise, let us be going. See, My betrayer is at hand."

May the Lord bless His word to our hearing and edification as we now turn to consider it further.

- This is truly one of the most gripping passages in the whole Bible.
- It is here, more than anywhere else, that we see our Lord's struggle with the cross as He cries out ardently to His Father and yields to the Father's call to bear His people's sins.

We will begin by looking at His distress, then at the reason for His distress, then at what He did to obtain relief, and last of all at what His disciples then and now are called to do in relation to all of this.

I. See then, first of all, how distressed He is.

- He has just made His way from the Passover table to the Mount of Olives with all of disciples except Judas, who is busy rounding up His enemies to arrest Him.
 - We are told that He comes to a place that appears to be familiar to Him called Gethsemane which means olive press.
 - There were many olive presses on the Mount of Olives along with many Olive trees.
 - Jesus tells His disciples to sit here while He prays—
 - There was nothing unusual about this as He often went aside to pray.
 - But what was unusual was His distress.
 - Mark reveals to us how deeply distressed Jesus was.
- A. Mark tells, first with a description and then with the Lord's own words how distressed He was.
 1. In verse 33, Mark says that "He began to be troubled and deeply distressed."
 - This is very strong language—
 - a. The word translated *troubled* speaks of surprise or shock because of something remarkable or unexpected.
 - As Jesus was drawing near to His Father, He was struck with the reality of the horrendous task that was before Him that night.
 - He was alarmed—it was perhaps as if all that was before Him came crashing down upon Him as the hour drew near.
 - b. The word translated *deeply distressed* is a very strong term that denotes extreme anguish.
 - 2. Then we have the words of Jesus Himself—He tells His most intimate disciples, Peter, James, and John, whom He called apart from the others: "My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even to death."
 - a. This is a very emotional expression that speaks of being surrounded and shut in by distress on every side.
 - It indicates that a person is stretched to the limits by sorrow—wholly engulfed by it—grieved all around.
 - The language is reflective of the refrain in Psalm 42-43 which speaks of a soul that is cast down and disquieted within.
 - b. The sorrow was so intense that it brought Him to the brink of death.
 - It threatened to snuff out His life—to exceed all power of human ability to endure... not that He would take His life, but His sorrow itself would do Him in.
 - There was never any sorrow like His sorrow.
 - Whatever sorrows we may have experienced are nothing compared to His sorrow on this night.
 - And I might add that His sorrow does not make Him downplay ours, but being compassionate, makes Him truly understand ours.

- Hebrews 5:15-16 explains: **For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all *points* tempted as *we are*, yet without sin.** ¹⁶ **Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.**

B. We also see His distress by His actions.

- This is found in verse 35 where it says: **He went a little farther, and fell on the ground, and prayed.**
- 1. He separates Himself from the three disciples to be alone with His Father and He falls on His face.
 - This is not a normal posture for prayer with the Jews.
 - This is what they did when they encountered the terrifying presence of God in a theophany.
 - It is a posture of desperation and terror before the Most High.
 - We have not seen Him like this before and it is almost certain that His disciples had not either.
- 2. He cries out that God His Father would remove the cup of affliction from Him.
 - Verse 35 continues that He prayed: **that if it were possible, the hour might pass from Him.** ³⁶ **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*.”**
 - He speaks of the hour that God has appointed for Him to suffer and give His life a ransom for many.
 - In John’s gospel, He often said that His hour had not yet come until this night.
 - He also speaks of what He is facing as a cup.
 - The cup is the cup of God’s judgment that He has appointed for someone to receive.
 - For example, in Isaiah 51:17, it says: **Awake, awake! Stand up, O Jerusalem, you who have drunk at the hand of the LORD the cup of His fury; you have drunk the dregs of the cup of trembling, and drained it out.**
 - Whoever drinks the cup bears the wrath and judgment of God.
 - This is a desperate plea from our Lord Jesus that He might be spared from the wrath of His Father.
 - The language suggests that He continued to pray for this, and we are told that He returned to His prayers two more times.
 - These is no sorrow like His sorrow.

TRANS> So we see our Lord here in a state that we have not previously seen Him in—a state of deep distress.

- He is not one to fall into such a condition without good reason.
- He is the mighty Lion of the tribe of Judah, and yet, here He is in great anguish.

And now I want to look at the reason for His great distress.

II. The reason for His distress is that He must relinquish what He rightly loves in order to do the will of God.

A. He must relinquish His heavenly Father's favour.

1. This is what He has always cherished more than anything else.
 - From all eternity, He, as the Son of God, had lived in the delight of His Father's great love and had always pleased Him.
 - When He became human flesh and dwelt among us, He was the same person with the same holy character now in human flesh—and as a human, He loved His Father with a perfect and complete human love.
 - Of course He continued in His divine nature, upholding the world, and loving His Father with the fullness of divine love...
 - But now He also existed in human form and in that form He loved with a perfect human love.
 - The Father testifies at His baptism and again at the transfiguration that His Son (as man) pleases Him... something that no other human had ever done because of our sin.
 - Pleasing the Father was the thing that ought to delight every human being and truly it was the delight of Jesus the Son.
2. But now it has been appointed by the Father for Him to bear His people's sin.
 - The hour has come when He must drink the cup of God's indignation against His people's sin.
 - He must be the victim who suffers for the sins that others have committed.
 - All the sacrifices of the Old Testament pointed to Him when their blood was shed to atone for the sins of God's people.
 - These animals at the temple were but provisional and representative of the true sacrifice that is required for sin to be pardoned by God.
 - God cannot pardon sin without such severe measures because to do so would promote the lie that sin is not as reprehensible as it truly is.
 - It would promote the lie that God is not worthy of all our love and honour and service and pure devotion in worship.
 - There could be no heaven if such a lie were allowed to stand—our worship of God and service to God and honour of God would always and forever be crippled.
 - So in order that He might justly pardon our sins, the Father appointed his Son to come in human flesh to bear our sins.
 - This alone would settle our debt forever.
 - The Son agreed and came in human flesh and in Mark 14 we have Him in human flesh as the hour approaches for the ordeal to begin...
 - The ordeal of becoming the sacrificial victim, the sin bearer, the one who goes before His Father bearing the guilt and shame of all His people was now upon Him and it was overwhelming.

3. It is clear that His arrest and betrayal was not just a bad turn of events that had fallen out in His disfavour.
 - As He Himself says, it is the cup of His Father's wrath and indignation that is being put to His lips and that He must drink.
 - It is this call to come under the displeasure of His Father that has brought Him to such distress here—a deeper sorrow and a deeper torment than anyone has ever experienced and ever could experience.
 - It is this that has made the Lion of the tribe of Judah fall on His face and cry out that if possible, this cup might be removed from Him.
 - Nothing could be more repugnant to Him than what He must shortly do.
- B. It is important to realise that it is right for Him to cherish God's favour and to despise the breach of it.
1. Every human being ought to cherish the favour and smile of God as the greatest of all treasures and to despise anything that would bring on His disapproval.
 - Of course (sinful wretches that we are), having God's favour is not nearly as important to us as it ought to be—even after we have been transformed by the washing and renewing of the Holy Spirit.
 - Unlike Jesus, we daily act in ways that are indifferent to our Father's pleasure and think very little of it.
 - Indeed, we even continue to commit sin—so universally that John says that if anyone denies it, he is a liar and the truth is not in him.
 - But Jesus is not like us—He always did what was pleasing to the Father because to Him, in our human flesh, pleasing the Father took the place of highest importance to Him that it ought to have to all of us.
 2. If Jesus were not deeply distressed at the prospect of losing the favour of His heavenly Father, He could not be our Saviour!
 - That's right.
 - If He had looked at the call to become an object of His Father's wrath and indignation with detached indifference, He would have been a wicked man like we are.
 - And if He had been a wicked man like we are, He could not have represented us in a way that would gain His Father's favour in our behalf.
 - He could not have been the unblemished man that God required to atone for our sins.
 - He would have been another defiled and sinful human who was unworthy of God's favour and acceptance and who deserved to go to hell like the rest of us.
 - God is worthy of all honour and service from us—all love and worship.
 - Whatever is less than that is a crime of infinite proportions because it is a crime against the One who is worthy of all glory.
 - Sin has blinded us to this reality, but it does not change the truth.
 - God has spoken and His word is true.

TRANS> So we have this state of affairs (this situation) in which Jesus is rightly loathing what God has called Him to do and where it would be wrong if He did not loathe it.

C. Such a state of affairs could only come about in a fallen world—a world entirely lost in sin and rebellion.

1. A world lost in sin and rebellion is a world that is in desperate need of redemption... of forgiveness, cleansing, deliverance, transformation...
 - But redemption is costly.
 - It can only be obtained at a very high price—no other price than for the Son of God’s love to become the sin bearer and be brought under God’s indignation and wrath.
2. In such a world, there is the requirement to relinquish what you love and what you ought to love in order to do the will of God.
 - Jesus must pay the price.
 - He must relinquish His Father’s favour in order to do the will of His Father and bear the sins of those He was sent to redeem.
 - Only in a fallen world is anyone ever asked to sacrifice what is good and right and what ought to be cherished to do the will of God.
 - In a world without sin that Jesus is establishing, God would never have occasion to ask us to relinquish what is right and good to do His will.

TRANS> So Jesus is extremely distressed and filled with sorrow.

III. How does He obtain relief?

A. We see how He prays earnestly that He would not have to drink this cup if possible.

1. He wants out if there is any way possible for Him to get out of it.
 - In verse 35, we are told that **He prayed that if it were possible, the hour might pass from Him**, and in verse 36 He says, **“Abba, Father, all things are possible for You. Take this cup away from Me, nevertheless, not what I will, but what You will.”**
 - We know that there are times in the Bible where God pronounces a judgment and where desperate cries for mercy are heard and the judgment is averted.
 - Jesus, faced with the prospect of this terrible ordeal, wants to know if it is possible for this cup to be removed.
 - In His human capacity, He does not—cannot—know all things.
 - And so He does what every man ought to do in times when He is surrounded with dismal prospects—“if it is possible, let this cup pass from me. Save me from this hour.”
2. In this way, He turns it over to His heavenly Father.
 - He makes it clear that He does not want to be cut off from Him—rightly He makes that known...
 - But He leaves it to the Father to determine if there is any other way—any way around what the Father is requiring Him to do.
 - This too is what every one of us ought to do when we are in dire straits.
 - We must state our earnest desires before God who can do anything, but we must ultimately leave it with Him.

3. In this way, Jesus assured Himself that there was no other way than for Him to be cut off from His Father, to become a curse for us on the cross.
 - If there had been another way, the Father would have heard, and released Him.
 - Let me say how reprehensible it is for anyone to suggest that Jesus dying on the cross was not necessary—that there are other ways for men to be saved—if they live a good life and follow their own religion...
 - Such views make a mockery of the sufferings of Christ.
 - Christians who suggest that there are other ways for men to be saved show that they do not know the true gospel.
 - Our confession states that to assert and maintain (or hold) that people may be saved by any other way is “very pernicious and to be detested.”
 - If there had been another way, God would surely have spared His Son.
- B. We see that Jesus not only prays earnestly, but also prays repeatedly.
1. We are told in our text that after praying for a while, He returns to check on His three leading disciples... only to find them sleeping (more on that later).
 - But three times He goes off from them to pray and three times He returns.
 - You can see how in verse 37, He returns from His prayer to find them sleeping...
 - And how verse 39 says that He went away again and prayed...
 - And then how in verse 41 we are told that He came the third time to His disciples.
 - So He had three sessions of prayer.
 2. And notice that in verse 37, it tells us that He prayed the same thing that He prayed before.
 - This was not vain repetition. This was desperation.
 - It took Jesus three sessions of prayer for Him to fully relinquish what He rightly held on to with such ardor.
- C. And indeed, He relinquished His will to His Father’s will.
1. He fully resigned Himself to accept the Father’s will for Him.
 - It is impossible for us to conceive how difficult it was for Him to give this up.
 - He had to repeat His prayer until He was fully resigned to do the Father’s will—until, to use the language of Psalm 131, He had quieted His soul and become like a weaned child on His mother’s lap...
 - No longer making demands and asserting His own will—as right as that will was—but leaving it all to His Father.
 - You can see how after His time at Gethsemane, He is fully resigned to bear the cross.
 - The cross is still before Him, but the struggle of resigning to it is over.
 - He is ready to go and suffer all that the Father has appointed for Him in order that He might redeem us.

2. This was the strongest temptation that has ever been faced.
 - It called for the most extreme resignation and for the acceptance of the greatest suffering that ever has been and that ever will be.
 - Even those who suffer forever in hell will never experience the depths of suffering that our Lord Jesus Christ willingly undertook for His people.
 - There is no sorrow like His sorrow, nor can there ever be.
3. His will was hereby beautifully brought into perfect harmony with God's will.
 - Our salvation depended upon this beautiful resignation—this most difficult of all resignations.
 - Rebellion in one garden brought death to us all, but submission in another garden set in motion the sequence of events that would procure our salvation.
 - Praise be to our gracious Saviour! Blessed be His glorious name forever!

IV. But what of His disciples? What of us if we are His disciples?

- A. Jesus' disciples were being called to relinquish what they loved—the aspirations they cherished about Jesus and about immediate prosperity in this world.
 1. Jesus had repeatedly told them about the cross and that they must also deny themselves and bear the cross to enter His kingdom.
 - They had yet to take that in.
 - They were still dreaming of the positions of honour they would have in the world and the palaces they would live in.
 2. Here in the garden, we see that Jesus repeatedly counselled them to watch and pray.
 - In verse 38, He says: **“Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.”**
 - He urged them to pray as He was praying, but they did not.
 - He knew that they would face, as Lane says, a severe sifting of loyalties which would test them when He was arrested.
 - We know that He knew this because He had already warned them about it.
 - He had told them that they would all desert Him, and the fulfillment of the prophecy was already happening when they slept instead of watching and praying.
 - To watch is to be spiritually vigilant and alert—to be fully dependant on God for our keeping and fully resigned to whatever He calls us to bear in our service to Him.
 3. Jesus warned them that though the spirit of them was willing, the flesh was weak.
 - The flesh is what we are in ourselves, apart from the influence of God's Spirit to strengthen us.
 - And the spirit is what in us is renewed and influenced by God's Spirit.
 - In us as fallen, the flesh is full of sinful desires and brings forth things like malice and immorality—it is full not only of good desires like the fully human and righteous desire of Jesus to have God's favour...
 - But in us it is always tainted with selfish and perverted desires.

- In other words, we might say that for Jesus, the flesh was His perfectly righteous human desires that had to yield to His human spirit which was informed of God's will...
 - While for us as fallen, our flesh not only has desires for things that are good in themselves such as love, happiness, good things of this life, and even God's favour to a certain extent,
 - But is also mixed through and through with sin so that even our desires for love and good things are tainted with covetousness, lust, pride, rebellion, and resistance to God.
 - So the disciples needed to watch and pray that they would not give way to temptation, but would continue to do the will of God.
 - They needed their wills and their desires to be given up to God.
- B. As Jesus' disciples today, we are also called to relinquish what we love when it clashes with the will of God.
1. Much of our love is misplaced.
 - We do not, like Jesus, seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness.
 - We set our affection on the wrong things.
 - Obviously we need to relinquish our desires for selfish indulgence, for self-promotion, for sinful revenge, for our neighbour's wealth or spouse—what wickedness there is in us...
 - And we need to cherish our own spouse, delight in helping those in need when we are able to do so, learn to serve others...
 2. But it is also true that much of our love is not misplaced when God has saved us.
 - Like Jesus' disciples, we want to see Jesus honoured in the world, we want to see His kingdom advance among the nations.
 - That is a good desire.
 - But when God decides to chasten His church and bring it into dishonour in the world, we must be willing to relinquish our will.
 - We must do this when obeying the will of God means that the church will be rejected.
 - For example, when teaching that fornication is sinful, that homosexuality is sinful, that Jesus is the only way of salvation, that abortion is murder—
 - When such teaching is seen to be wicked and brings the church into disfavour in the world, our desire for the church to be popular must give way to the will of God.
 - Likewise, we may have a spouse that we dearly love.
 - This is a good thing.
 - Put in this fallen world, it may be God's will for our spouse to become ill and even to die at a young age... perhaps with much suffering.
 - We can pray earnestly for God to spare them and heal them—those are desires that are right and good (like Jesus' desire for God's favour),
 - but if the will of God is for that beloved spouse to die, we must say with Jesus, “nevertheless, not my will but your will be done.”

- We may have deep sorrows at the time of loss—in fact, it is right for us to have deep sorrows—like Jesus did—when losing something precious—
 - but then, like Jesus, we must relinquish our will to the will of God like Job did, and say, “the Lord gives and the Lord takes away, blessed be the name of the Lord.”
- C. We learn from this that we must wrestle, like Jesus did, not to hate what we ought to love, but to relinquish it to the will of God.
- And for us, because of our sin, to also replace the things that we wrongly love (sinful things) with the things that please God.
1. So we repent of loving what is sinful, and we also relinquish to the will of God what we love that we ought rightly to love.
 - Relinquishing good things that ought to be loved is the price of sin until Jesus returns and paradise is restored.
 - Until then, we must bear losses and crosses with patience and cheerfulness for the sake of God’s kingdom.
 - We must wrestle, as Jesus did, so that we bear the cross willingly.
 2. Consider that Jesus relinquished what was good and right for our sake—because of *our* sin—
 - Because of our sin, it was necessary for Him to restore obedience and submission to God by giving up His enjoyment of God’s favour for a time.
 - This was the price, not of His own sin, but of our sin that we might be redeemed.
 - What grace was His that He was willing to do this!
 3. But now for that same kingdom, we are also called to take up our cross.
 - Often we must relinquish things that are dear to us for the sake of God’s kingdom—but in our case, it is not for sin that we had no part in.
 - If Jesus was patient in bearing the cross on account of our sin, should we not be patient bearing the cross when the sin belongs to us all?
 - Yes indeed—when we are called to sacrifice our lives for God’s kingdom or to suffer losses for Him with patience, we join our testimony with that of Jesus that doing the will of God is more important than even the best things that we enjoy in this world.
 - At Gethsemane, Jesus taught us that the will of God is to take precedence over everything else.
 - If this were not so, there would be no salvation for us.
 - Blessed be His glorious name forever and ever. Amen.