

Text: Mark 14:32-42

Title: “Praying Your Heart Out”

SERMON BUMPER – I don’t mean to be morbid, but let me ask you to think about this: What if you knew you were going to die tomorrow? Not just that, but that you were going to die at the hands of people who hate you? More than that, that you were going to actually die for someone else’s sins? More than that, as you carried the weight of everyone else’s sin you would endure the greatest emotional and spiritual darkness anyone had ever faced before? If you knew all of that was just a day away, how would you spend your last day?

Well that’s exactly what Jesus faced on Thursday of the week He was crucified and arose from the grave ... “The Week that Changed the World.” Open your Bible to Mark 14:32. We know how Jesus spent the day before He died. He spent it with the people closest to Him, the people into whose life He had poured His life. And He spent it with His Father in prayer. Remember this is all happening during the Jewish festival called Passover. That evening Jesus gathered with His disciples in an upstairs room to eat the Passover meal. As the disciples arrived Jesus surprised them by taking the role of a servant and washing their feet. Then around the table He told them that the bread they ate symbolized His body that would be sacrificed for the sins of the world. The wine they drank symbolized His blood that would be poured out to atone for their sins. Also Jesus announced to them that one of them would betray Him to the authorities who would arrest Jesus and carry out His crucifixion. In fact, at that very moment the Jewish leaders were plotting how they will carry out their murderous scheme. But surprisingly, Jesus isn’t focused on His own fate; instead He continues to teach and encourage and comfort His followers, knowing what is ahead for them. Then Jesus left the city and walked a short distance to a grove of olive trees called Gethsemane. It’s late in the night and Jesus knows the horrific suffering that is just hours away. And here He pours out His heart in prayer. **Read Mark 14:32-42.**

As you and I go through the trials of life we learn from Jesus how to face them. For Jesus models for us how to ...

1. PRAY

We’re told in v.32 that Jesus went with His disciples to a place called Gethsemane to pray. In fact, Luke’s Gospel tells us that Jesus often went to this place to pray. Gethsemane was a grove or garden of olive trees. The name means “olive press.” You see, after the olives are harvested from the trees, they’re placed into a trough.

Then a heavy stone wheel is rolled over them repeatedly, squeezing out the precious olive oil. What a fitting picture of what was happening to Jesus on this evening. He is being pressed beyond our comprehension. And He faces it with prayer.

The writer of Hebrews surely had this evening in mind when he wrote:

Hebrews 5:7 - During the days of Jesus' life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with loud cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission.

What you see here is Jesus fully surrendering Himself to the Father's will for His life. He prayed His heart out, and He teaches us to do the same. But He also shows us how to...

2. PRAY WITH FRIENDS

We can't escape the fact that Jesus didn't want to be alone as He faced this dark night. It says in v.32 that the disciples went with Jesus to Gethsemane, but then in v.33 he took Peter, James and John on a little farther into the garden. These men were His closest friends whom He wanted and needed with Him in this hour of suffering. Yes, Jesus is the Son of God, but He is also completely man, and as a human being, He benefited from having his closest friends with Him in His despair. In v.34 He told them, "My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch." Jesus humbled Himself and talked honestly about His pain with others. He told them what was going on in His soul. And if Jesus benefited from partners in His despair, how much more can we.

Galatians 6:2 - Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.

You see, God created us for this kind community with others. He puts other people in our lives to share the burden of our suffering. Part of the life of a follower of Christ is praying with other believers and sharing their burden as Jesus did. One of the reasons so many people experience depression is because they have no one to share their pain with them. Do you have a friend like this? Are you a friend like this?

Now as it turns out, Jesus' friends are not very reliable partners for Jesus. Three times Jesus returned to them to find them sleeping. But if Jesus needed partners in the dark night of suffering, so do we. Jesus also shows us how to ...

3. PRAY WITH INTENSITY

It says in v.33 that Jesus "began to be deeply distressed and troubled." With the Cross so near, Jesus' despair now was greatly intensified. His soul is gripped with tremendous sadness and despair. He's feeling pressured, just like we do at times. Now, granted, Jesus' stress and pressure was part of His suffering for our sins, but it's pressure nonetheless. In the next verse Jesus described his despair to the three:

Mark 14:34 - "My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death," he said to them. "Stay here and keep watch."

The picture Mark paints here is means to be surrounded by sorrow. He cannot escape it. The Bible paraphrase *The Message* here says, "He plunged into an agonizing sorrow. Then he said, 'This sorrow is crushing my life out.'" What a picture of stress! We all know what that feels like. So the more intense the suffering the more intense the prayer is.

Mark 14:35 - Going a little farther, he fell to the ground and prayed that if possible the hour might pass from him.

So Jesus is either on His knees or flat out on His face ... the posture of great humility and desperation. Luke's gospel records that Jesus' sweat "was like drops of blood falling to the ground." That's intense prayer! When is the last time you prayed your heart out in this way?

Jesus also shows us how to...

4. PRAY WITH INTIMACY

Jesus wanted to be supported by His friends, but ultimately He knew His help would come from His Father. There are some things others can't do for us. And sometimes our friends will fail us. But everything can and must be shared with the Father. Jesus prayed to his Father.

Mark 14:35b-36a – (Jesus) prayed that if possible the hour might pass from him. "Abba, Father," he said, "everything is possible for you."

Jesus was not only fully God, He was fully human. There was nothing in Jesus that made him immune to pain and suffering. In His humanity Jesus felt, “I’d rather not go through this.” But He had absolute trust that His Father knew what was best.

And Jesus understood that what He needed most in that hour was intimacy with His Father. And that is the big deal about praying. Our greatest need is not to get a job or get married or get well; our greatest need is God. The greatest need of our soul is to be close to God. That’s the main goal of prayer. And because everything is possible for the Father, nothing can keep Him from doing what is best for us.

Jesus also shows us how to ...

5. PRAY WITH PERSPECTIVE

In times of despair, we tend to lose our perspective. And when we lose our perspective we become vulnerable to the lies of Satan. Despair is Satan’s cell phone. When we are discouraged and in despair, Satan starts ringing us up and telling us all kinds of lies: “God doesn’t care about you ... no one is interested in you ... you deserve this ... you’ll never get over this.”

But Jesus shows us how, in times of despair, we can align ourselves with the purposes of God. It’s the only way we can make any sense out of the suffering.

Notice in v.35 Jesus prays that if possible “the hour” might pass from him. What was ahead for Jesus was not random, senseless suffering. This is the appointed “hour” for which He came into the world. He mentions it again in v.41. When He returns and finds His partners sleeping He says, “Wake up! The hour has come!”

And then in v.36 Jesus talks about a “cup.” He asked the Father if possible, “Take this cup from me.” What is this “cup”? It was the will of God for His life. It was the reason for which Jesus came. The Father had filled up the cup of His wrath against our sin and His Son was about to drink that cup of the Father’s righteous wrath that we deserved. Jesus didn’t deserve any of what He suffered. But there’s a purpose behind this unjust suffering. Jesus drank the cup for us. Jesus went to the Cross of Calvary where He suffered and died, taking our sins upon Himself straight to the grave where He was buried. But three days later He rose again. The sin and death that destroyed God’s good creation and our relationship with Him would no longer have the final word. Jesus was able to move through the despair to

accomplish the Father's will for His life because He kept that perspective. He saw how the Father was using this suffering.

We may not always see things that clearly, but we can be sure that whatever we are facing God is at work bringing about His good purposes for us and through us. So pray on!

Jesus also shows us how to...

6. PRAY WITH PERSISTENCE

Jesus never quit praying, no matter how deep the despair. Now the disciples struggled with persistence. Every time Jesus comes back to them He finds them asleep. In v.37 He questions Peter, "Could you not keep watch for one hour?" So if we have trouble staying alert or even awake for prayer, we're in good company. Jesus told Peter and us...

Mark 14:38 - Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the body is weak."

The way Jesus puts it here it means "keep on watching and keep on praying." It's like what Jesus taught in ...

Matthew 7:7 - "Ask (keep on asking) and it will be given to you; seek (keep on seeking) and you will find; knock (and keep on knocking) and the door will be opened to you.

That's what Jesus does. In v.39 it says that "once more he went away and prayed the same thing." Why did Jesus keep going back and praying the same thing? Was He hoping to change the Father's mind on this? Was it that God didn't hear Him the first time He asked? No, Jesus was increasingly bringing Himself into alignment with the Father's will. Perhaps He was praying that God would give Him strength to go through with the sufferings without quitting. And God gave to His Son the grace to endure all that He had to endure the next day as He went to the Cross to suffer and die. Now He's ready to face the terrible trial that is ahead.

Mark 14:41b-42 - Enough! The hour has come. Look, the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise! Let us go! Here comes my betrayer!"

So Jesus has prayed his heart out with His friends, with intensity and intimacy with His Father and with perspective and persistence. I'm grateful that we have this recorded in Scripture so we can learn from Jesus how to pray our heart out in the face of whatever pressure we may experience. But there's something else you need to see here. What Jesus did on the next day when He suffered and died for our sins is that He made it possible for us to come to the Father just like He came to the Father to pray His heart out. Because Jesus took away our sins we can now come into the presence of a holy God and have a relationship with Him and pour out hearts out to Him.