

There are many wonderful titles used in the Bible to depict Jesus Christ. He is the Light of the world, the Bread of Life, the Son of God, the King of kings, the Prince of peace, the Lily of the valley, the Rose of Sharon, and the great I AM. One of the most moving, mind-boggling titles is the one revealed in Isaiah 53:3--Jesus is the "Man of sorrows."

Philip P. Bliss penned these penetrating words, "Man of Sorrows, what a name for the Son of God, who came ruined sinners to reclaim! Hallelujah, what a Savior! Bearing shame and scoffing rude, in my place condemned He stood--sealed my pardon with His blood: Hallelujah, what a Savior! Guilty, vile and helpless we, spotless Lamb of God was He; Full atonement! Can it be? Hallelujah, what a Savior! Lifted up was He to die, 'It is finished!' was His cry; Now in heaven exalted high; Hallelujah, what a Savior!"

This morning, we are going to tread on holy ground. Our aim is to get to know better the Man of Sorrows. Frankly, sorrow is not a popular topic in our day. Today's gospel is far more often presented in terms like this, "Come to Jesus, and He'll make you feel better about yourself." We have ignored to a great degree the fact that Jesus was the Suffering Servant, the Man of Sorrows. The message this morning is designed to help us understand and appreciate more fully the sorrow our Savior endured for us.

Warning: We ought never to learn the Word of God merely for the sake of learning, that is, to stuff our heads with knowledge we have no intent on using. This is especially the case this morning. In our attempt to fathom the sorrows our Savior endured, our aim is to learn so as to worship. Frankly, if this is not your desire, it would be better to leave at this point. The event we will consider is sacred. One commentator has written (Barclay, 343), "This is a passage we almost fear to read, for it seems to intrude into the private agony of Jesus."

Two weeks ago, we began a series entitled, "The Passion Week of Jesus." We are probing the events that occurred from Palm Sunday to Resurrection Sunday.

An Overview of the Events of the Passion Week of Jesus:
(based on the traditional view of Jesus' crucifixion being on Friday)

Sunday	Triumphal Entry (Mk 11:1-11)
Monday	Cursing of Fig Tree; Drive out money changers (Mk 11:12-19)
Tuesday	Withered Fig Tree; Challenge of His authority by leaders; Olivet Discourse (Mk 11:20f)
Wednesday	Betrayal Arrangements (Mk 14:1-11)
Thursday	Last Supper; Upper Room Discourse; Gethsemane; Betrayal, arrest, trial (Mk 14:12-15:14)
Friday	Crucifixion (Mk 15:15-47)
Saturday	In the tomb
Sunday	Resurrection and appearances (Mk 16)

***Note: This is an unedited manuscript of a message preached at Wheelersburg Baptist Church. It is provided to prompt your continued reflection on the practical truths of the Word of God.

Key: Mark 11:1-16:8 covers what happened in Jesus' final week of earthly ministry, from Palm Sunday to Easter Sunday.

Perhaps other than the Cross itself, no other event in the life of the Man of Sorrows reveals the agony He endured more vividly than Gethsemane. Jesus suffered for us beyond what our finite minds can fathom. So great was His pain there that Luke's gospel records that He sweat as it were drops of blood (Luke 22:44). What really happened at Gethsemane? Once we grasp the answer, we'll never be the same again.

Proposition: In order to appreciate more fully the suffering Jesus endured for us at Gethsemane, we will consider three questions answered for us in Mark 14:32-42.

The Setting for Gethsemane (Mark 14):

- A. Jesus was anointed for burial at Bethany (1-10).
 - B. Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper (12-25).
 - C. Jesus revealed two heart-sinking predictions:
 - 1. One would betray him (18).
 - 2. All would deny him, including Peter (27).
- I. What did Jesus DO at Gethsemane? (32-34)
- A. He prepared Himself.
 - 1. He was about to experience His greatest agony.
 - 2. He did experience great distress.
 - B. He prepared His disciples.
 - 1. He helped them face the hour of sorrow.
 - 2. He helped them to interpret the hour of sorrow.
- II. What did Jesus SAY at Gethsemane? (35-42)
- A. He prayed to His Father (35-36, 39).
 - 1. His words indicate intimacy.
 - 2. His words indicate dread.
 - 3. His words indicate submission.
 - B. He taught the disciples (37-42).
- III. What must WE do because of Gethsemane?
- A. We must believe.
 - B. We must worship.

The Setting for Gethsemane (Mark 14):

It's significant that each of the four gospel writers mention that Jesus went to the Garden of Gethsemane. John does not tell us what happened there, but Matthew, Mark, and Luke do. Let's sketch the backdrop as revealed in Mark's account. Three key events preface Gethsemane in Mk 14.

A. Jesus was anointed for burial at Bethany (1-10).

Jesus cleansed the temple on Monday. The religious leaders challenged Him on Tuesday. As He was leaving the temple, one of the disciples said (Mk 13:1), "Master, see what manner of stones and what buildings are here!" This statement prompted what we commonly call the "Olivet Discourse," which occupies the fourteenth chapter of Mark.

The time sequence of the events that followed are not easy to reconstruct. According to 14:1, two days prior to Passover, the chief priests and scribes made a decision to kill Jesus when a suitable time came. But never assume that Jesus' death was a quirk of fate. It wasn't. Jesus died because He chose to die. We see this in His response to being anointed by Mary of Bethany. He said in v 8, "She is come beforehand to anoint my body for the burial." Don't miss the importance of v 9, for it reveals that Jesus saw beyond His death to the result of His death--the gospel would transform the world.

Judas, incensed by what he considered a waste of money, left at that point (19), and set in motion his wicked plot to betray Jesus.

B. Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper (12-25).

Last year, in a study of John 13-16, we investigated in detail what happened in the Upper Room--the Lord's supper, and the Upper Room Discourse. Suffice it to notice now that v 26 indicates the group sang a hymn, left the upper room, and headed for the Mount of Olives. The mood became very solemn when...

C. Jesus revealed two heart-sinking predictions:

1. *One would betray him (18).* That, of course, was Judas.
2. *All would deny him, including Peter (27).*

With those sober predictions in the disciples' ears, the group arrived at Gethsemane. Now we are ready to consider the first of three questions...

I. What did Jesus DO at Gethsemane? (32-34)

V 32 begins, "And they came to a place which was named Gethsemane." Gethsemane is Hebrew and means "press of oils." It was a garden located somewhere on the lower slopes of the Mount of Olives, a hill filled with olive trees and olive presses (Wessel, 763). It was one of Jesus' favorite spots, a place where He could retreat to be alone with His Father (Lk 22:39).

What happened at Gethsemane that night? In the darkness of the night, a twofold preparation occurred.

A. He prepared Himself.

"Prepared Himself for what?" you ask. Please look ahead in the account to v 36, and you'll see. Notice the words, "Take away this cup from me." What does Jesus mean by "this cup"? We know the language is symbolic, and grows out of the Old Testament. True, it refers to the suffering and death He will face, but it goes beyond that. It refers primarily here to God's wrath (Carson, 543). There were two aspects to the suffering for which Jesus prepared Himself in Gethsemane.

1. *He was about to experience His greatest agony.*

Take a closer look at the account. V 32 says, "And they came to...Gethsemane; and He said to His disciples, Sit here, while I shall pray." V 33 continues, "And He taketh with Him Peter, James, and John (that is, He left the other eight, and took the inner circle of three), and began to be greatly amazed, and to be very depressed."

Those words speak of great, grievous agony. You might wonder, "All throughout His ministry, Jesus calmly said He was going to die. Why now is He greatly amazed, and even depressed? Other martyrs have faced death with great courage. Why does Jesus here seem to dread the thought of death?"

Oh, beloved, it was not death per se over which Jesus agonized. It was something far more horrid. The agony Jesus felt in Gethsemane was not merely the dread of physical suffering and dying--for many men have faced torture and martyrdom. But none have ever drunk the cup that was before Him. He knew that in a few hours He would experience the horror of being separated from the Father, that soon He would cry, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" It was for that "cup" that Jesus prepared Himself in Gethsemane.

Elizabeth Clephane pondered this in the second verse of her well-known hymn, "Beneath the Cross of Jesus." "Upon the cross of Jesus mine eyes at times can see the very dying form of One Who suffered there for me; And from my smitten heart with tears two wonders I confess--the wonders of redeeming love and my unworthiness." The following words, attributed to Bernard of Clairvaux, likewise contemplate the "cup" our Lord did drink, "O sacred Head, now wounded, with grief and shame weighed down, now scornfully surrounded with thorns Thine only crown; How pale Thou art with anguish, with sore abuse and scorn, how does that visage languish, which once was bright as morn!"

While in Gethsemane, Jesus knew He was about to experience His greatest agony. There was, however, a second aspect of the suffering Jesus felt in Gethsemane.

2. He did experience great distress.

He did--present tense. Listen to what He said in v 34, "My soul is exceedingly sorrowful unto death; tarry ye here, and watch." Please don't assume that because Jesus is God, pain didn't affect Him. I remind you that He is God incarnate, and as such He is 100% man. Never forget that. When God the Son became a man, He laid aside the independent exercise of His divine attributes. He chose to feel the full weight of human pain, dread, and agony. The NEB is vivid, "My heart is ready to break with grief."

The text says that He was "overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death" (34, NIV). I want to suggest to you that Jesus' distress was so great that He nearly died in Gethsemane. Luke's description is heart-wrenching (22:44), "And being in agony, He prayed more earnestly; and His sweat was, as it were, great drops of blood falling down to the ground." An angel was sent to sustain Him (Lk 22:43).

D. A. Carson makes this observation (543), "Jesus did not suffer martyrdom...Jesus went to his death knowing that it was his Father's will that he face death completely alone as the sacrificial, wrath-averting Passover Lamb. As his death was unique, so was his anguish; and our best response to it is hushed worship." Jesus went to Gethsemane to prepare Himself. We'll see how in a moment. Secondly...

B. He prepared His disciples.

Why did Jesus bring Peter, James, and John with Him to Gethsemane? Why did He tell them to tarry and keep watch? Two key reasons seem likely.

1. He helped them face the hour of sorrow.

Remember, Jesus has already predicted that His hour of sorrow will be an hour of sorrow for them, too. They will all abandon Him out of fear. He wanted them to be with Him--yes, because He "needed" the encouragement of their presence--but also for their benefit. By allowing them to watch Him, Jesus was helping His followers to know how to face their own times of trial which stood before them.

2. *He helped them to interpret the hour of sorrow.*

Jesus wanted His disciples to know the truth about what happened to Him in Gethsemane. He did not hide the truth from them. He let them see the anguish He bore. He let them hear the groanings of His soul. Why? For one, so they would know the depths of the suffering He was about to endure to redeem His people. Also, because when He was gone, they would be the instruments He would use to pass the truth on to the world! Now we are ready to consider a second question...

II. What did Jesus SAY at Gethsemane? (35-42)

In the Gethsemane experience, we find Jesus speaking to two audiences.

A. He prayed to His Father (35-36, 39).

V 35 begins, "And He went forward a little, and fell on the ground and prayed." The typical posture of prayer for a Jew was standing with arms outstretched. But what was Jesus position here? The burden and agony was so great, He could not stand up. In fact, He prayed that, if possible, the hour might pass from Him.

Notice the very words He prayed. We can make three observations from them.

1. *His words indicate intimacy.*

Jesus began His prayer in v 36 with these words, "Abba, Father." The word "Abba" is Aramaic, and is an intimate term. The Jews would not use this term to refer to God because they thought it disrespectful (Wessel, 764). Our word "Daddy" comes close.

2. *His words indicate dread.*

He prayed (36), "Take away this cup from Me." The two most dreadful cries to come from our Savior's lips were the Cry of the cup, and the Cry of dereliction (Bruner, 977). The first was uttered here at Gethsemane ("Take this cup from Me"), the second at Golgotha ("My God, My God, why?"). Jesus dreaded the cup of judgment He was about to drink.

3. *His words indicate submission.*

"Nevertheless, not what I will, but what Thou wilt (36)." Those who preach the health and wealth gospel tell us it's always possible to have bad things removed. Jesus' prayer proves otherwise. He knew the plan of God involved intense suffering. He chose to submit His will to His Father's will. My friends, He is our example here.

There's a second audience in Gethsemane. Jesus prayed to His Father, and...

B. He taught the disciples (37-42).

You remember the story. Let's refresh our memory by reading what happened (37-41a), "And He cometh, and findeth them sleeping..."

This past Thursday night, I was awakened in the middle of the night by one of our daughters. She was afraid because of a past nightmare and couldn't sleep. I stumbled to her bedside to try to comfort her, but I could hardly keep my eyes open! I thought of the disciples in Gethsemane.

It had been a long, exhausting day for Jesus' followers, and there, in the cool night air, they dozed off. Luke's parallel says they were sleeping from sorrow (Lk 22:45). Then their Master's voice startled them. "Watch and pray," Jesus told Peter. "If you want to overcome temptation, watch and pray."

The same goes for us. Why? "Because the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak." Listen, if we are serious about overcoming sin, we'd better take heed to Jesus' admonition, "Watch (be alert) and pray." Both verbs are imperatives. No prayer, no victory.

How long did Jesus agonize in prayer? V 37 implies that His first season of prayer lasted an hour. He prayed two more times as well (39-41)--and all three times the disciples fell asleep (v 40 indicates that after the second time the disciples were so embarrassed they didn't know what to say). I would suggest that the disciples learned some amazing lessons in Gethsemane. About Jesus. About prayer. About how to suffer.

Don't ignore the fact that Mark had a purpose in mind for recording this gospel. Mark wrote this account of Jesus around 68 A.D. He had a Roman audience in mind. Mark knew many of the Christians in his day were facing martyrdom. He knew they struggled with how to prepare themselves for their impending execution. So with his pen, Mark took them to Gethsemane to see how the Master faced His hour of sorrow, and how He helped the three apostles prepare for the same.

It's amazing to me that even in Gethsemane, Jesus took time to teach His disciples. Though in His hour of greatest need, Jesus still thought of His followers. What does that say to us about how much He loves us? There is no greater love.

Please never forget this. Jesus' life was not taken, but given. Vv 41-42 make this clear, for Jesus said, "The hour is come...Rise up, let us go (not to flee, but to meet the mob); lo, he that betrays me is at hand." At Gethsemane, Jesus prepared to give Himself both TO sinners, and FOR sinners.

III. What must WE do because of Gethsemane?

We have two responsibilities in light of what He did.

A. We must believe.

Do you know why Jesus endured Gethsemane? He took our place. It was our sin that made Gethsemane necessary. What should we do then in light of Gethsemane? We must believe that He did it for us. Have you ever prayed to God in these terms--"Dear Lord, I believe that when You suffered in Gethsemane and on the cross, You did it to take my place. You took the agony I deserve because I am a sinner. I can never repay You, but today, I choose to believe in You, and receive You as the Savior and Lord of my life."--Have you ever believed in these terms? Acts 16:31 says, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved."

B. We must worship.

Every one of us ought to respond in humble worship this morning. Our hearts ought to cry out, "Thank You, Lord Jesus, for what You did for us. You are worthy." Let us worship Him. "Man of Sorrows, what a name for the Son of God, who came ruined sinners to reclaim! Hallelujah, what a Savior!"