

*Pressed*  
Mark 14:32-42  
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Good morning. It is good to be with you. It's good to hear hands clapping, "amen" being shouted, children singing. It's a good day to be together worshipping the Lord.

Turn in your Bibles or tap on your devices to the gospel of Mark. Today, we'll be looking at Mark 14:32-42. We've been in a sermon series looking at the "Renewal in the Wilderness." And we've been looking primarily at Exodus 20 and seeing the redemptive moment of God calling out His people out of Egypt and into the relationship of His covenant and the giving of His law as we looked at the Ten Commandments. And so we are staying in this series of "Renewal in the Wilderness" by going from Mount Sinai to now the Mount of Olives.

Hear now as I read the sermon text this morning.

And they went to a place called Gethsemane. And he said to his disciples, "Sit here while I pray." And he took with him Peter and James and John, and began to be greatly distressed and troubled. And he said to them, "My soul is very sorrowful, even to death. Remain here and watch." And going a little farther, he 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. Remove this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will." And he came and found them sleeping, and he said to Peter, "Simon, are you asleep? Could you not watch one hour? Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." And again he went away and prayed, saying the same words. And again he came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were very heavy, and they did not know what to answer him. And he came the third time and said to them, "Are you still sleeping and taking your rest? It is enough; the hour has come. The Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise, let us be going; see, my betrayer is at hand." [ESV]

This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. Let us pray.

Father in heaven, add to the reading of your word. May we be ministered by your Spirit this morning. May indeed we hear your words and not mine. May they forget what I say, and may they see Jesus. We pray these things in your name. Amen.

What is it like for you on the night before you give a big presentation at work? Some of you might be having a panic attack right now with me mentioning that. How do you describe your experience as you maybe study and anticipate a big test that's just around the corner? What of a difficult situation that is weighing heavily on your heart that you must endure by walking through it? You can't avoid it. You can't walk around it. You must go through it. Different circumstances call for different responses. We all have different types of experiences. But the stress and strain of looming deadlines press in on us.

The passage this morning that we just read, we see how Jesus is pressed in this moment. We see how the disciples are pressed. And in the larger context of what's happening in the holy, the passion week, we see the crowds and the leaders pressed all through this moment that has been in the making since before the foundation of the world, the coming. The hour is here for the purpose of Jesus's ministry.

Let's begin there. What's happening in this moment. Let's walk through the details of the scene. We see that Jesus is with His disciples and He's in Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover and the feast of the unleavened bread. Now, in Jesus's time, there would've been thousands of pilgrims coming and flooding

the city to make preparations for the feast, to worship, to celebrate God's salvation. It would have been bustling with the sounds of people greeting one another, negotiating in the street, preparing, making arrangements for lodging, for food and the sacrifices to be done at the temple.

The Passover is the ritual observance that celebrates God's deliverance, His deliverance of His people out of Egypt, and that celebration includes the slaughter of a lamb and its consumption in its full. And that meal is to be shared together as a whole family. During the meal, at one point, the head of the family would often stand and give explanation, to give reason for why they are celebrating the Passover meal and explain its meaning to the family, and particularly to the watching children. And then afterwards, there would be various songs and hymns sung together.

The feast of the unleavened bread begins the day after Passover, and the people during that time avoid eating anything with leaven in it for seven days. This feast is also the occasion when there would be the presentation of the first sheaf of harvest. And that marks the time when they would celebrate the feast of weeks. Now, that's also called Pentecost. It happens 50 days after the beginning of the feast of unleavened bread.

So this is the context at which we are in the story here in the gospel. It is the context and the framing of these events that frame out God's redemptive history of God working through His promises, His salvation, of bringing His people, the exit out of Egypt and the entry into the promise land. After they celebrated the Passover meal together, Jesus and His disciples, we see, go out to the Mount of Olives, and they come to a place that the text calls Gethsemane.

Gethsemane means "oil press," or even "olive press." It is across the Kidron Valley on the lower slopes on the other side of the Mount of Olives. It's to the east of the city walls of Jerusalem, and you would likely even see the temple mount from that vantage point. Only the gospel of John identifies the place as a garden. Some early traditions place Gethsemane as a cave where an oil press could've been, and so it was located near the olive groves. The exact location is not known. But we have in this place where in the flooding of the city, people pressing in to celebrate the Passover and these celebrations of God's salvation, we are seeing Jesus with His disciples.

They come to this place, and Jesus tells them to sit here while He prays. From there, we see Him moving away further, and He brings three of His disciples with Him. We see Peter, James, and John. And they go away a little bit. And then He tells them to remain here and watch. And we see Jesus going a little bit farther away, and He falls down to pray.

Now, as we think about this event in the stillness of the night, full bellies, the roasted lamb, wine, you would be tired. I would be tired. And yet, Jesus is in a different state of mind. So let's turn our attention to some of the events that have built up this pressure for this moment that we have here in Gethsemane.

You see, the time is now. God's salvation is once again pushing forward in the lives of His people according to God's promises and His purposes. Jesus had lived His entire life for these moments. Jesus's birth was the long expected news of the Messiah. But what sort of Messiah was He to be? Jesus's teaching ministry proclaimed the good news of the kingdom of God throughout Galilee and the Judean countryside. Jesus's ministry also performed miracles and healings that demonstrated that indeed He was the Son of David, the Messiah that will usher in the kingdom of God and call out His followers to live out His kingdom values in the new covenant community. And after about three years, the hour had come. Jesus was to enter Jerusalem to ascend the throne of David, renewing Israel and saving them from the Romans. That is as many had hoped.

In the background of this story, we hear Zachariah's words, "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion. Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem. Behold! Your king is coming to you. Righteous and having salvation, is he, humble and mounted on a donkey." The king and the king's entourage is parading forward and coming through to claim the king's throne. And what did He do upon entering the city? He

visited the temple to take a look around. What Messiah is He to be?

Throughout the week, Jesus and His disciples would stay in the nearby village called Bethany and would come into Jerusalem each day. So that's the ebb and flow of the gospel narratives that we see in the accounts given. On the second day, He made a prophetic speech about a fig tree that had leaves but had no fruit. He entered the temple again. He overturned the tables of the money changers. He drove out those who were buying and selling in the temple complex. He boldly admonished all present, how the temple had become a den of robbers instead of a house of prayer for all nations. Indeed, the chief priests and scribes were afraid of Him. They were pressed by that fear because they didn't know what was happening, what to do with such a man that carries on in such a way, disrupting the order of things and yet draws the astonishment of the crowds with His teaching.

We see the following day, Jesus is interacting directly with the religious leaders face to face. They ask him, "On what authority are you doing these things?" And Jesus's response shows how they were squeezed between the opinions of the crowds and blinded from seeing what God was doing in front of them. Jesus further pressed these religious leaders by speaking a parable that highlighted how the stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone. They heard what He was saying, and they rightly deduced that He was speaking against them and about them. He pressed the religious leaders by answering their questions about taxes, about the resurrection, about which commandment is the most important. And He pressed them by warning the people how the scribes enjoy their honor and esteem at the expense of the people. And to add the cherry on top, Jesus pressed them by predicting that the destruction of the temple would come. The religious leaders are pressed by what to do with this Messiah. Then we see in the text two days before the Passover, the chief priests and scribes were seeking to arrest and kill Him. And because of the crowds, because of the festivities, we see that their method is to do this by stealth.

But all along the way, Jesus is also pressing His disciples. Here, before they're in the garden of Gethsemane, He is spending time with them in this intimate moment of sharing in the Passover meal. He presses the disciples with the weight of this particular Passover which would be His last with them. He pressed His disciples with the new illumination of His teaching, that this last supper is to be interpreted as like the Exodus. This is to be understood in the framework of God's redemption, of God making and drawing out a new community in the new covenant that is in the body and blood of Jesus. And He pressed the disciples with the revelation that one among them would betray Him, that the others would not stand with Him, and specifically Peter will deny Him three times.

So you have roasted lamb, you have good wine, and you have not-so-good news, and you're feeling the pressure of the moment. The hour has come. And all along, we see the prophet Zachariah is in the background again as he says, "Strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered."

Now, the king who paraded into town and cleansed the temple, what does this Messiah do? He goes out, and He prays. What is happening in this time of prayer? Jesus models what He taught His disciples about prayer. He is not going about to be seen in front of people. He's not performing prayers with loud words and eloquent sayings with His arms lifted up and standing in the presence of many. No. He is prostrated, experiencing the intensity and the anguish that He is experiencing. He's crying out to God. We hear Him saying, "Abba, Father," this intimacy and communion with the Father. Now, "Abba" is a phrase just meant for "father." It's Aramaic for "father," and "father" in the text is Greek for "father." So there's some multiple languages happening there. But we see this intimacy. The Lord God was known as the Father, but it was not known to be an expression an individual would have to the Father. And here we have Jesus both teaching about how to pray, "Our Father who art in heaven," and we see Him modeling that here.

And in this intimacy, Jesus is seeking the Father's will. He is seeking the provision from Him. He's seeking what He needs to help Him in the midst of the temptation, and all along, He is knowing and reveling in God's glory.

Jesus models what it means to have faith in God that moves mountains. Now, this is a couple chapters earlier in Mark where He teaches the disciples that if you have faith, you can move mountains. And here, we have the cry and the anguish of, Lord, move this mountain. "Remove this cup from me." And all things are possible with God. And we have the answer to the prayer that the mountain will be moved, but in the way that Jesus has to go through.

Jesus likewise models what He means for His disciples to completely depend upon the Lord. This intimacy with the Father, seeking His will and not His own, that in that cry and the anguish of "Remove this cup from me," is truly a place of trust that He would have His will aligned with the Father, and, likewise, for His disciples to completely depend upon the Lord. And Jesus models what it means to endure the hard narrow road in that alignment. When our flesh would say, I don't want to go there, but we know that God's will is pointing in that direction, that in that alignment of His will to the Father's, that is where the experience of all joy and the riches of God's abundance takes place. And before there is glory on the throne is king, there is the humiliation. There is the suffering as the lamb who was slain.

So here are just a couple things. Today's a shorter meditation. We're going to be staying in this passage throughout Thursday, Friday, and this coming Easter. But as we think about the pressure of this moment here in Gethsemane and the culmination of the events of Jesus's life, what can we glean from Jesus here as He's praying to the Father? Here are a couple things just to draw your attention to. To meditate upon Jesus's inner emotional life. The second person of the Trinity who has become flesh, born a baby from a woman has grown to be this man, and He is distressed. He is troubled. And He even kind of echoes Psalm 42 where He's calling out with what is going on in His heart. "My soul is very sorrowful." So He's calling His disciples in the time of His anguish to be with Him. And out of that inner emotional life, we see what flows in Jesus's deep prayerful life.

Now, Mark's account is quick. It is fast paced. And this is likely happening over hours, certainly by the suggestion that He's saying, hey, Peter, you can't even stay awake one hour? We see in the stillness of the night, Jesus is deep in prayer. The reason why He's deep in prayer is that Jesus also has a focused, purposed life. In everything of His interactions with His disciples and the things He was teaching them and showing them to the things that He was proclaiming about the kingdom, and the miracles and healings He was doing, all of this was pointing to the work of this week. The Savior of the world to save sinners.

And in this moment, we see something beautiful about Jesus. As Messiah, He is king. As Messiah here, we also see Him as the perfect priest. Hebrews 5:7 just references, "In the days of his flesh," meaning His body, His life, "Jesus offered up prayers and supplications with loud cries and tears to him who is able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverence." In this purposed life, He was well aware and had been telling His disciples for some time. Mark gives an account of telling them in three cycles of what was to come, of why they were going to Jerusalem. Mark 10:42-45,

And Jesus called them to him and said to them, "You know that those who are considered rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. But it shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." [ESV]

He knew what was to come, and He gladly and willingly followed. His inner emotional life and the nature of Jesus in His humanity was full of distress and discomfort and anguish for what was going to transpire in the hours ahead. And so He sought comfort with His friends. He sought comfort with the Lord.

And this moment is a perfect contrast to another famous map, if you will, that happened earlier in Mark 4:35-41. Flip over there if you have it.

On that day, when evening had come, he said to them, "Let us go across to the

other side." And leaving the crowd, they took him with them in the boat, just as he was. And other boats were with him. And a great windstorm arose, and the waves were breaking into the boat, so that the boat was already filling. But he was in the stern, asleep on the cushion. And they woke him and said to him, "Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?" And he awoke and rebuked the wind and said to the sea, "Peace! Be still!" And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm. He said to them, "Why are you so afraid? Have you still no faith?" And they were filled with great fear and said to one another, "Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?" [ESV]

And here, we have another map, if you will. In the boat with the waves crashing, the disciples feared for their lives. In Gethsemane with the stillness of the night air, maybe it was a cool clear night, again, keep thinking about food. Their bellies were full. The lamb was tasty. The wine was good. The fellowship was sweet. In the middle of the night, who among us wouldn't be sleepy? Their eyes were heavy.

In the boat, Jesus was perfectly calm and in control. And yet, here in Gethsemane, Jesus was distraught. But He still was in control. Jesus slept in the boat during the storm while the disciples were freaking out. But here the disciples sleep while the Lord, who calms the waters and has perfect communion with the Father, is in anguish as death approaches.

Talking about nailing the moment. It's as if Jesus is saying, come on, guys, wake up. Wake up. I would like for you to be with me in this time and in this place. You are my friends. Support me. Encourage me. Be with me. But He's also saying, why aren't you reading the room? Why aren't you alert? Why aren't you preparing for what may be your temptation even this night?

You see, brothers and sisters, we stand firm every day in the finished work of Christ. God's salvation that is accomplished through Jesus's life, His death on the cross, and His resurrection, we rest in that every day. And we celebrate with great joy every Sunday, the resurrection. But Christians from all over the world remember these events with particular focus of Jesus's final days leading up to a Roman cross and an empty grave. We celebrate and we worship in our homes this week. We gather together later corporately as we meditate more upon this passage, maybe not in Mark necessarily. But as we focus on this scene in Gethsemane, we remember that Jesus is betrayed on Thursday, He's crushed on Friday, and what? He is raised on Sunday.

Brothers and sisters, the meditation this morning as we look at the lead up to the cross through the lens of Gethsemane, we recognize the purpose of our existence as image bearers starts in the garden in Genesis 1. We see salvation and renewal in a wilderness outside the garden. And here we are at the hour has come, and we're in another garden, or at least olive groves outside the temple, and we see the Son of Man in a wilderness facing another temptation of what's about to take place. And we see salvation. We see the promises of God there in Genesis coming to fulfillment in these moments, once and for all.

And so I invite you to meditate on this passage this week as you look at the events before and the trial and the crucifixion, and meditating even on the silence of Saturday and the joyous celebration of resurrection on Sunday. May we take care, may we watch, and may we pray so that we might not enter into temptation. As Jesus says here, "The spirit indeed is willing." We have high aspirations and desires for what that would mean to have communion and dependence upon the Lord, and yet our body is weak. And here, flesh is not evil. It is not bad. It's just recognizing the contrast between the aspirations of our hearts, and the distractions, and the avoidance that we often do in those tense and pressure filled moments.

But our shepherd, brothers and sisters, though He is pressed, He is not struck down forever because He lives, and He reigns. He calls His sheep to Himself. The call to us, even in here with Jesus inviting His disciples to watch and pray, is to not be afraid of the storms when nothing is going to harm you, but to not be drowsy when everything seems all calm and all peaceful and not pay attention to what

God is doing. It's for us to not sleep while it is day and see what is at hand in God's salvation even this day. Let us pray.

Our Father in heaven, we rejoice and give thanks for your great salvation, for your grace upon grace, your mercy upon mercy, that the promises of your goodness from the beginning of the age are fulfilled now in the obedience of Christ, His love compelling Him to glorify the Father, His love compelled to suffer and die as a sheep, as the lamb, for the forgiveness of sins. And as we celebrate the resurrection of the body, we share in your death and in your resurrection. Lord, help us to understand these truths. Help us to embody these mysteries. Lord, help us to long for the resurrection life even now. Help us to walk in the intimacy of prayer that we see that you have here in the garden, and may we share in that union that we have through Jesus Christ. In His name we pray. Amen.